

# No Pressure English with Kevin

## Episode 7: Don't Let Learning Become a Box-Ticking Exercise

Hello and welcome to this week's episode of the podcast. This podcast is for intermediate and advanced learners. The focus of the podcast is for natural language **acquisition**, so I recommend listening to this podcast two or three times, even with the transcript, which is available in the description.

Today I want to talk about little victories and **steady progress**. Obviously at the start of every episode, I kind of **preach** the idea of listening a couple of times because your brain is a machine. The more time you give it, even with any individual text or listening activity, the better it processes information.

Often we listen and we hear some new words or new phrases, and we think, "Oh, that's interesting. Oh, I like that. That's nice." Or "That's similar to my language," or "That has a good sound to it. That sounds very natural."

We think these things very often when we're listening to other people speaking or when we hear something natural. With repetition, the brain maintains it, or it tries to adopt and keep it. They say you have to see a word—what?—six to twelve times before it really enters your **receptive language** and you retain the word, but it can take a lot more exposure to fully lock it in, when it fully becomes yours. Of course, then you've got to use it a lot before it becomes a real part of your **lexicon**.

The road can seem long, but when it comes to making progress, celebrating every day is crucial. It's important to celebrate new words. Not only when you find a new word; it doesn't have to be a new word, even. It can be a correction, or it can be when you learn something new about a word, such as a secondary use or meaning.

1: Let's focus on - The Joy of Learning a New Word

Let's say—you meet or you encounter a new word, such as **handy**. **Handy** is a great word; it's an adjective which means that something is useful.

For example, I'm sure people thought that bicycles when they first were invented were very handy because they helped, and help, people move from point A to point B—exceptionally handy. Computers in this day and age—you could say they're essential, but yeah, having a backup computer, maybe that's handy. A raincoat is very handy if you're visiting Ireland at this time of year! A raincoat will come in handy if you're visiting Ireland at any time of year!

It will be useful. = it will come in handy.

So yeah, **handy** means useful.

Let's say, for example, this is the first time you are hearing that word and you're thinking, "Oh yeah, I like the sound of that. That's my word. I'm taking it. That is mine."

That idea—you can take a word. It's **ownership** of the word. You should do that. You should **revel in** that. You should enjoy that. You should think, "That's my word today. I just got a new one. Thank you very much. That's going in my **top pocket**. That's staying with me."

You should celebrate it.

2: Next, I'd like to look at - Correcting Pronunciation

Similarly, when you learn the pronunciation of a word that maybe you have pronounced incorrectly for a long time—I'm thinking of one word that a lot of my students have difficulty with: the adverb **theoretically**. Some people don't pronounce the second T. So, they say "theor-ically."

This is probably because the word is similar in your language but still a little bit different. The best reaction to a correction is to think - that's another one; that's another word of the day for me. "Oh, I've been saying that incorrectly," or "That hasn't worked for me.", and now I am going to fix it.

If you're listening to a video or if you're reading something and you see a word like this that you have made a mistake with, pause. Take a moment. Say it out loud. Repeat it to yourself. **Theoretically, theoretically.**

Do this with any word that you are second guessing or having doubts about - you can always double check using an online dictionary or translator. Use the audio feature to listen to the word and repeat it out loud. It amazes me how often we avoid this step as language learners, when the benefits of a 10 second review are so incredible!

Back to Theoretically -

That's another word for me. That's my word for today. Boom. Yes.

Thank you very much. I've got two. I've got **handy**, and I've got this pronunciation correction. I've got **theoretically**.

3: Lastly, I want to speak about - False Friends

And this is another area to celebrate, when we learn about **false friends!** This is a word that has a different meaning in our native language compared to our target language. I'm thinking of one I hear a lot: **attention**.

In English, when a situation is dangerous and we want people to look or be aware of danger in their immediate surroundings, to pay attention in that moment, we say **be careful, watch out, be careful, watch out**. A lot of my students say "attention."

But that has a completely different feeling to "watch out" or "be careful." For us, if you say "attention," it's like a teacher at the start of the class telling students to **look alive, look awake**, or to focus on them - to pay attention to them.

But if you say "be careful," immediately - I scan, I look around and ask myself, "Is there something dangerous in the vicinity?"

Okay? So "attention" creates a completely different feeling. I would just look at you and think, "What? What's happening?" It just calls attention to the speaker.

But "be careful" or "watch out" or "look out"—those are words that highlight the danger of the situation, the **peril** of the situation, the danger.

### Final Thoughts

And yeah, so that was just a thought for the day. Celebrate the small victories. Celebrate the new words. Repeat. **Repetition, repetition.**

It's not about memorizing. It's about spending time with the language.

If there were some phrases in this episode that you found difficult, I recommend listening again.

Try to spend time with the content. That's how our brain makes sense of it. It might not make sense immediately, but when we spend time on something - the second time, and the third time - the brain already has the concept, and now - not only can it identify small things that are unknown, but it can also absorb these gems, new words and meanings, naturally

Just don't make the mistake of listening to everything once and feeling that it's become a **box-ticking exercise**.

All right guys, that's all for today. I hope you find this content handy for your language learning journey.

Have a great week, and take care of yourselves. Ciao. Ciao.

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### Comprehensive Glossary

**acquisition** (noun) - the process of learning or developing a skill, especially language, naturally over time

**steady progress** (noun phrase) - consistent, gradual improvement over time

**preach** (verb) - to give advice or recommendations strongly and repeatedly (informal usage)

**receptive language** (noun phrase) - words and phrases you can understand when you hear or read them, even if you don't use them yourself

**lexicon** (noun) - vocabulary; the complete set of words that a person knows or uses

**handy** (adj) - useful; convenient; practical

**ownership** (noun) - the state of possessing something; claiming something as your own

**revel in** (phrasal verb) - to take great pleasure or delight in something; to enjoy thoroughly

**top pocket** (noun phrase) - the small pocket on the chest of a shirt or jacket; used here metaphorically to mean keeping something close and valuable

**theoretically** (adv) - in theory; hypothetically; used when discussing possibilities or ideas rather than proven facts

**false friends** (noun phrase) - words in different languages that look or sound similar but have different meanings

**attention** (noun/interjection) - focus; concentration; also used as a command to make people focus (different from warning of danger)

**be careful** (phrase) - warning to be cautious; alerting someone to danger

**watch out** (phrase) - warning of immediate danger; be alert

**look alive** (phrase) - wake up; become alert; pay attention (informal)

**look awake** (phrase) - appear attentive; seem alert

**peril** (noun) - serious danger; risk of harm

**repetition** (noun) - the action of repeating something; doing something again and again

**box-ticking exercise** (noun phrase) - doing something just to say you've done it, without real engagement or learning; going through the motions without genuine effort (British idiom)