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# FEARLESS FLUENCY

Speak English with  
Extraordinary Confidence



Dr Julian Northbrook

# **FEARLESS FLUENCY**

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SPEAK ENGLISH WITH EXTRAORDINARY CONFIDENCE

DR JULIAN NORTHBROOK



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To help you with this, I've included a complete audio version of this book (as long as you have a smartphone that can use the "Learnistic" app).

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## INTRODUCTION

WARNING! THIS BOOK IS NOT FOR EVERYONE

Hello.

I'm **Dr Julian Northbrook** and welcome to Fearless Fluency.

If you've been struggling to speak English confidently, you're in the right place. This book will take you, step-by-step, through the English-speaking mindset and will show you how to speak with confidence next time (and every time) you speak English.

First, a fair warning: this is going to be uncomfortable. Painful even.

Look, if you want to speak English confidently?

Be more confident in your everyday life?

It's likely you're going to need to make changes to the way that you think and behave. Some of the ideas I share with you will hurt. Most of them will seem unconventional. Counter-intuitive even.

There's an excellent chance I will offend you at least once (but probably many times) by challenging your beliefs. But those beliefs—which are likely false—need to be challenged. Pay attention, apply the lessons I share, and your confidence will grow.

One more thing: this is not a book that teaches you how to learn English. That's what my first book, Master English FAST – An Uncommon Guide to Speaking Extraordinary English (MEF for short) was all about. In that book, I walked you through the English Mastery process, step-by-simple-step and

showed you what to do as an intermediate to advanced English learner to speak extraordinarily good English. At the time of writing this book, MEF has sold more than a thousand copies in more than 94 countries around the world. The response has been, to say the least, extraordinary. But there was a problem with the book.

When I wrote Master English *FAST*, I was limited to how much I could include, so I decided to stick closely to the topic of how to Master English as an intermediate to advanced English learner. And MEF accomplished this—and continues to—beautifully. The vast majority of people reported excellent results. But a few struggled more than others... and all for the same reason. Confidence. Simply put, their own way of thinking was working against them.

The principles taught in MEF only work if you do them... but if you're always filled with fear and questioning yourself, it's unlikely you'll take the action needed.

This is where Fearless Fluency comes in.

Fearless Fluency fills the gap in MEF by showing you how to override your thoughts and get on with using English. It's the second book in my "Advanced English" series (after "Think English, Speak English", all about stopping mental translation and thinking as you speak) you don't need to have read MEF to benefit from this book.

Anything that is essential to know in order to use Fearless Fluency is repeated here, too. Obviously, it's better you read both books; but again, it's not necessary. And with all that out of the way, let's get into Fearless Fluency!

Best,  
Dr Julian Northbrook

P.S. Want a free gift from me?

If you find a typo, error or spelling mistake in this book: email me at [julian@doingenglish.com](mailto:julian@doingenglish.com) to let me know – if I haven't already found and fixed it, I'll send you a small something as a thank you.

## THOSE WHO FLOURISH AND THOSE WHO PERISH

**H**ere's a question for you: *Why is confidence so important?*

I'll answer this question in a moment in detail, but first, let me make one point; **true confidence is possible**. Even if you are shy, introverted, not confident in your first language or have screwed up in the past, **it is possible**. In truth, I am all of those things. And I have screwed up many, many times in the past. Far more than most people, in fact... and as you'll see as we progress through Fearless Fluency, this is one of the things that accounts for my success now.

We've already touched upon this above, but some people flourish in English, while others never progress.

Why is this?

A while ago I was at the university where I did my PhD on research in the UK. While I was there, I got talking to a German girl who was also doing her PhD there. She's the perfect example of someone who will go a long way in the world of academia. Bright, full of good ideas, and beautiful to boot.

*"Yes, she will go a long way,"* I thought to myself.

Or at least she *should*, anyway.

Because right now?

She doesn't.



Quite the opposite, in fact. She's struggling because she can't get her funding proposals accepted. The papers she submits to journals get rejected. And people don't listen to her at conferences and in presentations. They don't take her seriously, and she is terrified of criticism and avoids discussing her work with others.

Her problem is quite simple: **she's not confident with her English, and it shows in her speech and her writing.** Everything she does screams insecurity. And thus, her great research goes ignored.

Her English isn't that bad.

Yes, it needs work, but it should have been good enough. But that's the thing – the world is a harsh, uncaring place, and competition is fierce.

Academia is a world where those who communicate well flourish, and the insecure perish. Just doing research is not enough. That research has to be packaged and communicated to the academic world via journal articles and presentations. At every step of the way, people will criticise you and force you to defend your ideas.

Anne Sigismund Huff in her book *Designing Research for Publication* says that academic research is actually a conversation. And it is. It's a conversation between a group of like-minded people trying to come to a conclusion about a specific topic.

When I do my research (mainly to do with "chunks" of language and how we can use them to speak more fluently and naturally in a second language) I don't just make it all up from scratch. I consult other people's work. I read journal articles. Go to conferences. Talk to people. In this kind of environment the people who do best are the people who are excellent communicators.

This, of course, isn't just limited to the world of academia. These days it is the same for any profession and any industry. Including yours. Put simply, **those who take the time to perfect their communication skills and speak with strength and assertiveness win.**

This is a harsh reality. And you might not like it. But it is really all the same. No matter how unfair you think this is, nothing is going to change.

Of course, this doesn't mean that confidence is always enough, though. In the case of this person, her English was pretty good – certainly good enough. All she needed was a sprinkle of confidence to get her going. But you can't have confidence without the skill to back it up. You need to have the two in balance. You also need to remember that speaking *extraordinary* English requires more than just language – the words and rules of English. In fact, you need three things to speak well... and getting this right is essential.

## **The LKC Triangle**

You need three things to speak well; the language, knowledge of the things you want to talk about and knowledge of culture. I talk about this in Master English *FAST* in immense detail, but since it's so important for speaking with confidence, let's go over it quickly here, too.

Simply put, if you don't have the words and phrases you need to express the things you want to express... then you're not going to speak well. This much is obvious.

You also need content to talk about – simply put, if you do not know anything about something, you're not going to be able to speak about it confidently (or at all). This too is obvious. But where it might not be quite so obvious is in situations such as small talk and chit-chat. This is a massive topic, and one that in my experience even the most advanced language learners struggle with (hence my forthcoming book: *Smalltalk Superhero*).

While language is an important part of this—especially idiom and metaphor—much of the problem is to do with the content you've got in your head (i.e. you've got nothing to talk about).

So we've got language and knowledge.

These make up the “L” and the “K” of what I call the LKC Triangle. There's one more element, though.

Culture.

And this is the big one. Culture can be thought of as the filter that you see and interact with the world through. Everything you say is said through your

unique cultural filter. Unique, because although people from the same countries have very similar cultures, they're not identical because we've all had different experiences. Importantly, though, the way people understand what you say is *not* through *your* filter.

No. It's through *their* filter.

**What this means is that what you say may not be what they understand.**

This, and indeed all three elements of the LKC Triangle, has important implications for how confidently you speak. Just knowing the words isn't enough – you also need to know how best to *use* those words with the person you are talking to.

## THE CONFIDENCE CODE

What Is Confidence?

This is a question that has fascinated me for a long time. And one I'm going to answer in this chapter.

When I was younger and far more naive than I am now, I was very shy. But I could see that it was holding me back, and so one day I decided I needed to try and fix the problem. I wanted to become more confident. So I did what most people do: I tried to fake it, hoping that it would become real confidence.

*"Fake it until you make it,"* as the saying goes.

That's not what happened, though.

*Ohhh, no.*

I did what I thought was supposed to be confident, based on what I saw other people around me doing. But I got it wrong, and in the end, I just appeared arrogant. And of course, on the inside, I still didn't feel confident at all.

In fact, I felt worse!

I still felt shy, but now I also felt like I was fake, too, which just made me feel worse about talking to people.

Now, confidence can be learned. True confidence when you speak English is possible. But first, you need to understand what confidence *is*.

Confidence is internal; it's on the inside.

Of course, when you are confident on the inside this will change the way you behave and make you look confident on the outside, too. **But it all starts on the inside.**

If you are confident, you know that you bring value to the world, to the people you are with, and to the people that you speak to. Being confident doesn't mean you can do everything perfectly. And it certainly doesn't mean *believing* you can do everything.

That is just arrogance, not confidence. Which is precisely the trap I fell into.

I remember making a complete idiot of myself at university by trying to argue and justify an obvious mistake in my work. I was trying to sound confident by sticking up for myself... but ultimately the mistake I made was clearly a mistake, and *everybody* could see that.

**True confidence means knowing there are loads of things you can't do well, but knowing that is OK.**

A confident person is OK with making mistakes.

OK with screwing up.

A confident person sees everything as a learning opportunity and tries to learn from everything that happens to them – good or bad.

When you are confident, it's not that you don't feel fear. Rather you are just comfortable with that fear. It's not that you never get embarrassed, rejected or feel stupid. Rather you know that it's fine to feel silly. And importantly, confidence means being fine with showing your true self.

A sure sign of someone who is not confident on the inside is that they try to hide the negative parts of themselves. But true strength comes from admitting to the world that you are not perfect, but knowing that you add value anyway.

Someone who, on the surface, seems to be always confident, always happy and always on top of the world comes across as fake because we are never always happy, and there are always things that don't go how we want them to. People who come across as genuinely confident are okay with this and okay

with sharing it with other people.

That, in a nutshell, is real confidence.

## **Forgetting English Isn't Your First Language**

I often talk about “Forgetting that English isn't your first language”. This is what I consider Mastery of a language.

It means you are good enough at English that you are not conscious of the fact you are speaking a second language. **It doesn't, however, mean you are perfect.**

Nobody ever is.

It also doesn't mean you never make mistakes.

Everybody does.

Rather, *forgetting that English isn't your first language* means you are completely comfortable with using English and focused on what you are doing with the language, not the actual act of speaking.

Confidence is an important part of this.

People who are not confident are always focusing on their mistakes and aiming for perfection. And people who focus on being perfect tend not to move very far because they're always fully conscious of the fact they are speaking a second language.

Before we move on, though, there's a great story that illustrates this point well: in the book *Art and Fear* David Bayles and Ted Orland (a must-read if you're interested in art, but also extremely relevant to language learning) tell a story about a pottery teacher.

A pottery teacher decides to do an experiment on his class. He splits them up into two groups and tells one group (Group A) that their grade will be based on the quality of their work. They only need to make one pot... *but it needs to be perfect*. Then to Group B, he says their grade will be based on the quantity of pots they produce – he's just going to weigh all their work then grade them based on that. The more there is, the better the grade.

Which group do you think produced the finest, highest quality pots? You'd think it would be Group A, right?

After all, they've got the most motivation to create a high quality, perfect pot. But actually, no. The highest quality pots came from Group B – the quantity group.

You see, while Group A was sitting around trying to decide how to make a perfect pot and worrying about messing up, Group B students were up to their elbows in clay just churning out pot after pot after pot and learning from their mistakes as they went.

The point is, language, like art, is a process. You can't get good without doing it. And that inevitably means screwing it all up a lot. If you're going to reach the highest levels of English Mastery, and use your English confidently, you're going to have to let go of your fear of mistakes and just go at it. Ironically, the fastest road to confident, mistake-free English is... screwing up a lot and learning from it.

## **The Key to a Happy Life**

There's a great scene in the film *Jurassic World*.

Simon Masrani, CEO of Jurassic World (played by the fantastic actor Irfan Khan) is flying his helicopter with Claire, the park operations manager.

Masrani isn't exactly a good pilot. Indeed, he hasn't even got his licence yet.

The helicopter is going all over the place, and naturally, Claire looks terrified. Masrani, however, is the epitome of confidence.

*"You look tense, Claire,"* he says.

Claire is anything but confident. She looks terrified and responds, *"Maybe you should just... focus on the controls..."*

Here, Masrani's reply is brilliant: *"The key to a happy life,"* he says, *"is to accept that you are never actually in control."*

Wow.

This is not a great thing to hear when you're in a helicopter with someone who barely knows how to fly it. *And it's only half true.* But all the same, **the sooner you learn this fact, the better.**

No one is truly in control of anything except themselves. And worrying about things you have no control of is a total waste of time.

Do you remember my definition of confidence? People who are confident are comfortable with being wrong, with screwing up, with not being perfect.

I've already said this, but Masrani is the epitome of confidence. And his attitude is a huge part of that. Attitude will take you a long way.

A great example of this would be something like a job interview. Ultimately you have no control over whether you get the job or not. You have no idea whether the interviewer is having a bad day, is hungover and not listening to you. He may have biases against you because you're a woman or he may have some kind of prejudice against you for racist reasons. My wife is Japanese, and my grandmother (who is now dead and buried) was against our marriage. Why? Because she's Japanese.

My grandmother grew up during the years of the Second World War. She would have been equally against me marrying a German. It's sad in this day and age, but it does happen – and not just with people who lived through the war.

The point is, all people have their own biases and prejudices. And you have no control over them whatsoever.

What you *can* control, however, is yourself, your own attitude, your own decisions and the way you deal with the shit life throws at you.

I said Masrani's statement was only half true, because later in the film, overconfident with his abilities, he flies his helicopter again, crashes and dies.

Not a great way to go, really.

But that's another important lesson: *skill without confidence won't get you far.*

Confidence is very important, but balance is everything.



At the same time though, Masrani is someone who accepts that things coming at him in life aren't necessarily within his control. So, he doesn't seek to control those things; he only seeks to control his actions – the things that he can do. He gets in the helicopter, and he flies against all odds. Sure, things went wrong, but at least he took the risk. There's no point in being able to fly a helicopter if you're too scared to leave the ground, after all.

## **The Two Types of People**

Psychologists say there are two types of people in this world. And only one of these types is likely to master English *fast*, or indeed, at all.

Which are you, I wonder?

Imagine this situation: Two people start businesses. They both develop a product that they think will sell well.

*"People need this!"* they say.

But the products don't sell.

It turns out they were wrong. People didn't need them at all and didn't want to buy. The businesses both lose a lot of money and ultimately fail. The first business owner says, *"This is impossible, I have no business talent,"* and gives up.

The second says, *"Well, at least now I know what people don't want to buy."*

Which do you think will ultimately go on to be a successful billionaire?

The second business owner was Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, Bill Gates, James Dyson – all people who failed but kept going to become among the richest people who have ever lived.

The first business owner?

Nobody will ever know who he was because he just disappeared.

Smart people in psychology tell us there are two types of people: **people with a fixed mindset, and people with a growth mindset.**

Most people have fixed mindsets. They are the failures of the world. People with a fixed mindset have an image in their mind of what they should be like and *refuse* to deviate from that. They expect to be perfect straight away, expect the world to give them everything and quit when things don't work. Worse: *they stopped without ever learning anything*.

The reality is that most people in the world have fixed mindsets. It's very likely that you do, too.

In contrast, people who have growth mindsets are the people who screw up, learn from the experience and try again and again and again until they succeed.

The image they have in their head of themselves is flexible – **they're focused on the process, not the result**.

Go back to the story I told you about the pottery teacher and his experiment. Two groups of people – one group told to produce a perfect pot, the other group to produce as many pots as possible.

It's no wonder that the second group ultimately produced the highest quality pots... even though their job was not to produce quality.

What the pottery teacher did in this experiment was force a fixed mindset (Group A) and a growth mindset (Group B).

With pots and English alike, if you've got a specific image in your mind of what you should produce and you can't let go of that, you are doomed to failure. Because basically nothing ever goes to plan. If you see everything as a learning opportunity—a chance to develop—though, you can't fail because “failure” doesn't exist.

The question is, which are you?

If you're already a growth person, great – you'll get good at English fast, and speak with confidence. If you've got a fixed mindset, I'm afraid you've got your work cut out for you.

Don't worry.

You can change your mindset. But you're going to have to put some serious time and effort into changing the way you think about English and your behaviour.

## WE ARE THE WAVE MAKERS

**T**he idiom, ‘to make waves’ means to create a significant impression. Usually in a way that could be considered making trouble.

It means to disturb the status quo, to ask the difficult questions and probably upset a few people along the way. But it means to make a significant impression.

It’s usually used in a very negative sense. Normally, when we say ‘make waves,’ we actually say, “Don’t make waves!” And that’s what we’re all taught as kids, as we’re growing up. “Don’t make waves! Don’t ruffle feathers, don’t upset the tranquillity of working life. Keep quiet, behave yourself, don’t stick out.”

Especially in Japan and Asian countries as well, we’re told, “Don’t stick out!”

BUT – then when we look around and we look at the people who are making significant changes in the world, the real innovators, the leaders, the Steve Jobs-es of the world, the Richard Branson’s - the people who are building businesses, doing things that really matter... guess what?

They're all wave makers.

The relentless.

The ruthless.

They go out there and they don't care if they upset people; they upset as many people as they have to in the pursuit of effecting whatever it is that they do.

This doesn't mean you should *try* to upset people... but it doesn't mean you shouldn't be afraid to. You need to have the confidence to go out there and make those waves, make a mess if you have to but ultimately do amazing shit.

## **English for Punks**

I am happy to spend more than four times the cost of a can of regular beer on a can of BrewDog Punk IPA.

I also have to get on my bike and cycle for 30 minutes to get to the nearest place that sells it.

*“But why?”* you may ask.

Because it's the best beer in the world?

Not really.

Though it is *good*.

The reason is that the things BrewDog stand for align with what I personally stand for. Doing things how I want, on my own terms.

Put another way, BrewDog's mission in life, the things important to them, are also important to me. And that attracts me to the company and to the products they produce.

Of course, their beer is good (and if it wasn't they'd quickly lose people's respect), but the point is when I drink it I *feel* part of the culture they have created.

Remember: we're group animals by nature.

We want to fit into groups, preferably groups that already align with what we already believe in. And you need to have the same effect on people. When you speak English, and in everything you do.

Your typical English learner is like mainstream canned lager. They're trying desperately to fit it, copying what everyone else does and wondering why they don't get far in life. They're cheap, tasteless, and let's be honest – utterly forgettable.

*You need to be more like BrewDog.*

A punk of the English learning world – uncompromising, bold and irreverent to the norms that people say you have to uphold.

American accent?

Why?

You're not an American, so screw their accent! Same with British accents and all the rest.

This is no reason to lose confidence – no reason whatsoever.

Someone laughs at you because you made a mistake in English? Because you don't use English in the way, they want you to? Screw them! They're not important.

Someone got 'opinions' about something you're doing? Give them the middle finger and carry on doing what you know works.

BrewDog oozes authenticity.

They went from two men, one dog and a tent in 2007, to being one of the fastest growing food and drink companies in the UK, with more than 500 employees and 44 bars worldwide.

All because they refused to listen to what other people told them they should do.

Confidence is all about being comfortable with being wrong and taking risks.

But at the same time knowing that it doesn't matter – that you always have options, and that failure doesn't even mean failing, it means feedback to learn from. Because you do always have options. Always. You've just got to look at them in the right way.

I use the example of BrewDog because they are the ultimate case study in how the confidence to do something different, combined with skill, can result in massive success.

But it's just as true of your speaking English.

Take the same idea, and apply it to you, your life, and your English speaking.

You will get the same kind of results.

## **I like How You Roll**

In Nancy Meyers' film *The Intern*, Ben—a retired 70-year-old—applies for an intern position. Right from the start, he's meticulous about what he wears. Classic suits, attention to detail, and always with a handkerchief in his pocket.

He gets the job.

Very quickly, people comment on his clothes. “*Hey Ben, you gonna wear a suit every day?*” one person asks.

“*You bet,*” replies Ben.

“*Confidence—I like how you roll,*” replies his new co-worker.

The boss even tells him he doesn't need to dress up for the job: “*Don't feel like you have to dress up... We're super cas here,*” she says.

Ben, however, again replies, “*I'm comfortable in a suit, thank you.*”

Here's the thing though: **Ben stands out.**

He dresses well in an environment where everybody dresses super casual, and as a result, he turns heads.

Research shows that people who dress “unusually” tend to gain more respect than other people. This doesn't mean they wear “weird” clothes (although they often do — take Lady Gaga as a great example) but it means they wear what they want, and they wear it with style and confidence.

We're going to talk more about the topic of authenticity later in this book, but this is a huge part of what we see here. And this is why I'm going to say this: *Dress well, and you'll speak better.*

Simply put, if you dress well, you'll feel great in what you're wearing. And that'll make you seem strong and confident. When you exude confidence, people treat you with respect. And when people treat you with respect, you become stronger and more confident with *everything* – including speaking English.

The reason I tell you this here is because it links back to everything we've just talked about in this book.

Just like people respect those who dress well and in the way that they want to, people who are confident and comfortable with making mistakes also tend to gain other people's respect.

One of the groups of people studied in this research project about “unusual dressers” was people who go to high-end boutiques and brand shops wearing trainers and tracksuits.

Sales assistants look out for these people because they know they're likely to spend far more money.

You see, the people who dress up to go to a fancy boutique are trying hard to fit in. They have an image in their mind of what someone who buys brand clothes looks like... and they're trying to match that. You could say that they are the “fixed mind setters” of the fashion world.

The people who are comfortable with walking into, say, Prada, in gym-wear, on the other hand, are people for whom being in Prada is so natural that they just don't care. For them stepping into Prada is just something they do as naturally as most people step into their local supermarket.

This is the way you want to think about English too. Stop trying so hard to fit in, and think of English as being as simple and natural as going to your local supermarket for a loaf of bread (and perhaps a bottle of wine or two).

**Try First, Then Quit**



What exactly is it that makes people want to dress up in fancy clothes to go shopping at a high-end fashion boutique?

For some, it may be the simple pleasure of dressing up (I tend to be like this... I overdress just going to the supermarket, but I enjoy it). But for many—and this is what we just talked about above—it's all about fear of being rejected.

They have a fixed image of how they should look in such a situation, and feel that if they don't look the part, they will be rejected by people *already* in that world.

Which is silly because the people truly in that world don't give a shit (just like almost nobody gives a shit about your occasional grammar mistakes).

Look, it doesn't matter how good you are at speaking English. If you aren't confident when you speak, you won't sound good.

For some people, confidence comes naturally, probably because of their upbringing. For others, like me, *confidence doesn't come naturally*.

**But it can be learnt.**

Remember the story I told you near the beginning of this book? About the German girl I met who was having problems because of confidence? Well, what I didn't tell you is this: *she dropped out of university*.

Such a waste.

She was good at what she did, but she just didn't have the confidence to communicate that well.

Don't you end up the same!

If she'd just put a little time and effort into working on her mindset—her confidence problems with English—things might have gone very differently for her.

To my mind, lack of confidence in something is never a good reason to quit, and *never* a good reason not to try. Try and fail, then if it's not right... quit. But don't quit simply because you're scared of trying.

## THE THREE FEARS OF GREAT ENGLISH SPEAKING

Lack of confidence with English (and indeed anything else in life, really) comes down to three basic, fundamental fears:

1. The fear of failure
2. The fear of rejection
3. The fear of embarrassment

Lack of confidence can always be linked to these three fears. Therefore, to become truly confident, **we have to overcome them.**

How do we do this?

Well, it's going to take some work.

That's the bad news.

But the good news is that just being aware of them will help. **You'll never improve what you don't notice.** And so, by noticing these three fears in yourself, you will open the door to overcoming them.

In the next section, we'll talk about where these three fears come from, and why we have evolved as an animal that naturally has these fears. Then we'll talk in detail about each fear over several chapters.

There's a lot to discuss. But first, you have homework. I want you to think back to the last conversation you had in English.

Try and remember everything you talked about in that conversation.

Remember in as much detail as you can...

1. Were you afraid of making mistakes
2. Of not being understood?
3. Of being rejected or laughed at by the person you were talking to?
4. Did you feel embarrassed? Why?

Think about these questions, and write down how you felt. **As I said, the first step to overcoming these fears and speaking English confidently is to face your fear.** Only once you realise that these fears exist, and only once you are honest with yourself and admit that they are there for you will you be able to fix them.

## **The Evolution of Fear**

To be human means to fear. After all, fear is designed to protect us.

Sometimes when I'm out running, and I'm stood at a traffic light getting pissed off because I want to *go* it can be so, so tempting to just dash out through the traffic.

Surely I could dodge the oncoming vehicles?

I mean, how hard could it be?

Well, the thing that stops me from doing this is fear. Plain and simple. And it's a good job too, 'cos I ain't no traffic dodger. I'd be flatter than a pancake before you could say, "*bob's your uncle*".

The fear you feel when speaking English comes from the way we've evolved as a species.

Go back 100,000 years or so. Fear is what kept us alive. People who weren't afraid died quickly. They were killed by wild animals or other tribes ate poisoned berries or fell off cliffs. Subsequently, they never passed on their genes. On the other hand, people who were wary survived. Their genes *were* passed on.

We no longer have to worry about sabre-tooth tigers eating us. The world is still full of danger of course, but not like it was 100,000 years ago.

These days our fear is mostly unjustified. But at the same time, the way we interact with the world has changed. It's not a simple case of “man hunts, woman makes babies” anymore. We've developed into a complex society with even more complex social systems (well, the word “society” comes from the word “social”, but you get what I mean).

Guess what?

We just kept the fear.

Even though the old risk of death is no longer there, the evolutionary fear is still very much alive and kicking.

### **What This Means for Your English Speaking**

It's simple. Human beings developed as group animals. The group meant survival. But for a group to function and survive the dangerous world, the people in the group needed to be similar.

One person with crazy ideas about bringing a sabre-tooth tiger home and keeping it as a pet could get the entire group killed.

So, people who were different were kicked out. And people who were kicked out of their group didn't last long.

You've probably seen nature programmes where an animal inadvertently gets separated from the herd. In seconds predators descend upon it, and the animal becomes part of the food chain.

Well, that's very unlikely to happen to you now. But it was the difference between life and death for our ancestors.

The result of this is that we naturally want to “fit in” to groups. And we've retained the fears related to losing these groups. This explanation is grossly over-simplified, of course. I get that. But the point I want to make is that **all people have a natural tendency towards fear, but that fear no longer helps us the way it used to.** Now, it just gets in the way.

Failure. Rejection. Embarrassment.

All fears that remain from ancient times, but that have very little to no real use anymore. They just hold us back. But simply knowing that they are a natural part of human nature makes them much easier to overcome.

## **Are You a Sheep**

How powerful is conformity? The desire to be part of the group? It turns out: *very powerful*.

Most people in this world are sheep. In 1951, Solomon Asch conducted an experiment. He asked a group of people to look at a card which had a line on it, then three more lines labelled A, B, and C.

All they had to do was say which line was the same length as the baseline. But in the group was an actor who deliberately gave an incorrect response. The participants didn't know this, of course, but the researchers wanted to know if people would copy the incorrect response to fit in.

Logically, you'd think that no, they wouldn't. But it turns out that yes, actually, people do. In fact, a massive 75% of people copied the obviously incorrect response.

In another experiment, the researcher placed actors in a hospital waiting room. A "beep" sound played, and all the actors stood up, then sat back down.

When a new person came into the room, he or she copied without knowing why.

One by one, all the actors were called away, and eventually only new, non-actors were left. They kept standing up on the beep. *None of them knew why*. But because everyone was doing it, they kept going.

Does this make you feel good to be human?

Pretty unlikely.

It's this same psychology that drives the fear you feel when you worry you might screw up your English. Imagine you're sitting in a meeting, and you

have a great idea – a solution to a complex problem. But you don't know how to express it well in English. So, you shut up and say nothing. Eventually, someone else says the same thing you wanted to say 10 minutes ago... but it's too late now. You'll never get the credit for the idea.

The fear you feel in this situation is driven by a fear of rejection. What if you try to express your idea and people don't understand? They'll think you're *such an idiot*.

The reality is that this is very, very rarely the case.

Assholes do exist in the world, but for the most people will want to help you and want to understand what you're trying to express. Logically we know this, of course, but emotionally? That's very different.

We're fighting more than 100,000 years of evolutionary instinct when is all said and done.

### **But There Is a Silver Lining to All This**

There is a silver lining to being a “sheep”, though. It all comes down to who you choose to be with.

Jim Rohn, an American entrepreneur and motivational speaker (sadly no longer with us) said: ***"You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with."***

I recommend you get a piece of paper and a pen and write that down. Pin it up somewhere where you will see it every day. Because this is *powerful*.

What Rohn meant is that you become like the people who you spend the most time with. Surround yourself with the best, and you will become the best.

Surround yourself with people who are comfortable with expressing their ideas even if they don't know how to communicate them in perfect English, and you'll become like that too.

You see, not only do we naturally want to fit into the group... but we also naturally become *like* the group.

This is partly because you will get support from those people, of course, but mainly because you'll naturally pick up their habits and attitudes, just like people in the conformity experiments did.

On the other hand, if you surround yourself with people who make excuses, never do anything, think English is stupid and make no effort to get better, well, *you'll conform to that group as well. You'll end up the same.*

Likewise, if you're constantly in an overcritical environment, you'll become over-critical.

If the people you're surrounded by continuously criticise you for making mistakes, you'll not only come to fear making mistakes, but you'll also become like them: over critical and negative. Not helpful.

As an aside, I am part of a business mastermind group that costs me a significant monthly investment.

I'm there for a very good reason.

Everybody in the group is the top of their field, and I feel so crap when I'm around them.

I am easily the stupidest person in the room. And that is great – because I am the one who's got the most to learn and the most to gain. At the same time though it is a very supportive environment.

Unsurprisingly, my business has improved by leaps and bounds since I joined.

## THE FIRST FEAR

**T**he first of the Three Fears is *the fear of failure*.

I'll be frank: **if you're not failing at least once a day at something, you're not doing enough**. Simple as that. Start doing more!

There's a great idiom in Japanese: "*Shippai ha seikou no haha*" — "*Failure is the mother of success*."

A mentor of mine once told me about a friend of hers who paints one painting every single day. He believes that it's impossible to paint 352 crap paintings in a row. So if he paints every day, *something* will be a success.

Pretty simple logic.

But extremely powerful.

I take the same approach with my daily emails (the Doing English Daily Newsletter – see the resource area at the back of this book) and my YouTube channel.

When I make videos or write emails, I'm not trying to be a success every time. But I know that if I keep doing it day in, day out, there's no way something won't work.

### The 'Shadowing' Video

A perfect example is the "Shadowing" video I did. It was the first video I did



that got popular.

The 50 or videos that I did on my YouTube channel before that got no views, ever.

The Shadowing video went viral and got tens of thousands of views overnight.

Importantly, I didn't expect the Shadowing video to get popular. When I made it, it was just another video – another day of doing what I do every day. It also wasn't a popular topic then. I didn't invent the exercise — I actually took it from a test used in psychology to measure fluency (it's commonly used, for example, with brain-damage patients). But I was the first person to talk about it on YouTube in terms of English learning — now everybody and their dog as a “shadowing” video (sadly, thanks to the ‘Chinese Whispers’ effect, the exercise and what it's useful for has been massively blown out of proportion... but I digress).

The point is, it took 50 videos of total failure before I got a good one.

These days I just make the videos I want, so I don't consider them failures regardless of how they perform, but still, its roughly one in 20 that really picks up and becomes popular.

## **The Best Are All There Because They Failed**

Nobody is super-successful right from the start. It just doesn't work like that. Take Henry Ford, for example. A super-successful businessman.

Well, guess what?

His first businesses failed, and he went bankrupt before seeing any positive result.

Akio Morita, the founder of Sony, is another excellent example. His first product was a rice cooker. It burned the rice and sold less than 100 units. It was a colossal failure.

Other examples: Honda, Bill Gates, Richard Branson, Harland David Sanders (the KFC guy), Walt Disney, Einstein, Darwin, Newton, Edison, Winston

Churchill, Abraham Lincoln.

Should I go on?

Oprah Winfrey, Jerry Seinfeld, Charlie Chaplin, Harrison Ford, Marilyn Monroe, Lady Gaga.

What? Do you want more examples?

Vincent Van Gogh, Charles Schultz, Steven Spielberg, Stephen King, even J.K. Rowling, Monet and Mozart.

You want more?

The Beatles (yes, all of them). Beethoven, Michael Jordan, Stan Smith, Babe Ruth.

The list is endless!

Famous people.

Very, very successful people. All of them completely screwed up in the beginning.

What got them to the end?

Persistence.

Plain and simple. All of these people had a growth mindset and were focused on the process, not on getting things perfectly right the first time.

Of course, they did.

People with a fixed mindset don't become famous, successful people, after all.

## **Failure Equals Feedback**

My good friend Vicki La Bouchardiere once told me, “*failure equals feedback, nothing else.*” She’s right, of course.

I’ve already said this, but I’m going to say it again (and again and again and again and a bloody again until you get it). Whether something is a failure or

not is merely a matter of perspective.

A few years ago, I presented my research in front of a group of people at the prestigious Tokyo University.

Honestly? I didn't deliver my presentation well. I failed to explain some things well, and I confused my audience.

Uncomfortable to be sure.

But a good learning experience all the same. I learned that I needed to articulate my research better.

I also learned that some things I included in the original presentation were boring and irrelevant to the people I was talking to. But I was only able to learn those lessons because I took the blank expressions and subsequent criticism as feedback, not failure.

Same with your English.

If you're not sure how to say something, just try.

Even if you know what you're about to say is incorrect, try anyway. Even if the other people don't understand, you're still one step closer to saying it in the right way because you now know what *not* to say.

## THE SECOND FEAR

**T**he second of the Three Fears is the fear of *rejection*.

Everybody gets rejected. And everybody feels terrible when they do. But you know what? In reality, rejection is a good thing.

Honest truth: A long time ago I got dumped by my girlfriend.

At the time, it was painful as hell. But thinking about it now, I'm so glad I'm not still with that person. I'm so much happier now than I was then.

The truth was that we weren't right for each other, and were much better off without each other.

**Everything happens for a reason;** this is how you need to think. Nine times out of ten, whether something which happened was a bad thing or a *great* thing is very subjective.

When my girlfriend dumped me, I felt like it was a bad thing, but after a couple of days, I realised it was a good thing. Of course, there are things that happen that are extremely hard to think of as "good".

### A Chance For Reflection

Several years ago, my mother died of a very rare form of cancer. I'd never say that was a good experience. It wasn't! It was a horrible experience for my mother and everyone around her. But at the same time, positive things did

come from that.

The experience of my mum dying from cancer made me think of my own life in a different way.

My mum was only 50 when she died.

That's just 17 years older than I am now. What if I only had another 17 years? Have I done everything I wanted to do? She also wasn't the kind of person to get regular check-ups. Her cancer was an extremely rare type (called *pseudomyxoma peritonei*), so it's debatable whether check-ups would have helped or not... *but you can bet your life I now get mine regularly.*

The point is, even the worst of situations often have a positive side if you look in the right way. And when it comes to most everyday situations how you deal with them is down to your attitude and little else.

I like to think of it like this: every time someone rejects you, *you've just removed another person from your life who wasn't right for you.*

You've gotten yourself out of a situation that would have been bad for you. You've avoided wasting your time and energy on something that wasn't worth it.

Let's go back to the job interview example of a job interview that we talked about before: you go to a job interview, but you don't get the job. It's easy to feel like you've been rejected like you're not good enough. It's easy to feel bad. But actually, you should be feeling good because you've just avoided a job that would have been bad for you.

## **Aim to Fail Your Next Interview**

When people ask me what they should say in their English-language job interviews, my advice is always the same: **be yourself and let the interviewer decide whether you're right for the job or not.**

The last thing you want is to get stuck in an environment that you're not suited for, pretending to be someone you're not because you need to keep living a lie that you started in your job interview.

Everybody is looking for tips and tricks, the magic thing to say to impress the interviewer. But that's the wrong way to go about things.

You see, rejection is nothing to do with you.

Rejection is to do with the situation.

You don't know anything about the job interviewer or about the company you're interviewing for. If you've done your research, you might *think* you do. But you don't. Not really. Remember: you don't truly have control over anything. And again, when you use tips and tricks to trick the interviewer into accepting you for the job, what you've done is just gotten yourself into a situation—falsely—that might be bad for you. Whereas, if you show your true colours, be yourself, if you don't get the job, it's because you're not right for the job. Whether that's because the interviewer has biases against you (in which case you want to get well away from that person anyway), or because the job simply isn't appropriate for you. And of course, if you do get it? Well, you've done so for the right reasons. Either way, you win.

## **The Rejection Habit**

When I worked at a company in Tokyo (yes, I used to get up every morning, put on a suit and tie, get on a jam-packed train and go to an office. Scary thought!) we'd get constant phone calls from salespeople: photocopiers, mobile phones, internet servers, advertising... *The phone would ring all bloody day!*

After a while, the second I heard a salesman's voice on the phone, I'd just say, "*No thank you, good-bye,*" and put the phone down. I didn't even hear what they said or what they were selling. It was just a default action, a habit.

If you're in sales, you've almost definitely experienced this yourself. Most people reject by default.

You can never control other people, which means that worrying about rejection is pointless.

But we still feel bad.

Why is this?

When you think about it, it all comes down to a scarcity mindset: **the idea that the thing we want is very limited.** We desperately want a job and believe that there is no other job like it, no other chance for the same or better.

We worry about our girlfriends and boyfriends leaving us because we believe there is no other person like him or her in the world. We worry about our friends un-friending us for the same reason.

This is total rubbish.

If you think about it logically, there is always another option. No matter how bad the economy gets, businesses continue to run and continue to need employees. And even if that fails, there is more opportunity now to make money as a freelancer or start your own business than there ever has been in the history of forever. There is always an option.

Same with guys who are terrified of being dumped by their girlfriends, or women who stay with husbands they hate, because they think they can't do better. Again, when you think about it logically, this isn't true.

There are billions of people in the world.

Do you think that none of them are better than the person you're married to, the person you're with?

**Everything and everyone can be replaced.** There are always options —*always*.

Being rejected just doesn't matter. All you've got to do is get clear about your options and move on to the next.

## **The Idiot Next Door**

This is something that happened more than 20 years ago. When I was in my first year of secondary school, I lived in the countryside. Right out in the middle of nowhere. There was nothing but fields, rivers, and sheep.

And then there was where I lived.

Three houses in a tiny little area.

There was a large guest house that owned most of the land in the area. And another large house, next to ours that was owned by a work-at-home businessman.

I'm not sure what he did.

Something to do with roofing materials. I think. Was never really sure.

I heard rumours that he was a drug smuggler. But I doubt they were true.

Living out in the countryside meant things like electricity and water tended to just stop.

One minute you have lights.

Then they're gone.

The problem was, it was hard to know if the whole area had a problem. Or if it was just us. The lines were terrible, and often we were the only people affected.

One day the power went off.

So my father sent me next door, to the business man's house, to see if their power had also gone off.

I went around and knocked on the door.

He comes out looking super pissed off.

*"What do you want?!"* he said, obviously annoyed.

I was confused.

What had I I done?

*"My dad asked me to..."* I started to say.

But he cut me off.

*"Don't waste my time! fuck off!!!"* he said.

I was even more confused.

Was he joking?



I smiled. Not a happy smile. But the kind of smile kids make when they're getting in trouble, but don't know why and it's making them nervous.

That's all it took.

He went **crazy**.

Screaming and shouting, his eyes bulging out of his bright-red face.

Scared for my life I ran.

Later he and my father ended up having a massive argument. They never spoke to each other again after that. This made living in the area awkward seeing as there were only three houses there.

To this day I still don't know why he got so angry. Honestly, I don't.

Maybe he'd been having a bad day, and I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Who knows.

I hate to say it, but as a kid, this killed my confidence.

I was kind of shy anyway.

I became irrationally scared of this guy. And of speaking to people in general. I even stopped walking the dog, in case I saw him on the road.

This was a long time ago, and I'm not like that anymore.

And the truth is, I understand something very important now that I didn't understand as a kid... something that I will share with you in a moment. But first, there's another story I want to share with you.

## **A True Story**

Here's another true story. A while ago, I was talking to one of my Extraordinary English Speakers (a member of my English learning group, "*Julian Northbrook's League of Extraordinary English Speakers*" – EES for short). She's an illustrator. And the reason she joined EES was that of something which happened at a book fair she attended overseas.

There were many editors from other countries at this book fair. And one of them was interested in her book illustrations. She'd sent him a letter in advance, and he wanted to see her work. This could be her big chance, she knew.

She flew halfway around the world to attend the fair and met the editor. At first, the conversation went well.

*"Where are you from?"* he asked.

*"Japan,"* she replied.

Simple stuff. But very quickly, the conversation sped up. It got more complicated, and very soon she became confused.

Then the editor stopped her and asked, *"Do you speak English...?"*

*"A little,"* she replied.

She admitted that she had used a dictionary to write her letter and wasn't good at English.

What do you think the editor said?

*"Go away! Come here again when you can speak English!"*

Pretty harsh.

The reality is that there are people like that in this world. There's no point denying it, and there's no point being afraid of them. And there's no point worrying about them.

It's really easy to lose confidence after a situation like this, give up, and never want to speak English again. But I argue that this experience is an excellent one.

Why?

Because idiots like this give you the motivation, you need to become the best. If I were in this situation, *I'd work damn hard*. I would become the best at English—better than the editor, better than any of his clients. Better than anyone. Then I'd go back to the book fair, seek him out *and tell him to shove his book up his fat ass*.

Perhaps a bit childish?

Probably.

But I think it'd be satisfying, don't you?

## **What You've Got to Understand about People**

Over the years I've learned something valuable. Something important about people.

Want to know what it is?

It's this: **People are entirely self-centred.**

I don't just mean that they are selfish. They are. But I also mean that they are living in their own little worlds. Worlds filled with nothing but their own experiences.

Their own beliefs.

Biases.

Prejudices.

What this means for you, is that the negative things other people do and say is not your fault. The guy next door when I was a kid and the editor were both wrapped up in their own little worlds. Who knows what experiences they've had, and what their biases and prejudices are?

You can't do anything about the way they act—you can only control how you act. So you can only try to be the best you can be... *and screw everything and everybody else.*

The reason I told you the story about my member who got rejected on account of her English is because rather than crying about it she decided to do something about it. She decided to improve her English. So the situation wasn't a failure. She got something very important out of that disaster: an indication that she needed to work on her English if she didn't want to repeat the same disaster in the future. This gave her the motivation to succeed. She also learned that the art world is a harsh place.

The point is: it's your responsibility to improve your English and get good. Nobody else's. But at the same time, if you encounter some idiot hell-bent on embarrassing you, that's not your problem. As long as you've done your part, you're fine. Fuck them. But I do need to impress upon you that **confidence without skill isn't enough**. Work on your skills, so that when you do go out into the world, you're prepared for everything life throws at you.

Use the experiences that life throws at you to drive you and keep you motivated. Keep pushing forward, and don't let the negative shit get to you.

## THE THIRD FEAR

**T**he third, and arguably most powerful, of the Three Fears is the fear of embarrassment.

Embarrassment terrifies people. It frightens people so much that it stops them from doing what they want to do. *And it prevents you from being a good English speaker.*

For fuck's sake, *don't let embarrassment hold you back.*

It's such a waste.

Go back to all the famous people I mentioned previously. Do you think that they were too embarrassed to try again after their failures?

Of course not!

*Otherwise, they wouldn't be famous now.*

Or at least, even if they were embarrassed, they didn't let that stop them. They just did it anyway.

It doesn't matter what the situation is: talking to someone on the street, at a party, giving a presentation in English, singing a song in front of thousands of people... **feeling embarrassed is never a reason not to try.**

**“We Wish You a Merry.... Please Stop**

I am a terrible singer, and I know it. But when many years ago I was asked to stand on a stage in front of 900 primary school students and sing *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, I did it. To be fair, I did warn the school I couldn't sing—but they didn't believe me. They thought I was modest. Well, they got quite a shock, I can tell you.

Was it uncomfortable?

Yes.

Did anything bad come out of it?

No.

The worst that happened was a couple of students good-naturedly took the piss out of me for a day.

That was it.

The good news is, unlike rejection, embarrassment is something we *can* control. Why? Because it's all in the mind. Put simply; **embarrassment doesn't exist**. That's quite a strong statement, but it's true.

You see, when we think we might fail, we imagine things in our mind. We imagine horrible, terrible things. In our mind it is painful, and the embarrassment is too much. It's so bad; we could die.

Remember what we said before about the power of groups? Embarrassment is merely the fear of being looked at negatively by the group, which has no use whatsoever in the modern world.

### **Embarrassment Is All in Your Mind (and Nowhere Else)**

In the book *You Can Be Happy No Matter What*, Richard Carlson says, "*Thoughts are just thoughts. Nothing more. Nothing less.*"

You don't have to act on thoughts. They aren't real.

Think something might be embarrassing?

Who cares!

It doesn't matter. Do it anyway.

*Risk embarrassment.*

You'll find that it's not as bad as you thought. The things we imagine are always much, much worse than reality.

Even if you do make a mistake or do something which makes you feel embarrassed, it won't be as bad as you thought.

Did anything bad happen to me for singing out of tune in front of a primary school? No. Two days later and nobody even remembered it.

What's to lose by screwing up your English?

Likely nothing.

Of course, this is no excuse to go around speaking crap English forever. You'd be an idiot not to learn from your mistakes and actively improve your English. But that also doesn't mean you have to wait until you're "perfect"—which never happens anyway—before you start using your English.

Next time you speak English in front of people, consider each person. Ask yourself, "*Do I care what they think of me?*" Almost every time the answer will be "*no*". So what's the point in worrying? If you don't care anyway, it doesn't matter.

More to the point, caring what everyone thinks of you can be damaging. As in the adage: *something for everyone is something for no one*.

You can't be liked by all people. And if you try to please everyone, you will ultimately please no one.

## R IS FOR RELENTLESS

**B**y now I hope you understand that while confidence is important, so is perfecting your skill in English. And this includes all the elements of the LKC Triangle: language, knowledge and culture.

Work on these things and your confidence will grow. But how much time and effort are you putting into your English skill? Are you ready to have that big important conversation that could change your life, but you don't know is going to happen *tomorrow*?

If you're like most people, you're probably not ready.

We always leave things until they're urgent—until we *have* to get them done. But sadly, when it comes to English and our speaking skills, if something is urgent, guess what? *It's already too late.*

Think back to the story I told you of my student who went to the book fair and got told “*Go away!*” by an editor.

She's working hard now... but she should have started *much* earlier. This is not a criticism of her because we all do the same thing. But if she had started much earlier, she might have gotten that book published—and who knows what opportunities that could have led to?

### Why Is Your Dog Whining?

Most of us never take action until the pain of *not* taking action exceeds the



pain of taking action.

The motivational speaker Les Brown tells a great story about a dog sitting on a nail, which demonstrates this well: A man walking down the street walks past some other men sitting down with a dog. The dog is moaning and complaining.

*“What’s wrong with your dog?”* the man asks the owner.

*“Oh him? He’s sitting on a nail, and it’s hurting him,”* replies the owner.

*“Why doesn’t he move, then?”* asks the man.

The owner shrugs and replies, *“Because it’s not hurting him enough yet.”*

People are the same.

The dog is in pain, but not in enough pain that he can be bothered to get off the nail and move.

Let’s use weight loss as an easy-to-understand example. Say you’ve who’ve had a few too many cakes and you’ve gotten fat. Happens to the best of us, right? You need to lose weight. We all know how to do this: *Eat less and exercise more.*

It’s pretty simple.

But most likely you’ll sit around complaining that you’re fat, but never actually do anything about it. You might even eat more to make yourself feel better, which is stupid, but exactly what people do. And then eventually, what happened to my friend will happen to you. You’ll be at the supermarket checkout, and the lady behind the till will ask you, *“Oh! When’s the baby due?”*

*“But I’m not pregnant! I’m just fat!”* you’ll cry out.

And suddenly the pain of *not* taking action becomes too much. So you start a diet plan. You sign up to a gym. **You’ve gotta get in shape *now*!!!!** But very quickly the pain fades, and after a few days so does your motivation. Now you’re back to feeling sorry for yourself and comfort eating. The gym membership goes unused, as does your diet plan. Soon you’re fatter than you were before. Until, of course, the next time something happens to upset you

when you start the process all over again.

People do the same with English.

They say again and again that they need to improve their English. But they never do anything. Then suddenly they have a job interview, an important meeting, a potential book deal with an editor, or a situation where they desperately don't want to screw up. And what happens? They're not ready for that situation. So they screw up.

Remember: **ultimately, he who speaks best wins.** If that's not you, you lose.

Now, it's your life and your choice, of course.

But honestly, if English is important in your life, you are an idiot to leave it until it becomes urgent and a big problem for you to start trying to improve.

Start working on your English *right now*. If you're not sure what to do, check out my book Master English *FAST*. Just saying.

I'm trying to impress this point upon you now because just like being able to speak amazing English is useless if you don't have the confidence to use it, learning how to be confident is a total waste of time if you don't have the English skill to match.

## **How to Be Better than Everyone Else**

Mastering English is tough. Not complicated, to be sure, but tough. And this is something you should be glad of, because as we just talked about, most people are too lazy to just do the damn work.

I told you before about how I started running.

Well, these days I run about 10 kilometres a day. One day last winter I was walking down our icy road, in the pre-dawn dark at about 5 o'clock in the morning. I was freezing cold, wearing only a t-shirt and running shorts.

I stopped, and I thought to myself, "*What on earth am I doing?!*"

*"Why drag myself out of my nice warm bed at 5 am, then drag myself out into the cold to run?"*

Do I *want* to do this? No way! But I do it because I know that I *need* to do it because it's good for me. And actually, running is one of my favourite times of the day, once I get going. It gives me the energy I need during the day. It's a chance to listen to audio lessons undisturbed, and I get most of my best ideas while running. This doesn't make it any easier to get started though. But here's the thing—*that's the same for anything*. Success has nothing to do with being smart, nothing to do with graduating from a good university, or any of those other things that people think are oh so important.

Success comes down to taking action and just doing the stuff that other people are too damn lazy to do.

Everybody has good ideas, but most people never act on them. A great example of this: is art – especially the very (but often deceptively) simple abstract art. I love art and often go to art galleries. And whenever I go, I will invariably hear people stood in front of some painting or another saying things like: “*Oh, I could do that!*”

That is possible.

But you didn't!

That's why the painter has a painting in a famous art gallery, and you have nothing. They did it; you didn't. It's as simple as that.

I know someone who had an idea for a product. He talked about it for ages, but never actually did anything with the idea. Several years later, by pure coincidence, someone else released a product almost identical to my mate's idea. And guess what? It went on to make a lot of money. My friend still complains today that he had that idea first. But the point is, he didn't do anything with it. Someone else did, and they prospered.

Just saying, “*I could have done that*” is not good enough. The world doesn't give a shit about ideas never put into practice. Nobody cares about what you could have done but didn't. The only thing that matters—I repeat, the *only* thing that matters—is what you did do.

If you do the things that other people are too lazy to do, all else being equal, you will be more successful. And this is where you can get a massive advantage over other people: It doesn't matter whether it's your job or your

social group. If you take the time to invest in yourself and your English—even if that means getting up at 5 am on a cold morning—all else being equal, you will be better at English than everyone else. Which will translate to being more confident with your English. And in your life in general.

## **Know Your Value**

We now come to the end of this, albeit short, book. At this very moment in time stand at the crossroads of your life. In a moment, I'm going to ask you to make a decision. A decision that will change your life. But first, let me tell you a story. Several years ago, I was working in a job I hated, too afraid to quit and make *Doing English* my full-time job. I was working in a company, and the job just wasn't what I expected to be. I didn't enjoy it and the working hours were very long. Just like the dog sitting on a nail. I was in pain. But not in enough pain to move.

Then one day, moved.

April 1st, 2015 was the first day I sat down to work on *Doing English* as my *only* job. It was scary as hell. **Terrifying**, even. But I've never regretted it. It's not always been easy for reasons under and out of my control. But I've never regretted it. Not even once. In fact, if anything, I regret not starting sooner.

It's time for you to make a decision.

Are you going to keep doing what you've always done, be the same person you've always been? Or are you going to take action and do something amazing with your life?

I hope from this book you have learned that there are no excuses. Do you want to be confident? Ignore your fear and do the things you want to do anyway! Work on stepping outside of your comfort zone and doing more.

**Take the time to master English now.**

It's not complicated; just put the time and the effort into the things which work. If you're not sure what those things you should be doing are, don't worry, I have a book that can help you with that (not to mention a whole

range of courses—see the back of this book).

**But it all starts with you.**

*MOVE!*

I want you to make a decision.

**Stop everything you are doing right now and imagine that you are moments away from your death.**

What are your biggest regrets?

What do you wish you'd done, but never did?

What would you change if you had another chance?

Well, now is your 'another chance'. Start doing those things right now. Make those changes. No fear. No hesitation. No more thinking about it. No more waiting until tomorrow. Just move.

Take action now.

## AFTERWARDS

Thank you for investing in *Fearless Fluency*, and for choosing to take your journey to speaking English with extraordinary confidence with me.

I realise this book has been somewhat of a roller-coaster ride, and that I've likely challenged (and hopefully destroyed) many of the beliefs you had about the way you think about speaking and using English.

These uncomfortable truths can be bloody painful; I know...but consider them growing pains.

Ultimately, it's all for the best.

This said the journey ain't over.

And it never will be.

When it comes to English, not to mention your mindset, there will always be more to learn, and room to improve. Learning is a life-long pursuit. It started the day you were born, and it will continue until the day you die.

The question now, of course, is what are you going to do with the information you've just read?

It's a sad fact that most people will read this book and then never do anything.

From the moment I started teaching, I've been frustrated and disappointed again and again.

It's frustrating for me because writing this book was hard work—just like producing courses and programmes like EES is super hard work.

Sure, it's nice to get your money in my bank account. Ultimately, the sales that come from this book, the courses I make, as well as fees from coaching clients, are what put food on my table, clothes on my kids and beer in my fridge. The money helps me live. But more than that, you know what drives me? My Why? Hearing success stories from people just like you.

Yes, I've heard many over the years.

But I want to hear more.

Do me a favour: **do the damn work**. Implement what you've learned in this book, do something amazing, and let me know.

That about wraps up *Fearless Fluency*.

Get the work done and do extraordinary things with your English.

Best,  
Dr Julian Northbrook

## WHO THE HELL IS DR JULIAN NORTHBROOK?

Hi. I'm Dr Julian Northbrook.

And yes, I am a real doctor.

But please, don't come to me with a heart attack or other medical emergency – I'm not THAT kind of doctor.

More importantly, why should you listen to me?

Well, I could tell you all about my extensive experience teaching and coaching people to speaking amazing English, about my master's degree in Applied Linguistics (with distinction, no less) or my PhD research in second-language acquisition and the publications I have in top academic journals. I *could* tell you all about those things, but I won't, because nobody gives a shit about those qualifications.

What I will tell you about, though, is this – *the pain I experienced while learning my second language*.

You see, there are far, far too many language teachers in the world who have either never learned a second language themselves, or have never taken it past the low-intermediate stage.

Should you trust these people?

I say no.

I mean, I certainly wouldn't.



Just like I wouldn't trust a music teacher who couldn't play music, a hairdresser with dirty hair or a dentist with bad teeth.

In my opinion, the best way to measure a teacher's ability to help you is not by the qualifications they can list, but rather by the number of hours they've spent struggling in a second language themselves.

Well, I've spent *many* hours struggling.

If you want to know more about my story, I've written about it at length here: <https://doingenglish.com/about>.

But here are some totally random facts about me:

- Dropped out of school at 16 to sleep on my friend's sofa and work in a bacon factory (one of the best "educations" I ever got).
- Got a scholarship to study at an art college where I went to parties every day instead of doing any real work... eventually quit fine art to study fashion design instead.
- After a year bumming around London, working in a bar in Camden Town and sleeping on more sofas, I went back to art – this time at university. A lot more parties happened until one day I suddenly realised it was over and I had nothing to show for my three years at university. Other than a second-rate degree and a Japanese girlfriend.
- Said *fuck it* to life in the UK, and went to Japan for a year in 2007. One year turned into 13 years until I eventually moved to Ireland and got divorced.
- Said I'd learn Japanese after being turned down from the dream job I desperately wanted.
- Got serious about Japanese in 2008 when my father-in-law told me I had to if I wanted to marry his daughter (talk about motivation).
- By 2009 I was pretty good enough at Japanese.
- Started work as a freelance translator in 2011 then quit doing it a few months later (I hated translation work).
- Since my idea of being a translator didn't work out I decided to do a Masters in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching instead via distance learning (which I passed Distinction in half the time I had available – not bad for a school dropout).

- Loved the masters so much I went on to do a PhD in this stuff (studying how “chunks” of English help English learners speak fluently and naturally, and how to design materials in the best possible way to teach these chunks.
- Father of three (very noisy) bilingual children.
- As of February 2020, I’m technically homeless and live permanently in Airbnb’s (yes, I picked the worst possible time to start travelling the world...).
- Proponent of constant, life-long self-education.
- Avid runner (my best marathon time to date is 3:50:18, at the Los Angeles Marathon 2020).
- Reader (find me on Good Reads).
- Obsessive coffee drinker.
- Fan of 80s synth-pop, techno and electronic music.
- Very fond of beer, too.

## **SOME FREE RESOURCES FROM JULIAN**

Here are some free resources to further help you on your journey to English mastery.

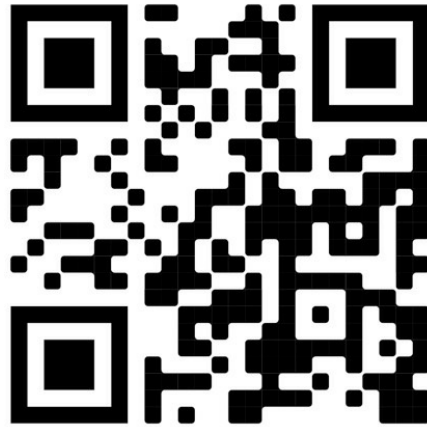
The main one is a complete audio version of this book via the Doing English Learnistic app. But if you haven't already subscribed to my daily email tips, I highly recommend you do. I am constantly learning more about this stuff every day, and so my emails always reflect the most up-to-date thinking on the subject of English as a second language.

### **The Fearless Fluency Audiobook**

I have included a complete audio version of the book so you can listen as well. Please note this audiobook is only available via the app, and you need a smartphone that's not older than my grandfather. If you don't have a smartphone and can't use the app, this is unavailable to you.

Also please note that I don't record the audio to be an exact replica of the book. The production is quite casual, and in some cases the audio might be of a previous edition of the book (though if that's the case, it'll only be temporary).

This said, to get the audiobook via the Doing English Learnistic app, simply go this URL:



<https://doeng.co/udiwW>

Follow the instructions carefully.

If it is your first time accessing the Doing English App, you'll need to install it first (note: this app isn't available in any of the app stores – you need to use the link above). If you already have the app, the book will simply be added to your existing account.

### **Doing English Daily Newsletter**

I write daily English tips emails, that you can subscribe to for free. Every day at around 8am Ireland time, a new email will hit your inbox packed with tips and ideas for speaking better English. This is also the best way to keep up to date with my new books and coaching courses – which I promote in every email.

Sign up here:

<https://doingenglish.com/emails>

### **The Rocket Launch Method Training**

For a summary of the key points from this book in video format (which lets me visualise some things we talked about here).

Go to:

<https://doingenglish.com/freetraining>

## **The Good Shadowing Guide**

Shadowing is a great exercise for developing your rhythm, intonation and "chunking" skills when speaking English – but the way most people do it is wrong. This guide will show you how to use shadowing properly and make it work for you personally.

You can get it here:

<https://doingenglish.com/shadowing>

## THE IMPLEMENTATION COURSE

After I originally published “Master English FAST” in 2016, many people said they wanted more: to go deeper into some topics we discuss, and to get my personal help to customise what they've learned here in this book. That's why I created the "Master English FAST Accelerator" coaching course.

You don't need this course to implement what you've learned here.

But if you want to see the fastest results, and transform your English speaking in as little as 90 days, it may be for you. I've copied the “basic” information page from <https://doingenglish.com/mefa> below:



Here you can get the basic information quickly, and then if you think the course is right for you... join my free daily emails, and I'll give you the opportunity to get more information and then enrol

### **What is MEFA?**

MEFA is a 12-week group coaching course with weekly study and homework tasks designed to:

- Give you as big a boost in English-speaking proficiency, as possible over the 90-days.

- Get you totally clear about everything you need to do to keep improving with English in your real life consistently and forever.

Each week's training session, homework task and the daily feedback from Julian is packed with actionable techniques to change the most important parts of your English as fast as possible. The weekly group coaching calls and support you get via the discussion group is designed to help you customise what you learn to you personally.

## Requirements

To be right for MEFA, you must meet the following requirements (if you don't meet all of these, there's no point in joining, or even in me sending you more information).

- You must be thick-skinned (I can't work with people who get offended at the slightest criticism).
- You must be able to listen to advice without letting your own (incorrect) opinions about learning English get in the way.
- You must have a real need for English (whether you use English now in work, daily life or have a clear future need – i.e., this is not for hobbyists).
- You must commit to finishing the course. Statistics show the average completion rate for online courses only between 5% and 15%... the completion rate for MEFA is currently 90%. Why? Because I'm extremely strict about requiring you to submit homework, on time, before the deadline. And if you fail to do the work (and don't have a good reason such as an emergency) I will not hide my displeasure.

Also, one more thing:

The MEFA course is not a magic pill that will transform your English simply by joining and doing nothing.

It takes time and work.

For the opportunity to join and more detailed information about everything we do in MEFA, first subscribe to my daily emails:

<https://doingenglish.com/emails>



## **OTHER BOOKS BY JULIAN**

You can find more low-priced books by Julian Northbrook on Amazon, by going here: <https://author.to/JulianNorthbrook>