



IIT Madras
ONLINE DEGREE



TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS

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Why (are the varieties of) English of native speakers hard to understand?

1. ACCENT

- English is a global language – Many accents around the world.
- Number of non-native speakers of English is higher than the number of native speakers of English in the world. Influence of native tongue on English used by non-native speakers. For e.g. Take a piece of cake.

2. SPEED

- Native speakers of English talk fast that results in **reductions**. E.g. shoulda – should have, coulda- could have, wanna – want to, kinda- kind of, gonna – going to etc.
- **Contractions** – I'll (I will), You'll (you will), we're (we are)
- E.g: I'm gonna be really upset with you if you are gonna do this.



Why is the English of native speakers hard to understand?

3. VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR

- Adapted from "The Colors of Animals" by Sir John Lubbock in A Book of Natural History (1902, ed. David Starr Jordan)

The color of animals is by no means a matter of chance; it depends on many considerations, but in the majority of cases tends to protect the animal from danger by rendering it less conspicuous. Perhaps it may be said that if coloring is mainly protective, there ought to be but few brightly colored animals. There are, however, not a few cases in which vivid colors are themselves protective. The kingfisher itself, though so brightly colored, is by no means easy to see. The blue harmonizes with the water, and the bird as it darts along the stream looks almost like a flash of sunlight.



Why is the English of native speakers hard to understand?

- **The example of the kingfisher in the passage is intended to prove _____.**
- A) that the color of an animal is not always adapted to match the background color of its environment
- B) that the color of an animal is always adapted to match the background color of its environment
- C) that the color of an animal is an **extraneous** detail, evolutionarily speaking
- D) that the color of an animal is, statistically speaking, most likely to be adapted to match the background color of its environment
- E) None of these answers; it is an **anecdotal story** designed to inject some **levity** into the passage



How to listen well in a conversation ?

- Relax and focus.
- Do not translate English into your mother tongue (in your head) while listening.
- Tend to understand the context.

A: My name is Keya. I want to book a room in this hotel.

B: May, I see your identification, please?

A: Here you go.

B: Thanks. Do you want a single, double, triple, quad, or a suite room ?



How to improve your listening & speaking skills?

- Listen to different varieties of English.
- Listen to men, women, and children.
- Listen to as many different formats and sources as possible – songs, news, films, TV shows, plays, audiobooks, podcasts, textbook exercises etc.
- Listen to something every day. Listen to some different every day. Listen without getting bored. The more you listen, the better you get at it.
- Listen when you do other activities which doesn't require much attention.
- How do you choose the material? – Understand more than 50% and less than 90% of the content.



A few good sources

- News – BBC, CNN, Fox News, Indian News Channels in English etc.
- Radio – BBC Radio Service, available online - free of cost.
- Podcast – Radio shows that are available only on the internet.
- Movies – 2 Hollywood movies per week (Do not watch with subtitles)
- TV shows – Better than movies because they are longer.
- Songs – Opportunity for repetition.



A few good sources

- Audiobooks – YouTube, Audible, Blinkist, etc. (2X natural speed).
- TED talks – speeches and informational videos, professionally produced, highly suitable for listening.
- Use dictionaries – pronunciation.
- Grammar books and worksheets (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) - available online free of cost.
- Talk to your friends in English.