



WE 004: The effect

Hi guys, hello listeners, it is very nice to meet you again, I'm very happy that we can meet for the fourth time. And today, as always, there's going to be a different topic of our meeting, and the topic of our today's meeting is *effective learning*.

What does it mean, so what the podcast is going to be about? The podcast will be about how to learn languages, so I'll try and teach you how to learn. This is the knowledge that very often people don't possess, I mean they start learning languages, they attend different courses, they take part in different learning programmes, but the result that they get at the end is not what they actually wanted at the very beginning.

This is my observation, the observation of a couple of years, as I have met different people in my teaching career, so to say, and the observation tells me that very often people spend a lot of time learning a given language, the question I often ask is *how long have you been learning English?* in this respect, or any other language and the answer I get is very surprising because people learn languages for a very long time, I mean they have learnt English for 10 years, for 5 years, for 7 years but unfortunately when it comes to a little conversation, it turns out that the knowledge of the language they have it is the kind of knowledge of a person who has been learning for a year or two. So this is not what we actually want to get.

So, as I said at the very beginning, as I introduced this podcast to you, today there will be tips on how to learn languages and how to be successful or more successful than you used to be.

What I will start with today is the problems, right, so the problems that people have the moment they decide to learn a given language. So, the key thing here is that the learners, the students don't know how to learn languages simply. They attend a course, and they think that this is enough. Of course, the course can be



in any form, right, it can be a regular course, in a group, it can be meetings with a teacher, individual meetings with a teacher, it can be online learning, there are all sorts of varieties, all sorts of types of learning a language but attending a course is not enough.

The same happens with materials. Students buy a book, or download materials, or borrow materials from some other learners, and again, having a book does not make you a good student of English.

Why? Because the work that you do in class and the work that you are supposed to conduct at home should be equally divided. I mean you should work in class with a teacher, with a group but you should also work at home, individually on your own. Without it, the success will not come, or if it comes, it won't be as great as you expected at the very beginning.

My other observation is, what also happens is that people think that if they write down a couple of words in their notebook, with their translation, they will remember them, right. So after a given lesson, they have these notes with some words, with some translations, and unfortunately, it happens that after a few days they don't remember the words at all.

Why? There is a question why it is so? So, I'll tell you why, I'll explain, I will tell you why it might be so. First of all, let's decide or let's agree on what it actually means to know a word. For many learners knowing a word means that you can translate it. That's it. Right. So there is a word, in a foreign language, you know its meaning, you know its translation into your mother tongue, and that's it, that's fine. Unfortunately, this is not so, this is not enough.

There are a few points you have to cover in order to be sure that you know a word, and to be sure that this word won't be passive, won't become passive vocabulary.



So, first of all, you have to know how to spell it. In other words, we can say you should know how to write it down. So, you hear a word, in many languages, this is the case of English, the words are read in a different way and they have different spellings, so if you know the exact letters that you should write down, it means that you know how to spell a word.

The other thing you should know, I mean a learner should know how to use it. And what does it mean *how to use it*? So, you should know the context for it, you need to know the word pattern. I will explain later on what that is, but, just to tell you briefly what that might be, it means that you know how to take a word as it is from a dictionary and how to put it in a sentence, in a correct phrase, in the correct use. And if you know how to do it, it means that you know a context for a given word.

Why is it so important? There was an experiment, linguists, many many years ago conducted an experiment, I like this experiment very much because it shows how context is important and how it is actually difficult to learn a language in the proper way, in the way it should be learnt.

Why? The experiment was as follows - a few linguists were thinking about a method of learning a language, of being successful in this process and they came up with a very bright idea, actually, because they said, look, there are dictionaries, dictionaries of all sorts of languages, so why don't we take a dictionary of English, let's say, English-Polish, Polish-English and we will read words, as they are written, alphabetically, with their translations and we will learn word by word, let's say ten or fifteen words a day, and we'll do it regularly, we'll do it every day and after some time we will know all the words from a dictionary.

You may wonder what the effect was. I guess that some of you already know that they weren't successful. Of course, they remembered a few of them, especially the ones beginning with letter A, but when it came to letter B, letter C, all the words started to become very vague, and they did not mean anything special for them.



Why is it so? Well, the answer is the word that I've already used, I mean the answer is the context. So words learnt without a context, without any association, without any word pattern, they are very difficult to remember, well I can't say that they are impossible to remember because it is a very strong expression. Maybe there are some of you who can learn this way, right, that they just write a word, and then they write the translation and then they remember it **by heart** only, because there is no association there, so it's only the by heart learning, but I believe that for most of us, **including** myself, it is very, very difficult. And that is why this context is so important.

Another point here which will tell you what it means to know a word is that you can translate it. So here comes this knowledge that is very familiar to you all as I said at the very beginning, people usually think that when they can translate a word, they know it, but it is only one little **tiny** point in the whole process.

Point number four, this is pronunciation. It is unfortunately **neglected** very much and this is something I can't understand. That is another super important thing that people forget about because they think that when they know the context, they know how to write it, again that this is enough. But, and here comes the problem of visiting Britain, of talking to native speakers, if we know words, but we can't pronounce them, we don't know the proper accent, we don't know the proper melody of the language, it'll be super difficult for us to communicate with native speakers simply because they won't understand us, and let's imagine a vice versa situation. So, let's imagine there is somebody learning Polish, Polish is very difficult for foreigners to learn and they know the grammar, at least a little bit, they know some vocabulary, but when it is very difficult for them to pronounce a word, it will be very difficult for us to understand them and it will break the communication channel,

So, I'll just sum up what I have just said, the points which make a learner know a word, so it is like standing in the mirror and telling yourself, look, you know a



word. So please remember, it is the spelling of a word, it is the word pattern or the context of a word, the translation and the pronunciation.

I will come back to word pattern and pronunciation in a second, as I promised, and now I'd like to move to the tips, to the tips I told you about. Something possibly that will help you to become better learners of the language, and something that will help you become more successful and will help you learn the language in a shorter time, cause this is another problem, believe me, you don't have to learn English for ten years or for five years, or seven years just to communicate the language. A good course, good materials, I believe you need two years, a year and a half to be communicative in a natural way, I mean you go to a given country, you know how to order food, you know how to make a phone call, you understand conversations, you can take part in conversations. Believe me, you don't need more than that.

So what are the tips, so what is the key to success?

Number one is that you have to learn systematically. I have repeated that **on many occasions**, I have also compared learning a language to going to the gym. And everybody here who does any sport, hopefully will agree with me. So, it is not important to go to the gym once a month, and stay there for five hours. The thing is to go there three times a week for thirty minutes, and this is the same with a language. An ideal situation would be to devote 15/20 minutes for learning, for revising the expressions, the grammar, the ideas every day. And believe me after a few days, or after a few weeks, you will see that this brings the fruits, this brings the language that you are dreaming about.

Number two, what you have to learn is little bits, so I am very much against these types of homework where students are asked to learn 100 words or 50 words for a test and they have like a night for it or an evening for it, or two evenings for it. In my opinion it will never be very successful, they will never be very successful. And



what you have to do is learn a few expressions, little bits of the language, but you have to do it every day systematically.

Point number three, that would be exposing yourself to English. What does it mean to expose yourself? I like this expression very much, the word *expose*, cause the context for the word *expose* is to expose yourself to the sun. For instance, like your face, your body just to sunbathe a little bit and get a nice tan. And the same thing happens with the language, that will be reading, reading all sorts of materials. It can be books, it can be magazines, there is a variety of webpages that you can turn to, while learning a language, watching stuff on TV or at the cinema so this is this exposure to the natural language, talking to other users of the language. You shouldn't be afraid of it. And here comes another problem, I observe especially in Poland, that Poles are very much afraid to speak English, because they are afraid to make a mistake. That is a very bad approach, because everybody who starts learning a given thing, it doesn't have to be a language, it can be learning how to drive a car, or how to ride a bike or how to ride a horse. It can be anything so everybody, every beginner who is just at the very start of their journey, they make mistakes, and this is a natural process. I don't think I have ever met anyone, any person who was talking to some other person and who was commenting on the mistakes the other person was making. That does not happen, right. People are happy that they can enter a conversation, that they can talk to each other, that they can convey messages in a given language, and this fright of making mistakes is something that shouldn't happen here.

The last idea here of the exposure to the language is listening to the radio. Also, people often forget about it, but the radio, and you know that I'm a true fan of the radio, a great lover of the radio, radio is a great source of learning a language. Why? Well, because you don't see the picture. Films are great, of course, but films are not as good as the radio because if you don't understand something you can see it, and then you can produce the meaning, with the radio it doesn't happen because the only thing that is there is the voice, is the language. Also, there are some great broadcasts on the radio, you can choose from a variety of broadcasts,



it's just like listening to podcasts, right, so you can listen to them anywhere, like when jogging, when driving to work, when vacuuming your house, a fantastic way, believe me, to learn English.

Another point, point number four of the tips, it is don't stop learning, I mean don't make breaks. If you want to learn English and you know that you need it because you need it for work, for your career, for your studies, for personal development, if you have this goal and this is the goal that you want to reach, so please set some time for yourself, as I said, it should be a year and a half, two years and be systematic. Don't attend a course for half a year, don't make breaks for two, three months and don't come back because the knowledge that you have gained through these classes over the last six months, the knowledge will disappear, it will not stay. Unfortunately, the language is like a muscle, so if you don't use it, it disappears. So the systematic work here is very important.

Another issue, another point here would be good teachers and good schools. We all want to learn in good schools with good teachers, but a teacher that is charismatic, that can absorb your energy, that can grasp your attention, that is a person that you want to follow, is half of the success, because if you meet a teacher that will be there for you, that you can turn to, that will be your inspiration, will definitely make you work harder, will definitely make it easier for you to learn. Also they will have the knowledge, the techniques, the experience, the expertise that will help you become successful.

The last thing here is motivation. Last but not least, I used this expression a couple of times, very important, so as I mentioned something as the last point, obviously it does not mean it is the least important because motivation is actually the most important thing. If you are not motivated, if you yourself don't know that you want to do it, if you don't feel somewhere there inside that this is the thing that is for you, that you actually wanted very much, the success might come but it will not be as great as you would like it to be. So motivation is the key thing here.



Also, as I was preparing for the podcast, I also thought about this idea of going abroad as a tip of learning a language. I have heard that on many occasions that if you want to learn a language, a foreign language, you have to go abroad. Well, I agree but only, let's say like 50% percent. So of course, if you go to a country where a given language is spoken on a regular basis, it is fantastic, right. Because you can listen to this language every day, you speak the language every day, you meet different people, you listen to different accents etc, etc. And of course here comes the feeling of survival, very often people go abroad because of work, very often they don't know the language that much but they need to survive so the brain will try to absorb as much of the language as possible, just to make you go through.

But of course, it does not mean that if you don't go abroad, you will not learn a language. Because you can definitely and very successfully learn a language at home, I mean in your home country. Thinking about all the tips that I have introduced today with good teachers, with good materials I am sure you will be equally successful and very often it also happens that people are inspired to go abroad, to take part in some courses that are conducted abroad because they think that what they will do, is that they will be exposed to English on a regular basis but in reality what happens is that they have classes in English, that is fine, and these classes are regular and they can even happen every day but what happens after classes is not what they expected because they are surrounded by people from the same nationality, from their own nationality and what they do after class is they speak, in this respect, Polish not English. So if you are thinking about going abroad, or if you are thinking about choosing some course conducted by a school abroad, please have a closer look at the offer and see if what they are offering is this full immersion, right full exposure to the language that you want.

To sum up, I told you that I will come back to this expression *word pattern* and *pronunciation*. The expression word pattern, I use it very often in class, as an equivalent to the context thing, is the way a given word is used. You can learn it from a dictionary, you can learn it from some real-life materials. So, you take a



word, you find out about its translation, and you also learn how and where to put it in the sentence. Is it a verb, is it a noun, is it an adjective, is it followed by some preposition, is it used in passive, is it used in the active voice? So what is the pattern of this word. This knowledge, believe me, is super important, is a key thing here. And if you start learning a language like that, so you take a word and you look at the pattern, you will be successful.

The super last thing is pronunciation, and I have talked a little bit about pronunciation already. Well, I told you that even if you are learning a language and there is not so much **attention paid to** pronunciation because you are exposed to a lot of vocabulary, to a lot of grammar, which is fine because the more, the better, but please work on your own. There are all sorts of materials on the Internet, all sorts of dictionaries with pronunciation. There are dictionaries with this option where you can press a button and you can listen to the pronunciation. Please, never neglect pronunciation because it is also super important.

Well, I hope you have enjoyed this meeting, I hope you will use, this is what matters here, I hope you will use these tips for your future learning, and I hope that after a very short time you will see that they actually work.

Thank you. Bye, bye.



GLOSSARY

so to say - niejako

(to) attend a course - uczęszczać na kurs

(to) conduct - prowadzić (np. wykład, *conduct a lecture*)

equally divided - równo podzielony

in other words - innymi słowy

vague - mglisty/ niejasny/ nieprecyzyjny

by heart - na pamięć

(to) include - zamieścić

tiny - małeńki

(to) neglect - zaniedbywać

on many occasions - wielokrotnie/ przy wielu okazjach

(to) expose yourself to - wystawić się na (działanie czegoś)

(to) sunbathe - opalać się

exposure to - wystawienie na/ ekspozycja/ obnażenie

(to) convey messages - przekazywać wiadomości/ informacje/ treści

fright of - strach przed

(to) vacuum - odkurzać

(to) reach a goal - osiągnąć cel

(to) gain - zyskać/ pozyskać

(to) grasp attention - przyciągnąć uwagę

expertise - wiedza i doświadczenie

on a regular basis - regularnie

(to) pay attention to - zwracać uwagę na/ uważać na/ przywiązywać wagę do