

Welcome to the Right2Education podcast!

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Hello and welcome to the first episode of the Right2Education podcast! My name's Benji, and I'm super happy to be hosting this very first episode. Thank you for joining me today. I'm very excited to welcome you to the very first episode.

To begin with, I want to tell you about the idea for this podcast. So, what is this podcast? Simply, this podcast is for people who want to learn English, and want to listen to something interesting. It can sometimes be difficult for students at a beginner or intermediate level of English to find something fun to listen to. The native English and American media can often be too hard to understand - for example, because the language is spoken too fast, or because the topics use a vocabulary that includes a lot of difficult words. And there are also many podcasts which are aimed at students, but these can often be a bit boring as they simply teach the language, explaining grammar rules and new words, rather than talking about something fun and exciting. That's where this podcast fits in! What we want to do with this Right2Education podcast is to help you learn English, but without all the boring instruction, and instead with interesting topics such as politics, society, culture, food, books, films, and many other things. If you are at an intermediate level, you will maybe be able to simply listen to each episode, but, if you are a beginner, you may want to read the transcript while you are listening to help you understand. So, that's the idea of the podcast.

And now maybe you would like to know a few things about me. So let me introduce myself to you. Like I said, my name's Benji. I come from the United Kingdom, from a city called Oxford - maybe you've heard of it! It's quite a famous city, not too far from London, and it has a university that is known all over the world. When I was eighteen, after I finished high-school, I decided to go travelling. For two years I travelled to a lot of different countries, including Australia, Morocco, and Costa Rica, before finally arriving in Amsterdam to start my studies. I began to study Literature and Philosophy, and, while I was studying, I became involved with Right2Education.

First, I became a buddy. I immediately loved the welcoming community of Right2Education, and I really enjoyed all the events and getting to know so many wonderful people. I really wanted to do more. And so I applied to join the board, and spent one year as a Teacher and Academic Coordinator, managing the teaching team and making sure all the courses ran smoothly and that they had all the right material. My plan when I finished studying in June was to go travelling again, so I left my position as a Teacher and Academic Coordinator. But I still really wanted to stay involved with Right2Education because I didn't want to leave the wonderful organisation. Luckily, I've been able to stay a part of the R2E community through working on some exciting projects to accompany the courses - like this podcast, for example! At the moment, as well as working on these projects, I'm working as a waiter at a lovely restaurant while getting ready to begin some more travelling. My dream is to buy a van and build a little home in the back with a bed and a cooker, and then spend some time driving around Europe. But with winter coming and lots of cold weather and rain on the way, I will probably wait a bit longer before I leave on my journey.

Hmm ... what else is there to know about me? Maybe something about my hobbies? I really love to read, and you can often see me lost in a book. I like to write as well - maybe one day I would like to be an author, but for now I'm happy to just do some writing for myself! I also enjoy watching films, but when the weather is nice, I don't like to be inside very much, and I am always happier doing something active outdoors. I love camping, hiking, climbing, surfing - really anything outside, and with a little bit of adventure. Like most people, I like to listen to music, and I also play guitar. I find this is a really good way to relax, and it lets my mind be free for a little while and I don't have to think about anything else.

Oh! The restaurant that I work at is right in Amsterdam city centre, very near to Dam Square. The name of the restaurant is St. George, and it does some really delicious food with something for everyone. So if you are ever looking for a place to eat while out and about in the city, please come by and say 'hello'!

But that's enough about me! Like I said already, this podcast is for English students to help with learning the language. If you find it a bit difficult to understand the podcast, don't worry - that's normal! You don't have to understand it all the first time you listen to it! The more times you listen to an episode, the more you will find you understand - it's logical! And soon, after listening a few times, you'll be surprised at just how much you have learned. If there is ever a word that you do not understand or recognize, you can always look at the transcription to find it, and then you can look it up in a dictionary to see what it means. You can even keep a notebook near you when you are listening, and write down the new vocabulary that you learn! But make sure you don't work too hard! Remember, most of all the podcast is meant to be fun, and you should enjoy listening to it!

For this first episode, I want to talk a little bit about language, and give you some tips for learning a language. This way, you'll be able to learn English much faster, and you will find it easier to listen to podcast episodes in the future to really enjoy them! First, it is important to explain the difference between a native language and a foreign language.

A native language is the first language that you learn when you are a child. It's usually the language that you use to talk with your family - with your parents, brothers, sisters - and it is also usually the language that you will use when you are at school. My native language is English. If you grow up in the United States or Australia, your native language will probably be English as well, but if you grow up in the Netherlands, your native language will probably be Dutch.

A foreign language is a language other than your native language, usually the language of a different country to the one where you grow up. Often, you will be taught a foreign language at school. In England, for example, children might learn French, or Spanish, or German as a foreign language.

When you learn a foreign language, there is usually a teacher of the language. This teacher will try to explain to you how the language works. So it is very important that the teacher understands the language and how it works. If they don't understand the language well, it can be very difficult for them to teach the language!

Having a teacher is just one of many different methods for learning a foreign language. When you learn a foreign language at school - or through a course like with Right2Education - there is often one teacher for a whole class, but you can also have a private teacher who teaches only you by yourself. You can, of course, also try to teach yourself a foreign language. For this, you might use books, videos, exercises and activities you find on the internet, and podcasts just like this one!

But we're not really going to talk about the different methods today. We're more going to be talking about the theory behind learning a language. In the past decades, there have been many theories developed which have influenced the way in which we learn the language and the way in which it is taught. Hopefully, by knowing some of this theory, you will be able to progress faster with learning English and learn the language in a natural way - or maybe you can even use the theory to help learn another language!

So, are you ready? Let's begin!

We'll talk about four different hypotheses of the theory of learning a language.

A hypothesis is a smaller theory that makes up a part of a big theory.

The first hypothesis makes the distinction between acquisition and learning.

So, acquisition of a language - what does this mean? To acquire something means to obtain something, to get something. For example, you can acquire a car, and this would mean that you have got yourself a car; or you can acquire a job, or some books, or a house. And you can also acquire a language. This is how you become able to use your native language. When you are a child, naturally, unconsciously, without thought, you begin to use a language. You start to use it because you begin to talk with your parents. You want to communicate a message to them, and you say that you are tired, or that you are hungry, or that you want to do something. And you start to use it without really thinking about it. Slowly, you simply acquire the language. This is the most natural way to learn a language, and it is the easiest way because it doesn't require any effort. But you also don't have any control over it: you can't choose to make it happen.

By contrast, active learning is a conscious process. This is what happens when you are at school, for example, or when you take a lesson or read a book. You know that you are learning the language, and you are putting in the effort to try and learn the language. For example, you will be working to learn the grammar rules, to find out how the language works, to find out the rules that must be followed to speak and use the language. Or you may be working to remember some new words to expand your vocabulary. When you learn a language this way, it can be harder to use the language for natural communication. You will always be thinking about the rules, or you might be busy thinking about the irregular verbs. Because you are distracted, you might not talk very well or smoothly.

So it is best to learn a language as similarly as possible as to how a child learns a language. It is important to try and learn a language naturally. This might mean that you surround yourself with the language, maybe by watching TV shows or films in that language, or listening to the radio or music in that language.

This doesn't mean that grammar rules aren't very important to know! You should still try and learn them, and it is important to remember them and use them, for example, when you are writing something, and you have more time to think, and you want it to be perfect. And they can be very useful for understanding the language as well. But they are not such a priority for communicating and having a conversation, or speaking smoothly. They are not essential for making yourself understood - even without the grammar rules, you can still communicate your ideas. You can still talk, even if you make mistakes. And, if you make mistakes, remember that it's not that serious! People will still understand a lot of what you say - probably even everything you are trying to say! As you learn the rules, you can start to communicate with more confidence and more clearly. But to learn a language naturally, the priority should be to just try to express yourself and speak!

The second hypothesis of the theory of language learning that I want to talk about is the hypothesis of the controller. This hypothesis describes an imaginary controller inside our heads. What is a controller? A controller is someone who is in charge, who observes or supervises something, and makes sure that you respect the rules. For example, you might have a traffic controller - someone who is in charge of the traffic on the roads (the cars, buses, bicycles, trucks) and who makes sure that the traffic runs smoothly by telling different vehicles when they can go and where they should go.

For language learning, this hypothesis says that we all have a controller in our head when we learn a language, that there is a part of our brain that always tries to make sure we respect all the rules. When we try and learn a language, a part of our brain keeps reminding us about all the grammar rules and makes sure that we think about the phonetic rules, the rules for how something should sound.

We don't all have the same kind of controller in our heads, though! For example, if you are a person who is extroverted - that means someone who doesn't have a fear of speaking and likes to express themselves - the controller is a bit weaker. Without a controller, an extroverted person might talk and talk more without thinking about the rules. By contrast, if you are introverted, the controller might be a lot more present. Then, when you talk, you will first think a lot about the rules so that you speak perfectly, so that you speak without any errors. Unfortunately, this is not such a great method for learning a foreign language. When you are learning a language, it is important to try and speak naturally, even if you make mistakes! This way you will progress a lot faster! So don't be afraid of making mistakes when you have a conversation! It's not that serious to make mistakes; even people who are very talented at

learning languages will still make mistakes - it's normal! When you talk with mistakes, people will still understand you, and you will gain a lot of confidence speaking the language, and you will feel comfortable talking! So, when learning to speak a language naturally and comfortably, it is important to try to limit the power of the controller.

The third hypothesis is the hypothesis of input. This hypothesis says that when someone learns a language, they are always trying to understand a message. For example, when you read an article, or when you watch a video, you are trying to understand the message of that article or of that video. The article or the video that is communicating the message is the input.

If the article, or the video, is too easy, you are never going to learn something new, you will not progress, you will not make progress. To learn a language, you should try to understand something that is just a little bit too difficult for you, things that are at a level a little bit higher than your level, things that are a little bit complicated to understand at first. Because, at that moment, your brain has to put in a bit of effort. For example, it will have to use the context, to try to understand the meaning of the message. In this way, your brain can understand a word that you do not know. It will use the parts of the message that you do understand - like other words, or the images - and work out the meaning of the new word, it will try to work out the meaning of the whole message. This way you can learn a word without even looking up the translation, without using a dictionary. Sometimes this is obviously not possible, and you have to look up the meaning of the word. If this happens, it can be really helpful to look up the definition in English rather than searching for a translation of the word. Because that stills requires some effort from your brain, and this bit of effort, this bit of work to learn the word will make you much more likely to remember it! With a little more work, it can be a lot easier to learn a language!

So chose something that is a little bit difficult for you. But make sure that you still enjoy it! This is the most important thing to remember! If you are having fun, you will learn a language much, much faster. You will stay very motivated, and you will sometimes even learn without really realizing that you are learning!

The fourth and final hypothesis that I want to talk about is the hypothesis of the affective filter. The affective filter - that sounds complicated! So what is it? Let's break it down. A filter is something that keeps some things and lets other things pass through. For instance, in a coffee machine you might find a coffee filter. This is a part of the machine that separates the liquid from the coffee grains. It lets the liquid pass through so that we can drink our cup of coffee, and it keeps the grains so that all the little bits don't end up in our drink!

And affective (with an 'a' at the start - not to be confused with 'effective' with an 'e' at the start) is a word that describes things that are to do with emotions, that describes things to do with how we are feeling.

So an affective filter is a system in your brain that determines which emotions you feel and how strongly you feel them. It controls your emotional response to something. And the filter can have a very big influence on how you learn a language, how easy it is for you to learn the language. For example, if you are very confident, and if you are very motivated and very enthusiastic to learn a language, it's much easier to learn a language. You think that you are able to do it, you think that you will be able to learn the language, so it is much easier to! On the other hand, if you do not have confidence in yourself, if you think that you are not able to learn the language, it

will be much harder. This is because the filter will stop you learning the information effectively, it will make it much harder for the information to arrive at your brain.

It is for this reason that when we learn a language, the atmosphere and the environment are really very important. If you are in a calm atmosphere, if you feel well and comfortable, if you are confident, it is more easy to learn a language. By contrast, if you feel stressed or anxious, or if you are sad or afraid, your affective filter will block the information, and you will not understand the lesson, and you will not learn very effectively at all!

So, the most effective method for learning a language is to study interesting material in an environment without stress where you feel comfortable and can have fun! Find something that interests *you* - a book that you want to read, or a film that you want to watch - and then you will want to learn the language, and you will enjoy it at the same time! You won't think "Oh, now I have to study, now I have to learn English", but instead you will think "that looks like a super interesting article in English - I want to read that", or "that looks like a very funny English video - I want to watch that".

In this podcast, I will try to talk about a whole range of different topics that I hope you find interesting, and hopefully, there will be something for everyone! And, if you have any suggestions for topics that you would like to hear about, please send me a message! Maybe there is a subject that you think would make for a really great episode, or maybe there is something you don't know much about but really want to explore more and find out more about.

Anyway, that's the end of today's podcast with some tips for learning a language. Next time I'll be talking about another brand new topic, but, in the meantime, try to practice a bit of English every day; read something in English, watch something in English - everyday try and learn something new.

Thank you very much for joining me today! Thank you a lot! I am very happy that you listened to the episode, and I hope you enjoyed it and found it both interesting and helpful. Take care, and until the next time! Bye!