

9 Speaking English Like a Leader

Many of our foreign-born clients come to us for help in learning how to sound like a leader in English. Typically, their English is already very good, their vocabulary pretty extensive, and while they may have an accent, they normally make few grammatical mistakes, if any. What exactly do they mean then, when they say they want to speak like a leader? In our experience, what they want to do is speak in a manner that makes them appear competent and persuasive—they want to sound smart, confident, and powerful.

Unfortunately, the concept of leadership and how it expresses itself in language is a very difficult one to define. There are many books with various leadership theories—and we certainly don't want to add another one to the already long list.

But we do know that foreign-born professionals face a particularly difficult challenge: not only is leadership (and its components) hard to define, its characteristics are also culturally bound.

The language patterns of leadership are different from language to language. The language patterns of Chinese or German leaders can be

the opposite of those typical of an American leader. A business leader in Germany uses a very erudite, complex, rich language full of subordinate clauses and adjectives, so the tendency for a native speaker of German is to replicate that pattern in English. However, that's precisely what makes him/her sound like a foreigner in the U.S. Similarly, a Chinese business leader sprinkles his or her sentences with a number of high-sounding slogans and maxims (e.g., "restructuring leads to progress"), but that approach doesn't work here.

Many foreigners (unless they are already bilingual) have a tendency to translate from their native language and use some of the same linguistic patterns—especially if they are under stress. That's part of the problem. If you want to come across as a leader in your professional field in the U.S., you have to borrow from the same repertoire of techniques that American leaders use: brief, concise statements, simple language, and clear messages.

What really matters is clarity of thought, expressed in simple, good English. If you want to speak English with authority, you need to steer clear of the erudite eloquence and rhetorical techniques that are typical of leadership in other cultures, and focus on presenting an effective message instead.

Often foreign-born professionals worry about using incorrect words, or picking inappropriate expressions, or repeating overused adjectives. They worry that these language choices make them sound uneducated and more junior than they actually are. While we understand this preoccupation with individual words, we have found that what contributes to form an impression of authority, or detracts from it, has to do with having a clear message and a straightforward sentence structure. The individual words you use don't matter as much; even if you pick a very unusual word, it might be noticed, but it will usually be understood in the context.

Two Approaches

Franz Josef, an Austrian project manager at a high-tech company in Silicon Valley, was asked by his boss during a team meeting whether he thought that a coworker, Ann (who was really keen on taking on a leadership role in the project), would be able to run the project. He

replied in a convoluted way: "If you are an avid runner and are training for a 10K race and you finish among the first 50 runners, that doesn't mean you would qualify for the Olympics." His team members were perplexed and didn't know what he was talking about.

What would an American have said?

Allison, sitting in the same team meeting, replied: "I think that Ann is a really great person, I like her a lot, although I don't know her well. I'm a bit concerned about her lack of direct experience. But I suppose we could give it a try. And, we are always here to help her out in case she needs us."

Both project managers were expressing the same idea: they had some hesitations about Ann. However, Franz Josef's example was confusing and vague, and sounded negative. Allison's approach was straightforward and positive. Their choice of language and their attitudes were fundamentally different and influenced their team members' perception of their abilities as leaders.

This chapter tries to give a few pointers on how leadership in the U.S. can be expressed and perceived through the use of the English language. The goal is to make our readers more aware of the subtext and the subtleties of their linguistic choices (especially the subconscious ones) and to help them learn to use English more deliberately. We all know that people skills are important for career advancement, and language plays a big role in interacting well with your colleagues, superiors, and subordinates alike.

We realize that some of the points discussed below may come across as generalizations or even as gross simplifications. They are all based on real-life examples of issues faced by our clients or other foreign-born professionals with whom we have worked. The techniques discussed are only meant to be general principles and should be considered illustrations of some of the language patterns typical of accomplished professionals in the U.S. (especially Silicon Valley). Consider them as a menu of options from which you can choose to craft your own style of speaking English as a leader.

Convergence toward the Middle of the Language Spectrum

Think about language as a continuum of possible choices, with one end being explicit, direct, forceful language and the other end being indirect, hesitant language. Europeans (and Israelis even more so) can be seen at the end of the explicit side of the spectrum, sometimes using overheated language, while many Asian cultures tend to be at the other end of the “indirect language” side.

Americans, on the other hand, tend to be more in the middle of this spectrum, with a tendency towards direct but calm and diplomatic language. An American would say: “I am not sure he is fully qualified,” whereas a European would say: “I don't think he is qualified,” and an Asian might say: “I am not really familiar with his qualifications.”

In business, Americans generally express themselves in measured tones. You will rarely hear words expressed in rage or even in overblown enthusiasm in meetings, on the phone, and in conferences. Employees are expected to be in control of their emotions and to be constructive members of the team, with a positive attitude, to “not make waves” or to not stand out in a conspicuous way. For example, in a recent discussion at a big, high-tech Silicon Valley company, a professional visiting from overseas started angrily attacking a colleague who worked overseas. Immediately, one of the senior managers stepped in and told him that in the U.S., personal attacks were not allowed and asked him to please stick to issues and problems.

Even during an argument, raised voices are not acceptable; the discussion should retain a certain level of politeness and should never get personal—personal attacks are considered the height of being “unprofessional.” It is OK to disagree about issues, but not about someone's personal input. So while a question such as “How can you say something like this?” might work in some parts of Europe, it is not advisable to use this kind of tone here.

At the opposite end, being too indirect is also a handicap. Some of our Asian clients agonize over meetings in which they have to “confront” an employee with negative news. The implicit conflict is not manageable for them, and it forces them to express themselves very indirectly,

which frustrates Americans because they can't really understand what the problem is. So, many of them choose to avoid the dreaded confrontation altogether.

In the business world in the U.S., there is a certain uniformity of language, i.e., a tendency to conform to certain models of communication and behavior within an office or industry. Corporate America, in general, is more accepting of people who fit in—even in terms of language—than of people who behave in an eccentric fashion. However, this tendency to conform—also called “drinking the same Kool-Aid”¹⁹—is less common in start-ups, where “being different” is encouraged and people tend to conform less to prescribed behaviors.

A Menu of Techniques to Speak Like a Leader

Be Positive

Use language that emphasizes the positive rather than the negative. For example, a sentence like, “We cannot offer you a job right now although we do anticipate several openings in September,” sounds much better if it's revised with a positive spin: “We might have an opening for you in September, although not right now. We'll get in touch with you then.”

Using sentences that emphasize solutions rather than problems is what distinguishes a style that is perceived as a leadership style. A solutions-based approach makes your statements sound positive and geared towards solving the problem—and being able to shift emphasis from the problem to the solution really shapes people's perception of you as a leader.

Another example: “The new equipment will not be subject to as many breakdowns as the old voice mail system, thereby eliminating lost time.” Positive spin: “The new voice mail system will save time by eliminating the many breakdowns we had with the old system.”

19. “Drinking your own Kool-Aid” is a typical Silicon Valley expression.

Stay positive even when it feels impossible, e.g., when you are assigned a project that is really a stretch and seems unachievable. Don't say: "I can't guarantee I will be able to finish the job by Wednesday, but I'll try my best," but rather say: "I will do everything I can to get the job done by Wednesday."

Frequently, foreigners will react with skepticism or even sarcasm when they hear a very positive, almost glowing statement or speech: it sounds too good to be true to them. They think the speaker is being too naïve and disingenuous. We remember a European client of ours who had a very cynical reaction to the "good news" speech delivered by a senior executive in her company. Her American colleagues were put off by her sarcastic remarks, and she didn't earn any points—as she might have in Europe—with her questioning attitude.

Get to the Point Quickly

English is all about economy of words.

When you want to make a statement, especially in a meeting or conference call, get to the point quickly. Emphasize the bottom line [your main point], and specify what you want people to do as a result of your comment. Vague explanations and long sentences will label you as ineffective.

For example, "Changing consumer demographics and psychographics will enable mainstream information technology if vendors get it right."

Revised: "Consumer trends will make information technology mainstream. Vendors need to 'get it right' immediately."

A good technique, especially when the thought you are trying to express is fairly complex, is to use enumeration techniques and/or "chunking down" problems.

For example: "What I think needs to happen is 1, 2, 3..." or: "Let's look at this problem from a couple of perspectives: perspective A..., perspective B..."

Being verbose and long-winded is a sure way to lose your audience quickly. Get to the point you want to make and keep it simple.

Use Active Instead of Passive Sentences

Active sentences give an impression of empowerment. Already in middle school, American students are taught to use the active versus the passive tense. The active form sounds much more compelling. Listen to the difference.

Passive: "Hourly workers were found to take as much pride as salaried workers in their company affiliations."

Active: "The research team found that hourly workers take as much pride as salaried workers in their company affiliation."

Use Verbs Instead of Nouns

In many languages other than English, people use more nouns than verbs when speaking in an educated manner. However, American English focuses on using more verbs than nouns. Instead of saying, "The expectation of management is that the recovery of the economy is imminent," you should try, "Management expects the economy to recover soon." Not only does this sound better, it is also a much easier way to communicate for non-native English speakers once they have learned to think this way.

Use Questions Rather than Statements

One of the main problems for international professionals—as we mentioned before—is that they tend to translate from their native language, especially when stressed or overworked, and so while their sentences might be grammatically correct, they don't strike the same note in English.

A good technique is to turn assertions into questions. Instead of saying: "Send me the contract" which would sound like a command in English, try a softer sentence: "Can you please send me the contract?" or even better: "When do you think you will be able to send me the contract?"

"Call me tomorrow" is a direct request (almost an order) that sounds quite rude in a business environment. Better: "Can you call me tomorrow?"

But not all questions are OK. Direct questions can sound aggressive and controlling. For example, instead of asking: “Have you received approval from management to do this?” a better version is: “I was wondering if you have received approval yet.”

And, if you would like to know if someone is “on board”, it is best to ask, “Let me ask you this, are you sure you can commit to this now?” rather than: “Will you follow through?”

Don't Be Too Modest

Sometimes foreigners—especially women from a more indirect, less individualistic culture—will use phrases that undercut their authority, making them sound weak and ineffective. They will say, “I don't know if this makes any sense to you” or, “I'm sure you already thought about this” or, “I am sure Mr. Smith knows more about this than I do, but...”

Or, they will apologize all the time: “Forgive me for interrupting...”

Avoid these disclaimers as much as you can. Far from enhancing your authority, they detract from it.

Be Diplomatic

In order to fit in, to be heard in a positive way, you frequently need to strike a diplomatic tone.

“We've already done that in the past,” sounds rude in English. A native speaker would most likely say: “It seems to me we have tried this approach before.”

Instead of making definite assertions and talking in black and white terms, it is advisable to use many phrases like “I think..., my impression is...”

When someone stops talking, instead of immediately providing your own input, it is better to use a phrase such as, “If I heard you correctly, this is what you were suggesting...” or “Let me make sure I understand you correctly.”

Other commonly used phrases are: “Did I hear you say that you were going to do X and Y...?”

“Help me understand what you mean by saying...”

These sentences help make sure that the speaker feels acknowledged, and they allow you to formulate a more careful reply.

Be Polite

As discussed, U.S. English makes a great effort to soften any blow. Just adding some polite words such as “please” or “do me a favor,” doesn’t do the trick here. “Please don’t make that mistake again” is not an acceptable way of addressing a coworker. A better version could be: “Could this procedure be looked at differently next time?” It avoids an accusatory tone and asks a question, which is much easier to accept than a statement, as it leaves room for discussion. And, it focuses on the issue instead of the person.

There are many other ways of softening your language and still getting the idea across. For example, instead of saying: “Can you wait for me to finish this?” you might want to use the conditional tense and say: “Would you please have a seat and wait for a moment?” (See how soft this suggestion was?)

Another technique is to add a “maybe” to requests or statements, such as: “Maybe we could look at this again when we have more data,” or “Maybe I didn’t look at this from all angles, I’ll go back and do it again.” The expression “quite” also softens the blow, as in: “That wasn’t quite what I was expecting.” Another option to defuse difficult situations is: “It seems to me that...” or “I think this could be rethought...”

And, if you don’t know something, don’t just shrug and blame someone else: “I don’t have a clue about this. Herr Mueller was supposed to prepare it.” Rather, say that you will look it up, discuss it with Herr Mueller, and get back to them.

Conversely, foreigners themselves might also encounter situations and questions from their U.S. counterparts that seem rude to them, depending on what culture they come from. For example, even after much explanation, they might be asked: “What do you mean, what's the bottom line?” or “What does this have to do with anything?”

When faced with what they perceive as rude questions, or even verbal attacks, many foreigners are taken aback and say whatever comes to their mind; they are not prepared to answer or, if they do, their discomfort with the question might easily come through with an aggressive comment. The best strategy is to rephrase the question and say, “What do you mean?” or, “Are you asking me if...” or even better, “Why do you ask?”

Use Familiar Examples

Avoid unfamiliar examples because it takes time to explain them. For example, many of our French clients interweave French historical figures in their speech; that's not a wise thing to do because many people here aren't familiar with European history (and they don't have to be).

Use the Right Intonation

Understand that when you raise your voice at the end of a sentence, people hear it as a question and not as a statement. Sometimes called “uptalk,” this is a habit many foreign-born professional women display, and their credibility takes a hit [is undermined]. One of our clients would introduce herself as: “I am a product manager,” but she raised her voice at the end of the sentence. It sounded as if she were not sure of her position.

Listen Actively

This is another characteristic of the language of leadership in the U.S. Business leaders in the U.S. are required to manage by consensus and therefore need to make sure that they have heard what you are saying and will try to capture your contribution. Please see Chapter 7 for a description of active listening techniques.

A nice way to end a discussion is to summarize what was said without putting in your own interpretation. Not only does that show that you were paying attention, but also that you were able to put it into context without judgment, thereby validating the other person's position.

Also, active listening can help you contribute your point of view in a meeting without your having to wait until you are called upon; use transitions like “What I am hearing is...” and then state your own point.

Adapt Your Language to Different Hierarchical Situations

It's undeniable that language changes depending on your position of power. Therefore, a shift in language patterns is necessary depending on whether you are talking to your boss or subordinate. This can present serious challenges to foreign-born professionals when they are promoted to positions of leadership. Should they now adopt a more forceful language, which is how, in many of their cultures, a leader is believed to communicate? Or should they remain one of the guys with the group out of which they rose to the new managerial position? There is no bulletproof solution, as every situation is different. In general, however, people's tones tend to move from more deferential (subordinate to boss) to more definitive.

Let's look at a few examples of how the same issue—a delay in getting to a meeting—would be expressed in different ways depending on the hierarchical relationship:

- Subordinate to boss: “We had to get the meeting started... we weren't sure if you were going to make it.” A more hesitant, subdued tone.
- Peer to peer: “Helen, how come you're late? Did something happen?” A friendly reproach.
- Boss to subordinate: “Prashant, you came in late again today and you didn't warn us ahead of time. In the future, please call and let us know and I will regard this as an isolated incidence.” Very matter-of-fact, straightforward, still respectful in tone.

How Do You Give and Receive Feedback in the U.S. Business Culture?

Business leaders are often responsible for giving feedback. For foreign-born professionals, it is very important to know and understand the formula used here when giving feedback in the U.S. Positive feedback is rather straightforward and it will be punctuated by adjectives like “great” or, “good job” or, “way to go.”

Negative feedback will almost always start with a positive statement or several positive general statements, so that the atmosphere is more relaxed and one is not just focusing on things that need improving. Once the positive points have been made, the next word is usually a BUT; this is the turning point, and people realize that what comes next is really what the review is all about. However, because positive comments are also part of the equation, the feedback is more acceptable and is not perceived as criticism. For more on this topic, see Chapter 2.

SPEAKING TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS

1. Keep your sentences short
2. Prefer the simple to the complex
3. Prefer the familiar word
4. Avoid unnecessary words
5. Put action into your verbs
6. Get to the point quickly
7. Have one clear message
8. Be positive
9. Use terms your listener can picture
10. Talk to express your point, not to impress your audience

Reducing Your Accent

A young European private equity analyst was enjoying a very successful professional life in the U.S. Even though he realized he was seen as a somewhat eccentric, brilliant outsider, it didn't bother him until he started noticing some perplexed reactions when he talked during his firm's partners' meetings. He was frequently asked to repeat what he just said, and still people looked at him perplexed. One day, a senior partner at his firm pulled him aside and explained to him that what he said and the way he said it attracted attention simply because of his accent. His accent and intonation forced his colleagues to really concentrate on his words and, therefore, made most exchanges fairly laborious. Together, they concluded that his accent was holding him back from fitting in more smoothly.

The more you advance in your career, the more your accent matters. Having an accent is not a problem “per se,” since Silicon Valley and the Bay Area are full of international professionals. But if your accent interferes with your being understood, or if it is so noticeable that it is distracting, then it does matter. And it can get in the way of your professional development.

The good news is that, despite conventional wisdom, you can modify your accent even as an adult. Below is a process that has helped dozens of our clients. One important point to understand is that while you will be able to modify your accent, you will probably never lose it—nor should you. The “flatter” the world becomes, as Thomas Friedman points out,²⁰ the more accents are a normal occurrence.

Steps to Gradually Reduce Your Accent

Set goals. Know what you can realistically expect to change during and after the sessions; this also depends on the amount of work you put into hearing and improving different sounds and word emphases.

Practice. Every day, even on the weekend, practice the new sounds and words. Stand in front of the mirror, watch the way your mouth makes the sound, and really focus on how you are enunciating the

20. Friedman, Thomas. The World is Flat. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

sound you need to improve. You will need to train the muscles to behave in new ways. So be sure to relax your jaw and the back of your throat.

Watch yourself in the mirror to see if your mouth and tongue are in the correct positions. For example, if you don't see your tongue placed visibly between your teeth to make the /th/ sound, you probably aren't doing it correctly. Develop the consciousness of listening to yourself—in your mind—and of anticipating what you are going to say. Here is a typical process of correcting your accented words:

1st phase: Here comes the word. Darn, I said it incorrectly.

2nd phase: Oops, I said it incorrectly again, but at least now I know how it should sound, and I knew it was coming.

3rd phase: Here comes the word. I know how to say it. Success!

Pay particular attention to the consonants in the middle and at the end of the words: without them, you will be hard to understand. /Have/ is not the same as /ha/, or /five/ can't be pronounced /fi/. This is difficult for most Asians as such sounds don't exist in Asian languages. For example, during a recent accent reduction session, a Chinese engineer said something that sounded like: /I ha essampl fi paymen contra/. What he meant was: "I have an example of five payment contracts."

Pay attention to vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u, y) and diphthongs (ei, ai, ou, au, oa, oi); some of them are held longer than others. For more tips and ideas, please go to

<http://www.professional-business-communications.com>.

Slow down! Post a sticky note with these words next to your telephone and write them ("slow down") into your presentation notes. This will remind you to slow down when you catch yourself talking too fast during your presentation or phone call—especially if you are stressed.

American English goes up in sound and then comes down, so listen to yourself: are you constantly using a high/upward tone at the end of your sentences? This will confuse your listeners because they will think you are asking a question and not making a point. Lower your voice at the end of a sentence or thought.

Record yourself and listen to your own speech.

Check if you sound boring, as monotonous speech is hard to listen to.

Videotape yourself and critique yourself (or have a friend do it).

Read. Read, read, read in English as much as you have time for; read a minimum of half an hour every day. Your reading should include fiction, with dialogue in it so that everyday words in American English become totally natural to you, as well as sentence structure.

Read along with books on tape, record yourself and compare the sounds.

Watch TV. Watch programs such as the news, PBS, sitcoms [situation comedies], etc. Listen to the way people sound out the words and listen to the music of their sentences.

Talk to people outside of your language group as much as you can.

Take at least 5 to 10 minutes every day to practice the new sounds; the best place is on the phone because no one can watch you if you don't look graceful at the beginning.

Correct your "sloppy" speech. If you already have been speaking English for a long time, it is possible that you have developed bad habits and are 'sloppy' saying certain words. Watch out for them and correct them; sound them out for a while in a really exaggerated manner; then, when you say them in a conversation, they will sound correct.

Techniques to Increase Your Vocabulary

Reading Books

Many of our clients are engineers who typically read nonfiction books, if any. Reading fiction will help you learn new words and expressions. Choose one from the *New York Times* Bestseller List, or on any topic of interest to you (historical fiction, detective novels, mysteries). Be sure to choose books with a lot of dialogue, as this will help make your own conversations more fluent.

Listening to Audio Books

If you don't have much time to read, you can listen to audio books while driving to and from work. Borrow CDs from your local library or download audio books directly to your iPod from sites such as <http://www.audible.com>.

Watching News, Nature, Technical or Political Shows on TV, or Listening to NPR

The TV and radio can be your good friends if you choose shows that interest you. Listen actively to the words and expressions that people use and write down any that are new to you.

Joining Toastmasters

Toastmasters is an organization that helps people learn how to speak well in any situations. If you want to be exposed to a variety of topics and vocabulary, you can join your local chapter of Toastmasters. Many of the big companies in Silicon Valley, such as HP or Sun Microsystems, have internal Toastmaster groups. You will have a chance to practice any new words you have learned.

Going to Business Events

There are so many opportunities to go to events on current business or political issues. Possible sources are: a university or college, your local chamber of commerce, meetup.com, Craigslist, alumni groups, and U.S. and international business organizations (in Silicon Valley alone

there are over two hundred organizations listed at <http://www.svhub.org>). Groups such as AAMA, BAIA, CSPA, GABA, Hispanic Net, HYSTA, Monte Jade, SDForum, SiliconFrench, SIPA, SVASE, TiE and so on are very active in Silicon Valley. There are similar groups all over the U.S.; it is just a matter of finding them.

Making Flash Cards of New and Idiomatic Expressions

Listen attentively to your American friends and colleagues, and write down the expressions they use frequently that you are not familiar with. Make sure you know what they mean before you make them a part of your own vocabulary.

In order to keep the words memorized, make yourself flash cards and go through them every day in the beginning; as you get better at them, you can study the cards once a week and keep them active.

One of our clients would write down all the words that the VPs used in meetings, and tried to incorporate them into his vocabulary. It's a good exercise for everybody: make a list of words used by people you respect, and see which ones you can start using.

Joining a Book Club

If you have the time, join a book club. This will “force” you to read since the club members will expect you to participate in the discussions.

Studying SAT Vocabulary Books

If you want to learn more words quickly, buy a book with SAT vocabulary. SAT stands for Standard Achievement Test and is the test that most high school seniors are expected to take to get into college. These books usually have about 250 of the most commonly used words educated people apply in conversation and in their written expressions.

Here are a few phrases that always work well when talking to your boss:²¹

LIST OF POWERFUL PHRASES IN ENGLISH

achieve goals
adjust our priorities
best use of resources
best for the company, for the team
big picture
cost in resources
cost in time
give full credit to
give this a trial
I need your advice
increased market, productivity
opens up possibilities
run all the numbers
take the upside
team player
thank you for asking me
think this through
user friendly
win-win situation
you have a good point

21. This list was excerpted from Griffin, Jack. How to Say it at Work: Putting Yourself Across with Power Words, Phrases, Body Language and Communication Secrets. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1998.

CORPORATE JARGON

Ramping it up—to increase

Let's talk offline—let's have a private conversation

Pinging—sending a quick greeting (usually via e-mail)

Key differentiator—key difference, main difference

Sharing best practices—compare best ideas

Scrubbing or window-dressing the numbers—manipulating the numbers

Going granular—talking, discussing in great detail

Come off the reservation—relate to real life*

Leverage your positioning—to exert power or influence on

Spinning—couching the message in a way that is appealing to the listeners, highlighting or rephrasing certain aspects of the message to get your point across

Micromanaging—managing with excessive attention to details

We are on the same page—we agree

They siloed—different business units become silos, entities by themselves, thereby assuming too much power

Violently agreeing to something—agreeing

Coming to a hard stop—you can only do something until that stop [time]

Taking the ball and running with it—being responsible for a certain project

* This expression does not have a negative connotation in the business world.

Action Steps to Sound More Confident

1. Use precise vocabulary that shows your expertise, not complicated words and convoluted phrases.
2. Describe what you mean clearly, and don't leave room for ambiguity.
3. Adapt your vocabulary to the position and background of the person with whom you are speaking; establish a connection.
4. Involve your colleagues in your speech; use conversational tags at the end of sentences, e.g., "You would see it the same way, wouldn't you?" or "I understand you have expertise in this field, don't you?"
5. Use simple, straightforward sentences
6. Don't use words and expressions that convey superiority or inferiority such as, "Am I the only one who...?"
7. Be positive; turn sentences with negatives into sentences with a positive spin.
8. Don't use sarcasm or irony in formal or informal speeches, as these can be misinterpreted.
9. Use words that encourage others to open up and contribute, and you will be seen as a powerful listener and communicator.

USEFUL TIPS FOR SPEAKING ENGLISH LIKE A LEADER

Helpful

Having a clear message

Understanding and using idioms correctly

Using positive language and expressions

Speaking in verbs, rather than in nouns

Being polite

Slowing down

Reading books in fiction and nonfiction to improve your vocabulary and fluency

Harmful

Using unusual words

Being cynical and sarcastic

Swearing and using vulgar language

Not listening

Mistaking informality for lack of hierarchy

Speaking with a strong accent

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