



(Ana) Hi everybody, today I'm talking to Lori Linstruth, the creator of Better at English, a blog with lots of tips and lessons on idiomatic expressions and English in general, and podcasts with real English conversations. To access Lori's website, go to betteratenglish.com. So, hi Lori! Let's get started, and thank you again for giving this interview to Inglês Online.

(Lori) It's my pleasure, Ana.

(Ana) So first, please tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do.

(Lori) Oh goodness! Yeah, I started out as a very frustrated teacher of English, um... Oh, gosh this is hard... Yeah, I was, my background is teaching English as a second language to adults and I found the whole experience very frustrating because of the stupid materials that you're often forced to use and that was the reason I started Better at English, was because I wanted to talk about maybe more fun and interesting topics rather than the stupid things that I had to teach all the time when I was working formally as a teacher.

(Ana) Was that in the US? Where were you teaching?

(Lori) No, I started in Indonesia actually, and then I moved to Sweden and continued teaching when I was in Sweden. And I now live in the Netherlands and luckily don't have to teach English anymore.

(Ana) Oh.... Ok! Yeah, I followed the link on your Skype profile, and I was in for a surprise. I had no idea you were involved with music!

(Lori) Oh, right, yeah. I don't talk so much about that on Better at English, but yeah, I do also play electric guitar and I'm quite active in music as well.

(Ana) So currently, you're not.. you're not teaching English.

(Lori) No, no, I don't have to do that anymore. Thank goodness!

(Ana) Yeah, you know, I was gonna ask you what motivated you to start Better at English, so... it was basically a lack of good materials... So, what's your opinion, I mean, why did you think the materials were inadequate?

(Lori) Usually they're just so boring and they teach a form of English that nobody speaks. Everything is so formal and correct and everyone speaks these perfectly formed, beautiful sentences, and I just found it really frustrating, because students would come to me, especially in Indonesia and they, they would do fine in pen and paper tests but they really couldn't understand conversational English with native speakers. Because the English they had been exposed to was just so far removed from the real world.

But this was several years ago, that I first started teaching, and I have to say, the materials have been getting better. And fun, fun silly topics, I think, are fun as well, or interesting topics. It's so boring having to read about stupid companies or things that are so **outdated** that they're just not even relevant anymore. Or reading, like constantly learning about country governments or political systems, or...

I mean, when I study a foreign language the last thing I wanna start with is learning about their stupid government system (laughter) It's just not interesting to me. Teach me how **to swear** or something!

Lori conta como começou sua carreira ensinando inglês, e a sua insatisfação com os materiais disponíveis fizeram com que ela criasse o Better at English.

Ela comenta que os materiais que usava ensinavam a língua "perfeita" e falavam de sistemas políticos e organização corporativa! Seus alunos iam bem nos testes escritos, mas tinham dificuldade em entender os falantes nativos.

outdated = ultrapassadas

to swear = xingar, falar palavrão



No, I'm just kidding, but it's a lot more fun, I don't know, to maybe pick some lighter topics...

(Ana) Yeah, yeah, I think I get what you're saying, because it's not like, you know, in our everyday conversation we're talking about the political system of countries and about the organization of companies...

(Lori) Especially when you're at, say, the lower intermediate level where it's still kind of a struggle to get through a text and you have to be motivated and I mean, I really... I'm trying to learn Dutch right now because I recently moved to Holland and... that's the last thing I want, to have to struggle through some, like, dense text about Dutch culture.

I'm sorry to say, you know, I will learn the culture from my friends and from the people that, that I associate with. I don't really want that as my, my learning materials... to be teaching me culture. I need everyday expressions that people use in everyday conversation. That's far more useful to me, so... anyway.

(Ana) Yeah, no, I understand. And, I mean, you're lucky that... I mean, actually you're probably learning Dutch *because* you live in the Netherlands, right?

(Lori) Yeah, right, right.

(Ana) You're really immersed, you're really immersed in the culture and in the language.

(Lori) Yeah, definitely. Yeah, I would never study a foreign language just for the sake of studying it. There are so many other things to learn, I'm not one of these people who wants to spend my time studying just for the fun of it. You know, there's a whole universe of things to learn. You have to devote so much time, for one thing.

That's one thing that, when I was teaching, students really didn't seem to understand, is that there's no quick, easy, fast way to become proficient in a language. That it really does take time and patience, and lots of exposure, and eventually, if you stick with it, you will improve. But there's no **quick fix**, definitely.

(Ana) Yep. And you know, one thing that I wanted, that I wanted to ask you... It's great that you have had this experience of... teaching, for example, in Indonesia.

And, following up on what you just mentioned, what would you recommend for students who do not live in an English speaking country, and, you know, they wanna learn... I don't know about perfecting, but they want at least to be able to communicate decently. What can they do every day?

(Lori) Yeah, it's really hard, that's the real struggle because... Right now, where I live, I do live in Holland but I really don't socialize much with Dutch people... And my boyfriend, who I live with, his English is so good that we just basically speak English all the time. So I have to make a real effort to practice.

I get lots of... There's as much listening exposure as I want. All I have to do is turn on the TV. But to actually, to actually speak...

(Ana) And reading also, right...

(Lori) Yeah, reading, there's plenty I can get to read and listen to.

Lori comenta que, como estudante de línguas, ela própria prefere assuntos mais leves nos materiais didáticos.

Ela diz que fluência toma tempo e que na realidade, não há método rápido e fácil para aprender. Ter bastante exposição à língua é importante, assim como perseverar.

quick fix = um jeitinho rápido



But for speaking, there really is no substitute for trying to speak and use the little words that you have in a safe environment, so... I think that's really the challenge for people who live in a country where their target language isn't spoken, it's finding some safe, comfortable place where they can practice to get the speaking practice. And for that... gosh, what would I do? If I didn't have people here...

Probably.. try to find a club... In Sweden they have a really cool system called study circles, where it's not... it's like a course, but really you just have a course leader who's there sort of as a coach and guide, and to help out... And you don't get grades, and you go just because you want to learn. And there, it's sort of a safe and fun environment where you can practice a little bit.

That's... it's really hard, I really don't know good advice to give...

(Ana) Yeah, I know.

(Lori) 'cause it's so difficult...

(continua na próxima semana)