

Transcription:

Curtis: This is the Real English Conversations Podcast.

Amy: Where you'll find the lessons and advice you need to be able to confidently use your English in the real world.

Amy: Hey, everybody, this is Amy from realenglishconversations.com. And I'm here with part three of this very special podcast series where I'm talking about deliberate practice, and this is the actual episode where I'm going to be explaining what deliberate practices and why this is the gold standard of how you should be practicing languages to see the fastest results in the shortest period of time.

But in order to really understand what deliberate practice is, it was really important that we spent some time understanding naive practice and purposeful practice, which, as you know, we're covered in part one and part two.

If you haven't listened to those yet, I would strongly recommend going back and listening to this series from the beginning. But for the rest of you who have been following along, let's jump into this.

In today's episode, as promised, I'm going to be telling you my personal story and the mistake that I made that kept me stuck at this pathetic beginner just about conversational level for nearly 14 years.

My language learning journey started back when I was 14 years old and still going to school, and I studied there for five years. I took a break for about two or three years until I started to travel again, and because I was going to all of these cool places in Latin America where they spoke Spanish, that reignited my interest to learn the language as an adult. The thing is that I really had no idea how to learn a language.

I did, I think what most people do, maybe you go out and you get a textbook or you find a course that you can attend that teaches you, or you start watching movies and TV shows in the language that you want to learn.

And on top of doing all of that usual stuff, I was also traveling to Spanish speaking countries where I could spend four, six, even eight weeks immersed in the language and having interactions with people.

Obviously, I learned something up to this point, but it became really obvious to me that I was at a barrier or an obstacle that I didn't really know how to get over, and literally nothing that I was trying was working. All of the general advice was not working for me, and I didn't know what to do.

And I remember the trip and the moment where I had realized I wanted to live in a Spanish speaking country, and that meant I actually needed to learn this. And despite whatever attempts and effort and ways that I had been practicing and trying to learn the language, the time had come where I really had to figure it out. And although I didn't know what it was called at the time, I can tell you now that this was the transition between naive practice and purposeful practice.

But that was only actually half of it because identifying the actual goal, which was to develop speaking and listening skills for everyday communication, it led me to the next stage, which is, well, "how am I actually going to develop those skills, especially if nothing that I have been doing has been working?"

And that's when the trial and error period of my language learning started to happen.

And let me tell you a lot of the things that I tried didn't work just to give you an example of a terrible idea that didn't work, I decided that it was probably verb conjugations that were making it difficult for me to understand people and to be able to speak.

So, my plan of action was to go through all 14 verb tenses and practice the conjugations in Spanish, to do a bunch of exercises and memorize them, and then hurl myself into a conversation, thinking that it might improve my speaking and listening skills.

And when I think about it now, from the place where I am after coming through the language learning journey, I can see how ridiculous that idea is, but at the time, honestly, I didn't know. And it was a theory that had to be tested.

But out of every five or six bad ideas that I had, there was usually a good one that came out of it. And these are the ones that allowed me to advance and to really figure out how to learn a language and how to overcome these obstacles.

For example, the way that I figured out listening was from a challenge that one of my language exchange partners had given me. He actually realized that my listening was really bad, and he was trying to help me to recognize that so that I could work on it more and improve it.

So he found a YouTube video online about a lady that was baking apple pie because he knew I like to bake, and he challenged me to transcribe the video. The problem was that when I was listening to this video, there were no subtitles, and I listened to the first 20 seconds, and I swear, the only word I could hear was the word pie.

And the reason why I could hear pie is because it's like pie in Spanish, and it sounds exactly the same. And I worked at this audio. I listened to it again and again and again, I tried slowing it down. I was listening to two or three or 5 seconds at a time and repeating it over and over. Literally nothing I was doing was helping me to understand what this woman was saying.

And I had to go through this before I realized you need the text. If you are unable to understand some sort of audio, you can listen to it all day, all night, all year. You are not going to improve your listening unless you have the text so you can train your ears to understand what they're not able to hear on their own and eventually get to the point where you don't need subtitles or the transcript.

And although this was a very unfortunate situation that I had to go through where I had to try to figure out how to solve this problem on my own.

This was the exact experience that, fortunately, Pedro was able to get access to when he came to real English Conversations. Because we were able to identify immediately that "Oh, hold on, wait a minute, you're not using the transcription, well, how are you going to hear what you can't understand?" And the second thing was, "oh, you're listening to the entire podcast episode without stopping when you can't understand something?" Well, how is that going to help you to understand that? You need to work through smaller sections of audio until you can understand it almost perfectly."

And boom, just like that, a problem that Pedro had been struggling with for years trying to figure out on his own had been solved in just a few weeks.

Another difficult one I had to figure out was related to speaking fluency and really trying to solve that issue with knowing a word when you hear it or you read it, but you're not able to use it in your speaking.

And thanks to a challenge that I set for myself to try to describe a book that I was reading at the time, which was Harry Potter. I realized I knew words like Owl and wizard when I read it or I heard it, but I wasn't able to use it in my own speaking when I was trying to describe what the book was about and through the process of trying to figure out how to incorporate those words into the summary, that's when I stumbled across a very, very effective speaking fluency technique.

And what about confidence? I also have that experience of struggling with low confidence.

I remember there was one point when I was at this intermediate level, and I wanted to speak well so badly, and at the time I had it in my head that I had to speak correctly, and the person that I was practicing with was giving me lots of corrections so that I could do that.

But unfortunately, what it was doing was actually bringing down my confidence. It was a combination of wanting to speak better so badly, along with not being able to because every third word I was getting interrupted, and that was affecting my speaking fluency and making me realize how poorly I was speaking and how many mistakes I was making. It was destroying my confidence.

And I remember there was one video call that I was having with this person, and after a certain number of corrections, I felt the tears in my eyes starting, and I had to excuse myself from the call and end it pretty quickly. And immediately after that call ended, I burst into tears and had a meltdown about how horrible my Spanish was.

What was happening was a combination of wanting something so badly and working at it so hard and still failing.

And this is when I realized how corrections need to be handled and how confidence is super important and why when we work with our students, confidence if it's low, is generally the first thing that we try to solve, because as soon as you're feeling better about your communication, a lot of times, the other skills improve on their own.

At this point in the lesson, I would like to go back to the very first part of this training where I was talking about you wanting to learn how to play basketball, and your goal was that you didn't want to be the worst player on the team.

And one of the things that you wanted to improve was your ability to shoot and get the ball in the net. Now there are two ways that you could go about doing this. There's the long way and the short way.

The long way is trying to figure it out on your own, when you have no idea how to improve your shooting, the faster way is to probably ask someone else that already knows how to do it so that you can get some tips or pointers and to get the information that you need not only to shoot better when you're with your friend who is explaining what to do and giving you the feedback, but also so that you can apply that same information or the techniques when you're practicing on your own.

And this brings me to the point of deliberate practice and what it actually is. You see, deliberate practice is the same as purposeful practice, but instead of trying to figure it out on your own, you work with an expert.

Somebody who already knows how to do what you want to do, a person who can guide you, who can coach you and give you those tips that only a person with experience would know. They've either done it themselves or they have the experience of helping many other people to accomplish that specific thing.

When you have that type of advice or guidance, it really is the fast track because it takes the guessing out of the situation and saves you from trying to figure it out on your own in many different areas of our lives.

We're already working with experts to some degree.

For example, if you have a problem with your car, you might lift up the hood and look at the engine and you have no idea what's wrong with it. Therefore, you can't fix it, but you

take it to the mechanic. He looks at it and he's like, oh, yeah, it's your radiator. And you're like, "how did he know he just looked at it".

But that's what experience does when you're trained in an area and you have the expertise and you're looking at it every day, you can look at something and understand exactly what needs to be done to fix it, or if we're going through different processes, like, for example, maybe you want to buy a house, and there's a lot of paperwork involved in that. You're working with banks, you're working with the laws, and I don't know, property transfers and all of this stuff that none of us really know about because we don't deal with it on a daily basis.

So, we hire somebody that knows what to do, and they guide us through that process to try to make it as fast, efficient, and easy as possible to get to the outcome that we want, which is to obviously buy the house. You could do it on your own. But do you really want to? And is that a good idea? Especially when it's something that's important to you?

Over the past few days, I've been getting you to do some thinking about your goals and the types of activities that you might be able to do to accomplish those goals. And even though I've given you really clear instructions about how to think about your goals, you may have found this activity to be pretty challenging. And what about that activity I gave you with Pedro? How I wanted you to try to figure out how he should be working to improve his listening.

Did you figure out that he needed to be focusing on the parts of the audio he couldn't understand and that he needed to listen to smaller chunks and use a transcription?

The reason why this is so hard is because you haven't done this before. In all likelihood, you speak one language, which is your native language. If you're bilingual, you probably learned it as a child before you were an adult.

But English is the first language that you're trying to learn on your own as an adult.

And the truth is, learning a language is a very complex process that is unique to each person that's trying to learn it. We all have different obstacles, we all have different challenges and things that we get stuck on.

And if we take our car to a mechanic when we need something to be fixed, or we contract a real estate agent when we're doing something complex, like buying a house, why would you be trying to figure out this complex skill of learning another language on your own?

And what would happen if you had someone that was very experienced like me that could help you to figure out what your goal needs to be, the type of skills you need to develop in order to do that, and the exact activities that you need to be doing that work really, really well, without you having to try to figure it out yourself like I did.

Of course, the amount of time that it's going to take you to reach your goals is going to be significantly shorter

And what if I told you that getting access to one of these expert teachers was a lot easier than you think?

And in fact, the only thing you need to do is to go down to the description area of this podcast and click on the link that says as Book a Trial lesson. From there, you're going to go to a page where you can see the teacher videos and decide which teacher is best for you, and you can book a time and a date for your lesson in their calendar, and that's it.

The next step is showing up to have this lesson with the teacher to discuss your specific situation, the areas where you feel that you're stuck and you would like to have some assistance to overcome those challenges a little bit faster and to get some recommendations about how to do that.

And then you're going to see that teacher in action. You're going to see how they choose an activity that is really cool and it helps you to develop the skills that you need in a certain area based on what you told them at the beginning of the class. And that's really how you're going to know that this teacher can help you. They know the activities to choose, and they're capable of creating a plan to get you from where you are now to where you want to go, so that's it.

You don't need to figure this out on your own, you don't need to guess if the ideas that you're doing are the right activity.

You have access to experts that know how to get students through their challenges very quickly.

So, if you would like to take advantage of having access to that expert and you're ready to book a trial lesson, just go to the description area and click the link Book a Trial Lesson to get started.

I really hope that you have enjoyed this podcast series and have learned a ton about the different ways of practicing and how at the very least you should be doing purposeful practice, but ideally deliberate practice to get the best results in the shortest time on your fluency journey.

Take care and I'll see you in the next podcast episode.