

Beliefs Main Text

Hello, welcome to the fourth lesson. This one is called “Beliefs.” Let’s get started.

Beliefs are another important part of managing your psychology, of strengthening your psychology so that you will learn English, or anything in fact, much faster. And there are two kinds of beliefs to general categories of beliefs. Limiting and empowering.

Let’s talk about limiting beliefs first. Now limiting means, limit is something that stops you. It’s like a boundary. It stops you from going ahead. So a limiting belief is a belief that stops you from improving, a belief that stops you from getting better. And I’d say most English students have limiting beliefs and many English students have very strong limiting beliefs. I call these beliefs English trauma and I got that name from a few of my Japanese students. They would tell me “AJ, I can’t speak English well because I have English trauma.”

What is English trauma? What is that, what are they talking about? Well, trauma means some kind of injury, some kind of hurt. Emotional hurt, deep emotional hurt. So what they mean is that they had some very negative, painful experiences with English in the past. In other words, when they were in school in English classes, even as adults going to other English schools, they had very negative experiences. And all these negative experiences have created some very negative beliefs, some very limiting beliefs. For example, they say “I am not good at English.” Well, that’s a belief. It may be true, it may not be true. But it’s an opinion, it’s a belief that they have.

Another belief, a very common belief, English is difficult. Or, English is complicated. Well, that’s just a belief. For me English is very easy, because I’m a native speaker, just like your native language for you is very easy. Tomoe can speak Japanese fluently because she’s Japanese, so I might say “Japanese is difficult,” and she would say “No, Japanese is super easy.” These are just beliefs that come from our experiences. The problem is these limiting beliefs limit us. They in fact do limit us. They stop us from getting better. They cause a lot of problems for us as students, as learners. I have them, too. As I try to learn Japanese, for example, I have a lot of these limiting beliefs I realize. I think “Oh, Japanese is so difficult.” Japanese is complicated, just look at the writing system. It’s so different from English.

And these beliefs hurt my motivation. They lower my energy, and in fact they’re wrong. They’re not true. Japanese does not have to be difficult, it does not have to be complicated. A small child, even a small American child, could learn Japanese very effortlessly, very easily. And the reason is, the number one reason is, they don’t have the limiting beliefs. They can sing songs and play games and enjoy the language, and

they'll learn it so quickly, so easily, they'll say "Japanese is easy." Well, it's the same with English with you. You learned in a very painful, difficult way in the past. And so you developed, you created these beliefs in your head. English is difficult. English is boring. English is painful. I'm not good at English. I'll never speak excellent English. These are just beliefs.

So how do you eliminate these beliefs? Okay, you have these beliefs. You know they're negative, you know they're not helping you. But we have to figure out, how can we get rid of the limiting beliefs? That's the first step, you have to weaken them. You have to make them weaker and weaker and weaker. You have to cut them down. Well beliefs get stronger from references. And reference is just an experience or a memory. Sometimes it's just something you imagine, actually. But it's a specific experience or a specific imagination, a specific moment, that makes the belief stronger or weaker.

So, for example, you have this idea "English is painful and boring." And when you think of this belief, where does it come from? Well, you think of all these past experiences. You think of the time in middle school where your teacher corrected your mistake and you felt terrible. And you think of maybe the bad grades you got on the test or all the red marks on your English papers. And you start adding more and more and more memories, more of these negative experiences, these negative references. And if you get enough, you will develop a very, strong, deep, powerful belief "English is difficult. English is painful. I'm not good at English." So to weaken these, you just have to question the references.

You have to question the experiences. Take the power away from the experiences. And an easy way to do that is just to ask questions about them. For example, let me ask this question. Your past English schools, were they excellent? Were they just fantastic English schools with fantastic, amazing, fun, positive English teachers? Did you have a great time every day? Well, I know for most of you the answer is no. So that's interesting, so if your schools were not excellent, maybe the school was the problem. Maybe it's not you. Maybe your English is not great because you did not go to great schools. And did those schools that you went to, or the books you used, did they use proven methods?

Did they use research-based methods? Did they know a lot about the research about English learning, English teaching? Did they only use the best methods? Or did they just use the textbook that everybody else uses? Well, I know from my experience as a teacher, most schools just use the same textbooks. They don't know why. Maybe the boss tells them "We must use this book." But they're not choosing the very, very best methods. They're not choosing the very, very best books. And so maybe the reason you believe English is difficult is because you used difficult methods in the past, or your teachers did. Maybe you think English is boring because in the past you used boring methods. You went to boring schools. You had boring teachers. Maybe English isn't the problem. Maybe it was these past experiences. Maybe it was the way you did it or where you did it. Ask yourself these questions. Think about them in detail. Weaken your limiting beliefs. Challenge your limiting beliefs.

Another question, in school did you learn deeply? For example, did you take one chapter in your book and learn it for a long time so that you totally mastered it, so that you knew it completely, 100% and never forgot it? Probably not, most schools I have seen and the ones I have taught in, it's quite the opposite. The teachers go very, very, very quickly. You learn one chapter in your book, boom, after one week on to the next one, and the next one. Each chapter has so many new words, so much new grammar.

For example, my experience with Spanish in high school and university, I took Spanish, I've had a total of maybe two years of Spanish, but I forgot it all. Because we never learned deeply. They just tried to make us learn as many words as possible, a lot of words, a lot of words, a lot of grammar, very, very fast. And then, of course, I forgot everything. How about you? Did you learn deeply in your schools? If not, maybe that was one of the problems. Maybe English feels difficult because you never learned deeply. Maybe English is not the problem.

Finally, did you learn with a grammar translation method? Did you study a lot of grammar rules? Did you take a lot of tests? Did you feel good about that? Again, maybe the method was the problem. Maybe the school is the problem, not English.

So think about these questions and think about them every day. Think about them a lot, especially this week as you listen to Lesson Number 4. I want you to think about these questions again and again and again. And really be honest about it. And start to destroy these limiting beliefs. Get rid of them. They're wrong. English is not difficult. English is not painful. English is not boring. It's only a belief. It's only a past experience. You can change that now and in the future.

So let's do that. Let's talk now about empowering beliefs, the positive side. So to empower, the verb, to empower means to make stronger. It means to give power to another person. Or in this case, it means the beliefs give you power. An empowering belief is a belief that makes you feel powerful, that gives you power. That's the kind of beliefs you want and you need to choose them.

You must decide which beliefs will make you stronger. For example, here's an empowering belief. You can replace your old limiting belief, add this one instead. You can say "My brain is a natural language learning machine." Because that's what all of the scientific research shows, our brain naturally learns languages. It is designed to learn language. It should be easy. It should be effortless. It should feel good. You learned your native language that way. It wasn't difficult was it? English was easy for me to learn, because I did it in a totally natural way. And the more naturally I tried to learn Japanese, for example, or Spanish, the easier it feels. So this is a new belief and you should write it down, think about it. Write down this idea, this belief "My brain is a natural language learning machine." Think about it every day. Decide to choose that belief.

Here's another belief you might decide to choose "English can be fun and effortless." English can be fun and effortless. That's an empowering belief and it's also true. You can think of a lot of examples for this. Some of these mini-stories you're listening to, right? They're fun. They're stupid, sometimes. They're crazy, sometimes. But they're not serious. English can be fun and effortless. That's an empowering belief you want to choose and you want to remember it every day.

And to make these beliefs stronger, you need experiences. Remember, you need references, you need examples that prove the belief. So I'm going to give you some examples and you can find more. Go find people who speak English very well. Or maybe even that have learned another language very well. I'll give you one of my favorite examples, Steve Kaufman of The Linguist speaks, I believe, twelve languages now. I want you to find these people and look at their beliefs. I'll tell you some of his beliefs because he's a friend, I've talked to him a number of times, and Steve believes, for example, that language learning is easy and effortless. That's his belief.

He's a native English speaker, he speaks Cantonese, he speaks Mandarin, he speaks Japanese, he speaks Russian. These are all, supposedly, difficult languages. For him they're not difficult. They're easy and effortless. That's a very strong belief he has. Another belief he has is that you must learn language naturally and you must focus on meaning. So in other words, he doesn't focus on the grammar. He's not focusing on boring textbooks. He's reading interesting things that he enjoys. He's listening to interesting things that he enjoys. So, for him, language learning is interesting.

What's really interesting for me is that these are the same beliefs that all of my best students have. They all have these same ideas. The best students, the ones who learn the fastest, the ones who have the best test scores, the ones with the best speaking, they all believe these things. They all believe that English is fun, interesting and effortless. They all believe that language learning is natural. They all believe that they should focus on the meaning, not on the grammar and the little pieces of the language. So if you want to be like these successful people, you need to think like them. You need to have the same beliefs as them.

So here's what I want you to do. Here's your homework. This is the last thing, the last part of this lesson. What I want you to do is write down two, three, four empowering beliefs, beliefs that give you power about English. Maybe "My brain is a natural language learning machine." Maybe "English can be fun and effortless." Maybe "I love English." I don't know, write down, two, three, four empowering beliefs about English. And every day you're going to do an incantation. That's a good word, that's a new word, incantation.

An incantation is a phrase or sentence that you say again and again. It has almost a magic idea, it comes from magic. An incantation is a magical sentence. It's a sentence, if you say the sentence something will happen. That's where it comes from. But for us an incantation is just a belief you are going to repeat again and again and again every day. So here's what you're going to do. For example "English can be fun and

effortless.” You’re going to say that out loud every day while you’re walking along and you’re doing your posture. And you’re breathing and you’re smiling. Well, you’re going to add one more thing. As you walk, as you’re getting ready for the lesson, you’re going to repeat this out loud. You’re going to say “English can be fun and effortless.” You’re going to say it with some emotion. Say it with feeling so you’re smiling, you’re breathing deep, you’re moving your body, you have good posture and now you’re also saying these strong beliefs. English can be fun and effortless. You repeat it again. English can be fun and effortless. And then you say it again. English can be fun and effortless.

You can do this in your room and its fine. You can do it outside and make everyone look at you and think you’re crazy. Why not? It’s better than feeling powerless, right? It’s better than being bored. I promise you will learn so much faster if you do this. So do these incantations every day just before you do a lesson. Get your body strong, peak emotional state, and then say these incantations. English can be fun and effortless. English can be fun and effortless. Now your body, your mind, your beliefs, they’re all together, very strong. Then you’re ready to learn.

Okay, that is the end of the main story for “Beliefs.”