Hello, and welcome to English Fluency Now podcast episode number 49. My name is Lisa and this is the English Fluency Now podcast, a podcast which will help you improve your English by listening to authentic English spoken by American English speakers. The podcast covers topics related to everyday life, business, education, travel, and a variety of other interesting topics. To get the lesson guide for this episode, go to my website [www.englishfluencynow.com](http://www.englishfluencynow.com) and click on the products page. The lesson guide has the complete transcript so you can read along while you listen. It also has other helpful learning materials such as comprehension questions, definitions from more than 25 vocabulary words used in the podcast and sample sentences, and links to more videos and articles related to today’s topic. Also, on the website, you can sign up for my free email course: 7 strategies for English fluency. The course gives you 7 lessons about things you need to do to become fluent in English.

Ok, let’s begin. In today’s episode, I want to talk about language learning. The other day, I read an article with some of my students entitled learning a language: 10 things you need to know, published online at the guardian.com. There is a link to the original article and several others related to this topic in the lesson guide. The information provided in the article was based on a recent live chat that they held with a panel of language learning experts including creators of language learning software and other products, polyglots, professional linguists and foreign language teachers. As we were reading the article, I had my own thoughts about their suggestions and I wanted to share my ideas with you since I think it could be helpful.

So, what I’m going to do in this podcast is discuss the ten suggestions that the panellists gave and tell you what I think about each one. The first suggestion is to make realistic, specific goals. When I speak to students, they often say that their goal is to speak English fluently. This is a great goal but it is actually pretty vague. When a goal is so broad and all-encompassing, it can be difficult to know where to begin and what to do exactly. On the other hand, if you make a specific and realistic goal, you will be able to more easily focus on a particular task. A specific realistic goal for an intermediate learner might be to be able to understand a TED talk on a certain topic. This gives you something to do, you find a TED Talk, you listen to it and if you don’t understand it very well, you listen to it again. Perhaps you’ll find the transcript in English and read through it while you are listening and look up any words or expressions that you don’t know. Then you could listen to it again, and again, until you finally understand it. This would be a specific realistic goal. Another goal might be to hold a thirty minute conversation with a native English speaker about a topic of your choice. To reach this goal, you may have to learn some new vocabulary and expressions, you may want to read an article or two on the topic, or watch a video related to the subject, then after you have the conversation, you can evaluate yourself and give yourself feedback about how well you were able to do what you wanted to do. Were you able to say what you wanted to say, did you understand the other person, were you able to keep your side of the conversation going? Having vague goals like I want to speak fluently is too broad and may keep you from focusing on specific tasks. It is better to choose a small goal and work towards it, and then keep working on small goals, pretty soon, you will realise that you are quite fluent. Remember the saying “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”.   
The second suggestion is to remind yourself why you are learning the language. I am a big fan of this idea and talk about it in my free email course. What happens a lot of time especially for adult learners is that you get really excited to learn a language or brush up on your English for example since so many of you actually studied English in elementary and high school. In the beginning, you have a lot of enthusiasm and you buy some books, listen to some podcasts, search Youtube for some free teaching videos and you get started. Then, after about a month or so, you begin to lose your momentum, you go for days without listening to English at all. Pretty soon, you have lost interest in improving your English and you can’t make yourself read another article from the BBC, or listen to another podcast episode. You can’t even remember why you spent all that money and time trying to learn English, or another language. Now, there is nothing wrong with doing this but you certainly won’t ever achieve your fluency goals if you don’t put in the time and the effort. So when you start getting bored of learning English or it just seems like you don’t have any time, you must remind yourself why you are learning this language. Do you need it for your job, do you need it because you will soon be moving to the US to live and work? Do you need it so that you can travel and do business with others internationally, do you need it for your next vacation to the United States or England? Or do you just love English and want to improve your knowledge and speaking skills? Whatever your reason for learning English, reviewing it now and again, reminding yourself why you chose to do this in the first place is a good idea to get you through the times when your enthusiasm and energy wain. Remembering why you want to be fluent and what you are going to gain because of it is a great motivator. In fact, just saying you want to learn English for your job may not be the real reason, the real reason may be that when you speak English you will earn much more money in your job, so your real reason is to be able to have a larger salary so you can buy a house, send your kids to private school or take a nice vacation next year. Think about the real reason you want to learn a language, not just the superficial reason. What will you be able to get by knowing English, for example more money, more education, more friends, more experiences?

The third suggestion is to focus on exactly what you want to learn. In my mind this is similar to making specific goals, but it is a bit broader. For example, I have a student who wants to be able to write articles about tennis in English. This is a very specific goad and it is also what she wants to learn. So when we are working together, we work specifically on this topic. We go over tennis vocabulary, we read articles related to the players and the tournaments and she writes press releases and articles about tennis and I correct them and give her feedback. For now, this is exactly what she wants to learn. Another student wants to prepare for a job interview in English. So he practises giving answers to the most common job interview questions. I listen, give feedback and model what a better answer would sound like. When you are studying English, figuring out exactly what you want to learn can help you focus your time, energy and money and will help to keep you motivated as you get closer to your goal. If you are working one on one with a tutor, you will get the most bang for your buck if you have a good idea of what you want to learn, rather than to expect the teacher to teach you anything. Remember learning happens within you, your teacher, tutor or coach can provide you with resources, information, feedback and suggestions but ultimately, you are the one who is learning.

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