

Learning to Speak English with Confidence

Tips to Give Confidence Speaking Foreign Languages

How many people really demonstrate confidence speaking foreign languages?

We feel is it true to say that most people get nervous when speaking foreign languages. This is usually because they feel they don't know enough words, they haven't perfected their grammar or because whenever they have to speak to someone they feel pressured to say something in a 100% correct manner.

It is normal to feel a bit insecure when learning a foreign language but don't let it stop you.

Practice English with people you know!

- ◆ If shyness is a barrier to your use of the language, it may be helpful to practice with people you know well who can speak the language! This may be easier if you live in a city.

Long-term Goal

- ◆ Once you have learned your language skills, many students struggle to put them into practice. We will look at this today.
- ◆ Here are some tips which will help you overcome your (natural and normal) issues when it comes to use of the language.
- ◆ After all, it is no use learning a foreign language if you cannot actually use it!

Everyone makes mistakes!

- ◆ Make sure neither you nor your children feel pressured to speak the language you are learning, perfectly, from day one. You are learning and it is only natural that you make mistakes. You shouldn't be embarrassed or feel shy if you use the wrong word or pronounce a word incorrectly. In fact, making mistakes will help you learn even more.
- ◆ Everyone makes mistakes when speaking, even in our native languages. It really doesn't matter if you say something wrong, what matters is that you practise and try your best to make others understand you, even if your grammar isn't 100% perfect.
- ◆ Learning a new language is hard, and one of the most difficult aspects is to actually speak it.

Listen and pay attention

- ◆ Listening to other people talk will help you improve your language skills and, as a result, you will feel more confident when starting a conversation.
- ◆ Many people feel insecure when they speak a foreign language because they feel they don't know enough to make others understand them. No matter what your level, listening to others will help you get the flow of the language and pick up the way people speak and express themselves.
- ◆ You don't need to meet with native people who speak the language, you can simply do it by putting a movie on or watching a TV series in the target language. Soon you will feel you know the language better and you will feel more confident when you next need to speak. Of course, take into account that getting confident and comfortable when speaking a foreign language might take some time but the wait is definitely worth it!

Practice in an informal situation

- ◆ Why not be comfortable? Chose a familiar setting and time.
- ◆ Speaking a foreign language can be less intimidating when you've got a glass of good red wine in one hand. That's not to say that you should always be improving confidence with alcohol, but that you should place yourself in situations where you feel comfortable talking. Eat out with a friend who speaks the language too!

Don't be shy

- ◆ Something you really must get your child (or yourself!) to do is just to not be shy. As we said before, it is only natural to make mistakes and we shouldn't be embarrassed. On the other hand, we shouldn't be shy to start a conversation with someone who speaks the language as that's one of the main ways to actually get fluent.
- ◆ Just try and speak your target language as much as possible, even mix it up with your native language if you have to. The point is to use it as much as possible so you feel more comfortable with the language and you start feeling more and more confident.
- ◆ If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart. –Nelson Mandela

Be creative

- ◆ When speaking a foreign language we sometimes struggle to express ourselves because we just don't remember a certain word or saying. Don't worry. It doesn't matter if you don't remember the exact word just try to explain yourself and be creative with the vocabulary and grammar you do know.
- ◆ For instance, if you forget how to say "chair" in your target language just try explain what the object is and what it is used for and everybody will understand you! At the end, when speaking, what's important is people understanding you and you getting your point across no matter what happens so, be creative and use those things you remember to explain yourself!
- ◆ You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only 1 language, you live only once –Czech proverb

Speak, speak, and speak some more!

- ◆ It might sound silly but speaking your target language is the best way to actually get confident with it. Obviously, the more you practise the more comfortable you will feel with the vocabulary and grammar you know so, speaking is definitely one of the most important things to do to get confident when using a foreign language.
- ◆ Talk to your friends, children, parents or even to yourself! What matters is that you take all of your skills and knowledge and you put them to use so that you feel more self-confident and comfortable when speaking any language.

Offer rewards and positive feedback (Young learners)

- ◆ Don't hesitate to use a reward system for language learning if this is something your children react well to. It is amazing what some children can achieve when tempted by a shiny star, a smiley face and even material rewards. Language learning should be approached like any other activity you want to motivate your child to do. Children forget their anxieties when rewards are offered!
- ◆ For older learners, praise and positive feedback are vital. After all, we are looking at techniques for improving confidence!
- ◆ And of course, I welcome any feedback which the students, or their parents, may offer!

Be a good listener!

- ◆ Most of our fear of speaking in a foreign language stems from the fact that conversations happen in real-time. This means that you have to be able to think on your feet and be ready to respond in a manner that is coherent without pausing to give it too much thought. And to make matters worse, 50% of a conversation is actually listening, so you need to have the vocab and language knowledge to understand what people are saying back to you too!

Practice one to one, not in a group

- ◆ When you set out to practice speaking a new language, doing so in a group of people can feel incredibly scary and intimidating. A good way to build your confidence before you take that leap is to start small, usually one-on-one. Find a native speaker to have coffee with once a week and practice chatting with him or her in the target tongue. Be firm about only speaking the language while you're together and try preparing a few topics, such as books, politics, or movies, to discuss. In no time at all, you'll feel more confident about your abilities and ready to try them out in other situations too!

A new method I will use – the mock meeting...

- ◆ I have successfully used the technique of 'mock interviews' to help other students prepare for job interviews in English.
- ◆ This is 'role play' in which my role is that of the interviewer.
- ◆ So: a new technique I am perfecting is the 'mock encounter' where you meet a native English speaker unexpectedly.
- ◆ And I will look at how you handle the situation. The scenario is secret until the lesson to make it as realistic as possible.
- ◆ You do not know the scenario in advance.