



WE 024: English structure

Hello everyone. It's me again. It's the World of English podcast, the next episode and the next subject. As you have probably noticed, the episodes of the World of English podcast are intermingled, which means that one time it is an engaging story, I hope, once it is an interview just like it was last time and the next time the episode is more functional. And this is what we are going to listen to today. I mean this episode is also going to be more functional because I'd like to talk about a subject that is very useful and, hopefully, this is the idea of it, this is the general idea, I hope you will make use of the information that you are going to listen to in a while and I hope it'll help you to study the language better.

As you can probably understand, as you can probably know, the inspiration for this episode also came from my classes because the things I'm talking about, they are the things that are filtered through my experience. So, whatever comes to my mind, whatever I see or whatever mistake I can observe that keeps repeating itself every single time or every single lesson, this is something that I'd like to share with you because I don't want you to make this mistake once again. And the general title of today's meeting is the structure because it is very important for myself to teach you, to talk to you, not only about words and expressions and the grammar. But it is very important to me to also tell you how to study the language. This is the great problem, this is the thing that I observe every single time; that although you spend so many years and although you spend so much time studying the language, the problem is that the success does not come or it is not that great as you would expect it to be. And there comes this frustration, right. So you invest your time, you invest your energy, but what you get as this result is not what you actually want. The problem is that many students and many learners do not know how to study the language. They study the words, they repeat what they hear, they revise the material, they try to memorize all the information, but it is to no avail. There is no effect and there comes this frustration. And believe me, if you know how to do it, if you know how to study the language, you will be more effective in



your work and then the process of learning will get smoother and you will simply get the success that you want to get.

Let me come back to the title of today's meeting, to the subject of today's meeting, which is the structure. What I have observed and as I said, it gets repeated itself very, very often, is that 70% of the learners of the English language do not realise, they do not know that there is this difference in structures of the two languages and when I say the two languages, what I mean here is this difference between English and Polish. It seems when you look at it, right, so it seems when you hear it, it seems like an obvious thing, right. Because we know that English and Polish they are these two different languages, so they are governed by different rules and there is different grammar, so it is so all easy. But it is only easy when we talk about it, it is only easy in theory, but in practice, there is this huge problem with it which stops the learning process. And I will explain just right now to you what I mean and where the problem is.

So, as you start studying the language, and here I would say like any language, of course, I can only talk about English, but I can just presume that the idea, the idea that I'm talking about today, it applies to all languages, foreign languages in the world. Because when you start studying a given language, English in this respect, you have to know, you have to realise that there is this different system of the language and there is this different structure. So when we come to studying a language with the knowledge of our mother tongues, it is something that will actually stop us from developing, because we have all these habits, we have all these structures, we have all these rusty structures I would even say, in our minds, which impose themselves on what we should be learning and they stop us from understanding that in order to speak the language, in order to speak English fluently, you need to get rid of these structures. Very often when I hear people speaking English, I actually hear people speaking Polish. What I mean here is that they actually, well, they use English vocabulary, or they use English expressions, but the way they build their sentences and the way they think, it is still in Polish. Well, some of you may just react, or some of you may just say *But how can we do it?*, right. 'Cause Polish is the only language that we know and this is only natural



that we base our knowledge on the Polish language. Well, I can say, of course, I understand it. So, of course, when we just come to the class, we come with this knowledge of Polish. But please try, and this is something that you can do, really, if you have the proper knowledge of the structure of the other language, of it, please try to get rid of Polish as soon as possible and please try not to get so attached to it. And today I'd like to talk about a few subjects, a few ideas like these key ideas that will, to my understanding, in my understanding, will help you come to the learning process in a better way and in this respect, you will simply become more successful.

So, the greatest difference or differences in the structure of the Polish language and the English language is this difference in the usage of the word *be* and *have*. I always say that Polish is very possessive, right, because everything in Polish, well many things in Polish *we have*, right. So, *have*, like this word applies to different sentences in which of course we talk about possessing, right, so we have like a car, we have a family, we have children. But *have* is also used in Polish in other context, the context which does not mean that you physically have something or physically possess something but in English very often in this very context we will not use the word *have* but we will use the word *be*. What I mean here is talking about your age, for instance, yes, so you say that *I am twenty years old*, for example. We do not use the word *have* here and I hear it very, very, very often. So remember, right, *I am twenty years old*. Another expression that would be *there is unemployment in Poland*, for instance. In Polish what we would put there is also this possessive verb *have*. Just another example is like *be right and wrong*. If there is somebody that you agree with, you can say that they are right. Yes, so there is this discussion and somebody says something, we agree with them and we say *you are right*. When we don't agree with somebody, we might say *you are wrong*. Again, here in English, we would say, we would use the verb *be*. But in Polish, in the very same context, we would use the word *have* and this is the very great mistake that gets repeated itself. I hear it very often that although people know the expression like *right*, although people know the expression *wrong*, they would still put the verb *have* in there and, of course, they would make themselves



communicative, I would understand what they mean, but the sentences that they would produce they would be incorrect and they would have this mistake. And of course, what I venture to do and what I want to do, apart from teaching the language, I want people to speak a good variety, a good standard of the language, right. So I don't want them just to be communicative, but I just want them to produce correct sentences and if you know that there is this difference in these two systems of the language, right, there is this difference between the Polish language and the English language. Very often, let me say it again, let me repeat it, very often in the Polish context, so in Polish, we would use the *have* verb, very often in the very same context we would use *be* in English.

Another subject that presents a huge problem, it is called, I can call it because it is a very broad subject, it is called prepositions. And my advice here is to learn, I have repeated that on many occasions, my advice is, my advice here is to learn the whole structures as I said, right. For instance, this is the expression I have just used in one of the meetings recently, like *seek revenge on somebody*, yeah. So you learn the whole expression, not only just the word *revenge* but also the *seek* and then we've got this preposition *on*, right. Another example, the easier example would be like *depend on*, yes, or *rely on* or *be afraid of*. So we learn the whole structure, we learn the whole, the jigsaw puzzle, as I call it, you know the whole block or brick of the language, you can call it in any way. But if you know those little pieces, then it is easier to produce full sentences, instead of if you just know one single word and then you are supposed to glue, so to say. Sorry for the expression but that's exactly what happens, like the learners are trying to glue those little elements and they try to put them in one piece.

And in this very subject of prepositions, there is this great problem of this preposition *on*. Because in Polish we would use this preposition in many, many occasions and very often and this is the advice that I give to you, this is the advice that I offer - very often if you feel, if you are compelled because you are the speaker of Polish and you feel that you want to use *on* because this is what your Polish experience tells you, please try to use this expression *at* instead of *on*. For instance, *Where were you last night? I was at a party. What did you do over the*



weekend?, right. *I went to a concert, a great concert, so I was at a concert. Why are you late?*, somebody can ask you. *Well, because I was waiting at the traffic lights.* Ok. Another example of this sort is *What is he doing? Where is he? Well, he is not at home, because he is waiting at a bus stop.* So you see, in all of these respects, we would use *at* instead of *on*. So the Polish language, the Polish knowledge is, would just push us, force us to say *on*, but in these very respects, we would rather use *at* than *on*. Of course, when I say to you that please use *at* instead of *on*, like every single time, of course, that wouldn't, that wouldn't mean that every single example that we have in our mind in Polish with the *on* word, like *depend on*, for instance, I've just used it, yes, so sometimes it can be translated the very same way. But the chances are that more often you would use *at* instead of *on*. So please don't make this direct copy from the Polish language into the English language.

When we want to continue with the subject of prepositions, there is another difference between these uses of prepositions, in this usage of prepositions, between Polish and English. So, there are also such instances in English where there is no preposition but there is a very visible preposition in Polish. Very simple examples and very often, a very often made mistake is *contact somebody*, yeah. So, you can just enter your office and you can say *Sorry, I do not have time, because I have this very important client that I need to contact, or I need to call him*, that's another thing, because we contact somebody, we call somebody. And in Polish, we would put this preposition there, but there is no preposition in English, please remember about this. But on the other hand, there is this example where there is no preposition in Polish and there is a preposition in English. Because, please remember from now on, that we *listen to something*, every single time we listen to music, we listen to our favourite band, we listen to the teacher, we listen to this episode of the World of English podcast, for instance. In Polish, there is no *to*, but in English, there is *to* every single time. So once again, a huge difference. You contact somebody, you call somebody; that is English. But you listen to somebody, instead of just listen - the way we would use it in Polish.



When I talk to people, when I listen to them, there you go, I see this visible problem very often. The students, the speakers of English, do not control verbs and nouns. So, they know a given word but they do not know what kind of word that is, so they do not know whether it is a verb or it is a noun and because they don't know it, they use it in the incorrect context. Let me use just word *suffer*, for instance. Yes, *suffer* is the verb, yes, so you can *suffer from something*, you can suffer from a disease, you can suffer from headache, you can suffer from flu. But if you want to use this word as a noun, you are not allowed to, ok. Because this is a verb. Sometimes, the verb and the noun they are exactly the same, yes. For instance, there is this word *envy*, *envy* is both a verb and a noun. So I can say, like, *There is a lot of envy among people*, let's put it this way, or I can say, *I envy you*, yes, *something*, right. Because you have this great knowledge of something or you have this great possession of something. This control whether you are using a noun or a verb is a very important one. I always repeat it, please start controlling your language, start controlling what you've got to say, start controlling the structure. Otherwise you will be speaking English, that is you will be using these English expressions, but you will keep on thinking in Polish and you will be still producing Polish structures and if you stick to that, you will never be a fluent speaker of English. And this is what we want, right. We want you to get to be these fluent speakers of English.

When it comes to these types of words, right. Like there are those nouns and verbs, there is also the general structure of the sentence. And this general structure of an English sentence is hidden in something I call *subject - verb - object*. When I share this information with my students, I can see that their eyes just open, because they are not aware of it. And this is the absolutely key thing here. You cannot be a fluent speaker of English, you cannot be a good speaker of English if you do not have this knowledge, if you do not how to produce proper sentences in English, how they are structured in the proper way. And I have just used this structure; it is *subject - verb - object*. Here, as I talk about the structure, I talk about the most important difference in my understanding the most important difference between Polish and English. And the difference is that in the Polish



language what we have, is we have those endings to the words. That's why even if we put these words in different order, so if we start with the verb, then we put the noun or sometimes we can start with a noun and then put the verb, everything is understood. Of course, some structures are more natural, right. But when it comes to this understanding level, nothing happens. Why? Because we've got this ending to the word, so the ending never changes if I put it in a different position in a sentence. So, I will never confuse a given word with another word because I've got this ending. In English, on the other hand, there are no endings, yes. So, like there are these words that have the same form, they look the same in various structures, yes. I can say *I like*, then I can say *you like*, then we say *we like*, *they like*, and the word *like* always looks the same. And that is why this structure of the subject - verb - object is so important. You always have to begin a sentence with the noun, that is the subject, then you have to follow with a verb, with this activity and then you have to add, like the rest of the sentence. Of course, I do understand and I know that sometimes there can be these slight modifications. But, for the start, if you want to control your language, if you want to control your speech, please stick to this structure, right. Please remember it, because from now on I do believe that it will help you very much. Every single time that you want to say something in English, you would need the noun, the doer of the action, so to say, then you would need this action, so what is happening or what happened or what will happen and then you will finish with object, so you will finish with this extra information to the sentence. Please believe me, it's the key information. If you stick to it, definitely you will not make mistakes.

And, of course, here I wouldn't be myself if I didn't talk about the inversion here, because this inversion that is in Polish, it also does work in English, but it works only in certain aspects. I don't know if you have heard such sentences as *Never in my life have I seen such a beautiful girl*, for instance, or *Not once did he look at me*. Yes, there is inversion, you can see that there is this change in this word order but this inversion is very specific, as I said. You can use it only in very specific situations, you will use it with very specific expressions. Most often you will use it with the negative meaning of the sentence, like *never*, *not once*, *never*



before. And this is used just to emphasize this negative element, yes, this something what you want to say. But on a regular basis, when you think about inversion, it is not used in English because in English when you use this everyday language, you would stick to this structure. Let me repeat it once again, so that would be subject - verb - object.

And when it comes to the structure of the sentences, when it comes to the proper use of the words, I would like to mention another, another thing here that is called, that has this name of *uncountable nouns*. I'm sure you heard this expression. I also myself use this expression like uncountable nouns very often in my class, but only recently, it was only recently that I realized that there is a problem with it, because the learners do not actually know what that means when I say *uncountable*. I mean, they know that the word *uncountable* means that there is this noun that does not have this plural form. But when there is this uncountable noun in a sentence, it means that everything stays uncountable, so to say. So all the, it applies to all the words that are in the sentence. So, there is this example that I'd like to share with you and it is as follows *This information is very important*. So, the word *information* is uncountable but also the expression before that is uncountable, so with this *this* not *these* and then the verb stays in the form typical of the singular form, so it is *is*. So, as you see, there are three elements that you have to think about. So you have to say *this information is very important* and this is how you make a correct sentence. Another example, very useful everyday example that you can use is *Your hair looks wonderful*, and here we just see that the two words that are in this uncountable or singular form, so to say, because it is the noun like *hair* and the verb *looks* because of this third person.

I'd like to finish this meeting, I'd like to finish this episode with talking about the future a little, a little bit. Well, I decided to put this one, the future at the very end, because I hope that in this way we will, so to say, like enter this future, this future of this good study of the language and this great success when it comes to studying English. And I decided to talk about this future because, as again, I saw that there is this great problem and it gets repeated itself. And where is the problem. So, when you talk about the future in English, many people know



that there is this tense, right, with *will* and all you have to do is just you have to put this *will*, right. So then you say *I will go*, or *I will buy*, or *She will come*, or *They will visit us*, yeah. Very simple actually because you do not change this form of the verb, you just put *will* and then the next verb. But very often what I hear is that people would use *will* plus *be* because they think that this *will* and *be* is the future. No, guys, *will* is enough. So when you just put *will* and then you put any other, almost any other, verb that you would like to use, then you will produce a well-structured sentence in English. So you will say *I will visit you tomorrow*, or *I will call you tomorrow* or *You will meet me and we will have a great time*.

So, as I said, just to give you, just to leave you with this positive feeling, I hope you will study language, study English the proper way from now on. I hope, I hope that will happen, please stick to it, please remember about all the things I have told you today. They are very useful, they are very important, and without this knowledge of how to study the language and without this awareness of how these two systems of the language, I mean how Polish and English, how they differ, you will not become successful and this is what I want you to do, this is what I want you to be, I want you to be successful when it comes to studying and learning English. Thank you for being with me. Talk to you soon. Bye, bye.