

## VOCABULARY · EPISODE 85

# You Understand Everything But You Cant Speak

Key words &amp; expressions · English + Español

10 words

Your English Toolbox

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## passive knowledge

**el conocimiento pasivo · el saber que entiendes pero no produces****DEF**

language that you can understand when you hear or read it but cannot yet produce actively in speaking or writing

*Passive knowledge is the first stage of language acquisition — you understand far more than you can say. Most learners have a huge passive vocabulary that needs to be converted to active knowledge through speaking practice.*

**ES**

El idioma que puedes entender cuando lo escuchas o lees pero que aún no puedes producir activamente en el habla o la escritura.

Es la primera etapa de la adquisición del idioma — entiendes mucho más de lo que puedes decir.

***You have passive knowledge of most English you have heard — the challenge is activating it.***

You have passive knowledge of most English you have heard — the challenge is activating it. -> Tienes el conocimiento pasivo de la mayor parte del inglés que has escuchado — el desafío es activarlo.

***She understood English films perfectly but couldn't speak — a classic case of passive knowledge awaiting activation.***

She understood English films perfectly but couldn't speak — a classic case of passive knowledge awaiting activation. -> Entendía las películas en inglés perfectamente pero no podía hablar — un caso clásico del saber que entiendes pero no produces esperando activación.

## 2 to activate your vocabulary

activar tu vocabulario · convertir lo que entiendes en lo que puedes decir

### DEF

to move words and phrases from passive understanding into active use — making them available for speaking and writing, not just comprehension

*Activating vocabulary is the critical step that most learners skip — they understand everything but cannot say it. The bridge from passive to active is output practice: speaking, writing, teaching others.*

### ES

Mover palabras y frases de la comprensión pasiva al uso activo — hacerlas disponibles para hablar y escribir, no solo para la comprensión.

Es el paso crítico que la mayoría de los estudiantes omite — entienden todo pero no pueden decirlo.

**You activate vocabulary through output, not input — speak, write, explain, and the passive becomes active.**

You activate vocabulary through output, not input — speak, write, explain, and the passive becomes active. -> Activas tu vocabulario a través del output, no del input — habla, escribe, explica, y lo pasivo se vuelve activo.

**This episode is designed specifically to help you activate vocabulary you already understand passively.**

This episode is designed to help you activate vocabulary you already understand passively. -> Este episodio está diseñado para ayudarte a convertir lo que entiendes en lo que puedes decir.

## 3 to put into practice

poner en práctica · usar realmente un conocimiento o habilidad en una situación real — no solo conocerlo teóricamente

### DEF

to actually use knowledge or a skill in a real situation — rather than just knowing it theoretically

*Put into practice is the application phrase. In language learning, the gap between knowing a rule or word and being able to use it fluently is bridged only through active, real-world use. 'I know this word but I never put it into practice' describes the passive knowledge problem. Putting language into practice means speaking, writing, making mistakes, and correcting them — not just reviewing notes.*

### ES

Usar realmente un conocimiento o habilidad en una situación real — en lugar de solo conocerlo teóricamente.

La frase de aplicación. En el aprendizaje de idiomas la brecha entre saber una regla y poder usarla fluidamente solo se cierra con uso real activo.

**Put new vocabulary into practice within twenty-four hours of learning it — use it or lose it.**

Put new vocabulary into practice within twenty-four hours of learning it — use it or lose it. -> Pon el nuevo vocabulario en práctica dentro de las veinticuatro horas de aprenderlo — úsalo o piérdelo.

**She started a speaking partner programme specifically to put into practice the vocabulary she had learned from the podcast.**

She started a speaking partner programme specifically to put into practice the vocabulary she had learned from the podcast. -> Inició un programa de compañeros de conversación específicamente para poner en práctica el vocabulario que había aprendido del podcast.

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## to look something up

**buscar · buscar información sobre una palabra frase o tema en un diccionario o fuente de referencia**

### DEF

to search for information about a word, phrase, or topic — in a dictionary, online, or another reference source

*Look something up is the research phrasal verb. For language learners, looking words up is one of the core study habits. Key nuances: looking up a word in a dictionary gives definition and pronunciation; looking it up in context gives natural usage examples. The habit of looking up unfamiliar words encountered in reading and listening — rather than skipping them — is a high-yield vocabulary strategy.*

### ES

Buscar información sobre una palabra, frase o tema — en un diccionario, en línea o en otra fuente de referencia.

El verbo frasal de investigación. El hábito de buscar palabras desconocidas encontradas en la lectura es una estrategia de vocabulario de alto rendimiento.

***Look up new words in context not just in a dictionary — seeing how they are used matters more than the definition.***

Look up new words in context not just in a dictionary — seeing how they are used matters more than the definition. -> Busca palabras nuevas en contexto no solo en un diccionario — ver cómo se usan importa más que la definición.

***She kept a notebook beside her whenever she listened to English podcasts and looked up every unfamiliar word the same day.***

She kept a notebook beside her whenever she listened to English podcasts and looked up every unfamiliar word the same day. -> Mantenía un cuaderno a su lado siempre que escuchaba podcasts en inglés y buscaba cada palabra desconocida el mismo día.

## a vocabulary gap

### 5 una laguna de vocabulario · una palabra o expresión que entiendes cuando la encuentras pero que no puedes producir independientemente cuando la necesitas

#### DEF

a word or expression that you understand when you encounter it but cannot produce independently when you need it

*Vocabulary gap is the passive-active divide concept. It describes the common situation where a learner has many words in their passive vocabulary — words they recognise — that are not yet in their active vocabulary — words they can use spontaneously. Closing vocabulary gaps means deliberately moving words from passive recognition to active production through targeted use and rehearsal.*

#### ES

Una palabra o expresión que entiendes cuando la encuentras pero que no puedes producir independientemente cuando la necesitas.

El concepto de la división pasivo-activo. Cerrar las lagunas de vocabulario significa mover deliberadamente palabras del reconocimiento pasivo a la producción activa.

**Identify your vocabulary gaps by noticing what you want to say but cannot — then study those words specifically.**

Identify your vocabulary gaps by noticing what you want to say but cannot — then study those words specifically. -> Identifica tus lagunas de vocabulario notando lo que quieres decir pero no puedes — luego estudia esas palabras específicamente.

**She discovered a vocabulary gap around business negotiation English and spent two weeks studying and practising exactly those phrases.**

She discovered a vocabulary gap around business negotiation English and spent two weeks studying and practising exactly those phrases. -> Descubrió una laguna de vocabulario en el inglés de negociación empresarial y pasó dos semanas estudiando y practicando exactamente esas frases.

## to use language in context

### 6 usar el lenguaje en contexto · emplear palabras y estructuras en situaciones reales y significativas — no practicarlas de forma aislada

#### DEF

to employ words and structures in real, meaningful situations — rather than practising them in isolation from a textbook

*Use language in context is the communicative learning principle. Context is what gives language meaning. Learning words in isolation — memorising lists — is far less effective than encountering and using words in natural communicative situations: conversations, podcasts, films, real reading, and authentic writing tasks. Context is what makes the language stick.*

#### ES

Emplear palabras y estructuras en situaciones reales y significativas — en lugar de practicarlas de forma aislada de un libro de texto.

El principio de aprendizaje comunicativo. El contexto es lo que da significado al lenguaje. Aprender palabras en situaciones comunicativas naturales es mucho más efectivo que memorizar listas.

**Always learn new words in a sentence, not in isolation — context is what makes them memorable.**

Always learn new words in a sentence, not in isolation — context is what makes them memorable. -> Aprende siempre las palabras nuevas en una frase, no de forma aislada — el contexto es lo que las hace memorables.

**She improved much faster once she stopped studying isolated vocabulary lists and started using language in context through real conversations.**

She improved much faster once she stopped studying isolated vocabulary lists and started using language in context through real conversations. -> Mejoró mucho más rápido una vez que dejó de estudiar listas de vocabulario aisladas y empezó a usar el lenguaje en contexto a través de conversaciones reales.

## to recall

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**recordar · traer de vuelta a la mente una palabra hecho o recuerdo — recuperar información de la memoria cuando la necesitas**

### DEF

to bring a word, fact, or memory back to mind — to successfully retrieve information from memory when you need it

*Recall is the memory retrieval verb. In language learning, recall is the final test: not just recognising a word when you see it but being able to produce it independently in the right moment. Active recall — testing yourself rather than just re-reading — is one of the most research-supported vocabulary learning techniques. The question to ask is not 'do I know this word?' but 'can I recall it when I need it?'*

### ES

Traer de vuelta a la mente una palabra, hecho o recuerdo — recuperar con éxito información de la memoria cuando la necesitas.

El verbo de recuperación de memoria. En el aprendizaje de idiomas el recuerdo activo es una de las técnicas de aprendizaje de vocabulario más respaldadas por la investigación.

***Test yourself by trying to recall words without looking — recognition is not the same as recall.***

Test yourself by trying to recall words without looking — recognition is not the same as recall. -> Pruébate a ti mismo intentando recordar palabras sin mirar — el reconocimiento no es lo mismo que el recuerdo.

***She could recognise hundreds of words in reading but found she could not recall them spontaneously in conversation, which showed her the gap in her learning.***

She could recognise hundreds of words in reading but found she could not recall them spontaneously in conversation, which showed her the gap in her learning. -> Podía reconocer cientos de palabras en la lectura pero descubrió que no podía recordarlas espontáneamente en la conversación lo que le mostró la brecha en su aprendizaje.

## to expand your vocabulary

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### ampliar tu vocabulario · aumentar deliberadamente el rango de palabras y frases que puedes usar

#### DEF

to deliberately increase the range of words and phrases you can use — through study, reading, listening, and active practice

*Expand your vocabulary is the language growth phrase. It is the meta-goal of most vocabulary learning activities. In English learning, expanding vocabulary is never purely about quantity — 5,000 words used fluently beats 15,000 known passively. The most effective expansion happens through: comprehensible input (reading and listening at a slightly challenging level), active recall, and deliberate use in output.*

#### ES

Aumentar deliberadamente el rango de palabras y frases que puedes usar — a través del estudio, la lectura, la escucha y la práctica activa.

La frase del crecimiento lingüístico. La expansión más efectiva ocurre a través de la entrada comprensible y el uso activo en la producción.

**Expand your vocabulary by reading widely — fiction and non-fiction both, at a level slightly above your comfort zone.**

Expand your vocabulary by reading widely — fiction and non-fiction both, at a level slightly above your comfort zone. -> Amplía tu vocabulario leyendo ampliamente — ficción y no ficción, a un nivel ligeramente por encima de tu zona de confort.

**She set a goal to expand her vocabulary by learning ten new words every week and tracking her progress in a dedicated notebook.**

She set a goal to expand her vocabulary by learning ten new words every week and tracking her progress in a dedicated notebook. -> Se fijó el objetivo de ampliar su vocabulario aprendiendo diez palabras nuevas cada semana y haciendo un seguimiento de su progreso en un cuaderno dedicado.

## to make progress

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### hacer progresos · avanzar y mejorar — acercarte a un objetivo con el tiempo a través de un esfuerzo sostenido

#### DEF

to move forward and improve — to get closer to a goal over time through sustained effort

*Make progress is the improvement recognition phrase. It is one of the most motivating phrases in language learning — recognising that you are moving forward, even if slowly. 'I'm making progress' is both an observation and a motivation. In language learning, progress is often non-linear: plateaus are followed by breakthroughs. The key is to keep the feedback mechanism working: regular output, regular feedback, regular reflection.*

#### ES

Avanzar y mejorar — acercarse a un objetivo con el tiempo a través de un esfuerzo sostenido.

La frase de reconocimiento de la mejora. En el aprendizaje de idiomas el progreso a menudo no es lineal: las mesetas son seguidas por avances.

**Making progress requires both effort and patience — the two cannot be substituted for each other.**

Making progress requires both effort and patience — the two cannot be substituted for each other. -> Hacer progresos requiere tanto esfuerzo como paciencia — los dos no pueden sustituirse entre sí.

**She looked back at her first attempts to speak English and was moved by how much progress she had made in two years.**

She looked back at her first attempts to speak English and was moved by how much progress she had made in two years. -> Miró atrás sus primeros intentos de hablar inglés y se conmovió por el progreso que había hecho en dos años.

## to review your notes

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**reparar tus notas · volver a leer las notas que has tomado para reforzar el aprendizaje — idealmente poco después de la sesión de estudio inicial**

### DEF

to read back through notes you have taken in order to reinforce learning — ideally shortly after the initial study session and again at spaced intervals

*Review your notes is the consolidation study habit. Research on memory retention consistently shows that reviewing notes — especially at spaced intervals — dramatically improves long-term retention compared to a single study session. For language learners, reviewing notes means re-encountering words in the context you originally recorded them, which is more effective than re-reading a word list. 'Review your notes' is both practical advice and a core vocabulary learning strategy.*

### ES

Volver a leer las notas que has tomado para reforzar el aprendizaje — idealmente poco después de la sesión de estudio inicial y de nuevo a intervalos espaciados.

El hábito de estudio de consolidación. Revisar las notas a intervalos espaciados mejora dramáticamente la retención a largo plazo.

***Review your notes within twenty-four hours of a lesson — waiting a week means starting from nearly zero.***

Review your notes within twenty-four hours of a lesson — waiting a week means starting from nearly zero. -> Repasa tus notas dentro de las veinticuatro horas de una lección — esperar una semana significa empezar desde casi cero.

***She made a habit of reviewing her notes every Sunday evening and found that far more words stayed with her as a result.***

She made a habit of reviewing her notes every Sunday evening and found that far more words stayed with her as a result. -> Se acostumbró a repasar sus notas cada domingo por la noche y descubrió que muchas más palabras se quedaban con ella como resultado.