



TRANSFORM YOUR ENGLISH!

Tips to kick off the New Year!

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By David Sweetnam, Melbourne

You know how a snowball gets bigger and bigger as it rolls down a mountain? Or how a train you catch goes faster and faster as it pulls out of the station? That's the momentum we want for your English in 2019!

Of course many students and teachers focus on what happens during their course at school, but today I'd like you to consider something even bigger and broader.

First up, let's consider a typical 'student' way of thinking. You go to class, and then when you come home you think: "I should study something..I should do that homework my teacher gave me."

So you might start your homework, but then after checking social media and watching random videos on Youtube, you lose the desire to focus more on your English.

You might also feel a bit disappointed in yourself or frustrated.

On top of this, you're actually looking at the small decisions (what to do tonight, should it be grammar or writing, and so on) and this can in itself be stressful.

Each day you might have these feelings that you should study English, and each day you might have too many 'English decisions' to make. Or postpone. Or ignore.

Isn't there a better way?

I recommend you build a lifestyle that creates so much momentum for you that just 2-3 big decisions can provide you with the foundations for an amazing English life!

1. Speak English At Home

I understand that when you come to Australia you want to find a place to sleep quickly and easily. So, for example, many Colombian students in town will join a group for their country on Facebook, and that's how they find accommodation and possibly even work.

It's all very quick. After just one week in Melbourne you already have a home, a way to make some money, and you've made some new friends to hang out with. You have an instant social circle!

The problem of course is that you're now speaking Spanish at home. It happens a lot. So many students link up with people who speak their native language, and English becomes less of a priority.

Now, that's your decision, but one of the best ways of

improving your English is to speak it at home!

Can you find a place to live with Australians or at least with a mixture of nationalities?

If not, what's stopping you?

Maybe you want the comfort of living with your fellow Colombians (or Brazilians, Koreans or Japanese friends).

Maybe it's more important to have fun in Australia than learn English. I'd argue though that you can do both – if you speak English at home you can gain comfort from this and also have your fun lifestyle!

If you're reading this in another country, then the same principle applies. I lived in Europe for many years and my flat in Prague was an 'English apartment' with flatmates coming from all over the world!

You can also create an English home by:

- Organising language exchanges on sites such as Italki. Speak with the world from your bedroom!
- Reading books and articles in English
- Playing English-language music
- Watching TV shows in English on Netflix
- Agreeing with your flatmates to have 'English Happy Hours' or 'English Only Nights'
- Inviting your international friends over more often

As you're reading this, it might all seem logical to you, but you'd be surprised by how many international students stay in their 'bubble'. For example, just last week I met a student who had been here for three years and she was still at Pre-Intermediate (A2) level.

On the positive side, I've also had students who speak English at home and they are now ready to study at university or college or get a professional job!

It really is possible – you just have to keep going to get what you want!

2. Speak English At Work

I get that it can be tough moving to an expensive country such as Australia. You want to find work quickly so that you can afford your rent and pay for your English classes and travels.

Yet many of my students have worked either as cleaners or in hospitality, and therefore they end up speaking very little English.

For example, I've known many Taiwanese students who work at a Chinese restaurant (washing dishes, waitering) and they end up speaking Mandarin for most of the day.

Many Colombian and Brazilian evening students wake up at about 6am and clean all day, and speak mostly to each other while visiting different houses.

My tip is to do your best to see what else is out there!

If you're in hospitality, at least see if you can find work at an Australian cafe or restaurant. Not only will you speak more English with your workmates and customers, but you're more likely to get paid better!

Speaking English at work really is like magic for your English!

Recently I had a student from Taiwan who had picked up all these common every day English expressions from her daily experience of speaking with customers.

I know a few others who have worked in construction. They actually didn't study much, but they spoke English with their mates at work. They spoke with Aussies while working, and later on had a beer or two together socially. As they did this every day, their spoken English skyrocketed!

On top of this, students who speak at home and at work seem a lot more relaxed and comfortable.

That's because in addition to having English lessons, they've had HUNDREDS of interactions in the language. They learn so much!

Again, if you're reading this in another country, the same principle applies. See if you can find a company where you'll speak English.

It's totally possible! For example, I know many students in Prague who do this! One friendly Czech guy I know works for Apple, while another works in finance and communicates across Europe in English.

If you're still at school or university, see if you can work for hotels or restaurants with an international clientele.

3. Create Your Own English Space

You can do this wherever you are in the world. Create a bigger and bigger world for your English.

If you're in Melbourne and you often speak Spanish, perhaps you can start by creating one day just for yourself and English.

Go to your local library and find a book to read in English (it's free!).

Go for a walk in the Botanic Gardens and write your English diary.

Go to a concert and see if you can chat to someone there. In Australia I've found that people sometimes just start chatting to you!

Put yourself out there.

Perhaps write your Instagram photo description in English.
Maybe the photo has a story behind it..?

Commit to going to a yoga or dance class once a week. Doing something regular is a great way to feel comfortable meeting new people and who knows where that can lead!

Take The Leap

At some point you may need to walk alone while you're on your English journey. If your flatmates are not speaking to you in English and if you don't speak English at work, then if English really is a priority, you'll have to walk alone..at least for a bit.

It all comes back to you. What do you want to do in Australia?
How do you want to feel?

Part of it involves putting your own culture aside..at least for a while.

I know an Australian woman in Melbourne who speaks Portuguese really well. All the Brazilians are amazed when they hear her speak, and they say she speaks like a Brazilian. She told me:

“I wanted to speak Portuguese so while I was living in Sao Paulo I did what Brazilians do. I woke up with them, I worked with them, I went out with them. I ate their specialities and experienced the city as much as I could like a Brazilian.”

After being back in Melbourne for over 2 years, I'd say few students follow the advice I've written here.

The good news is that almost everyone improves because at least they have their regular English classes.

But how many reach their potential?

Do you feel you've reached your potential? **What about doing better than what you had thought you could achieve?!**

To reach your potential, please have a think about whether you can make one of these 3 big decisions I've written about above.

I hope you do great things this year!

And please let me know how you're going on your English journey!

Best wishes

David Sweetnam

P.S. If you'd like to read more from me about learning English, feel free to check out my blog at www.GetIntoEnglish.com

See you again soon!



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