

You are better than you think

How to actually see your progress in English

WHAT THIS LESSON IS ABOUT

Not a motivational talk.

A practical guide to seeing progress that is already there — and three tools that make it visible.

THE REAL PROBLEM

Most learners feel like they are not improving. And the reason is not that they are not improving. The reason is that they have no way to see it.

Progress in language learning is slow and invisible in the short term. You do not notice when a word you used to look up starts coming automatically. You do not notice when a sentence that used to take five seconds to form now takes two. It just happens — and then you forget that it was ever hard.

Without a system to make progress visible, your brain defaults to what it can see: the things you still cannot do. That list always feels longer than it is.

KEY IDEA

Progress is always happening. The problem is you have nothing to measure it against. These three tools fix that.

THREE TOOLS TO SEE YOUR PROGRESS

1. The 60-second recording

Pick a topic — your job, your neighbourhood, something you did last weekend. Talk about it for 60 seconds. Record it. Save it with today's date.

Do not listen back immediately. Wait four to six weeks. Then record the same topic again.

When you compare the two recordings, you will hear things you cannot currently see: better sentence structure, fewer pauses, words you did not have before.

2. The phrase diary

Keep a small list — in your phone, in a notebook, anywhere. One section called 'I could not say this before.' Every time you use a phrase you did not have three months ago, write it down.

Review it once a week. That list is your progress. It is concrete, it is specific, and it is yours.

3. The conversation replay

After any conversation in English — even a short one — take 30 seconds to notice: what went better than it used to? Not what went wrong. What went right.
'I did not switch to Dutch.' 'I found a word I would have lost before.' 'I answered without freezing.'
Small. Specific. Real. These add up faster than you think.

PRACTICE

Read each statement. Is this a sign of progress you might be missing?

#	Situation	Response
1	You used a word without translating it first.	<i>Yes. That is a word moving from passive to automatic.</i>
2	You understood a joke in English.	<i>Yes. Humour is one of the last things to click. That is real progress.</i>
3	You stayed in English for the whole conversation.	<i>Yes. Even if it was hard. Especially if it was hard.</i>
4	You made the same grammar mistake you always make.	<i>Possibly still progress — you caught it this time. Did you?</i>
5	You described something complicated and got your point across.	<i>Yes. Getting the point across is the goal. Not perfection.</i>

TODAY'S SMALL ACTION

Record yourself for 60 seconds right now. A topic you know. Save it with today's date. You will listen back in six weeks.

Want to go deeper? The members edition has 20 progress checkpoints and a self-review quiz.