

Section 1 Transcription:

Amy: Hey, guys, this is Amy and Curtis, and today we're going to do a conversation that one of our listeners actually suggested to us. So who was that?

Curtis: That was Alfredo. And he's living in Venezuela.

Amy: No, he is from Venezuela.

Curtis: Oh, okay. Where's he living?

Amy: He's living in Argentina and working as a pilot.

Curtis: Oh, that's a cool job.

Amy: So what did he ask us to talk about?

Curtis: Well, because he is a pilot, he asked us to talk about some of our experiences in airports.

Amy: And specifically doing it in another language.

Curtis: Yeah. This can be tricky at times.

Amy: Yeah, so if you guys have been listening to the podcasts for a while, you're going to know we've done quite a bit of travelling. I mean, where have we been? We've been to...we went to Hawaii.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And we've been to California.

Curtis: We've been to Costa Rica.

Amy: Yeah. Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Ecuador. And upcoming we have a trip planned to Ecuador again. And to Colombia. And this next vacation is going to be three months, and I think we might be able to this time when we go to the airports, we might actually have an experience to do the whole process of the customs and like checking in with the customs agent and getting our passports stamped and stuff. I think we might be able to do it completely in Spanish this time.

Curtis: Yeah. I'm feeling a little more confident, that's for sure.

Amy: Yeah. So the last times that we've travelled, we've really had a fairly limited level of the language.

Curtis: Yes.

Amy: You know, because I know when we came back from Ecuador, after we came back, after I had been there for six weeks, I was still just a beginner, looking back now. I thought I was better than I was, but looking back now I can see I was...I was pretty basic.

Curtis: And I...I was basic basic.

Amy: You were like a **newbie**¹, like...

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: You knew words. You didn't know grammar, how to put anything together. Okay. So we have a couple of stories, um, we'll talk about two that are related to airport travels specifically.

Curtis: Yes.

Amy: And the third one is still, and it's when you need to communicate certain and specific information. But it's actually related to a surfboard rental.

Curtis: Okay.

Amy: So...but we kind of thought it was on...on the same...the same note, because you're having to communicate something in a non-native language with whatever words you have.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: So what was the first experience that we had where we...we had to find out certain information. And the person that we were talking to didn't know English.

Curtis: We experienced this in Panama.

Amy: Um-hum. Panama City.

Curtis: Panama City. And we were flying to a different part of Panama.

Amy: Yeah. So we came in on an international flight.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And we had landed. And there was about I think an hour and a half **layover**² in between our flights. And we had to find the, I guess, the domestic flight connection.

Curtis: Yes.

Amy: So a domestic flight is a flight within the country. And, anyway, I asked the...I don't know who it was. You know those people that are kind of at the...the...they're near the area where you get your tickets and boarding passes. And they're kind of at the end to help you. They're like an assistant to guide you around or give you information that you need.

Curtis: An assistant or...yeah.

Amy: Yeah. So, anyway, I asked one of those people, you know, how do you...or where is the flight connection? We're going to Bocas del Toro. Where...where do we go to get that flight? And, you know, he looked at me, and he said, oh, no. You need to be at the other airport. It's a 35 minute taxi ride from here.

Curtis: And we had to catch the plane in...

Amy: In an hour and a half.

Curtis: ...and hour and a half and there was no way.

Amy: And luckily I don't trust what people tell me the first time when I know that it's probably wrong.

Curtis: Um-hum. Your **gut instinct**³ was...

Amy: No, I knew our airplane was flying out of the Panama International Airport. And that...that's it. I knew it was there. It wasn't...I knew about the other airport that he was talking about, and I knew on our ticket that that wasn't the one that I had booked.

Curtis: And this was very limited Spanish...

Amy: Very, very limited...

Curtis: ...that we were...

Amy: Because this was prior to our Ecuador trips. So this is about three years ago that we did this one.

Section 1 Transcription:

Amy: I asked another person. And I asked another person. And finally we got the answer. And where was the terminal?

Curtis: The terminal was like a...was outside and we had to walk to it.

Amy: Yeah. And it was a crazy climate difference, because the air in Panama City is super hot, very humid, moist air.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And the little waiting room was like an **ice box**⁴. It was...

Curtis: One extreme to the other.

Amy: Yeah, it was interesting. But, anyway, we got where we needed to go and...and everything was fine. But in this case we had to use our limited Spanish to try to make a very important connection, and we didn't really have very much time. So it was...it gives you a little bit of anxiety when you can't communicate what you mean.

- Curtis:** Yeah. And you know you have another plane to catch.
- Amy:** Yeah. And what happened with the second one. I think it was in Quito, in Ecuador?
- Curtis:** Yeah, and it was really, really early in the morning.
- Amy:** Oh, yeah. Because they make you show up three hours early for a, ah, international flight connection. But it wasn't even, the check in area wasn't even open.
- Curtis:** No, there was nobody around. We were like, are we in the right area?
- Amy:** Oh, yeah, yeah. And again, I forgot about that. But we had to ask around in Spanish, and try to make sure that that was...was the area that we were supposed to be in. And, um...
- Curtis:** And then some of the employees showed up, a few more people started to line up in the...in the queue line. And, yeah, we were just standing there, waiting to get to the counter. And we got to the counter and there was a problem.
- Amy:** Yeah. And I think I know what the problem was. The problem was that we had changed our flights two weeks ago. And we were supposed to originally leave Ecuador and fly to Peru for two weeks, but we **changed our mind**⁵, because we were having such a good time on the coast in Ecuador.
- Curtis:** Yeah.
- Amy:** We...we decided to stay longer. So somewhere in that process, when we went to go get our boarding passes, we needed to do some sort of extra steps, some sort of registration. I don't know what it was.
- Curtis:** Yeah. Maybe we had to sign a different piece of paper or I don't know.
- Amy:** But I remember the lady, the first lady. She didn't speak English.
- Curtis:** None.
- Amy:** And she was trying to explain to us what we needed, and she had to actually get another attendant that spoke a bit of English to explain what we needed to do.
- Curtis:** Yeah.
- Amy:** And I don't think that I would have, like, if I didn't know any Spanish, I don't know what I would have done in that situation.
- Curtis:** Oh, yeah.
- Amy:** You know, and...anyway, so we had to go over to the other lady, and what was that like?
- Curtis:** It was a very bad experience. She didn't want to be at work that day, she was in a bad mood.
- Amy:** That was the first Ecuadorian that we met that wasn't happy.
- Curtis:** That was the only Ecuadorian that we met that wasn't happy.
- Amy:** Yeah, we were like, ah, the Latin American people, when...when they're referring to...to North Americans that don't speak Spanish, they call them gringos. So we were called the gringos and we show up and, you know, we need help with something. And I don't even know what I needed help with. You know, I handed her this piece of paper, tried to answer her questions, and, you know...
- Curtis:** We're all **sleepy-headed**⁶ because it's early in the morning...
- Amy:** Oh, we only had three hours of sleep or something, it was crazy.
- Curtis:** Yeah.
- Amy:** And, anyway, we got through that process, I don't know how, but we got through that.

Section 3 Transcription:

- Amy:** We went through the check in area. And because I was so tired I forgot to take off my belt and I had my cellphone tucked in my pocket.
- Curtis:** Yeah.

Amy: And, of course, when I went through the...the metal detector...

Curtis: Yeah, you had to...

Amy: The alarm went off.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And I had to, oh, shoot, I forgot my belt, and here's my...ah, here's my cell phone. And the guy put it through a separate bin. But behind other people's bins that they have, like the bins for the security screening. And, ah, anyway, so we, you know, went through okay. I passed the test, no metal, you know. And, um, we put on our...our shoes and our...put our laptop back in the backpack.

Curtis: Yeah, repacked everything up.

Amy: Yeah. And off we went. And just after I left the security area that you can't return back into.

Curtis: Yeah, we were going through, it was like a **duty-free**⁷ kind of area or something there, just past security.

Amy: Yeah. Yeah, duty-free where they sell alcohol that's tax free, or perfumes and electronics and things like that.

Curtis: Yeah. Every airport has it.

Amy: Yeah. And I went, "oh, no. I forgot my cell phone. Where's my cell phone?" And, you know, of course, I'm panicking because, you know, my cell phone has all my contacts on it, and you know, it's expensive. Cell phones are expensive. And, ah, so anyway, I found the first security guy, or I think he was maybe a janitor or something like that.

Curtis: Oh, yeah.

Amy: And I had to communicate what I forgot in the security area, in Spanish.

Curtis: In Spanish.

Amy: And he took us back through and got us to the security area again.

Curtis: Yeah, and the security agents were, ah, they were funny. They were...

Amy: Yeah, they were actually joking around.

Curtis: ...playing a prank on you.

Amy: They knew what I was looking for. They knew my phone, and they were asking me to describe it. So, anyway, I was like, well, it's a black phone, you know, I'm using very, very simple words, because that's all I knew. And...and the guy asked me, and I think he was just doing it just to get that confused look on my face of like, what? What did you just ask me? But he asked me if it was a light black cell phone, or a dark black cell phone.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And of course there's no such thing. Black is black. Right?

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And, yeah, it was...it was funny. But then he laughed...

Curtis: You got everything back and...

Amy: Yeah, he just laughed at me and handed it back to me.

Curtis: So what is your non-airport experience.

Amy: Oh, okay. So what happened with our...our last vacation, we were in a fairly small town on the coast in Ecuador. And I remember there were only three people that spoke, well, varying levels of English. Most of them, it was like, I can count to ten or say prices in English.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: That was two of them. And the third one was actually a Chinese guy that was down there, and he had learned Spanish and he knew English. And luckily this Chinese guy, when I first made the deal with him to rent a surfboard, he knew English. And I was able to communicate it, because I kind of went into the situation unplanned.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: Like somebody had said, I think you can rent a surfboard at this Internet cafe. And, you know, I hadn't looked up any words to deal with renting, or talking about transportation, trying to get it delivered. So I had no idea how to express these ideas. And I was really, really happy when I went in and it was the first and only time I asked anybody on the trip if they spoke English.

Curtis: Oh, yeah.

Amy: And he did. And it was like, oh, good. Perfect. And the thing that was complicated about it was that I actually needed the surfboard rental for about three weeks. And our accommodation was about three or four kilometres from the town.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And I needed to have it delivered. And picked up when I was finished with the surfboard. And I think because it was a **long-term rental**⁸ and it was kind of the slow season, he decided it would be okay, and he would rent me the surfboard.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And deliver it to the location. And that was fine. Of course, that was in English. So that was fine.

Section 4 Transcription:

Amy: When I went back at the end of the time, where I was finished using the surfboard, and I was trying to arrange for it to be...

Curtis: Picked up and brought back.

Amy: ...picked up to be returned, because I had no way of getting this surfboard back to the rental place.

Curtis: And we weren't going to, you know, walk down the street. It's a little too far.

Amy: And it was a big surfboard. It wasn't like a little four, five foot surfboard.

Curtis: No.

Amy: It was a long board, so, you know, it would be hard to get, like, I don't even think we could get it on the bus.

Curtis: No.

Amy: No, you know, so, anyway. Um, we went back and I think it was his wife or something.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And...and I had prepared this time for the conversation. I had learned the words I needed. I even wrote out a little explanation, just in case she couldn't understand my horrible Spanish accent.

Curtis: Yeah. I think you even rehearsed it with me a few times.

Amy: Oh, totally. I was prepared for this conversation. And I went into the...the surf shop, or the Internet cafe, **slash**⁹, surfboard rental place. And, ah, and the lady I was talking to her and she had this look on her face like I was talking German, or something.

Curtis: Yeah. Yeah.

Amy: And this was the only experience that I have ever had when I was trying to communicate in a foreign language, and the person just did not...

Curtis: Did not...

Amy: ...get it. They could not understand me. Maybe they were bad with understanding foreign accents in that language. I don't really know. But it was...it was pretty frustrating. It was hard.

Curtis: Yeah. It was really surprising to me.

Amy: And really awkward.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: Because I was like, um, I don't know what to do here. Okay, well, I'm going to leave and hopefully when I come back someone else is working that understands, you know, broken Spanish. And, anyway, so this experience, it actually gave me a really interesting sensation because when I left, of course, when you're trying to communicate and someone can't understand you, it kind of affects your confidence a little bit.

Curtis: It does.

Amy: You're like, oh, hmm, am I that bad?

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: Is my accent that bad?

Curtis: Am I pronouncing something, or everything really, really poorly, or...

Amy: Yeah, yeah.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And I realized after that, no, this isn't a case. And I've come across this a few different times through language partners that I've been practising with. And they have said similar things to me. Like one of my Colombian friends, he...he said that when he was in the United States, and he was trying to communicate, people would just not give him the time of day.

Curtis: Uh-huh.

Amy: And I told him it's not that his English is bad, it's that those people are not...they're not trying.

Curtis: No.

Amy: And you can't force someone to try to understand you. They either want to or they don't.

Curtis: Yeah. It's a choice.

Amy: And it doesn't mean you're bad, like, you're trying, man. You know...you don't know their language like a native. You can't help it. You're trying. You're doing the best you can. And if they're not trying to understand you, that's their problem. And you should never let that affect your confidence, ever.

Curtis: No. Not at all.

Amy: You know, people that genuinely want to help will help, and, you know, that was the most important thing. Anyway, I ended up the next day we came back and we talked to the son-in-law. And he called his dad, and his dad knew about me, and he knew where I was staying, and everything was fine. We managed to get the surfboard picked up and delivered, and I paid them for the rental and everything.

Curtis: Everything worked out.

Amy: And everything worked out. So those are some of the situations that we've faced in our travels in a foreign language. I mean, **there's been many more stories**¹¹. Usually on the bus, but...but, um, in respect to airport travel, and important situations where you needed to communicate.

Curtis: Yeah, and facing some **language barriers**¹⁰.

Real English Conversational Tip

Amy: Alright. So for today's English tip, we are just going to talk about time zones, and how to...especially when you're doing airport travel, and you're crossing time zones, you need to talk about what the time is where you're going, or what it was, or will be.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: And it's a little bit confusing. So we just wanted to give you some examples about how you can express this exactly like you should in English. So, Curtis, if we were flying to Toronto

from Kelowna. This is four provinces away from where we are, and **there's three different time zones**¹².

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: Okay. Because where we are, we would say we're behind Toronto time.

Curtis: Yes. Toronto is three hours ahead.

Amy: Okay. So if we left here at 4:00 in the afternoon, and our flight is three hours...

Curtis: Yes.

Amy: And Toronto's three hours ahead...

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: What time will we arrive?

Curtis: That would be 10:00 at night.

Amy: Yeah, you're right. I had to think about it.

Curtis: My math is good today I guess.

Amy: Yeah, sometimes it's not. That's why I was thinking about it. Okay. So, for example, when...when I'm trying to coordinate times with different people for language lessons, or if I want to talk to one of my friends on Skype for practice myself, I always have to talk about time zones, because they usually live in a different time zone than me. So most of the people that I talk to are two hours ahead of me.

Curtis: Okay.

Amy: So when they say, what time is it there? I tell them the time and I say, I'm two hours behind.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: Yeah. So...so that's pretty much what we do. If the place that, um, if...yeah, if the place that you're flying to or the person is in a different country, and their time is ahead of yours, you say you're blank hours ahead of me. You're five hours ahead, you're ten hours ahead. Whatever it is. And if it's the other way, you know, like us here out in the west of Canada, we're always behind everyone. Like we're three hours behind Toronto, for example. So anyway that's how you can talk about different time zones, and the normal way that people express that concept.

Curtis: Yeah. So, yeah, if you guys haven't been to our website yet, I encourage you to come to RealEnglishConversations.com, and sign up as a free member. We have access to three of our most popular conversations with transcripts, and you can download the slower versions of the audio. And, yeah, lots of good free resources there for you to check out.

Amy: Kind of gives you a sample of what you're going to get as a premium membership.

Curtis: Yeah.

Amy: The free member's stuff has most of the features. Of course, as a premium member you get access to the speaking exercises, the phrasal verb course, and, um, I don't know...

Curtis: Just more.

Amy: Just more of everything. We've got a whole bunch of stuff in the member section, the premium member section. So we'll see you there.

Lesson Notes

newbie¹ – Someone who is new and inexperienced at an activity or a job.

- We have a newbie working with us today. It should be interesting to see what mistakes they make.
- I feel like a complete newbie at this sport. I hope I learn quickly.

layover² – The time in between flight connections.

- There is a very short layover in Calgary. Hopefully there will be no flight delays otherwise we are going to miss the connection.
- A 2 hour layover is perfect. You have enough time to go through customs and security plus grab a bite to eat if you're hungry.

gut instinct³ – An gut feeling or gut instinct can be used equally. It is an instinct or intuition that helps you to decide what you should do in a certain situation.

- I have a gut feeling that I'm going to get offered the job.
- My gut instinct says we should turn left on this road.

ice box⁴ – This is an old term that is used to refer to the freezer section of the refrigerator.

- The room was so cold, I felt like I was in an ice box.
- Throw those drinks in the ice box for 15 minutes and they should be nice and cold.

changed our mind⁵ – To change (someones) mind. To decide to do something different than you originally planned.

- I have changed my mind at least a dozen times about the color I would like to paint the living room of our house.
- He changed his mind at the last minute and decided not to come with us for dinner.

sleepy-headed⁶ – Someone who is acting sleepy headed seems like they are half asleep. They are not thinking or acting very quickly, they need more sleep. Someone who likes to sleep can be called a sleepy-head.

- Curtis is a bit sleepy-headed for 15-20 minutes after he wakes up in the morning.
- On the weekends my daughter tends to be a bit of a sleepy head and doesn't get up until 10AM.

duty-free⁷ – A store that sells products with no taxes in airports or near border crossings.

- They allow you 2 bottles of alcohol duty-free when you re-enter Canada after being out of the country for 3 or more days.

- The duty-free store sells perfume, alcohol and electronic goods usually.

long-term rental⁸ – A rental that is for an extended period of time. It will depend on the normal rental period for the item or space whether you say it is a short-term rental or a long-term rental. For example, renting a house for 3 months or less would be considered a short term rental. Renting a surfboard for 1 weeks or more would be considered a long-term rental because surf boards are rented by the hour, the day or week.

- I need a long-term bicycle rental for the two weeks I'll be visiting Hawaii.

slash⁹ – The word slash describes this symbol: / but it is verbalized as the word 'slash' in conversation.

This was used in the context of describing a business that does 2 different things. It is a surf board rental shop and also an internet café.

- I wish there was a bakery / fruit market in our neighborhood. It would be nice to buy everything in one place.
- Let's go to that restaurant called the Asian Food Restaurant. It's like a sushi / Korean restaurant.

language barriers¹⁰ – The lack of understanding something due to it being a foreign language.

- We were confused about what we needed to do because there was a language barrier between the Spanish speaking police officer and us.

there's been many more stories¹¹ – This was a spoken error. The correct form should be 'there've been many more stories'.

there's three different time zones¹² – This was a spoken error. The correct form should be 'there are three different time zones'.

Practice Exercises

True or False

Based on the conversation decide if these statements are true or false:

1. The first experience we had when we needed information was in Costa Rica.
2. Amy tried to rent a car in Ecuador.
3. Our Spanish was very limited when we asked where the terminal was.
4. The second time we had a difficult time in the airport was in Quito Ecuador.
5. Our accommodation in Ecuador was 3 or 4 kilometres from town.

Fill in the Blank

Choose which words best fits in the blank space of each sentence.

- Newbie
- Layover
- Gut Instinct
- Ice box
- Changed our Mind

1. We usually have a long _____ between flights when we travel.
2. We _____ about where to stay on our trip.
3. I was just learning Spanish so I was a _____.
4. My _____ was telling me that this was the right airport.
5. When we came home from our trip the weather felt like we were in an _____.

Writing Exercise: Write about an experience you have had in an airport. Try to describe what happened in your travels with people, places and things you encountered.

Answers to True or False questions

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True

Answers To Fill in the blank

1. Layover
2. Changed Our Mind
3. Newbie
4. Gut Instinct
5. Ice Box