

Hey everyone, it's Hadar. Thank you for joining me. Today I want to share with you a question I received from one of my followers on Instagram. Her name is Nadia, and she's been struggling with anxiety around having conversation in English.

And this is what your rights. She says, "I always get anxious at work with my coworkers and director, especially if I want to provide new ideas or explain something. I always think that they, they're gonna judge me and pretty much make fun of my accent. I know I'm not supposed to think this way.

But this feeling is pressuring me. I need your advice, especially since I applied for a management position, and I want to be confident to talk and express my abilities. I know I have a lot to offer, but I just stumble over my words when I'm nervous and always feel stuck when I start a conversation with people I work with. I want to talk and interact, but I always fail".

So first of all, Nadia, I wanted to thank you for sharing this with me. I know it's not easy to be vulnerable and to express these emotions, but I think it's so valuable because it can actually help so many other people.

In fact, the same week I received this message, I received two other messages - one on Facebook, one an email - sharing exactly the same struggle. Which means what you're sharing and what you're experiencing, many other non-native speakers share and experience the very same struggles.

I'm not saying this to undermine or belittle your experience, not at all. I'm saying this to show you that if a lot of other people experience the same thing, then these are just patterns, human patterns, which we can resolve with the right tools.

So what you're experiencing is the fear of authority. You get anxious and nervous around people who are ranked higher than you. So for example, you mentioned your director, your boss, who is constantly looking at your performance. And according to that, deciding whether or not you're a good fit for the company.

But you also mentioned fear and anxiety around native speakers. When it comes to non-native speakers, it can also be the authoritative voice of the native speaker. Now, let me explain. When we learn a second language, we always try to reach a certain level, the level of the native speaker, right?

And that level is so high up, so people at that level seem to us intimidating and perform as the authority. As if the language belongs to them, and anything that is less than what they do is just not good enough. And all you need to do all your life is to reach that level.

Now, this experience and this perception is very, very inhibiting. So, the native speaker was

born into the language. That's just circumstances. You learn the language, you learn it as a second language, which means that you're going to have an accent and a few mistakes, but that's just about it.

It doesn't change who you are, what you have to say, how smart you are, how intelligent you are, how creative you are, has nothing to do with that. It's just limiting your form of expression, but it doesn't limit your presence and it shouldn't limit what you bring to the table.

And you know what? In fact, most native speakers don't even see it as if they're better than you in English. They just recognize that you speak another language, which is amazing. I mean, most native speakers of English don't even speak a second language. So it is something admirable. And I'm saying most native speakers, because yes, there are some native speakers who feel entitled and believe that the way they speak English is the only way to speak English. And if you want proof, you can just look at some of the comments below my videos.

"Why are you teaching people how to speak incorrectly?" "Oh, Americans, why do you butcher the language so?" "Wow, you advise your students to mispronounce the word just because 'even native speakers do that?'". But I really don't care [whispering].

So today I'm going to give you a few tips that will help you overcome this anxiety, and that will stop letting English be an obstacle on your way to achieving your goals.

Now, the first thing you need to do is to change the record in your head. The last sentence you wrote to me is, "I want to talk and interact, but I always fail". Now, when you have these thoughts about yourself and beliefs about yourself, this is going to be your reality. When you go into a conversation knowing that you're going to fail, you will fail, okay?

Besides, what is fail, anyway? So when you think that you're failing in a conversation, what, are you spilling water all over the other person? Do you keep stepping on their foot? Do you spit all over their face when you speak? I mean, I guess this would be considered as a failed conversation.

But feeling a little awkward, feeling nervous, maybe not finding the right words, getting stuck a little bit - that's not failing in a conversation. That's just going through a conversation. It happens to native speakers as well.

What do you think, native speakers don't experience anxiety around other people? Maybe that they don't know how to talk to or they don't know what to say? Introverts that feel just shy and awkward when they speak to other people?

I mean, come on. This is something that we all experience as humans. It's not about your

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English. I mean, I don't believe that you are failing in a conversation. That's how you see it. I'm sure that your conversation partners, your colleagues, your friends don't see it the same way.

I'm sure that you don't feel the same way when you speak to other non-native speakers. I'm sure that with close friends, you feel a lot more comfortable and expressive, so it's not about the English. Don't use English as an excuse to stop yourself from putting yourself out there and getting into a conversation.

Now, when you say to yourself that you're a failure, you will feel like a failure, no matter what objectively happens in the situation. Because thoughts create feelings. So, instead, what I'm suggesting is the change the record in your head.

And instead of saying, "I'm a failure", start saying, "I'm smart, I'm interesting, I have a lot to say, and I'm an awesome conversationalist". "I'm smart, I'm interesting, I have a lot to say, and I'm an awesome conversationalist".

Because once you start thinking it, even if it's artificial, even if you force yourself, even if you cringe when you hear that and you're like, "No, no, that's not true", you will start believing in it. Cause that's just how we work.

And if you don't believe me, just give it a try. You start thinking those bad thoughts, you turn them around and you start inserting to your brain the good thoughts.

So when you let the fear of people judging you and ridiculing you, and probably it doesn't even happen, it's all in your head, but that doesn't matter. Let's say that you really think these bad things about you, so you are choosing their judgment over you.

So that means that everything you have to say and share and impact the world and share your gifts with the world, and all of these things don't matter cause they're not as important as what they think about your freaking accent. Okay?

Yeah. Because that really is more important than changing things in the company, in, in, in people's minds, in the team, right? You know, 50 years from today when you're going to look back at your life, you are not going to remember those things that you were afraid of, what they're gonna think about you.

You're not even gonna remember their names. But what you will remember is every choice that you've made, the path that you took, the people you've impacted.

Remember that having a foreign accent is not a bad thing. You should cherish it and acknowledge it. What you bring to the table as a non-native speaker makes you unique and special, right?

The challenges that you faced - moving to a different country, starting over learning a new

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language, finding yourself, succeeding, reaching the place that you've reached – that's what makes you so qualified to handle other situations.

So, that obstacle that you think you have or that disadvantage is actually your advantage. Because you know things about the world, about people, about struggles that other people don't, which makes you super qualified and competent to do any job that you want.

So instead of thinking of your accent and your English, that is an English of a non-native speaker as a source of shame, wear it proudly. Acknowledge your journey and your worth. Now, while you need to work on your mindset, first and foremost, here are a few things that you can do starting of today, that will help you feel more prepared and confident when you speak English.

The first thing is always come over prepared. Even if it's a simple meeting, even if it's a conversation with colleagues over dinner. Think about the things that you want to talk about. Say them out loud maybe a few times.

If you feel that you get stuck somewhere, then look for the word and say it again over and over again. If you need to share a new idea, then say it to yourself out loud a few times, until you get comfortable with your voice, with how you sound. With how you sound seeing this specific thing, then you can tweak it, you know.

Sometimes when I try to explain a complex idea, I have to say it like five- six times until I know how exactly I want to say it. So I believe that it's not enough to think about it. It's not even enough to write it. You have to say it out loud a few times, especially if it's an important meeting or an interview.

So always come really, really prepared. With bullet points, with clarity about what you're going to say. And if it's a complex argument or idea or opinion, then even structure it for yourself. And of course, say it out loud many, many times.

Always come focused and concentrated, right? When we are preoccupied, when we're distracted, it definitely affects our English. So know that if this is a situation where you feel completely confused and tired, then maybe it's not a good time to go into a conversation. And if you have to go into the conversation or the meeting, then maybe meditate or sit with yourself for a few minutes before you go into a conversation and bring in all the baggage with you.

Remember that the more you do it, the better you become at it. The things that are terrifying right now, are not going to be that scary when you actually do it every single day, a few times a day on a regular basis.

So if you need to ask someone something and you can write them an email, but you can also

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walk to their desk and ask them, go and ask the question, okay? If you see a bunch of people gathering around and you're like, your first instinct is to go the other direction, go into that group of people and put yourself out there and start having conversation.

Remember that it's all about the other people. It's not about you and they're not looking to see you fail, okay? They just want to connect and they just want to talk and pass a few minutes between emails.

Now, if you objectively struggle with clarity because you feel that people just don't understand you, or if you struggle and feel self-conscious about certain sounds, let's say the R, and you find yourself avoiding words, avoiding using words that have the R sound, then there is a problem. And then you can resolve it.

All you need to do is decide that you're focusing on that one element of your speech because you know you can improve that. So, for example, if the R is a struggle, then make a point of blocking out time, learning how to pronounce it correctly, drilling a lot of words, practicing it, recording yourself.

I mean, I have tons of videos explaining how to improve your pronunciation. You can just go ahead and learn from that. But you need to commit that you are going to improve that, and you're going to invest time and energy in doing that.

Because once you get that out of the way, it will boost your confidence and your clarity.

Okay. And ultimately that's what we want. So of course, most of the work is on your mindset and how you perceive yourself, but you can actually do some specific things to help you feel better about how you sound.

Okay, that's it. Nadia, thank you so much for sharing with me this question. I'm sure that a lot of people benefited from it. And actually, you know, share it with us now, everyone out there. Have you ever struggled with anxiety or this feeling of being a failure when interacting with native speakers?

And if you have, what have you done to overcome this anxiety or to overcome the struggle?

Okay? What are the tactics and tips and tricks that you use in order to become a more confident and fluent speaker?

Okay. That's it. Thank you so much for staying till the end. If you enjoy this video, consider subscribing and share it with your friends and colleagues and family, so we can all benefit from confident English.

Have a wonderful week and I'll see you next week in the next video. Bye.