TRANSFORM
YOUR ENGLISH

# You're Not Missing English.
# You've Got Too Much Spanish.

How to get Spanish out of the way, finally use the English you already have, and make it grow

**FREE SAMPLE**
Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 8, complete

Mr. G
TRANSFORM YOUR ENGLISH

ENGLISH MODE: ON

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Mr. G

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**You're Not Missing English. You've Got Too Much Spanish.**
How to get Spanish out of the way and finally use the English you already have
English Mode: ON Edition

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This is a free sample of **You're Not Missing English. You've Got Too Much Spanish.** It contains the complete first part and one chapter from the second, exactly as they are in the book.

**This sample is free. Share it with whoever you want**, on WhatsApp or however you like. All I ask is that it travels complete and unchanged.

The full book is at transformyourenglish.com/ebook

First edition, 2026.

transformyourenglish.com

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# A note for this edition

This edition is in English, but it was written for you: a Spanish speaker. Whenever you see Spanish in these pages, it's there on purpose. Sometimes it's the voice that shows up in your head while you listen. Sometimes it's an example of how Spanish gets in the way.

If something doesn't click, don't translate it. Keep reading. The context will explain it. That's exactly what this book is about.

# A letter before you start

I've been teaching English to Spanish speakers for almost twenty years. In all that time, I've seen the same block over and over again, wearing a thousand different faces.

It's someone who understands in pieces. Someone who follows a show with subtitles and suddenly catches a whole sentence, but turns the subtitles off and is worn out in five minutes. Someone who sings the chorus of their favorite song at the top of their lungs and just moves their mouth during the verses. Someone who hears a word and gets stuck thinking *"esa me la sé, ¿qué era?"*, and by the time they remember, the conversation has moved on. And someone who, when it's time to talk to a real person, freezes: they build the sentence in their head, check it, fix it, and by the time it's ready, it's too late.

If you see yourself there, even a little, the first thing you need to know is this: it's not a lack of studying, and it's not a lack of intelligence. You've learned things much harder than English.

What happened is that you learned English with Spanish as the middleman. Every sentence you hear, you try to turn into Spanish so you can feel you understood it, and every sentence you want to say is born in Spanish, and then you try to turn it into English. That's not how you learned your own language. That's why Spanish comes out on its own, and English doesn't.

> You're not missing English. You've got too much Spanish.

Careful: “you’re not missing English” doesn’t mean you already know it all. It means that what’s holding you back today isn’t what you’re missing, but the Spanish that gets in the middle. You’ve been hearing English your whole life: music, shows, movies, work, video games, classes, trips. You know more than you can use today, and you understand less than you could, because the filter gets in on both sides: when you listen and when you speak.

This book isn’t going to fill your head with rules or lists. It’s going to help you get Spanish out of the way, so you can use the English you already have and make it grow with everything you hear.

## What this book is not

It’s not a grammar book. You won’t find tables to memorize, lists of rules, or pages of copying the same line over and over. And I’m not going to promise you’ll be bilingual in three weeks: no honest person can promise you that.

What you will find is a change of state. The moment you stop translating and English starts coming in and going out directly. I call that state **English Mode: ON**. And once you find it, something even better happens:

> When you stop translating everything, English starts teaching you English.

Every conversation, every song and every show starts leaving you something: a word, a sound, a way of saying things. You finally pay attention to the English and not to your translation, and your English stops being something you study and becomes something that grows every time

you use it. For that, just listening to English isn't enough: you need three switches turned on, curiosity, attention and intention. In Chapter 3, I'll show you how to turn them on.

## Where all this comes from

What you're about to read comes from all those years in front of students. It started with my book *Next Level English* and my video course *10 Steps to Your English Success*, and class after class it became the method I teach live today, which has the same name as that state: **English Mode: ON**.

This book is the doorway to that method. I took what has worked best, what has most often lit up someone's face when they discovered they could do it after all, and I put it in a book you use, not just read.

I've also stayed quiet out of fear of making mistakes. I know how it feels. And I know there's a way out.

See you inside.

**Mr. G**

# How to use this book

This book is made to be used with your mouth, not just your eyes. Before you start, five rules.

## 1. Write on it

You'll find exercises with lines, boxes and tables. If you're reading on the website, just tap and type. In the PDF, you can fill them in right from your computer or your phone: open the book in a PDF reader that lets you fill in forms, like Adobe Acrobat Reader (it's free, on computer and phone), Chrome, Edge or Preview on a Mac. Tap the line or the box and type. If your reader won't let you, use a notebook or the notes on your phone. What matters is that you write: what you write yourself sticks much better than what you read.

## 2. The examples, out loud

Even if you're alone. Even if you feel silly. Reading silently trains your eyes; reading out loud trains your mouth, and your mouth is the one that freezes when you need it most. In these pages, the examples to say out loud come in blue: **like this**. And if you want, read whole paragraphs of this book out loud too. In this edition, every page is practice.

- **Keep the rhythm.** No pauses you don't need: stop at commas and periods, and nowhere else.
- **Read ideas, not words.** Group the words that go together, the way you do in Spanish. In Chapter 6 you'll see why.

- **If you stumble, keep going.** Don't go back to the beginning of the sentence: finish it, and if you want, say the whole thing again at the end.
- **Say it with intention.** As if you were saying it to someone, not reading a list.

## 3. Listen to it and check yourself

Don't know how something sounds? Want to know if you're saying it right? Use the technology you already carry on your phone. For single words, Google Translate. For whole sentences and natural intonation, ChatGPT, which has the most natural voice right now, although any AI with a voice will do.

> **HOW TO LISTEN AND CHECK YOURSELF**
>
> **To hear a word:** in Google Translate, set English as the source language, type the word and tap the speaker. It's the most accurate option, because it doesn't depend on how you say it.
>
> **To hear a sentence:** in ChatGPT, type the sentence. Then tap the waves icon, to the right of where you type, to talk with your voice, and ask: **Please read what I just wrote, slowly and then naturally.** Listen to it and repeat it. Right there you can ask anything you want, like how your mouth moves for a certain sound.
>
> **To check yourself:** tap the microphone in the text box, in ChatGPT or in the translator. Say your word or your sentence in English and look at what it wrote, before you send anything. If it wrote what you meant, you're being understood. If it wrote something else, listen again, adjust by ear and try again. Whenever this book tells you to check something with dictation, this is it.
>
> If the app doesn't understand you or writes in Spanish, look in the voice settings for the language option and choose English.

## 4. Guess before you read the answer

Many times I'll ask you something before I explain it. Don't skip it. Guessing, even if you get it wrong, makes the answer stick. In Chapter 8 I'll tell you why. Some answers are covered with a green box: tap it to uncover the answer once you have yours, and tap it again to cover it back up.

## 5. One chapter a day, at most

Every chapter ends with a 24-hour practice. Do it before moving on to the next one. This book works like a training program, not like a novel. And when you finish it, a 21-day plan is waiting for you in Chapter 14, so you can practice everything in your real life.

## What you'll find in each chapter

- **A scene** you've probably lived, and **one big idea**. Just one.
- **Why it works:** what's happening in your head, explained without the fluff.
- **Try it:** exercises to do on the spot, before you keep reading.
- **The trap:** the most common mistake, so you can see it coming.
- **What you take with you:** the chapter in a few lines.
- **Your 24-hour practice:** just one thing to do in your real life before moving on.
- **Practice with AI:** a prompt to copy and paste into ChatGPT, so you can practice the chapter with someone who answers back.

To use the prompts, copy them, paste them into a new ChatGPT chat and send them. If the box says "Voice mode," then tap the waves icon and talk with your voice. If the prompt has options in brackets, keep only the one you choose. All the prompts, ready to copy, are also at transformyourenglish.com/practica.

Read every chapter with your three switches on: curiosity, attention and intention. In Chapter 3 I'll tell you what they are and how to turn them on.

And one last piece of advice: don't try to do it perfectly. Just do it. As I say in my video course, **fast is better than perfect**.

# SPANISH MODE: OFF

## Find out exactly where Spanish sneaks in, and switch it off.

Before changing anything, we need to see the problem in action.

In these three chapters, you're going to prove that you already know much more English than you think, discover the exact places where Spanish sneaks in, and turn on the three switches that make your English grow every time you come into contact with it.

01

# You Already Know More English Than You Think

The inventory no one ever asked you to take

You're watching a show with subtitles. Suddenly, a character says something and you get it before you have time to read it. Two scenes later, you've lost everything and have to rewind. In the car, you belt out the chorus of your favorite song, and during the verses you just move your mouth. And one day someone asks you in English how to get to a street, and your mind goes blank.

All of that happens to the same person, and it's no coincidence. In the moments when you understood without reading, the English reached you directly. In the others, your head went searching in Spanish. The English is in there. It's just that the road to it is full of Spanish.

Before we talk about that road, I want you to see something with your own eyes: how much English is already in there.

### TRY IT Your lightning inventory

1. Set a two-minute timer.
2. Write down every English word and phrase that comes to mind. No order, and don't worry about spelling: brands, songs, movie lines, words from work, video games, social media.
3. When the alarm goes off, count them.

How many did you write? Five or twenty-five, the number doesn't matter. Now here's the important question: how many of those did a teacher teach you?

Almost none. You learned them by listening, watching, living. Nobody explained what **game over**, **download** or **I love you** mean. You just understood them, because they came attached to a situation.

That's the English you carry, and it's no small thing: thousands of hours of songs, shows, movies, ads, video games and classes. Maybe you don't understand all of it, and a lot of it is only half there. But it's there. The problem is that you learned to reach it by going through Spanish.

## What you know well, you just get

Try this, really quick. Read the next sentence and try *not* to understand it:

> **Don't forget your phone.**

Could you not understand it? No. You understood it before you even decided to. You didn't translate it or analyze it: it just came to you. That's how everything you know well works. **What you know well, you don't try to understand. You just understand it.**

WHY IT WORKS

In 1935, psychologist John Ridley Stroop showed that people who can read can't help reading a word that's right in front of them, even when they're asked to ignore it. Reading becomes automatic. Something similar happens with the English you've already absorbed: part of it already runs on autopilot, no translating needed.

## Trying to understand is trying to translate

And what you don't know so well? That's where the trouble starts. When you say "I'm trying to understand," you're almost always trying to translate: looking for the Spanish version of what you heard, to get that satisfying *"ya entendí"* feeling. We've been doing it since our very first English class, our whole lives, and that's why English doesn't flow for us.

Notice what happens in your head while you listen to anything in English. Thoughts pop up. Sometimes you're aware of them, but most of the time you're not: *"creo que ya conozco esa palabra… ¿qué significaba?"*, or *"esa frase ya me la sé."* Even when some of those thoughts are good news, every one of them pulls you out of what you're listening to. While you're looking for the Spanish of one sentence, the next one has already gone by. That's why listening to English is so exhausting: your head isn't listening. It's translating, remembering and checking, all at the same time.

There's another way to understand new things, and you've already used it once. Think back, or just imagine it: when you were a baby learning Spanish, do you think you were thinking *"OK, I know this word, but not that one"*? You couldn't: you didn't even have the words to ask yourself that. You stayed connected to the sound, whether you understood or not, and the situation gave you the idea: the tone, the intention, what was going on. Sometimes you understood a lot, sometimes a little, sometimes something else entirely. But there were no thoughts getting in the way, because you didn't have the language to think them yet. And that way, just by listening, Spanish stuck.

You did it once, and you can train yourself to do the same in English. It's not about stopping your thoughts, because that's impossible. It's about noticing that you're thinking, bringing your attention back to the sound, and letting go of whether this word means this or that. In Chapter 8, we're going to get that way of understanding back.

## So why do I freeze?

Because when you speak, you do the same thing, only backwards. You listen by turning English into Spanish, and you speak by turning Spanish into English: you think the sentence in Spanish, translate it, check it, fix it. It's the same filter, working in both directions.

And it shows more when you speak, for two reasons. First, because it happens in real time: someone is waiting for your answer, and translating takes time. Second, because you learned to speak in a classroom, putting sentences together, following rules and waiting for the teacher to tell you if it was right. So when it's your turn to talk, test mode kicks in. And in test mode, Spanish is in charge.

This book exists to change that road, in both directions. You're not going to learn English from scratch. You're going to learn to use the English you already have, without going through Spanish.

## Using it is what makes it grow

One more thing, and it's one of the most important. The English you carry isn't a fixed amount. Every time some English you're interested in reaches you, and you pay attention to it instead of translating it, it leaves you something: a word, an expression, a sound, an intonation, a way of putting a sentence together. There's no end to what you can notice.

And if you use that new thing soon, it becomes yours. That's how your English grows while you use it, and it feels more and more like yours: more comfortable, more natural, more authentic. In Chapter 3, I'll show you how to do it on purpose, with three switches.

## TRY IT Your hidden English

1. Pick five words or phrases from your inventory.
2. Next to each one, don't write what it means in Spanish. Write **the situation where you'd say it**. For example: **game over**, when something can't be fixed anymore.
3. Say them out loud, picturing that situation.

What you just did looks like a game, but it's the training for the whole book: connecting a situation directly to English, without going through Spanish.

**THE TRAP**

Thinking the words you know "don't count" because you never studied them. They count more than the ones you studied. They came with sound, context and emotion, which is exactly how words stick.

## What you take with you

- You already have more English than you use, even if you don't understand all of it: thousands of hours of exposure.
- Most of your English, nobody taught you. You absorbed it in situations.
- What you know well, you just get. Trying to understand is almost always trying to translate.
- The same filter wears you out when you listen and freezes you when you speak.
- Every contact with English, with attention, makes your English grow.

### YOUR 24-HOUR PRACTICE

Today, catch three moments when you understand something in English without trying: a song, an ad, a line in a show, a message. Write them down. Also catch one moment when you find yourself translating or hunting for a word ("*¿qué era?*"). You don't have to fix anything yet. Your only job is to notice what happened each time.

## Practice with AI

VOICE MODE

**Goal:** Have a conversation in English with the English you already have, and stay in English even when you don't understand everything.

> PROMPT
>
> I want to practice English with you. Chat with me in English about my life: my job, the things I like, my day. Ask me one question at a time and wait for my answer. Speak only in English, slowly and in short sentences. If I don't understand you, don't translate: say it another way, more simply, or with an example. Don't correct my mistakes yet; just keep the conversation going. At the end, tell me three English words or phrases I used well. You start.

Paste it into a new ChatGPT chat, send it, and then tap the waves icon to talk with your voice. You'll find it ready to copy at **transformyourenglish.com/practica#cap01**

02

# Your Spanish Is Trying to Help

And that's where the trouble starts: the three places it sneaks in

Your Spanish means well. It's been getting you out of trouble your whole life, so when English shows up, it does the only thing it knows how to do: help you. It translates what you hear, builds what you want to say, and tells you how the letters are pronounced. And with all that help, it holds you back.

It doesn't mean any harm. It's just how you learned. Most of us learned English with Spanish as the middleman, in both directions: to feel that we understood, and to build what we're going to say. With both languages running at the same time, the mind gets stuck.

## The three places of the filter

Your Spanish doesn't sneak in everywhere equally. It gets in in three very specific places:

| | |
|---|---|
| **When you speak** | Your mouth tries to make English sounds with Spanish habits. You read the word and say it the way it's written. |
| **When you listen** | Your mind turns what it hears into Spanish before it feels it truly understood. If a word won't translate, you lose the whole sentence. |
| **When you express yourself** | The sentence shows up in Spanish first, and then you try to move it into English. While you translate, the conversation goes on without you. |

Almost nobody has all three equally strong. Some people understand quite a bit, but speak with a Spanish mouth. Some pronounce beautifully, but get lost when they listen. And some know exactly what they want to say, but

get tangled up putting it together. Knowing which one is yours tells you where to start.

### WHY IT WORKS

In 1994, researchers Judith Kroll and Erika Stewart described how the path to meaning changes when you learn another language. At first, to understand a word in English, you go through its translation: **dog** → *perro* → the idea of a dog. With practice, a direct path forms: **dog** → the idea. Spanish isn't needed anymore. That direct path is what you'll be training throughout this book.

And it builds faster when you turn the volume down on Spanish. In 2009, Jared Linck and his team compared students of Spanish who were living in Spain with others who were studying it in their home country. The immersed students understood and spoke Spanish better, and they also had their native language less within reach while they were there: their brain learned to keep it in the background. That's Spanish Mode: OFF.

While you keep translating, you fill up your working memory, that tiny mental space where you hold a sentence while you process it. That's why, when you translate, it feels like people speak "too fast."

## TRY IT Your self-diagnosis

Check the sentences that describe you. Be honest: nobody else is going to see this.

### When you speak

- ☐ I know how a word is spelled, and I pronounce it the way it's written.

- [ ] I avoid certain words because I'm not sure how to pronounce them.
- [ ] I feel my English sounds "Spanish," even when the sentence is right.
- [ ] Dictation and voice assistants have a hard time understanding me.

### When you listen

- [ ] I understand written English better than spoken English.
- [ ] If I miss one word, I lose the rest of the sentence.
- [ ] I need to translate in my head to feel I understood.
- [ ] While I listen, I get distracted by thoughts like *"esa palabra me la sé"* or *"¿qué significaba esa palabra?"*.
- [ ] With subtitles I understand; without them, I get tired fast.

### When you express yourself

- [ ] I think the sentence in Spanish first and then translate it.
- [ ] I know what I want to say, but I get stuck looking for a word.
- [ ] When someone asks me something, it takes me a while to put the answer together.
- [ ] My sentences come out "correct," but they don't sound like something an English speaker would say.

### When you talk with other people

- [ ] I'm afraid of making mistakes in front of others.
- [ ] I'd rather stay quiet than say it wrong.
- [ ] I apologize for my English before I start talking.
- [ ] I feel my accent is a problem.

Count how many you checked in each group. The group with the most checks is where Spanish sneaks in the most.

| IF IT SNEAKS IN MOST… | PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO… |
|---|---|
| When you speak | Chapters 4 to 7: **SPEAK!** |
| When you listen | Chapters 8, 10 and 11: **THINK!** |
| When you express yourself | Chapters 9 to 11: **THINK!** |
| When you talk with other people | Chapters 12 and 13: **FEEL!** |

Even so, read the book in order. Everything is connected: what you do with your mouth will help your ear, and the other way around. In fact, your mouth can only say a sound well once your ear recognizes it.

## Spanish Mode: OFF

This isn't about hating your Spanish or pretending it doesn't exist. Your Spanish is yours, and it's valuable. It's about moving it to a different seat.

### Put your Spanish in the back seat.

It's still in the car. It can give its opinion. But it's not driving anymore. When you're in English, let the English you already have do the driving, even if it's just a little, and even if it makes mistakes.

Switching off Spanish doesn't mean understanding everything. It means staying in English, whether you understand a lot or a little, even when you feel lost for a moment. That confusion doesn't mean you're doing it wrong: it's your brain building the direct path. Stay there.

I call that shift **Spanish Mode: OFF**. It's the other side of **English Mode: ON**: switching one off is what lets you switch the other on.

THE TRAP

Scolding yourself every time Spanish shows up. It will show up, especially at the beginning, and the more you forbid it, the more it shows up. Don't fight it: notice it, let it go and come back to English. The more you train the direct path, the further back it stays, all on its own.

## What you take with you

- Your Spanish sneaks in in three places: when you speak, when you listen and when you express yourself.
- At first you reach English by going through Spanish; with practice, a direct path forms.
- Switching off Spanish isn't understanding everything: it's staying in English, even in the confusion.
- Translating fills up your working memory and leaves you no room to listen.
- It's not about fighting your Spanish, but about putting it in the back seat.

### YOUR 24-HOUR PRACTICE

Today you're going to be a detective of your own filter. The next time you hear or read something in English, notice the exact moment your head translates it. Don't fix it, just notice it. Write down where it happened: when you spoke, when you listened or when you expressed yourself.

## Practice with AI

VOICE MODE

**Goal:** Five minutes without switching to Spanish, even if you feel lost for a moment.

> PROMPT
>
> Let's talk for five minutes, only in English, about things I like. The rule is that I can't switch to Spanish. If I'm missing a word, I'll try to describe it with other words; help me with a hint in English, never with the translation. If I seem lost, ask me the question again with simpler words. Be kind and patient, and use short sentences. At the end, tell me one specific thing I did well and one word I was missing. Start by asking me what I like to do.

Paste it into a new ChatGPT chat, send it, and then tap the waves icon to talk with your voice. You'll find it ready to copy at
**transformyourenglish.com/practica#cap02**

03

# Your Three Switches

Curiosity, attention and intention: what turns on English Mode: ON

You probably know someone like this. Maybe it's you. They put their shows in English "to learn." They listen to music in English in the car, keep a podcast on in the background while they cook, change their phone's language. Months go by, and their English is exactly the same.

It's not that they're doing something wrong. It's that they're missing the most important part.

## Just listening to English isn't enough

We believe that putting on a movie in English or listening to music in English is enough to learn and improve. It's a very common idea, and it doesn't work. Background English goes in one ear and out the other.

The only way for your English to keep growing is for you to want to make it grow, in every way. There are things you already know you can improve. And there are others you don't even know exist. But those things keep revealing themselves all the time, when you watch a movie, when you try to speak, think, write or read in English, as long as you have three things turned on:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Curiosity** | Teaches you what to learn. |
| **Attention** | Teaches you how to learn it. |
| **Intention** | Teaches you when, how and with whom to use it. |

ENGLISH MODE: ON

I call these three your three switches. When all three are on, **English Mode: ON** turns on. And when you have them on, you don't need a teacher to improve anymore: every contact with English teaches you something.

And careful: they're not three separate things. The three work together, on the same piece of English: a word, a sound, a sentence. Curiosity leads you to attention, and attention leads you to intention. One leads you to the next.

## Curiosity: the little ladder

Everything starts here. Curiosity is the first step of a little ladder that works on its own, if you let it:

### 1 · Curiosity

Something in English catches your attention, or you wonder how to say something.

### 2 · Doubt

"What does it mean?", "How do you say it?", "Why did they say it like that?"

### 3 · Question

You ask someone, the AI, the translator or Google.

### 4 · Answer

It comes, and it comes right when you needed it.

### 5 · Improvement

Your English improves in that exact spot.

Look at step two. Doubt isn't bad news: it's the best news you could get, because it's the door to a question, and the question is the door to an answer. And when you learn like that, you didn't learn thanks to a teacher. You learned thanks to your curiosity.

Curiosity is when a word in a song catches your attention and you go look it up. It's wondering how you'd say in English what you're doing right now, or what matters in your day, at work, in your life. It's looking at the object in front of you and wondering what it's called.

That's how you took the reins of your Spanish when you were a baby, and that's how you're going to take the reins of your English. The first step is a commitment: to stay curious about English.

## Attention: everything reveals itself

Curiosity brings you an answer. Attention means not letting it slip by: paying deep attention to that new thing you discovered, to how it sounds, how it's used, when it's said.

And here's the best part: you don't need to know a list of things to study, or have someone explain them to you. If you keep your ears, your eyes, your mouth and your mind awake, the things you can pay attention to reveal themselves on their own. There are tons of them. Here are just a few:

- Sounds Spanish doesn't have
- Long and short vowels
- Words that stick together
- Contractions
- The rhythm of a sentence
- Where people pause
- Which word they stress
- The melody of a question
- The tone for sarcasm
- The tone for surprise
- How excitement sounds
- How boredom sounds
- How people talk when they get excited
- How they say hi
- How they say goodbye
- How they ask for a favor
- How they say no without sounding rude
- How they apologize
- How they react: **no way, seriously?**
- Fillers: **like, you know, I mean**

Informal expressions | Formal expressions

Words that go together: **make a decision**

Verbs with prepositions: **give up**, **figure out** | How they tell a story

How they make a joke | How they interrupt politely

How they change the subject | How they write a text: **lol**, **btw**

How they start an email | How they say dates and numbers

How they move their mouth | Their gestures and their face when they talk

Accents from different countries

You don't have to look for all of them, not today and not ever. They're everywhere, and every time one catches your attention, there's something new to notice.

## Intention: wanting to use it

You've discovered something new with curiosity. You've paid attention to it. What's missing is what makes it yours: the intention to use it, and deciding when, how and with whom. Being hungry and excited to use that new sound, that word you now pronounce differently, that phrase, that structure, or that word you finally figured out.

Look at kids. When a kid learns a new word, they're dying to use it. They use it, and use it, and overuse it, because they have all the intention, the excitement and the joy of trying it out, and they can't wait. We need to get that excitement back with English. That's what moves something new from your passive English to your active English: from what you understand to what you say.

## All three, together

Imagine you're watching a show. A character hangs up the phone, grabs their keys and says something like **I'm on my way**.

**Curiosity:** "What did they say? I've heard that a thousand times." You rewind the scene. **Attention:** you listen to how it sounds, all stuck together, and to when they said it: as they were heading out, to someone who was waiting for them. **Intention:** that same afternoon, when you're running late to meet a friend, you text them: **I'm on my way**.

Notice: all three worked on the same phrase. Curiosity taught you what to learn, attention taught you how to learn it, and intention taught you when, how and with whom to use it. Three switches, five minutes, and a phrase that's already yours.

TRY IT **Turn on your three switches with just one thing**

1. **Curiosity.** Pick just one thing: something from your day you don't know how to say in English, or something you heard in English that caught your attention.
2. **Attention.** Look it up and listen to it inside a full sentence, in ChatGPT or in the translator. Notice how it sounds, what situation it's used in and what words it goes with. Repeat it until it comes out right.
3. **Intention.** Decide when, how and with whom you're going to use it today. And use it.

My piece of English

What I noticed

When, how and with whom I'll use it

### WHY IT WORKS

In the eighties, linguist Richard Schmidt lived in Brazil learning Portuguese and kept a diary of his own learning. He discovered something curious: there were parts of the language he heard all the time and still didn't learn, until he noticed them. As soon as he noticed one, he started using it. That's where his most famous idea came from: what you don't notice, you don't learn. Listening isn't enough; you have to notice.

And about intention: in 2006, psychologists Peter Gollwitzer and Paschal Sheeran reviewed almost a hundred studies and found that people who decide in advance when and where they're going to do something ("when I get to the office, I'm going to…") follow through much more than people who just feel like doing it. A concrete intention turns what you want into what you do. That's why intention isn't just wanting to use the new thing: it's deciding when, how and with whom.

### THE TRAP

Putting English on in the background and expecting it to work on its own. English that doesn't spark a single question in you, that you don't pay attention to and that you have no intention of using, leaves the same way it came. You don't need more hours of English: you need your three switches on during the hours you already have.

## What you take with you

- Just listening to English isn't enough.
- Curiosity teaches you what to learn. Climb the little ladder: curiosity, doubt, question, answer and improvement.
- Doubt is good news: it's the door to your next improvement.
- Attention teaches you how to learn it. What there is to notice reveals itself.
- Intention teaches you when, how and with whom to use it, with the excitement of a kid trying out a new word.
- All three work together, on the same piece of English. One leads you to the next.

### YOUR 24-HOUR PRACTICE

Today, pick just one piece of English you're curious about: something you hear, or something you want to say. Pay attention to it until you know how it sounds and when it's used. Decide when, how and with whom you're going to use it, and before the day is over, use it.

## Practice with AI

VOICE MODE

**Goal:** Turn on your three switches: wonder how to say something, notice the answer and use it right away.

PROMPT

I want to practice English based on my own curiosity. Ask me in English what I'm doing today, what's around me and what's important to me this week. When I don't know how to say something, let me try with the words I have. Then tell me, in one short sentence, how someone who speaks English every day would say it, and ask me to repeat it. Then ask me when, how and with whom I could use it this week, and ask me to say it the way I'd say it in that moment. Correct only one thing at a time. Speak only in English, in short sentences, and if I don't understand you, say it another way, more simply. You start.

Paste it into a new ChatGPT chat, send it, and then tap the waves icon to talk with your voice. You'll find it ready to copy at
**transformyourenglish.com/practica#cap03**

# Here I skip a few pages

That's the end of the book's complete first part. You've seen where Spanish sneaks in and which three switches turn on your English.

What comes next in the book is Part 1, **SPEAK!**, with four chapters about sound: the sounds your mouth has never made, why letters fool you, why in English words touch each other and nobody speaks word by word, and how your intonation ends up being your identity.

But I don't want you to finish this sample thinking I just described a problem and nothing else. So I'm going to skip those four chapters and give you one from Part 2, so you can do something and see what happens.

It's the first chapter of **THINK!**, and it's the one I love teaching most in class, because it isn't explained: it's lived. When you finish it, you'll have understood a language you don't speak.

Here it is, complete, exactly as it is in the book.

# THINK!

## Flow in English, and only in English.

Now we're going to switch off your inner voice in Spanish, the one that wants to translate everything, and free up your ability to understand, learn and fine-tune the words, expressions and structures of your English, every day.

They're two sides of the same muscle: stop translating inward when you listen, and stop translating outward when you answer.

08

# Understand Like a Baby

Understand the idea, not the words

A one-year-old doesn't know grammar. They don't know the word "noun," and they can't conjugate a verb. But you say *"¿dónde está la pelota?"* and they turn to look at the ball. Nobody explained the sentence to them: they understood it from the situation, from your tone, and because your eyes went to the ball first.

You understood like that for years. Then school came along and taught you that to understand English, you had to translate. In this chapter, we're going to take you back to the baby method: understanding the idea, the message and the feeling, not every word.

## Try not to understand

I do this exercise with my students, and the same thing always happens. Do it in order, without skipping any rounds. In all three, your only mission is to **not understand**.

### TRY IT Round 1: in Spanish

You're in a coffee shop. Read this conversation between the server and a customer, and try not to understand it.

> — Buenos días. ¿Qué te sirvo?
>
> — Un café con leche, por favor. Y una rebanada de pastel de chocolate.
>
> — Claro. ¿Para aquí o para llevar?
>
> — Para llevar, por favor.
>
> — Son cuatro cincuenta.
>
> — Muchas gracias.

Could you not understand it?

You couldn't. You understood without meaning to. You didn't translate anything or analyze a single word: the scene just came to you.

### TRY IT Round 2: in English

Same coffee shop, same mission: don't understand it.

> — Good morning. What can I get you?
>
> — A coffee with milk, please. And a piece of chocolate cake.
>
> — Sure. For here or to go?
>
> — To go, please.
>
> — That's four fifty.
>
> — Thank you very much.

What happened this time? Did you translate word by word, or did the scene come together on its own?

If you understood almost everything, you just saw that your English also runs on autopilot when you pay attention to it. And if a word didn't come to you, it probably didn't stop you from understanding what happened.

Now, a language you probably don't speak.

TRY IT **Round 3: in German**

The coffee shop again, this time in Berlin. Same mission.

> — Guten Morgen. Was möchten Sie?
>
> — Einen Kaffee mit Milch, bitte. Und ein Stück Schokoladenkuchen.
>
> — Gerne. Für hier oder zum Mitnehmen?
>
> — Zum Mitnehmen, bitte.
>
> — Das macht vier fünfzig.
>
> — Danke schön.

What did the customer order? Did they take it to go, or eat it there? How much did they pay?

How did it go? One of two things happened.

**If you didn't understand it, don't give up: guess.** With everything you've just read in this chapter, what do you think it says? What do you think they ordered? For here or to go? You don't need to know German to place a bet. Place it.

**If you did understand it, give yourself credit.** Maybe it feels like cheating, because you'd already read it in Spanish and in English, and you assumed it would say the same thing. But that's not cheating: it's exactly what we're training. Understanding by guessing, by using your intuition with whatever you have within reach in that moment: the situation, the tone, what you already know. This time, what you had within reach was having read it in two languages, and that led you to make a decision: to go looking for the meaning, instead of giving up.

> Understanding is involuntary when there's attention.

And careful: sometimes, not understanding is involuntary too. There will be things you won't understand, no matter what you do. That's when the best thing you can do is use your intuition, hold on to an idea, even a general one, and later, if you really need to, confirm it: ask, or look up what you're missing.

## Context beats the dictionary

Want to see that it works even when you haven't read it in another language first?

When a student asks me what a word means, many times I turn the question around: with what you're reading or hearing, what would you guess it is? Maybe an exact idea comes to you, or a more general one. At the very least, you can almost always tell whether it's something positive or negative. And many times, that's all you need to understand what matters.

TRY IT **What does it say?**

> **We had a terrific weekend at the beach. Everybody wants to go back next year.**

How did it go for them: good or bad?

TOCA AQUÍ PARA DESTAPAR

Now this one:

> **The movie was terrible. I fell asleep in ten minutes.**

How was the movie? You fell asleep after ten minutes: it was awful. Here, **terrible** really is terrible. The two words look alike and mean the opposite: **terrific** is great, and **terrible** is bad. What told you which was which wasn't the word: it was the context.

> Follow the context, not the Spanish word it looks like.

TRY IT **Positive or negative?**

Read each sentence and decide out loud: is the marked word something positive or negative?

1. **The view from the top was stunning. We stayed there for an hour, just looking.**
2. **I was enthralled by my daughter's school dance. Everything was so perfect and beautiful.**
3. **The service was appalling. We waited an hour, and the waiter was rude.**

Let's go one by one. If we stayed up there a whole hour, just looking, what do you think that view was like? **It was stunning.** What's **stunning**? Notice: even without putting a Spanish word on it, you already know what it is.

At my daughter's school dance, if everything was so beautiful and so perfect, how do you think I felt? That's **enthralled**.

We waited an hour, and the waiter was rude. How was the service? **Appalling**.

If you want to fine-tune it: **stunning** is so impressive it leaves you speechless; **enthralled** is being fascinated, almost hypnotized; **appalling** is awful, unbelievably bad. But notice that the details came later. You already had the important part the moment you knew whether it was good or bad. And since you guessed it yourself, it's going to stick much more than if I'd handed you the translation.

## A story you already know

### TRY IT The Three Little Pigs

You already know this story. Read it out loud, all the way through, without stopping on any word.

> Once upon a time, there were three little pigs. The first pig was very lazy: he built his house with straw in five minutes and went to sleep. The second pig built his house with sticks. The third pig worked hard all day and built his house with bricks.
>
> Then a big bad wolf came. "Little pig, little pig, let me come in," he said. "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin," said the pig. "Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down."

Now, without a dictionary or a translator, answer out loud:

1. Do you know what **lazy** is? If not, what would you guess? How would you describe the little pig who didn't want to work and built his house in five minutes?
2. What did each one build his house with? What materials do you think **straw**, **sticks** and **bricks** are?
3. What did the little pig answer the wolf with **Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin**? No translating word by word: what would a little pig say in Spanish?
4. And what did the wolf tell him with **I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down**?

WHAT DID YOU ANSWER?

TOCA AQUÍ PARA DESTAPAR

Now read these two sentences:

> This old building is made of red bricks.
>
> It's Sunday, and I feel lazy. I'm staying in bed all day.

Did you understand them instantly? See? What you understand through context, you don't need to memorize: when you see it again somewhere else, in a context that makes sense, you recognize it.

## Riddles in English

Now, some harder ones. Treat them like riddles: guess what the marked words mean, even in general, and write it down.

## TRY IT Solve the riddle

1. **My boss keeps asking where I was on Friday. I think she's onto me.** And this one: **She laughs at all my jokes and always wants to talk to me. I think she's into me.** In which one are you in trouble, and in which one are you happy?

2. **The car was completely destroyed, but the driver walked out unscathed. Not even a scratch.** How did the driver come out?

3. **The roof is falling in. That old house is completely dilapidated.** What's the house like?

4. **When I opened my bakery, I named it "Don Luis," after my father.** Why is the bakery called that?

---

onto me / into me

---

unscathed

---

dilapidated

---

named it… after

---

TOCA AQUÍ PARA DESTAPAR

And notice something. If you wanted to say it in Spanish, you wouldn't translate word by word: you'd say the idea, however it sounds natural. *"Le puse así por mi papá"* looks nothing like **I named it after my father**, and it says exactly the same thing. That's how it works between two languages: the literal translation of a word is almost never the one people actually use in the other language. You understand the intention, and if you want to carry it into the other language, you carry the idea, not the words.

And if one of them didn't come to you on the first try, don't worry. First, realize that maybe you would have understood it with the context in mind. And even if not, now that it's clicked, read them again and notice how the meaning of each sentence arrives on its own, automatically, like a puzzle piece that fits perfectly into the space shaped for it.

### WHY IT WORKS

In 1999, Dutch researchers Swanborn and De Glopper reviewed twenty studies on how we learn words while we read. They found that, without anyone explaining them, we keep about 15% of the unknown words we come across in context. No dictionary and no effort: pure gain. And every encounter adds up, so the next time you run into that word, you'll understand a little more. In a real conversation, even more things help: the situation, the tone and the other person's face.

And there's more. In 2009, psychologists Nate Kornell, Matthew Hays and Robert Bjork showed that trying to guess an answer before seeing it makes you remember it better afterward, even when you guessed wrong. Guessing gets your brain ready to keep the answer. That's why, in this book, I ask you to guess before I explain.

### THE TRAP

Searching your inner dictionary or translator for what a word or a sentence means, instead of feeling the situation and staying connected to the context to come away with an impression of what it means. It doesn't matter if that impression is vague or general: every time you hear that word in context again, you'll understand a little more of its details.

## What you take with you

- Understand the idea, the message and the feeling, not every word.
- Understanding is involuntary when you pay attention. Sometimes, not understanding is too: when that happens, use your intuition, and if you need to, confirm.
- At the very least, the context tells you whether something is positive or negative.
- Follow the context, not the Spanish word it looks like: **terrific** isn't *terrible*.
- What you understand through context doesn't need to be memorized: next time, you recognize it.

### YOUR 24-HOUR PRACTICE

Watch three minutes of a show or a video in English **without subtitles**, and without translating. If a word catches your attention, guess what it means, even if it's just whether it's positive or negative. When you're done, write three lines about what happened.

## Practice with AI

WRITING

**Goal:** Understand new words through context, without a dictionary and without translating.

> PROMPT
>
> Tell me a short story in English, about six sentences long, about an everyday situation. Use three uncommon words and let the context explain what they mean. Don't tell me which ones they are. When you finish, ask me what I understood from the story and which words I didn't know. For each one, first ask me if I think it's something positive or negative, and then what I think it means. Let me guess, even if I'm wrong. Then confirm it for me in English, with another example where it's easy to understand. Then tell me another story. Speak only in English and don't translate anything for me.

Paste it into a new ChatGPT chat and send it. You'll find it ready to copy at **transformyourenglish.com/practica#cap08**

# About Mr. G

Mr. G has been teaching English to Spanish speakers since 2008. In all these years, he's seen the same block over and over again: Spanish stuck in the middle, wearing you out when you listen and freezing you when you speak. He created Transform Your English to take it apart.

He's the author of the book *Next Level English*; the video course *10 Steps to Your English Success*, which more than a thousand students have taken on Udemy; and *Inglés al Chile*, for people starting from zero. His method, *English Mode: ON*, is what he teaches live today, in small groups: get Spanish out of the way, use the English you already have and make it grow.

His method starts from a simple idea: you're not missing English, you've got too much Spanish. Everything else is practice, curiosity and permission to make mistakes.

**transformyourenglish.com**

# That's the end of the sample

If the German exercise worked for you, you now know two things you didn't know before: that understanding isn't something you try, and that you have a lot more English available than you thought. That's what the rest of the book does, chapter by chapter.

## What's still waiting for you

**Part 1 · SPEAK!** · The sounds of English in a single chapter, with permission to forget them. Why your mouth speaks Spanish even when you're saying English words. Why words touch each other and nobody speaks word by word. And why your intonation, not your vocabulary, is what gives you your own identity in English.

**Part 2 · THINK!** · Besides the chapter you just read: how to say your idea in your English without going through Spanish, how to steal the English you like and keep it, and the cheat sheet, the technique that lets you answer correctly even when you don't know how the sentence is built.

**Part 3 · FEEL!** · The inner judge, the nerves, and the permission to make mistakes that nobody ever gave you. And how to keep a conversation going that really flows.

**Part 4 · BE!** · Stop studying English and start living it, with a 21-day plan and a pocket kit with the book's sixteen ideas on a single page.

That's fourteen chapters. Each one ends with an AI practice: a goal and a prompt to copy and paste, so you can practice out loud without paying anything extra or meeting up with anyone.

HOW IT'S MADE

The full book comes in Spanish and in English, as PDFs you fill in digitally: they have spaces to write your own answers and boxes that cover the answers until you decide to see them. No separate notebook, no printing. And on the website you can read it with the English Mode: ON button, switching between both languages whenever you want.

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