

WHY DO YOU UNDERSTAND ENGLISH BUT CAN'T SPEAK IT?

This lesson will help you to break free from your current struggles with spoken English and equip you with practical skills to strengthen your confidence in speaking English fluently.

Why can't I speak English fluently?

This is mostly related to the fact that understanding a language requires the use of **receptive skills**: listening and reading. Most English learners focus on language **input** like watching films, YouTube videos and TV shows all in English. They listen to English-speaking podcasts. They read books in English to immerse themselves in the language as much as possible. This is fantastic. Lots of us do it and don't stop doing it. It's a great way to build vocabulary and gain a better overall understanding of how the language functions. But, and there's always a but, this doesn't do so much to increase your fluency when speaking because, in contrast, speaking requires the use of **productive skills**. You need to take a more active role in your studying, and by that, I mean **practice**.

You need to focus more on **output**: using the language rather than just taking it in. We need to have a good balance between the two, but unfortunately, language output can be much harder to practise than language input. It's not so free and easy to go to an English-speaking country and find a personal English tutor or find an English-speaking best friend.

This is why I meet so many students who are grammar geniuses. Students whose knowledge of grammar is higher than most native speakers. However, they just can't speak. They know all of the theory, but when it comes to the practical, they struggle. Today I have six practical tips for you.

1 Talk to Yourself

The first one is completely free, and that is talk to yourself.



This is something I actively did when I was learning Spanish. One of the simplest things you can do to increase your output is to talk to yourself, and you can start right now. It could feel a little bit strange, but it's truly magical how well talking to yourself works to improve your fluency and fluidity; plus, you do it all day long anyway, so ***why not do it in English?***

Most of us have a little voice in our head when we think. Some people don't have this, but most of us do. This little voice probably speaks in your native language. See if you can come up with an English alter ego for your inner voice. If you can't find that inner voice, you're going to have to speak out loud.

- *I am watching TV.*
- *I am washing the dishes.*
- *I am picking up the plate.*
- *I am scrubbing it with a sponge.*
- *I hope my husband brings home pizza for dinner.*

Now I really recommend speaking out loud because you need to practice creating new sounds and feeling how words are formed in the mouth. But **narrating** in your head is a great way to start, and it's a good thing to do if lots of people are around you; this slight adjustment can help you significantly increase how much you use English during the day. It's especially useful if you don't have anyone to practice speaking with and you can't afford to hire someone.

I want to make a further addition to this point, and this is a way you can supercharge your vocabulary. No joke. I used it myself. One of my first videos on YouTube, actually, was 'How to Drastically Increase your Vocabulary' because it works. As you are narrating in your head or out loud everything you do in your day, watch out for when there is a specific word or phrase that you just don't know in English.



Keep a vocab diary. I think back in the day in my first video, like seven years ago, eight years ago, I told people to write down in an actual notebook.

Nowadays, there are apps for that. You can use your notes app. You could program your smartwatch to take in your voice. For example, what if I'm walking down the street and I realise that I don't know the word for traffic light in Italian—the language I'm learning? I would do something like this because I love using my smartphone. First, I would ask Siri to write it in my notes.



Done. Easy as that. Then I'll ask it to set a reminder at 6pm for me to go through my new vocabulary.

Beautiful. So tonight at 6pm, when I've got home, I'll get a reminder to go through the new vocabulary I've added today.

I haven't had to type a single thing. It's been so low effort, but I know that every day I'll be expanding my vocabulary with the words around me that I'm actively noticing that I do not know in Italian or whichever language you're learning. After that, you need to practice using these in sentences out loud. Okay, that's my free, super **accessible** way of increasing your English output.

2 Talk to a Tutor

Now let's move on to tip number two. Talk to a **tutor**. This one is incredibly important. Why is talking to a tutor better than talking to yourself or talking to another English speaker? You can say to a tutor how you would like the conversation to go, and you can **reenact** situations in which you felt you

failed in the past. Maybe someone at a networking event asked you what you did for a living, and you **stumbled over your words**, got flustered and just gave a really **oversimplified** version of what you do, a version that didn't do you justice.

When you hire a one-on-one tutor, you can run through those exact situations so you never have to struggle like that again.

The next two points are really important, too: corrections. You want someone who fully understands the English language, and who can accurately correct you when you make mistakes. That might be your grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or, more importantly, whether you are speaking clearly and naturally. I don't recommend aiming for absolute perfection. Instead, you want everyone to understand what you're saying.

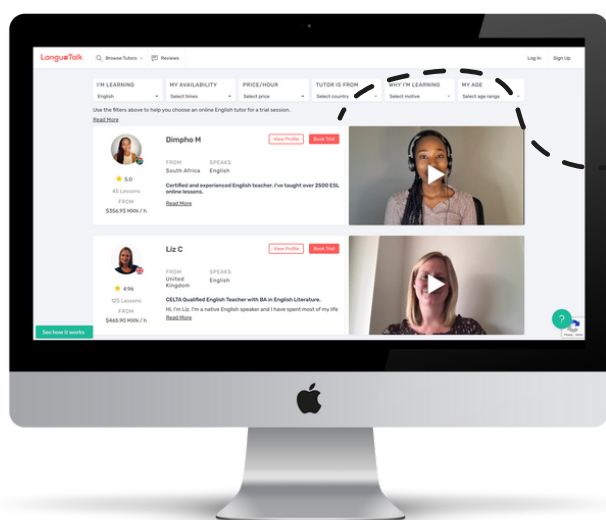
And number three, you're in a safe space with a tutor to request feedback and to make mistakes. You're not going to be **ridiculed**. You're not going to feel embarrassed. A personal tutor is someone who experiences mistakes with English learners all the time. It's literally their job. And because of all of that experience, they can give you **targeted** advice to make quick improvements.

Now let's think back to our school days. We all had a teacher that we didn't like. We didn't like them; they didn't like us. We didn't **get on**. I had multiple teachers like that. Some of them absolutely should not have been teaching children when they so obviously hated children. So for many students, the fear of finding the wrong tutor gets in the way of actually finding the right one. Because, unlike school, this is something that you are personally paying for. You're making an investment. So to spend an hour with a teacher that you end up not liking is an expensive mistake. Now, here's where I think I've got a really good solution for you in more ways than one. Two ways, actually. Have you ever heard me mention **LanguaTalk** before? This is a company that I liked so much I decided to become a part of it. So technically, I'm sponsoring myself here.

I truly think that LanguaTalk is the best online language tutor platform, and this is how it relates to this lesson.

When you first start **browsing** through the English tutors on the platform, firstly, you can rest assured that they are of incredible quality. LanguaTalk has an incredibly **strict** screening process; well below 10% of applicants get accepted onto the platform.

Then you can filter by their availability, the country they're based in for timezone, the price per hour to make sure it fits with your budget and also your motivation, whether you're learning for your career or because you're moving to a country or because you want to pass a specific exam. Then you'll see all of your suitable tutors appear, and every single one of them has a video so you can go through your own filtration process and make sure that it's someone that you will connect with.

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Then you will see this button here, and this is really important. Nearly all of the tutors on LanguaTalk offer a free trial session, so you can make sure you're right for each other. That completely **eliminates** the risk of paying for a session with someone that isn't right for you.

Then if you want to be extra sure, I'm giving you a \$10 lesson credit for free. To claim that, all you have to do is book your first paid class and then message their support team with the code: TENLUCY.



This code is valid for anyone signing up for their first class from today. To visit LanguaTalk, view all of their tutors, claim your free trial session and get \$10 Lesson credit for free; click on the link in the description box.

3 Write Before You Speak

Okay. Tip number three involves writing. One of the best ways to get yourself prepared for speaking in any situation is to write down what it is you would like to say before speaking. Take time to write out all of the sentences you plan to say, and then practice saying them aloud.

Now, I don't expect you to carry a notebook around with you and write down everything you want to say before speaking. That's just **impractical**. But this is an exercise that can be added to your daily English practice. The best way to approach this is to think about situations and **potential** conversation topics, especially those that interest you because learning English should be fun.

Also, think about questions or opportunities you get frequently in English. We use the term '**an elevator pitch**'. So this refers to trying to sell something to someone that you've met in an elevator. That's American English. It would be a 'lift' in British English. You've only got a limited amount of time, so you've got to get the message across quickly and efficiently.

The Elevator Pitch

1. Start with a strong hook that grabs the listener's attention.
2. Introduce yourself and your background briefly.
3. Explain what problem you are solving or what your idea is.
4. Describe the benefits and advantages of your idea or solution.
5. Provide evidence or examples that support your claims.
6. Address any potential concerns or objections the listener might have.
7. End with a clear call to action or next step.



Try to think of elevator pitch versions of your most frequently received questions. I'm thinking ones like:

Where are you from?

You might say something like:

Well, you can probably tell that I'm not from here. I was actually born in Italy, but then I moved to France at the age of four. I went to college in the US, which is why I speak with a slight American accent.

Write it down, practise it because you know you're going to get asked a lot.

Another one is:

*What do you do for a living? or
How did you learn English?*

You can begin with simple conversation questions and gradually increase the difficulty level. This will help to build your confidence and improve your fluency over time.

See, I'm not very good at giving strong opinions, so sometimes if I'm going to an event where I know I'll be asked about a hot topic that's quite **divisive**, I do prepare in advance. It helps me to feel more relaxed or less anxious. I'm not somebody who can just give an **eloquent** opinion piece straight off the bat. 'Straight off the bat' means immediately with no preparation, hence why we need preparation, written preparation.

It's also a great idea to prepare these written answers and then present them in a tutor session to ask for their feedback. So many of my students have come to me with things that they frequently have to defend, like why they are fasting during Ramadan. That's one question that my students got a lot. Same with why they wear a hijab, why they are vegan and choose not to



consume animal products, why they chose to leave their country when they love it so much. There are loads of really difficult questions that you might want to take a step back and think about to be able to give a true answer that you're really proud of and comfortable with.

The biggest one, the one I get most frequently, is, of course, **self-introduction**, and I have an entire video about this that I will leave below in the description. In that video, I explain all of the necessary steps for preparing notes to introduce yourself confidently and fluently.

4 Focus on Fluency, Not Accuracy

Okay, number four. This is something I've said time and time again, and I wholeheartedly believe that it is the correct way forward. Focus on fluency, not perfection or not accuracy. Fluency over accuracy every single time. You need to be understood, not **applauded** as a grammar genius.

To me, this means that you need to start to feel comfortable making mistakes. If you avoid speaking with people out of fear of making mistakes, you're going to have nothing to learn from. You're **starving yourself** of opportunities. No one wants to make mistakes. It's embarrassing, and it can cause us to lose confidence. Learning and speaking in another language is a very personal, sensitive topic, but getting out of your **comfort zone** and making mistakes while speaking is genuinely one of the best things you can do to improve your fluency.

And if you can, not everyone can, but if you can, try to ***have a sense of humour*** about it. See this as an opportunity to laugh with yourself, not *at* yourself, with yourself. Some of my best **anecdotes** in Spanish come from the mistakes I made whilst learning Spanish. I love those stories. They're so special to me. They're great ones that I can get out at any dinner party when speaking in Spanish, and I can have the entire room laughing. I chose not to be embarrassed in the moments when I made those mistakes. I chose to take a step back and laugh at the **hilarity** of the situation.



Now I understand it's not that way for everyone. I learnt Spanish because I wanted to learn Spanish. I liked Spanish. I like learning it. But lots of people learn English because they feel they have to. They cannot progress in their life until they have acquired the skill of speaking English. So I understand how it's a bit harder to laugh at yourself when you don't even want to be learning the language in the first place. So at the very least, see it as an excellent learning opportunity.

And the good news is that most English speakers and other English learners are usually pretty willing to help when you need it. You just have to ask. If I talk to a non-native speaker and they make lots of mistakes, I will not correct them unless they ask me to. So if you do want those corrections, you can say,

By the way, if I make a mistake, you can let me know.

And then, to go back to point one, I really suggest that you keep a notebook or your smartphone ready to take notes whenever you receive a correction, just after you receive the correction, so that you can review the information later.

5 Shadowing

Number five is not for everyone, but it works really well for some students. And I've seen it in action, and it's awesome. It's shadowing. Shadowing means copying other English speakers. It's imitation.

When you are purposefully learning new words or just casually watching a video, repeat what you hear. You don't need to be thinking about sentence structure or verb tenses, or grammar in general. Just repeat the words and sounds. By repeating the words and phrases, you:

- are activating your mind so that you can obtain new information
- understand the speaker more easily
- improve muscle memory for forming words
- practise natural word stress and pronunciation



Vocabulary List

accessible *adj* /ək'sesəbl/ - easy to approach, reach or understand

The teacher's explanations were accessible, making the complex topic easy to understand.

anecdote *n* /'anɪkdəʊt/ - a short, interesting or amusing story about a real incident or person

She entertained the guests with an anecdote from her recent holiday.

to applaud *v* /ə'plɔ:d/ - to show approval or praise by clapping hands

The audience applauded the singer's incredible performance.

benchmark *n* /'bentʃmɑ:k/ - a standard or point of reference used to compare or evaluate something

Our company uses industry benchmarks to measure its success.

to browse *v* /braʊz/ - to look through something casually or without a specific aim.

She spent the afternoon browsing through books at the library.

comfort zone *phrase* /'kʌmfət zəʊn/ - a situation or area where someone feels relaxed, safe, and confident

Learning a new language requires stepping out of your comfort zone.

to cringe *v* /krɪndʒ/ - to feel embarrassment or discomfort

I cringed when I remembered my awkward speech at the party.

disassociation *n* /dɪsəsəʊsi'eɪʃən/ - the act of separating or detaching oneself from something

The company announced its disassociation from the controversial sponsor

divisive *adj* /dɪˈvaɪsɪv/ - causing disagreement or hostility between people
The politician's speech was divisive, creating heated debates in the community.

to eliminate *v* /ɪˈlɪmɪneɪt/ - to remove or get rid of something
The government aims to eliminate poverty through various welfare programs.

eloquent *adj* /ˈeləkwənt/ - having the ability to express oneself clearly and effectively, often with persuasive or impactful language
The speaker delivered an eloquent and moving speech on climate change.

get on (with) *phr v* /get ɒn/ - have a good relationship with someone
They get on well with their neighbours and often have dinner together.

hilarity *n* /hɪˈlærɪti/ a state of great amusement, often accompanied by laughter
The comedian's jokes had the audience in a state of hilarity.

impractical *adj* /ɪmˈpræktɪkəl/ - not sensible or realistic in terms of actions or ideas
His plan to build a rocket in his backyard was deemed impractical.

input *n* /ˈɪnpʊt/ - the language that a learner is exposed to, whether it is spoken or written
Input is an essential part of learning a language.

to narrate *v* /nəˈreɪt/ - to tell a story or give an account of something, often in detail
The tour is normally narrated by the bus driver.

output *n* /ˈaʊtpʊt/ - the language produced by a language learner, whether it is spoken or written; it is the opposite of input
My teacher gave me great techniques to increase my output in French.



oversimplified *adj* /ˌəʊvə'simplɪfaɪd/ - describing something in a way that is too simple and lacks important details or explanations

The oversimplified summary of the book failed to capture its true essence.

potential *adj* /pə'tenʃəl/ - the possibility of something happening or of someone developing certain abilities or qualities

The potential risks of doing business with them were not worth the money.

productive skills *noun phrase* - language abilities related to speaking and writing, which involve creating and expressing messages

To improve your productive skills, practice speaking and writing in the target language regularly.

receptive skills *noun phrase* - language abilities related to listening and reading, which involve understanding and interpreting messages

Reading books and listening to podcasts can help develop your receptive skills in a foreign language.

to reenact *v* /ˌriːɪ'nækt/ - to perform or act out an event or situation again, often for entertainment or educational purposes

The historical society reenacted a famous battle from the past.

to ridicule *v* /'rɪdɪkjuːl/ - to make fun of or mock someone or something in a hurtful or unkind way

The children ridiculed him for his old-fashioned clothes.

self-introduction *n* /ˌselfɪntrə'dʌkʃən/ - the act of presenting or explaining who you are, often in a formal or social setting.

During the job interview, she gave a brief self-introduction, outlining her background and experience.

to starve oneself *idiom* - to deprive oneself of something potentially beneficial

You are always starving yourself of a good time; come out with us!



strict *adj* /strikt/ - demanding that rules or standards are followed, often with serious consequences if not adhered to

The teacher was very strict and did not tolerate any misbehaviour in the classroom.

to stumble over one's words *idiom* - to speak in a stuttering manner or speak in an unclear way that is difficult to follow

I tend to stumble over my words when I speak quickly.

targeted *adj* /'tɑ:ɡɪtɪd/ - directed or aimed at a particular group or purpose

The advertising campaign was targeted at young adults interested in fitness.

QUIZ!

Choose the correct answer for each question.

- 1) What is one of the best ways to get prepared for speaking in any situation?
 - a. memorising sentences
 - b. writing down what you want to say
 - c. practising reading out loud
- 2) How can you build your confidence and fluency in English?
 - a. by practising simple conversation questions
 - b. by listening to podcasts
 - c. by practising only reading and writing
- 3) What is the benefit of presenting your written answers in a tutor session?
 - a. to get feedback
 - b. to show off your writing skills
 - c. to make your tutor happy
- 4) What does the idiom "to go down the drain" mean?
 - a. to disappear
 - b. to flow smoothly
 - c. to become successful
- 5) Why do many students struggle with speaking English fluently?
 - a. they don't have a good vocabulary
 - b. because they don't understand English
 - c. they focus more on receptive skills than productive skills
- 6) What is the difference between receptive and productive skills in language learning?
 - a. receptive skills involve reading and writing, while productive skills involve speaking and listening
 - b. receptive skills involve listening and reading, while productive skills involve speaking and writing
 - c. receptive skills involve speaking and listening, while productive skills involve writing and reading
- 7) What is one of the best things you can do to improve your fluency in a new language?
 - a. avoid speaking with people
 - b. laugh at your mistakes
 - c. focus only on grammar
- 8) What is shadowing in language learning?
 - a. copying other English speakers
 - b. memorising grammar rules
 - c. writing down new vocabulary words
- 9) Which of the following best describes Lucy's opinion toward making mistakes?
 - a. mistakes are embarrassing and should be avoided
 - b. mistakes are opportunities for learning and growth
 - c. mistakes are not important in language learning

The End!

1) b 2) a 3) a 4) b 5) c 6) b 7) b 8) a 9) b

