

Improve your

# Self-Confidence

in your

# English-Speaking

*With **5 Self-Confidence Exercises** to help improve your English-Speaking*

By Gerrard Giudice

MA (Counselling Psychology), Certified Teacher, Global English Instructor

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# A Letter from the Author

*Dear English-learner,*

*Hello, I'm Gerry, and I am a certified teacher, therapist, and a 15-year global English instructor. For the entirety of this book, I hope that you will consider me your **English Speaking Self-Confidence Coach**. I say this because if you are reading this book, then you have probably been studying English for a very long time, have spent a large amount of money on books and lessons, but still find it difficult to understand everything a native English speaker says when you speak to him or her. Furthermore, many times when you speak to them, they ask you to repeat yourself, and they look at you with funny faces as if they do not understand everything you are saying.*

*If this sound like you, then I want you to get ready to let me introduce you to some concepts and exercises that will guide you toward adjusting the way you think about your English-speaking skills. Changing the way you think about your skills can really boost your self-confidence in these abilities which will ultimately increase your **performance** in English-speaking.*

*Throughout my 15-year career, I have been travelling and teaching English to people of all ages in schools and institutes in a handful of different countries. Over time, while sharing the classroom with hundreds of my students, I began to notice patterns in the development of their levels of self-confidence and I observed how some students, even though their academic knowledge was basic, were able to communicate in a fun, animated way that captivated their conversation partners. They spoke with self-confidence! As many people realize, a strong sense of self-confidence can lead to advanced performance in English speaking, no matter what a person's academic level. At no other time did I learn this lesson more than when I came across those daring street-kids along the hustling lanes of Ho Chi Minh City.*

*One of the most radical trips I have ever taken was to Saigon, Vietnam, now known as Ho Chi Minh City. Along the narrow main street outside of my hotel, there was a noisy, bustling scene of motorcycles and bicycles, some passing by carrying fruit, and others being repaired by shirtless men on sidewalks occupied by tiny shops, food vendors, and small restaurant patios. All this energetic city action transpired under the sweltering-hot, humid sun, and it was not too long after a tourist would sit down at one of these patio restaurants to have a cool drink and some food, that they would be confronted by a group of young street children selling photocopied books, candy and gum, and other small necessities from a box attached by a strap around their necks. I noticed that these children were not in school, and wondered where their parents were. My first reaction was to feel sorry for them because they looked hungry and poor, but then I heard them speak. These children were bold, and they spoke fluent English! Of course, they must have made many mistakes in their English, but I did not notice them. They spoke with 100%*

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*pure confidence. I could tell that they knew they could speak enough English to communicate properly and their mistakes, if they made any, did not hinder their communication skills.*

*"Where did you learn to speak such wonderful English?" I asked the leader of the group, a shabbily-dressed, chubby girl of maybe nine years old.*

*"On the street. You want buy this one?" she replied, thrusting a pack of chewing gum into my hand.*

*These children never learned English in school. They didn't even go to school. For them, English was purely a tool. They used English to survive by making money. They did not think about studying or tests. They did not compare their test scores with their classmates. They just spoke English and they spoke confidently.*

*If most people realize that increased self-confidence means increased performance, than why doesn't everyone simply increase their self-confidence? Some of the things that we think about and some of the things that we say to ourselves can actually limit our level of self-confidence. These self-defeating behaviours hinder us from improving our performance when speaking English for business or pleasure.*

## **Welcome to My Family**

*I have been teaching English for a very long time, and as a philosophy, I believe that every student's first true teacher is her or his parent(s). Actually, for some people, their main teachers have been their grandmother or grandfather, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, or even a cousin or close friend. With this in mind, I have discovered that true teaching comes from family. This led me to my secret of effective teaching: **to treat my students like family**. In turn, students will respect their teacher and treat them like family as well. Then, there will be love, and love is the most fertile soil to grow ripe, juicy fruit of knowledge and self-awareness. So, as you read this book, and for the purposes of your general education, you can think of me as an older or younger brother, son, uncle, cousin, or friend. Oh yeah, and as your **English Speaking Self-Confidence Coach**.*

*Sincerely,*

*Gerrard Giudice, MA (Counselling Psychology, Certified Teacher (Ontario/BC, Canada))*

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# Introduction: Why This Book?

You have probably been studying English for a very long time now. You have bought many books and have paid for and attended many classes, but sometimes, it still seems like something is holding you back from communicating in English to the full potential of your abilities. You are reading this book, so you probably already know what this obstacle is: your level of self-confidence.

After many years of time and money spent on studying, you most likely already have enough “head” knowledge about English to communicate effectively. However, in order to balance your learning, you need some “heart knowledge”, which means becoming more aware of how you *feel* when you speak English.

The theme for this book is *self-confidence in English speaking*, but if something is not apart of you, then it is difficult for you to have self-confidence in it. So, the secondary theme for this book is: *ownership*. This means that for you to improve your self-confidence in your English speaking abilities, you may want to take more ownership over English. If you “own” English, then it becomes something that you have and can use any time you want. You become more comfortable using it because you know you own it. This does not mean that English becomes your new culture or replaces your native culture. It means that English can become your tool that you can use anytime you want. Other people can speak English too, but their English is their English. Your English is *your* English. You own it.

## Privilege and Advantages of Native English Speakers

I am a native English speaker. In our globalized world, I have a social advantage over you. Why? Do I have a social advantage because I am “better” or “more special” than you? No! I have an advantage only because I was born speaking English. Whether I deserve this advantage or not, I have it nevertheless. I cannot ignore it. You have a (slight) disadvantage in our globalized world because you must spend time and money learning something that I already know. I am not happy about this, but this is the way it is. In English, “the way it is” is an expression that we use when there is nothing that we can do about something.

So, as I was saying, you have to spend time and money learning English. This takes away from the time and money that you spend on other things. Native English speakers do not have to spend this time and money. However, you do indeed gain an advantage by having to study English. You can achieve more personal power through learning. You become more powerful because you *earned* your English speaking abilities. You become more powerful because you slowly become able to speak and communicate with more people throughout the world in

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your own language or in English.

When you learn another language, you become stronger because you are now able to *adapt* to many different situations. In this regard, you achieve more powerful than some native English speakers because maybe English is the only language they know. Maybe English *owns* them. For you, you own English because you paid for it with your effort and your money. For you, you are more powerful because you added something to yourself. You added English-speaking abilities to your list of knowledge and skills. You added more to yourself. You have grown bigger, stronger, and with more power.

Throughout some of this book, I will be talking a bit about "power". This refers to the ability for people to influence the individuals and groups of people around them to get what they want. When I say that 'someone has power over you', I mean that someone has more of an advantage to get something that they want than you in a particular situation. This is often referred to as a *power differential*. This does not mean they always have power over someone, but only in that specific situation, for example, when a group of native English speakers are speaking very quickly and you feel as if they understand everything and you do not. Many times, language and communication skills can give someone extra social power.

However, sometimes this power is illusory, which means that it is not necessarily real. It is only real if we believe it is real. If we believe that we all have our own special power, than power differentials begin to weaken. You know more than one language. That is powerful. If you are ever speaking with a native English speaker, and you feel like they are trying to steal your power, you can tell them what one of my students once said, "*I speak English with an accent, but I do not think with an accent.*"

This e-book is meant to help increase your power. It can do this by guiding you toward believing that you truly know yourself. This will increase your self-confidence in your English-speaking abilities, and ultimately, will help improve your English-speaking skills because...you already know how to speak English (well).

As you will see, self-confidence is all about trusting yourself. In order to trust yourself, you will first need to truly *know* yourself.

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# English the Brand: You Buy It, You Own It

If you think of English as a “teenager”, then you can think of its big brothers and sisters as being German, Dutch, French, Latin, and Greek. English is a West Germanic language. It is related to Dutch and today, is most related to Frisian, spoken in the Netherlands. When William the Conqueror of Normandy took control of England in 1066, he brought with him the French language which had a great impact on the development of English. Small parts of hundreds of Latin and Greek words are used to create a very large portion of English vocabulary. As you can see, English has a very big family.

Once this teenager grew up into an adult, it was released into the world, became very popular, and was sold as a product and as a service. That's right! You can buy English. You *have* bought it. So, this means you can *own* it. English can now be one of your languages (if you want it). If you look at it another way, you can say that if English were an “apartment”, then you can live there because you have paid your “rent”. This is an important idea to grasp because sometimes, when we visit people's homes, we feel humble and act politely because we know that we do not own their house and we know that we do not live there. However, if you want to speak English more effectively, realize that you can feel comfortable using it because it is yours. Being self-confident means feeling comfortable with yourself, and at this “English-apartment”, you can feel as comfortable as you like because you are not a guest here: this is your place too.

## Native English-Speaking versus Global English

Maybe you disagree with me. Even though you have paid for English, and even though you now realize that you can own English, you may still have problems understanding when native English speakers speak, they often have to ask you to repeat yourself, and this makes you feel very uncomfortable. ***What is happening?*** The problem is, native English speakers are not speaking the same English as you because you are speaking *Global English*.

Global English is pretty much perfect, proper English. That's right! This means that native English speakers do not speak proper English; they make “mistakes” constantly. Although, the reason why their speaking does not sound wrong is because native English speakers all make the same mistakes. They link words together, substitute vowel sounds of function words with the vowel-sound schwa (ə), use idioms, slang, etc. Your English language is Global English. It is your language, not mine. You can own it.

English is cultural and regional, but Global English is the business language of the world. If you do business, then you probably speak English. So, it's your business, it's your

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language! Many of my students tell me that they often feel embarrassed when speaking English with native English speakers. I ask them the reasons for their embarrassment, and they say it is because they think their English is the problem. Now, some of this may be true, but I want you to consider the notion that sometimes, the problem is caused by the native English speakers. *Why is this?*

Most of us will agree that there are many people in this world who want power. If they already have power, then they want more power. Sadly, there are also many people in this world who want power over other people. There are some native English speakers who enjoy having power "over you". Because English is the universal language of business, native English speakers already have extra power. If you disagree with me, then think about a time when you spoke with someone whose English skills were at a lower level than you. How did you feel? Did you feel like you had more power over that person? Now, *don't get me wrong*: many native English speaking people are friendly, kind, compassionate, and helpful to English-learners. However, some use English to get an advantage over other people in business, social networking, or life in general.

## **Social Power**

Native English speakers can sometimes try to maintain social power over English-learners by making strange facial expressions when they hear you speak English, or by complaining about the quality of your English. Instead of trying to help you and teach you, they sometimes pretend that they do not understand you. They do this because they want power over you. This is life. The dog has power over the cat. The cat has power over the mouse. This is how animals do things: through violence and aggression. However, as you may agree with me, this is not the best way for humans to live. The best way for us to live is to take care of ourselves and our own interests, but also to not interfere with the progress of other people. In fact, offering to help other people who help you in return seems to be the best way for everyone to live peacefully.

Native English speakers must understand and remember that they have shared their language to the world through colonization and war. They have offered up English as a gift. English is their original language and they have given it to you to use as a tool to communicate better with them and with other people because when the world communicates better with each other, we can all solve our problems faster and easier. People who work together should help each other together. So, if the native English speakers that you work with, interact with, or do business with will not help you learn English, or will not at least be patient with you, or will not help make you feel good about speaking English, and make funny facial expressions when you speak, then maybe they are not really very interested in helping the world communicate better. Maybe it would be better for you to do business with other

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people and not them.

Remember: if you are not a native English speaker, than you probably speak more languages than most native English speakers do. That is more power to you. One way to feel more self-confident about your English-speaking may be to decide to feel like you own the language. The 'self' in self-confidence is **you**. It is important for you to own English as a tool because in this way, your English can become a part of you (if you want it to).

### ***Self-Confidence Exercise***

*Sit down in a quiet place. Recount through your life and add up the total number of years that you have spent learning English.*

*How much money did you spend per year on English lessons?*

*How much per year did you pay for books and other fees regarding your English study?*

*Now, multiply this yearly rate by the number of years you have studied English. Add any extra costs that you may have had such as homestay programs, trips, tours, etc.*

*How much money have you spent on English?*

*Most likely, much of this money has come from your parents or other family members.*

*Has this money that you spent on English helped you bring in more wealth?*

*What could you have bought with this money that you spent on English?*

*If you didn't have to study English, what else could you have done during that time?*

*Ask yourself if you agree with these statements:*

***I have spent much money on English.***

***I have spent much time on English.***

***I own English.***

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# What is 'Self-Confidence'?

In English, we say that people can “throw” around words. To “throw” around a word means to use it without paying much attention to its meaning. People often throw around words like *self-esteem*, *integrity*, *dignity*, and *self-worth*. One of these words that is thrown around a lot, but has a true definition that is often overlooked, is **confidence**. So, what does the word 'confidence' really mean?

## Using Roots as Tools

One of the best ways to study English vocabulary is to study Latin and Greek roots because most English vocabulary has been derived from these ancient languages. Very often during lessons with my students, we dissect English words into their Latin and Greek roots to extract their original meanings. These are called *word origins*. A word's origin can often help us *feel* a word's meaning because this definition was its first meaning.

The word '**confidence**' is easily dissected:

The prefix is **con-**.

The middle root is **fid-**.

The suffix is **-ence**.

The root **con-** (along with *co-*, *col-*, *com-*, and *con-*) is Latin, meaning 'together', 'with', and/or '**fully**'. For example, *cooperate*, *community*, *connect*, etc.

The root **fid-** means '**trust**'. For example, *fidelity*.

The suffix **-ence** signifies that the word is a noun.

So, the word 'confidence' actually means '**full trust**', and to have 'self-confidence' means to '**fully trust yourself**'.

What does it mean to 'trust yourself'? Many people have told us to trust in our abilities, and I am telling you in this book to trust in your English-speaking abilities. Does it mean to trust that you will always be successful? This cannot be true, because no one is always successful. Does it mean that we are supposed to trust that our abilities are excellent all the time? Of course not! That's impossible. As we will learn in our chapter on making mistakes, failure is often the best and only way that we truly learn, so trusting ourselves does not mean

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that we believe that we will always be perfect and successful because in order for us to be successful, we must fail sometimes. Nevertheless, why do so many people still have difficulty speaking English the best that they can? Why do they lose self-confidence when they are speaking English with other people? One reason may be because many of us are trusting in our English speaking abilities the wrong way.

The only way to really improve at something is to study it, then practice it, then study it again and learn from the mistakes that you made when you practiced, and then practice it again. However, many people pretend that they do not need to study and practice. People do this for many reasons. Maybe they think studying and practicing is not fun and they only want to do fun things, so they make themselves believe that they do not need to try hard. Maybe they believe that thinking this way will make them feel more powerful and will help them to improve their self-confidence. However, if they believe that they are perfect and do not need to study and practice, then they are lying to themselves because everyone can and should always try to become better. I have been an English teacher for almost 20 years, and I study English (and many other subjects) every day because there are still so many things that I want to learn and practice.

If someone believes that they never need to study or practice, then they must pretend to never fail. People who try to speak English perfectly usually do not go out in search of other people to speak English with. If they did this, then they would eventually make a mistake because making mistakes is natural. If they made a mistake, they would understand that they are not perfect and if they realize they are not perfect, they start to realize that they have been lying to themselves. Then, they do not want to try anymore. So, many people do not take risks or take chances to improve in their English-speaking because they are afraid to make mistakes. They have created a false image of themselves in their mind, and if they began to practice more, they would begin to make mistakes, and then the image of their perfect self would break and shatter.

This is why they do not have self-confidence: because they can not trust themselves because they often do not tell themselves the *full truth*. So, one way to improve your self-confidence is to trust in your abilities to help you in any English-speaking situation. If you feel that you can not trust in your abilities fully, then do something to improve your abilities: study and practice by speaking English with people.

Everyone is afraid of making mistakes, and life can be very fearful sometimes. Fear is useful to humans because it is like an alarm clock that warns us about danger. However, just like any alarm clock, our fear can become too loud and we need to turn it "off" because we already got the message. We will become tired. We will make mistakes. We will continue to try.

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Think of it this way: how do many of us feel after we fail or make (significant) mistakes? We often feel discouraged or have a negative emotional response. For what reason do we experience pain in this situation? Sometimes, it is because we have not been truthful to ourselves and are shocked by the results. We feel hurt because we surprised ourselves about our abilities because we were not very truthful with ourselves to begin with. If we told ourselves the truth about our abilities from the beginning, then we would never have any sad surprises.

### **Self-Confidence is Full Self-Trust**

It doesn't matter what speaking level you are at, just be *truthful* with yourself. When you look at it this way, it is okay if you are "not good enough" to do something because then you know the truth and then you can do something to change your situation. If we lie to ourselves, then we pretend that there is no problem, and then our problems becomes worse, and in the end, we feel even more negative than when we started.

If this is all true, then *how* do we begin to trust ourselves? Maybe asking a similar question can help us find the answer to this one: *what does it mean to trust someone else? What does it mean to trust your friend?* To trust a friend or to trust someone else means that you know that they will tell you the truth. So, to 'trust yourself' means to know that you will always tell yourself the truth. Self-confidence is quite simple!

Think about the people whom you trust: family, friends, co-workers, neighbours, etc. Why do we trust these people? Basically, we trust these people because we know them. We know their patterns of behaviour, and we know what to expect from them. This is why it is difficult to trust strangers: because we do not know them. We are not aware of their personalities, past behaviours or patterns of behaviours, so we cannot predict their actions and this means the future with them seems mysterious. We need to get to know them before we begin to trust them.

To have self-confidence means that you are not a mystery to yourself. You *know* yourself. You know yourself because you study yourself as a scientist (as we will see in the next chapter) and you are committed to being truthful with yourself. This means that if you think that you need to study more to improve upon your English-speaking abilities, then you are able to tell yourself that so that you can improve. It means that you will tell yourself happy things but it also means that you will tell yourself sad, disappointing things. If you are fully truthful with yourself, maybe you will tell yourself that your friends and/or co-workers speak better English than you. However, you can also tell yourself that it is not very important that your English skills are better than your friends and/or co-workers. Maybe, if you are truthful with yourself, you will realize that your English skills are good enough for what you need. If

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they are not good enough, and if you are truthful with yourself, then you will be able to do something about them in order to improve them.

So, how do you trust yourself? Always tell yourself the truth.

Yes, this may sound frightening to do, but remember that while you may have to tell yourself many "negative" or "dark" truths that are difficult to accept, you also have the freedom to tell yourself "positive truths" or "light" truths that you enjoy to know.

### **Self-Confidence Exercise**

*As you go about your day today or tomorrow, take a minute to focus on your situation. Where are you? What are you doing? Now, think about a truth about yourself that relates to this situation. Be honest. Tell yourself the truth. If this truth is a "dark" truth, then follow it with a "light" truth. If it is a "light" truth, follow it up with a "dark" truth (be nice to yourself).*

*For example:*

**Dark Truth:** *I notice that sometimes people make a funny face when they hear me pronounce English.*

**Light Truth:** *I can practice my English pronunciation by watching English movies, starting an English speaking group on the internet in order to speak with more people, or by getting a tutor.*

**Dark Truth:** *I am not an excellent English-speaker.*

**Light Truth:** *I do not need to be an excellent English-speaker; I only need to know a little bit of English for my job.*

**Dark Truth:** *I got many vocabulary words wrong on that test. My vocabulary knowledge is not good enough.*

**Light Truth:** *I still know many vocabulary words. I still have many things to discover about English.*

*Now, think about specific situations when you speak English. Write out a list of "truths" about your **English-speaking**. For every "light" truth that you write, write a "dark" truth, and for every "dark" truth, write a "light" truth.*

*Be self-confident.*

*Trust yourself.*

*Tell yourself the truth.*

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# The Curious Self-Scientist

Everyone is an explorer and we can all be scientists. We all like to study and learn about new things and find relationships and patterns between them. Scientists have helped us define and study the nature around us. In fact, we are nature, and so scientists have done much study on the human body and mind. No doubt, one aspect of humans that scientists have studied is our levels of self-confidence.

Every scientist should be in search of the truth, and as we learned from the last chapter, being self-confident is all about trusting yourself and trusting yourself means that you know that you tell yourself the truth about your abilities. Every scientist must study something, which means that every scientist needs a 'subject'. In your case, your subject is yourself, so when analyzing your English speaking skills, you can be a "*self-scientist*".

Approaching your learning like a scientist can be effective because you attempt to control your emotions during the process. When you do this, you can find patterns in your behaviour much more easily. You are a human animal, and your body works and reacts in certain ways according to laws of nature and the laws of nature are patterned throughout the universe. Rather than correcting each individual mistake that you make when you speak English, you can look for patterns of error in your English-speaking. Once you have identified any patterns of error, then you can simply change the pattern rather than trying to change every mistake you make. This will save you time and frustration.

Before a scientist begins a study to find patterns, she or he asks questions about their topic. These questions will guide their work. If you want to increase your self-confidence so that you speak English more effectively, ask yourself some questions about yourself: *How do I feel when I speak English? Where do I make most of my mistakes? When is it difficult for me to understand English? What things do I say in English that people find difficult to understand?*

As you ask yourself these questions, reflect on how you feel as you think about these experiences. Sometimes, we are feeling more than one feeling. For example, after failing an English speaking test, you may feel embarrassed and angry. In such a scenario, it may be helpful to try to guess what percentage of each emotion you are feeling. In this case, you may be feeling 50% embarrassed, 25% angry at yourself, and 25% angry at the school or teacher who gave you the test. *Am I feeling more than one feeling? How do I identify and divide these feelings?*

This thinking and feeling task may feel like it requires much energy because our

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emotions often take the better of us. To 'take the better of someone' means to control or take advantage of them. Sometimes, our emotions 'run away from us' and control us.

## **Controlling Emotions**

Our emotions evolved because they allowed us to make decisions quickly. Before civilization, we lived in continual fear of predators and other warring tribes and we did not have much time to analyze every situation we found ourselves in. At such a dangerous time, anxiety, fear, and anger were used to force us to take action. Our emotions served our ancestors of the past. They serve us now. They are positive elements of our personality.

This is a very important point: your emotions are "good". They are used as tools by our unconscious minds, but if we become more aware of ourselves and how our minds operate, our conscious minds can begin to hold more control of our emotions. This can lead to increased performance, production, and *self-confidence*.

Imagine your unconscious brain as a child. This child wants to play, eat, drink, and have fun but it also follows simple rules like a child does. The child-brain makes decisions quickly, depending on how much it wants something "right now". However, another part of the unconscious brain is like a strict parent. It warns the child-brain to do "good" things or else there will be consequences. It tells the child-brain how to be and how to act. If this parent is always nasty and mean to the child and tells it, "I'm bad!" or "I'm not good!", then the child will believe it. Children (usually) want to obey their parents. If the parent-brain tells the child-brain that something is true, but it is not true, then the child-brain will (try to) make it true. Then, the child-brain actually becomes what the parent-brain tells it to be. However, if our parent-brain tells our child-brain that they are a great student, and that they study well and practice hard, then the child-brain will feel like a great student, and will study well, and will practice hard because most children always listen to their parents.

## **Numbers are the Tool**

Even though using words can be useful, terms like "good" and "bad" are too general for scientists. These words have many different meanings to many different people. Words are not good enough for scientists. Scientists need numbers.

Life is analyzed by math which is organized by numbers. This has led to numerous amazing technological advancements in our global society. If you want to be a "self-scientist", then you will need the most powerful set of tools that every scientist has in their toolboxes: numbers.

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Using numbers may scare some people. Some of us do not enjoy math, and some of us do not feel self-confident when using numbers. However, we use number-systems everyday and we do not even realize it. We can identify and analyze our thoughts because they are organized by words and grammar. Words are made up of letters, and letters are similar to numbers because both letters and numbers have a position and an order. So, language-systems are similar to number-systems.

One reason why our emotions interfere with our self-confidence and English-speaking performance is because it is difficult to measure 'feelings'. Emotions are difficult to analyze because they are difficult to organize. Of course, because we are self-scientists, we will use numbers to organize our emotions when speaking English (and in other areas of our lives if we want) and we will use numbers to tell us where we want to be in the future. We can easily organize our emotions and feelings with numbers by asking ourselves to rate our feelings on a scale from zero (0) to ten (10).

For example, if we know that we are feeling low self-confidence, to measure this level, we can ask ourselves: *On a scale from zero (0) to ten (10), where zero (0) is 'no self-confidence', and ten (10) is 'full self-confidence', how self-confident am I feeling right now?*

Maybe using percentages is a better way for you. This can easily be done. For example: *What percentage of self-confidence do I have right now? Do I have 50% self-confidence? Do I have 75% self-confidence? Do I have 100% self-confidence?*

Whether you use numbers or percentages, in both cases, you will be measuring your level of self-confidence or other feeling that you are observing. Using numbers in this way can allow you to measure your improvement in your feelings of self-confidence. Once you have measured how you are feeling, you can measure how much you want to feel in the future. For example: *On a scale from zero (0) to ten (10), where do I want my self-confidence to be in one month? How will I achieve this?*

You can also use a scale to measure your English-speaking level and abilities. For example: *On a scale from zero (0) to ten (10), at what number is my English-speaking? In one month, at what number do I want my English-speaking ability to be?*

In the end, using numbers to observe, record, and measure your levels of self-confidence and your English-speaking abilities over time will give you more **control** over your emotions, and knowing that you have more control over your emotions will make you trust yourself more and therefore have *increased self-confidence!*

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Ask yourself:

On a scale from zero (0) to ten (10), **how self-confident am I in my English-speaking abilities?** (Circle one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### **Self-Confidence Exercise**

*Imagine that you are a scientist and you are doing an observational report and/or case study on someone. Now, imagine that you are focusing specifically on this person's English-speaking abilities. As a scientist, you are dedicated to seeking truth. While you realize that no one is ever truly unbiased, you make every attempt and effort to analyze this person's English skills in a truthful, straightforward manner, with very little emotional attachment.*

*Write out a one page report on this person's English-speaking skills.*

*In this report, include:*

- *Two strengths about their English-speaking (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, intonation, linking, self-confidence, etc.). Rate these on a scale from zero (0) to ten (10).*
- *Two areas that need attention. Rate these areas on a scale from zero (0) to ten (10).*
- *Two areas that need great improvement. Rate these areas on a scale from zero (0) to ten (10).*

*Measure this person's feelings throughout certain English-speaking situations. Do this over four weeks and compare the scores.*

*For example, during an English presentation given at school/university/work:*

- *Week 1 March 2015: on a scale from zero (0) to ten (10), this person scored a 7 in self-confidence (or this person felt 70% self-confident) during this English presentation.*

*Then, during a business meeting where English was spoken:*

- *Week 2 March 2015: on a scale from zero (0) to ten (10), this person scored a 7.5 in self-confidence (or this person felt 75% self-confident) during this business meeting.*

*Later, during a telephone call in English to a help centre:*

- *Week 3 March 2015: on a scale from zero (0) to ten (10), this person scored a 7.5 in self-confidence (or this person felt 75% self-confident) during this phone conversation.*

*Finally, during a casual conversation in English with some friends:*

- *Week 4 March 2015: on a scale from zero (0) to ten (10), this person scored an 8 in self-confidence (or this person felt 80% self-confident during this English conversation).*

*Notice how this person increased their level of self-confidence over the course of the month.*

*So, who is the "subject" of this report?*

*Well, if you have not already guessed it, the "subject" or person you are writing this report on is...**you!***

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# Emotions as Self-Confidence Tools

We are emotional beings and sometimes our emotions can lead us too far and we experience disastrous results. We developed emotions and feelings long ago because they help us make decisions quickly. Making sudden decisions was very important in the past, before civilization, because the world was a much more dangerous place and humans did not have a lot of time to think about what to do in a threatening situation. At one point, we did not even have a language system to think in words. Our emotions were important tools for our survival, but these days, they can seem a bit inappropriate in certain situations if they are not controlled.

Much of our emotional changes take place in the *limbic system* of our brains. This system, which also controls long-term memory, is made up of many brain structures which are all apart of the *reptilian brain*. This reptilian brain sits in the middle of the brain and is shared by humans and other vertebrates and it is widely accepted by scientists that it was inherited from reptiles in the course of evolution. Since this part of our brains has been around for a very long time, we can say that it is a *primitive brain*. In part, this means that it is based on *instinct* rather than on *reason* and *thought*.

The combinations of emotions that we feel at any present time is called our **emotional state**. Because emotions are based on instinct, when we encounter a conflict or a problem, our primitive brain can often produce an unproductive emotional state that reacts too rashly, takes control, and releases chemicals that puts us into a defensive mood. In this defensive state, humans often become afraid and have a strong desire to protect themselves. When we have a strong instinct for safety, we can lose our concentration and focus, and we become narrow-minded. If we are narrow-minded, then it is difficult for us to think clearly. If we cannot think clearly, then we cannot trust ourselves and then we lose our self-confidence. Then our English-speaking performance decreases.

## Using Emotions Productively

Even though our emotions stem from the primitive parts of our brains, they still make us human, and they do not always lead to negative consequences. Actually, we as humans can feel wonderful, fantastic emotions, and when our emotional state is positive and powerful, we can achieve excellent results. Much of this happens when we have enough time to analyze our situations, think about our decisions, and make choices more freely. In this respect, conflicts and problems are positive because when we solve them, we grow stronger, learn new skills, and become more self-confident in our abilities. This positive aspect to our emotions can be controlled and utilized to ensure that we are always improving.

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In today's world, we do not need to make decisions so swiftly. Of course, when we take too much time to make a decision, we put ourselves into an emotional state that is too relaxed where we cannot accomplish anything and we often miss valuable opportunities. We do need an *appropriate* level of stress. However, when we are in environments that we trust are safe, we can trust ourselves more because we realize that we are in a place where we are free to take our time and think clearly. In situations like these, our brain releases dopamine which makes us feel powerful and self-confident. We have time to use the tremendous power of our brains and think about and analyze problems and conflicts before we solve them. We give ourselves time to ask other people for help and they help us compassionately. Yet, as we all know, we cannot always expect such positive conditions.

Sometimes the situations that we are in are simply too stressful to handle. Life is busy. When we are communicating with people in English, the other person does not always have time to speak slowly or correct us. We cannot always trust everyone with whom we speak English to help us when we need them. Although, if we feel self-confident, and feel productive, positive emotions, we can trust ourselves knowing that we can handle situations of conflict.

### **Exercise to Control Your Emotional State**

We now realize that our emotional state can either increase our English-speaking performance or decrease our English-speaking performance. We also learned that emotions can be experienced suddenly and take control over our actions. Rather than letting our emotions control us, we can control and use them to produce emotional states that generate amazing English-speaking results!

Our emotional state can be affected by small cues and current situations that remind us of past situations. This is logical because the limbic system also controls long-term memory, so it is easy for us to remember emotions in the past when we see, hear, taste, feel, and sense specific "things". For example, if we smell cake baking in the oven, this smell might fill us with warm, comforting emotions because it reminds us when we were young and the time when our mothers or other person we loved made us cake and other desserts. On the other hand, if we walk into a room where we have to take an English-speaking test, we may be reminded of our past experiences in other testing rooms, and the times when we did poorly on a test, and this may harm our self-confidence. We need to control our emotions and sense of self-confidence.

If you know that you will be in a situation where you will be speaking English and are feeling nervous, the first step in controlling your emotions is to organize and analyze them. As

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we read in the previous chapter, a most effective way to do this is to use numbers to track our levels of feelings. Once we identify and organize our feelings during certain situations, we can use all of these situations to our advantage. How do we do this? The same way any effective and diligent student would: *organize* and *prepare*.

That's right. Prepare the emotions that you want to use beforehand. So, right before you take a test, or right before you go into a business meeting where you will be speaking English, you can do this exercise in order to feel more self-confident in your English-speaking.

### **Here is how you do it:**

1. Search throughout your past memories and select one or two moments in your life where you felt the same type of self-confidence that you want to feel during your test or other English-speaking situation. Choose a time in the past when you spoke with extreme self-confidence. Maybe this was a time when you took a test and got a perfect score, or maybe it was a time that you felt super self-confident during a social situation with friends, or while playing in a sports game. Either way, it is the feeling of self-confidence that is important.
2. Close your eyes. Create a picture of this situation from the past in your mind. Pretend and feel like you are in that situation right now. Feel the same level of self-confidence you felt when you were in this situation. *Where are you? What are you doing? What things are around you? Try to see the things that you saw. What do you see? How do you feel? What does **self-confidence** look like? What do you hear? Who is with you? Try to hear the sounds that you heard. What does **self-confidence** sound like? Use the senses of touch, smell, and taste if you want as well. What does **self-confidence** feel like? What does **self-confidence** smell like? What does self-confidence taste like? You can choose one sense, two, three, four, or all of them.*
3. Create a list of several of these past situations where you felt ultra self-confident. You can use different past situations for different present English-speaking opportunities. Your situations from the past can be English-speaking situations or situations where you were doing something other than speaking English. Remember: it is the feeling of extreme self-confidence that you experienced that is important and not what you were doing.

### **Self-Confidence Exercise**

*Close your eyes. Think of a time when you spoke to a close friend or someone else with whom you felt very comfortable. Where were you? See a picture of the comfortable position you were sitting in. Feel how relaxed and self-confident you felt as you spoke and shared your opinion.*

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Think and remember how you felt that your ideas were accepted by your conversation partner with respect and consideration. Feel this same self-confidence right now. At this moment, you feel extremely self-confident.

What is the source of your self-confidence?

Is it the content of what you are saying?

Is it your tone of voice?

If you cannot recall of such a memory, then create a memory like this in your mind.

Think of this memory daily. Feel the same feelings of self-confidence that you felt. Think the same confident thoughts that you thought. Remember and feel how well you trusted yourself at this time.

What does self-confidence look like?

What does self-confidence sound like?

What does self-confidence feel like?

What does self-confidence smell like?

What does self-confidence taste like?

The next time you speak in English, bring this image, the feelings, and the thoughts of this memory into your mind and heart. Realize what you are doing. Know that you are in control of your **emotional state**.

If you need to speak in a different type of role, than re-create or create a different past situation or experience to suit this need. For example, if you must give a presentation in English, think of a time when you spoke to a larger group of people with extreme self-confidence and focus. Repeat the exercise as many times as you like.

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# Using Mistakes as Tools

Another reason why English-learners feel embarrassed when speaking English is because English-learners are used to learning English *in school*. While native English speakers learn some English in school, most of their English is learned throughout daily *life*. For many English-learners like you, "English" may be viewed simply as a subject because the first time you learned and studied it was when you were in school. For every native English speaker, their English teachers were their parents, families, friends, and neighbours. For most non-native English speakers, their first English teachers were their English teachers at school.

So, what's the difference between learning in school and learning in life? Assessment. Measurement. Judgment. Because you learned English in school, your English level was and is being assessed, measured, and judged upon by your teachers, your classmates...and yourself. You are being measured so much that it sometimes can feel like your mind and your potential are being measured rather than only your English skills. In fact, often when we allow other people to "measure" us too much, it can feel as if they are measuring the value of our entire self, our sense of *self-worth*.

Let's take an example: tests. Think about it. What is the purpose of tests and exams at school? Are students given tests and exams in order to help them learn? Not really. Think about how many times your teachers gave and discussed the answers to a test after you took it. Did this happen often? Probably not, because that is not the purpose of tests and exams. Tests and exams rarely help us learn, especially if we never find out the answers.

Tests are given by schools and institutions and used to measure only a small part of our English abilities over a very small amount of time. They put a number or a letter on the results of this measurement, and then compare these letters and numbers with all the other students who took that test. They compare these letters and rank the students in order. The problem is that tests are not always accurate. They can never truly evaluate all of our abilities, but schools and the government do not have enough time to measure and order them more accurately. Taking tests and exams are a fast way to evaluate students and then put them in order.

If you disagree, then imagine this: you are taking a test, but this is a special test because only you take it. You receive a mark of 50% on this test. How do you think you would feel? Probably not wonderful, but maybe not too sad. Now, imagine that you take the same test, but this time, your classmates or other students are taking the test with you. You get 50% on this test again. How do you think you would feel this time? You would probably feel much sadder than receiving 50% on the test that you took alone. If the teacher told the class that most students got 70% on this test, you would probably feel even worse! If you think this

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would be true, then why do you think this might happen? We would feel worse getting a poor mark on a test that other students took with us because it is natural for us to compare our scores with our peers (people who are very similar to us, especially in age).

## **Social Comparisons**

For native English speakers like me, we learned English as babies and children. When we made mistakes, no one corrected us and made us feel negatively. They laughed at us and made us feel joyous because they were happy to hear us talk. They were glad when we made mistakes because they could correct them and teach us the right way to speak English. There was no need to compare our English to the English of another person.

Nevertheless, English-learners like you may sometimes feel like your conversation partner is assessing and measuring your English level and maybe even giving it a "score". You may feel this way because people have associated making mistakes in English with school because that is where many people first learned and used English. When we made mistakes in school, often times, we felt discouraged because at school, students are compared with each other and our teachers can sometimes become impatient or even angry with us.

After taking a test, every student must examine the answers or at least discuss possible solutions if the problems were too difficult to solve. In this way, our mistakes do not hurt us, but they help us. They aid us because as we find and discuss the answers, we learn, discover new ways to do things, and become stronger and more self-confident. We gain and grow. However, if we take a test and receive a bad grade on it, and we never discover and discuss the answers, then we will never know what we did wrong, and then we will not grow very much.

Here is a secret that you may rarely hear: mistakes are good. Well, they *can* be good. Yes, this is true, but only under certain conditions. When we identify that we have made a mistake, and identify the type of mistake we have made, we observe and concentrate on what we did wrong and how to do it right the next time. Sometimes, thinking about our mistakes in this way may not lead us to the correct answer the first time, but they may lead to better feelings of power and self-confidence, which can help us find the answers the second time.

## **Finding Patterns**

Think of mistakes as signals that tell you when you are going in the wrong direction. If they are signals then they are also *tools* to help you learn. Actually, think of mistakes as tiny "flashlights" which identify the areas in your English-speaking abilities which need improving.

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If you keep track of your mistakes, or write them down and make a list of them, you may soon realize that your flashlight keeps flashing in similar directions. This means that there are patterns in your mistakes. Very often, students make the same or similar mistakes over and over again. Use your “flashlight” to find the patterns in your mistakes, then fix the pattern, and then you correct many mistakes at once.

After reading this chapter, hopefully, you will try to make a separation in your mind between English and school. Even if you are still a student, remember that there is little need to feel like people are “measuring” your English when you speak with them. You will make mistakes. If you use these mistakes to compare yourself with the English-speaking level of other people, you may begin to feel intimidated and angry. However, if you decide to identify your mistakes, collect them, and use them as a tool, you can find patterns in your mistakes and take action to improve them.

### **Self-Confidence Exercise**

*Go to a quiet place and close your eyes.*

*Think about some times when you spoke English and felt intimidated by your mistakes.*

*Turn on your “flashlight” and use it to identify these mistakes.*

*Open your eyes and make a list of some of these mistakes. Close your eyes again and think of another time. Think of times when you thought that people did not understand you. What were you saying? Try to find mistakes that are similar to each other. Look for patterns. Put the mistakes in groups.*

*Maybe you will notice that you are pronouncing a certain English sound improperly, or maybe you often use the wrong preposition.*

*Remember to use your flashlight to identify your mistakes and look for patterns. This will “shed light” on your English-speaking abilities and ultimately, increase your self-confidence.*

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# English is Your Tool (Not Your Culture)

As we have learned throughout this book, a large part of becoming more self-confident in your English-speaking abilities is feeling like you have control over your English. The best way for you to feel like you control your English-speaking abilities is to feel like you own the language. The best way to feel like you own English...is to actually own it!

Owning your English-abilities does not mean that you must abandon your native language and culture, and it does not have to mean that your native language and culture are being threatened. You can own English as a tool. Whenever you feel uncomfortable using this tool, you can control your emotional feelings and improve your sense of self-confidence by focusing on past memories that you have prepared for yourself. These will be times from the past when you felt very self-confident. You now know that the mistakes you make in English can be used to identify patterns that need improvement, and realizing this can actually help you improve faster.

## The Changing World

Even though speaking English with self-confidence can be a straightforward process, some people still have problems. One final reason why some people find it difficult to speak English confidently that I haven't yet mentioned in this e-book is that they do not like English nor do they want to speak English, despite knowing that they need to use it. Some people believe Global English is not beneficial to society because it is a threat to other languages and cultures around the world. Others have suggested that English should be replaced by other languages, like Mandarin, as the new global business and social networking languages. However, I think Global English will be the main language of globalized business and social networking for a very long time. The internet is already overwhelmingly based in English. In addition, it seems too costly and too time-consuming for people all over the world to start studying a new language. English will be here for a very long time. However, everything changes.

Everything is changing right now. The *English language* is changing right now. Right at this moment, English is changing into something "different"...very slowly. This is true because, as I am writing this sentence, people around the world are speaking English using English words and they are using these words in their "own way". When someone uses a word in their own way, they are changing its definition (just a little). This is why people who live in specific regions and areas, who have their own unique cultures, use English words in slightly different ways than people in other regions and areas with their own culture. Language and communication is constantly changing.

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Here's a little secret: sometimes, native English speakers cannot understand each other. For example, a Canadian person may find it difficult to understand everything a person from Scotland says, or a person from the USA may often misunderstand a person from Australia because of different vocabulary and pronunciation. In the United Kingdom, a "bonnet" is the part of the car that opens and covers the engine, while in the United States, a "bonnet" is a scarf that women used to wear to cover their hair. One thing is for certain: there are different types of English, with different accents, and different vocabulary.

English is changing and if you want, you can participate in directing these changes. All you have to do is speak English regularly. If this idea does not appeal to you, then you may decide to view English only as a tool. The choice is yours. People from all over the world are adding new words and meanings to English every day, and this is forming a new international culture. You can be apart of this new Global English...if you want.

-the end-

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