



## Improving Communication Skills of Language Learners

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### ABSTRACT

The advent of the internet caused some observers to mourn the imminent death of personal written correspondence, but the reality couldn't be further from the prediction. Communication with others through texts, social media, and email is increasingly important. With that, more messages mean more potential for misunderstandings. In this article, we talk about why communication skills in English are so important; we'll also give you tips for meeting today's communication demands, whether English is your first language or whether you are learning it as an additional language skill.

### Keywords:

Communication, English and other languages, team working, importance of communication skills.

English is a lingua franca, meaning it is a "bridge" language: When two people who speak different non-English languages meet, very often the common language they use to connect is English. This is why English is taught in many schools around the globe and why many international corporations are officially mandating English communication for employees in all global locations. English is the common language of navigation, such as for air traffic controllers and airline pilots, and it is the most common language used on the worldwide web. It is one of the six official languages of the 193-member United Nations. It is also the language of scientific research, with some 96 percent of science journals publishing in English. Some researchers report that learning English communication is as important to obtaining their PhD as their thesis. English is spoken by about 2 billion people today. As a native language, English ranks third, but it is the number one language learned by speakers of other languages. In fact, more people use

English communication as a second language than they do their own native language [1,2].

For both native speakers and ESOL speakers, strong communication in English involves four modes: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Different people have naturally differing aptitudes for these skills. You probably know someone who has terrific English conversation skills, responding to your points with keen insights and offering up witty observations seemingly without effort. This person might also be someone who never cracks a book and who panics when faced with writing a simple cover letter. You probably also know that person's opposite: the introvert who seems tongue-tied in social settings or whose mind seems to wander when others are talking, but who reads a couple novels per week or repeatedly churns out well-crafted stories and articles. The more well-rounded you are in all the modes of English communication, the better equipped you are to thrive personally, socially, and professionally [3,4]. Whatever skill you

struggle with, the best prescription for improving it is practice. Reading comprehension increases when you read often, especially if you read a variety of material. So if you shrink in fear at a school or work reading assignment, commit to reading a little every day. Pick up a magazine, read a novel a few pages at a time — no pressure to finish it quickly — or take a few minutes to actually read one of the articles a friend has linked on social media. The same goes for writing. Do a little every day. It doesn't have to be anything anyone ever reads, though occasionally it's helpful to have someone read your writing and offer feedback. As a runner becomes strong and fast through regularly logging miles, a writer becomes concise and articulate by logging words. Learning to focus your listening also takes practice. If you are the kind of person who is always planning what you'll have for dinner while someone else is talking to you, it helps to simply catch your own mind in the act of wandering and gently bring it back to the present situation. Many experts recommend establishing a meditation practice, even if only a few minutes a day, to hone the skill of noticing when your thoughts stray and bringing them back to the point of focus [5].

If you have trouble speaking, whether in social groups or before audiences, try to assess exactly why; if you're too anxious to get your point across, sometimes acknowledging your anxiety can help dispel it. Try not to be too hard on yourself if, looking back, you cringe at something you've said in a public speaking situation. For one thing, we tend to be our own harshest judge, so it's likely no one else thought it was that bad. Also, ask yourself how *you* would treat someone else in the same position. You would likely feel sympathy and want to encourage that person — so do the same favor for yourself. If you can put aside some of your self-judgment, your mind is freed up to compile coherent thoughts on the fly, which is what public speaking is all about. Dr. Starley Dullien, Program Director of the English Language and Pathway Programs at National University, speaks English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, and is currently learning Chinese. She draws on her personal experience

when she suggests day-to-day strategies for improving English communication skills. Dr. Dullien recommends committing to at least an hour or two of English study every day. "You have to make the language a part of your life and a part of you," she says. One tip Dr. Dullien suggests for English learners is to resist the temptation of setting your cell phone to your first language — set it to English instead. Read and write in English as often as possible. Dr. Dullien suggests keeping a journal in English, or even just copying English articles or writing while someone dictates. This reinforces the written appearance of spoken words. Another way to engage visual learning with language learning is to make collages of magazine articles on similar subjects. Dr. Dullien also points out that books that pair words and pictures are powerful language acquisition tools. Children's books, comic books, and graphic novels enlist the brain's visual abilities to cement English communication concepts [6].

Another option for prospective California teachers is the Bachelor of Arts in English with Inspired Teaching and Learning and a Preliminary Single Subject Credential. This option intensifies candidates' English communication skills with an enhanced program of literary analysis, linguistics, and communication. It prepares teachers to engage meaningfully with students to ensure their achievement socially and emotionally as well as academically. The Bachelor of Arts in Strategic Communications sharpens students' communication expertise for settings in business, marketing, and public relations. This program develops strategies for communicating on multiple levels, from the personal to the global. Students learn to craft effective messaging that can be applied to any career or workplace environment. National University offers an array of journalism, film, and entertainment programs of study to prepare students to evolve in the fast-changing and diverse world of communication media. The Bachelor and Master of Digital Journalism programs provide students with a grounding in the principles of news reporting while also positioning them as future innovators of emerging communication media [7,8].

Whatever level of English communication you want to pursue, Institutes or Universities can help. Making a strong personal commitment to practice and self-study also will be helpful. The advantages gained through confident communication — on a personal level, in a business environment, or on the internet — will have a substantial impact on both your career and personal life.

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