INSTRUCTIONS FOR AFTERNOON SEMINAR ON MARCH 1.

It would be great if you could read all this chapter. However if you are short of time please read:

19.1, 19.3, 19.4, 19.5, 19.10, 19.12, 19.13-19.20

To help me prepare the course, please email me by Feb 17:

i) a presentation (saved as ppt or pdf) that you have given at a conference. Be prepared to present a very short part of it (around 30-45 seconds) during the course.

AND

i) a sample of an academic paper or report you have written or are writing

OR

iii) an email that you have written to a non-native English speaking colleague

My email address: adrian.wallwork@gmail.com

Subject line: Sheffield course

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Books: https://www.springer.com/series/13913?detailsPage=titles

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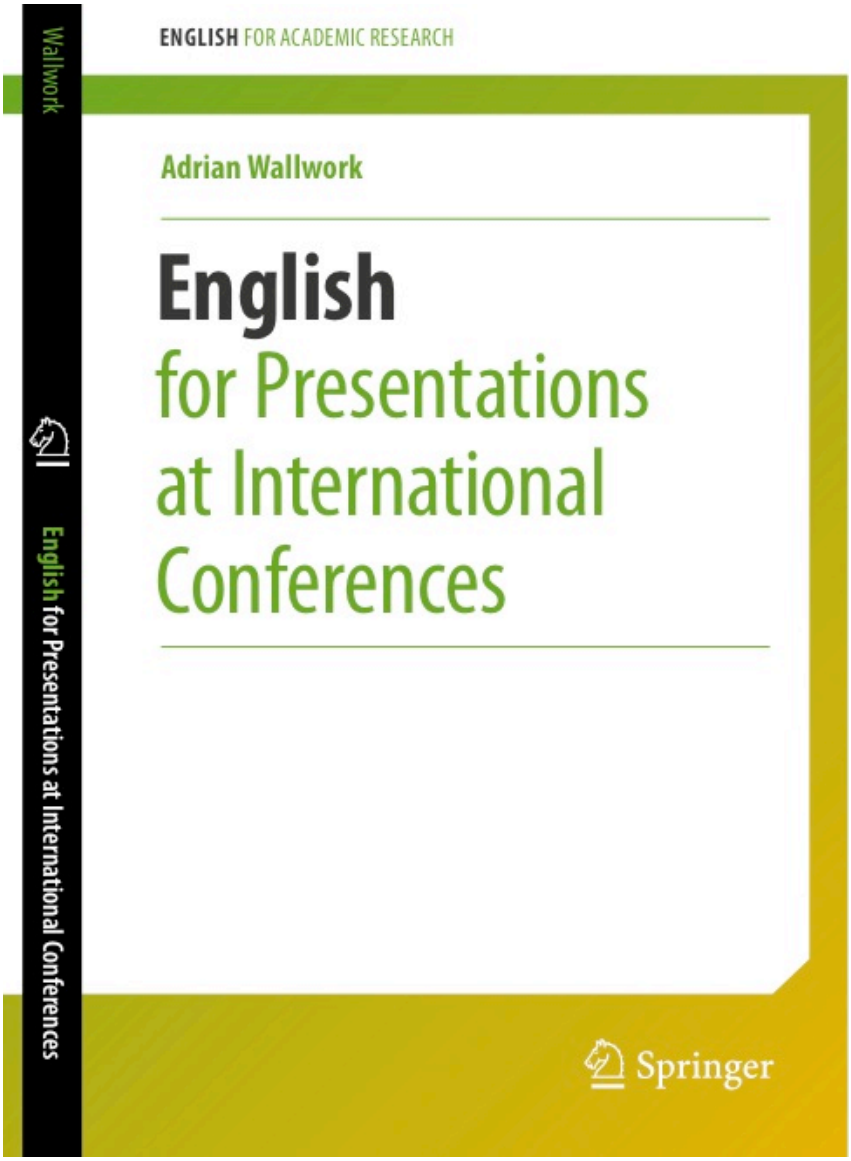

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Chapter 19

Advice for native English speakers on how to present at international conferences and run workshops

Factoids

1. Less than 8% of the world's population speak English as their first language, by 2050 this figure will drop to around 5%. The British Council claims that 25% of the world's population has some understanding of English.
2. According to Professor David Crystal, 96% of the world's languages are spoken by 4% of the people.
3. The average European non-native speaking researcher may spend up to €20,000 learning English at various points in their life.
4. One of the world's biggest selling non-fiction books (over 15 million copies) published by a British publisher is a book on English grammar for foreigners by Raymond Murphy. It was first published in 1985.
5. English has nearly one million words (including technical and scientific words). Most native speaking adults use no more than 10,000 words in their daily communication. It is possible to make yourself understood using 1-2,000 words, providing that those words coincide with the listener's word set. Non-native speakers will generally have a similar set of technical words specific to the field that you work in, but their extent of general vocabulary will be much less than a native speaker's.
6. In 1997 the ten most popular words on the Internet included *sex, chat, nude, porno* and *weather*. In 2015 only *weather* from the 1997 list was still one of the most searched for words.
7. In 1997 English was used for 84.3% of websites globally, 15 years later this figure was down to 62%.
8. In 1994 the English language teaching industry in Britain alone was worth €700 million per year. Twenty five years later it was worth five times as much. It is now forecast to grow by 25% per annum.

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19.1 What's the buzz?

In an early edition of a best-selling book on how to give presentations, the author wrote:

> *Have you ever been to an international conference where speakers from different nationalities were giving talks in foreign languages? Do you remember a presentation where it was only half way through that you realised it was actually in English? I certainly do.*

This is obviously a very damning statement of non-native speakers, probably typical of the early 1980s when the book was published (the author subsequently cut this comment in later editions). However, what the author failed to mention, is that it is equally true that some native speakers are particularly difficult to understand!

In my experience many non native speakers find communicating orally with, for example, American and British research groups, more stressful than working in English with for instance Europeans, Asians and South Americans.

The reason has nothing to do with personalities or levels of efficiency and collaboration, but with language.

Many break out into a cold sweat at the thought of conducting a Q&A with native English speaking counterparts because they know that they will understand only a small percentage of what they hear. They feel that seminars, workshops and meetings in general are often unproductive because the native English speakers tend to dominate the discussion and thus have an unfair leverage.

When learners of English fail to communicate successfully, they frequently assume it is because of their English ability. Such failures can be demotivating at best, but are often also embarrassing, frustrating and even humiliating. The reason for this lack of understanding is that native speakers often make no concessions for their interlocutor.

This is not a deliberate policy on the part of the native speakers, but simply because many are unaware that their spoken English is difficult to understand.

This means that they often speak too fast, use inappropriate language (e.g. colloquial structures and expressions), and may also have a strong regional accent that that their interlocutor has probably never been exposed to before.

In addition, many native speakers 'swallow' their words when speaking. This means that even a non-native speaker with a good command of English grammar and vocabulary cannot hear / identify the swallowed words, irrespectively of the accent.

If you find this chapter useful, and you are a reviewer or editor, then you might also like to read Chapter 11 *Writing a Peer Review* in the companion volume *English for Academic Correspondence*. You will pick up some tips for reviewing the work of non-natives without risking offending or demoralizing anyone.

****

This chapter is designed to make native English speaking readers of this book more aware of the difficulties that their non-native counterparts have at international conferences. It focuses on how native speakers should deliver presentations and conduct workshops with non-native audiences.

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Sections 19.2-19.6 describe what it's like to be a non-native speaker when listening to a native speaker.

Sections 19.7-19.11 outline things to be aware of when preparing your presentation.

Sections 19.12-19.15 focus on vocabulary issues.

The final sections suggest ways for chairing / running workshops and seminars.

19.2 Learn from seasoned speakers

I have conducted many surveys with British and American academics and business people to discover the problems they had when dealing with foreign clients. Whilst many of these people were aware that there was a communication problem, they did not realize there was anything concrete they could do about it, other than trying to speak more clearly.

However, my interviewees that regularly met with non-native speakers, were well aware of the problem and always took pains to make their communication clear. Below are three examples of what such experts have told me.

I have spent much of my career speaking publicly and privately with a broad range of audiences, from the ultra-technical to the general public. When speaking to and with people for whom English is not a native tongue, I have found it nearly universal that speaking more slowly and distinctly helps more than vocabulary changes, although I avoid special terms and acronyms when the audience is not expected to have command of the topic-specific argot.

Vint Cerf, Chief Internet Evangelist at Google, one of the founding fathers of the Internet

I was born in Morocco and moved to England when I was seven, so I had to learn English when I arrived. During my life I have also learned French and Spanish. This has helped me enormously in communicating with foreign customers, as I am fully aware of the difficulties that they have in terms of understanding native English speakers. So when, for example, I am explaining something orally to scientists and subject matter experts I might say:

"We are able to screen all open reading frames of any disease-causing agent."

But to a potential foreign investor I know that if I say the sentence above quickly it will just sound like a series of noises. Instead, I have to speak in a way my 11 year old son can understand - that doesn't mean dumbing down what I want to say, but speaking more slowly, giving examples and frequently checking that they have understood me. The result is that clients really appreciate the fact that I am making an effort to help them understand me. In my work experience, I have seen so many presentations given by Americans and Brits that left the non-native element in the audience completely frustrated because they only managed to understand a quarter or less of what was said. This has a serious negative effect on future collaborations, as clearly everyone needs to feel that they are being given equal consideration.

Mustapha Bakali, President of the Bill Clinton Health Access Initiative
The citation was written when Bakali was Chief Business Officer of Intercell Biomedical Research & Development AG

What I'd hope is ... that native English speakers are sensitive to this new role which English is taking on, and use their own language in such a way that it is easy for people who are non native speakers to understand them. Very often non-native speakers speak better English than native speakers.

Hamish McRae, British journalist and author

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19.3 Understand what it feels like not to understand

It helps if you can put yourself in the shoes of a non-native speaker and really feel what it's like not to understand. The best way is to try and learn a foreign language. But a simpler and more immediate way is to listen to music lyrics.

There are several websites that help music lovers decipher the lyrics of songs. Even for a native speaker, it's tough to hear the difference between:

The sky's in love

This guy's in love

Disguise in love

Try listening to Sia (the Australian singer) performing her song 'Distractions' live. You can make out the odd word or phrase here and then, but most of it is a mystery!

Then there's the classic song *Alice* by the Cocteau Twins. Trying listening to it before reading the paragraph below.

According to metrolyrics.com, the song begins as follows:

When I lost him ache

Shudder shock of pale

My, my true love

Niccol Donati, these days are

Smoking days

The lyrics to *Alice* reported on that site and many other sites are of course gibberish. The vocals of Elizabeth Frazer, the singer, don't actually rely on any recognizable language, so the only word said distinctly in this song is 'Alice'.

But the lyrics reported above are very representative of how it feels to be a non-native speaker listening to a native speaker - you just get snatches of what they think you have said and try to construct a logical thread between one snatch and another.

19.4 Watch TED to understand how it feels to be a non-native speaker

One of my favorite TED talks is 'Design and Destiny' where the French designer, Philippe Starck, talks about his work for 17 minutes with no slides at all.

His beginning highlights an obsession of many non-native speakers:

You will understand nothing with my type of English.

One of the funniest (at least for me!) presentations on TED is by the Swiss comedian and cabaret artist Ursus Wehrli, who according to the introductory blurb on the TED website 'shares his vision for a cleaner, more organized, tidier form of art — by deconstructing the paintings of modern masters into their component pieces, sorted by color and size'.

However, this presentation is not simply about modern art. It works on many levels. First it is a non-native English speaker's revenge on a native speaker audience.

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It is best to watch the first few minutes of Wehrli's presentation before reading the rest of this subsection.

http://www.ted.com/talks/ursus_wehrli_tidies_up_art?c=193562

Wehrli manages to make fun of the audience by saying:

> I'm a little bit nervous because I'm speaking in a foreign language, and I want to apologize in advance, for any mistakes I might make. Because I'm from Switzerland, and I just hope you don't think this is Swiss German I'm speaking now here. This is just what it sounds like if we Swiss try to speak American. But don't worry -- I don't have trouble with English, as such. I mean, it's not my problem, it's your language after all. I am fine. After this presentation here at TED, I can simply go back to Switzerland, and you have to go on talking like this all the time.

He also speaks for a few seconds in German: the audience laugh both because it's funny, but also because they feel a little out of their comfort zone (they, this time, are the ones who don't understand).

19.5 Watch TED to understand how to talk to non-natives

A great way to gain insights into how English is being learned around the world is to watch Jay Walker's talk entitled 'English Mania'.

http://www.ted.com/talks/jay_walker_on_the_world_s_english_mania?language=en

Jay Walker is head of Walker Digital and was named by *Time* magazine as one of the fifty most influential leaders in the digital age.

Not only will you learn about global English, but Jay's speech is a great example of how to talk to non-native speakers (though most of his audience I suspect were actually native speakers).

Let's analyse the opening minute of his speech:

> *Let's talk about manias. Let's start with Beatle mania: hysterical teenagers, crying, screaming, pandemonium. Sports mania: deafening crowds, all for one idea -- get the ball in the net. Okay, religious mania: there's rapture, there's weeping, there's visions. Manias can be good. Manias can be alarming. Or manias can be deadly.*
>
> *The world has a new mania. A mania for learning English. Listen as Chinese students practice their English by screaming it.*

72 words. 10 sentences. 60 seconds. That's an average of 7.2 words per sentence - much less than 100 words per minute. Jay chooses to:

- use short sentences
- use simple language
- speak very slowly and clearly

Does Jay launch straight into his topic? No. He introduces the theme i.e. manias, but not the key topic i.e. English. This gives the audience (particularly the non-natives) time to tune into his voice. So consider having a 30 second introduction to your presentation where the audience hear something interesting and relevant, but not crucial.

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Jay does not use any written slides, only images. This may work if your message is incredibly clear and requires little or no mental effort on the part of the audience.

However, international audiences generally appreciate slides with at least some text on them. This means that if they can't understand what you are saying, they can at least follow your slides.

To learn some more factors that you need to be aware of when talking to non-natives see Steve Silberman's talk on TED (2.5, but read 2.4 first to understand the context).

19.6 Learn another language!

You will quickly realise what a humbling experience learning another language can be - but fun too!

19.7 Have two versions of your presentation

You could have two versions of your presentation. The one that you show the audience, and a more detailed version with additional texts and notes which the audience can download and watch

- before they come to your presentation so that they are prepared for what you are going to tell them (OK, this might ruin the impact of any great statistics or images that you have used, but the benefits for an audience whose English is poor far outweigh such issues)
- while you are giving your presentation - in fact many of the people in your audience will have a laptop, iPad, tablet or smartphone with them, so they can upload your slides + notes
- after your presentation to enable them to recap

19.8 Ensure you adapt a presentation that you have given to native speakers and make it suitable for non-natives

I once watched an informal presentation on a web application framework called Ruby on Rails. The presenters were from the US, but the conference was in Europe. They had slides titles such as:

Yep, even scaffolding works

Some sorta cool aspects of fixtures

Preeeeetttty!

What the hell is RSpec?

Such titles are fun, but not very informative for non-natives.

19.9 Focus on what non-natives actually like about native speakers

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Although some types of native speakers have a reputation for being nearly impossible to understand, particularly those with a strong regional accent and / or who mumble, the structure and style of their presentations is generally appreciated.

Things that non-natives like about native speakers' presentations (and Scandinavians' too):

1. attractive slides with minimal text
2. friendly delivery
3. lots of examples
4. not too much detail
5. feeling involved
6. narrative style e.g. So then you think 'Hey, we could do this instead'
7. speaker's passion for his / her topic

Although some non-native speakers adopt some of the points above, many don't. This is because their education system tends to be much more formal. Academics are not supposed to be too friendly or fun. They are not supposed to make it easy for their listener. The idea for them is to show off rather than show how.

So use the above seven points to show that you really care about the audience. And if you say everything slowly and clearly, you are guaranteed to get a good reception!

19.10 Be careful of cultural differences

Avoid making references to the cultures of others as you may not be sure that what you are saying is positive or negative. Whilst teaching English in Cairo, my wife posed a hypothetical scenario to her audience: *Imagine that the Nile dried up*. The debate that ensued was extremely heated and many of the students were upset: the topic was to sensitive for them (the Nile, for some, was a life source).

Stick to making references about your own culture, where you should be on safer ground.

19.11 Avoid humor, but have fun

Although the humor of Laurel & Hardy and Mr Bean is fairly universal, much Anglo humor either gets lost - or worse - may offend your audience.

While preparing another book in this series, *English for Writing Research Papers*, I wrote a few spoof abstracts that I considered using as examples. Below is one such abstract from an imaginary paper entitled *Revisiting Gibbon's decadent Rome: parallels in social media and the downfall of the West.*

> In 1789 Edward Gibbon published the last volume of his epic tome *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, with a clear allusion as to where civilization in the west was heading in the 19th century. He summed up history as being: *little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind*. New research has brought to light a surprising number of

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> parallels between Roman decadence and the social media of today. This paper reports on manuscripts, recently discovered in the Vatican archives, which were written at the height of Rome's excesses. These manuscripts reveal hitherto unknown services that operated within the empire. These include *tuba tua*, where citizens would bring their wind instruments to the Forum and perform in public (feedback was left in the form of graffiti on the walls near the *cauponiae* - fast-food restaurants), *vox populi* (with its offshoot "Rome's got talent"), *Liber Faciērum,* and *twitterus* (inane blathering amongst slaves). Our findings combined with Gibbon's prognosis would seem to suggest that the west's self obsession and self indulgence will lead to self destruction and possibly a new wave of barbaric invasions.

I was pleased with my abstract. I even sent it to a professor of Latin at the University of Sassari in Sardinia so that she could check the 'Latin'. I then sent it around to various teachers in Europe for them to test it out on their students. My aim was to see whether any students might at best find it amusing or at worst plain stupid or vulgar.

The answers came back: most students (particularly the Germans and Austrians) had no idea that it was a spoof, one teacher wrote to me saying: *They didn't find it offensive, nor funny (but they didn't find it not funny either: they just took it at face value with a barely a reaction).* In fact, it hardly raised a smile amongst teachers either!

So what I had thought was rather clever and amusing got no reaction at all!

In 2015, Nobel prize winner professor Tim Hunt was forced to resign from his position after telling an audience at the World Conference of Science Journalists in South Korea:

> Let me tell you about my trouble with girls. Three things happen when they are in the lab: You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you, and when you criticize them they cry.

The reaction he received was generally one of outrage and disgust. Hunt claimed his comments were meant to be ironic and lighthearted but had been “interpreted deadly seriously by my audience.”

And that's my point - what you may find amusing may be interpreted very differently by your audience.

Essentially, we cannot ever be sure that people will share our sense of humor, unless, of course, we test it out on many other people. Below is a letter written by Peter White and sent to the editor of the British journal *The Oldie* in 2015. It went viral immediately, and it's not hard to understand why.

> Sir: I haven’t got a computer, but I was told about Facebook and Twitter and am trying to make friends outside Facebook and Twitter while applying the same principles.
>
> Every day, I walk down the streets and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel, what I have done the night before and what I will do for the rest of the day. I give them pictures of my wife, my daughter, my dog and me gardening and on holiday, spending time by the pool. I also listen to their conversations, tell them I ‘like’ them and give them my opinion on every subject that interests me…whether it interests them or not.
>
> And it works. I have four people following me; two police officers, a social worker and a psychiatrist.

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Basically, if you have something funny that you want to say, check with others first whether i) it is actually funny, ii) it is appropriate for your intended audience.

However ... if you are doing a presentation late in the conference, and you notice that the audience has consistently reacted well to what you would consider humorous in other people's presentations, then you can cautiously try out your own brand. But test it out on colleagues first.

19.12 Explain key words

It helps your audience if you explain any key words to them.

19.13 Choose appropriate vocabulary

Here is a very potted history of the English language (55 BC to 1301 AD):

> Julius Caesar invaded 'Britain' in 55 BC - several military words were introduced into the language. More Latin came with St Augustine who was sent by the pope in 697 AD to convert the Irish (and then mainland 'Britain') to Christianity, hence the predominance of Latin-based religious words (e.g. *spirit, priest, religion, redemption*). In the meantime 'Britain' was invaded by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, then by Vikings - all these invaders came from Northern Europe and contributed to the 'Anglo Saxon' element in our language (e.g. our 'four-letter' words!). By 1066 English (Old English) was a complex, but fairly regular, language. All this changed with the Battle of Hasting in 1066 when the Normans killed the English King Harold, and French became the 'official' language until 1301.

Latin and French-based words in English thus tend to be considered more erudite and formal: compare a 'hearty welcome' with a 'cordial reception'.

All this has big implications on the words that you should choose for your presentation.

Try this short test. Simply underline the words that are in the wrong column. The key is at the end of this subsection.

ANGLO-SAXON	LATIN / FRENCH
aim	objective
comprehend	understand
mankind	humanity
unbelievable	incredible
indication	clue
amusing	funny
result	outcome
drawback	disadvantage
irresponsible	reckless

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earnings profits

So which words are non-native speakers likely to understand most?

The answer is that speakers of nearly all languages are more likely to understand more formal English words (i.e. those that derive from Latin, Greek and French). And this is true irrespectively of whether their own language is Latin/French/Greek-based or not. This is because:

- when learning English, many non-natives study quite formal texts
- the longer the word, the more time the non native has to hear it (compare *hard* with *difficult*)

This means that although you may feel that you sound very formal, the audience may not perceive this. In any case, if you do speak in a formal way, they will probably understand more of what you say.

However, one sign of informality is shorter sentences, and this is an aspect that you should certainly adopt. Short sentences clearly spoken are much easier to understand than long formal sentences.

Try getting into the habit of being able to think of synonyms for words. This will enable you to communicate better when your counterpart doesn't understand a particular word. This is true not just for presentations (and socializing at conferences), but also in email correspondence.

The email below (written by a British speaker) might be very hard to understand for a non-native who is not proficient in English - the 'offending' words and expressions are in italics.

> Sorry for not getting back to you till now, but *I've had my back up against the wall*. To answer your two questions:
>
> 1) Attached are the notes you need to read. Let me know when you're *up to speed*.
>
> 2) *Re* the meeting. Looks as if I'm going to be *totally bogged down* for the next *fortnight*, but if you'd like to *give us a buzz* on Fri *aft* that would be *brill*.
>
> *Nice one*, Phil

Try to write your emails in a more formal way.

KEY Anglo-Saxon: aim, understand, mankind, unbelievable, clue, funny, outcome, drawback, reckless, earnings

19.14 Mind your language!

As already mentioned (19.13), multi-syllable words are better for three reasons:

1. they are longer, so there is a greater chance of the audience knowing them
2. for Latinate speakers (i.e. Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Romanian) these words are likely to be the same as in their own language

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3. they tend to be words that non-natives learn at school (so even those whose language does not have its roots in Latin or Greek are more likely to understand them)

More examples: *aim* vs *objective, drawback* vs *disadvantage, clue* vs *indication, reckless* vs *irresponsible* (prefer the second choice in each case).

The choice of words applies not just to what you say, but also to what you write on your slides. Although workshops and seminars tend to be less formal, it is worth remembering that too much informality may be hard for non-natives to understand.

In the Ruby on Rails presentations, the Americans used some colloquial expressions that would have been very hard for most of the audience to understand. Here are some examples:

it has a bunch of useful features

you have to do a backflip in your head

people who are newbies like me

it is certainly not all plain sailing

it's just part and parcel of

you might get a kick out of this

19.15 Speak slowly and enunciate very clearly

If you say the following you will depress your audience immediately:

I know I speak fast, so if I go too quickly then raise a hand.

You are basically saying:

Sorry, but I am native speaker. I have never learned a foreign language. I have no idea what it is like not to understand. I know I speak fast, so unfortunately you are not going to understand much. Sorry about that.

In any case, anyone who has the courage to 'raise a hand' would be admitting that they didn't understand (even though the rest of the audience probably didn't understand either) and would likely think that they would lose face in front of colleagues.

As native speakers we also tend to slur our words, and drop our voice at the end of a sentences. Both these factors make us harder to understand.

Finally, remember NOT to apply Boren's first law: *When in doubt, mumble*. The problem is that to a non-native a lot of what native speakers say sounds like mumbling! So never mumble, and when in doubt, say so (clearly!). By the way who was Boren? I have been unable to find out!

19.16 Workshops and seminars: try to reduce anxiety levels of the audience as soon as possible

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One of your primary and constant goals should be to reduce your audience's anxiety levels to the absolute minimum. You can do this by:

- putting yourself in your audience's shoes
- speaking slowly and clearly
- ensuring that you never put anyone in a position where they might lose face
- explain that when you ask a question, you will always say it twice and you will try to phrase it in a way that is easy to understand and easy to respond to

19.17 Never equate a person's level of English with their level of intelligence

If someone says to you 'he can hardly speak a word of English', what is your reaction? Most people would consciously or subconsciously think that 'he' was somewhat lacking in intelligence. But probably the only reason 'he' doesn't speak English is that he wasn't born in a country where English is the official language.

Don't forget the enormous advantages you have by being born in a native-English speaking country.

So avoid making assumptions that someone's ability to speak English reflects their level of intelligence.

19.18 Take responsibility for any lack of understanding by your interlocutor

Many non-native researchers, particularly those of the older generation or in countries where the Internet is not freely available, have been mainly exposed to English through standardized textbook recordings of clear-speaking actors and actresses reading simplified scripts, or through their English teacher who was probably not a native speaker. Such learners are thus likely to have great difficulty when encountering regional accents, informal register, colloquial structures/expressions, high-speed 'youth-speak', and the like. You need to modify your normal spoken variety accordingly.

I asked Chandler Davis, Professor of Mathematics at Toronto University, whether there was a need for a chapter in this book on helping native speakers communicate more effectively with non-natives. He wrote to me saying:

> Your question reminds me of the reaction of my late friend Moe Schreiber to his first scientific travel in Europe: "There's a common language for Poles, Hungarians, and Italians to communicate with each other. It's English; and I don't speak it." Moe's dilemmas was: *How do I frame my English utterances so they are not only good English but also unbaffling to non-native speakers.*

19.19 Ask your participants questions

The success of your workshop or seminar depends on how much your audience understand. There are two main ways to check if they have understood:

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1. by setting them a practical task to do which is related to what you have just explained. Their level of success in this task will be a clear indicator of whether they have understood or not
2. by asking them pertinent questions

The first solution is unlikely to be suitable at a conference. But the second is entirely feasible ... and fundamental. You need to be absolutely sure they understand. If you don't ask any questions, the risk is that you will be the only person talking and this will be extremely tiring for your participants.

An additional problem is that people of whatever culture:

- are reluctant to admit that they haven't understood, particularly as they erroneously conclude that the rest of the audience will have understood
- do not ask questions because they fear that they may not be relevant for other members of the audience, or because they are embarrassed about their level of English

The result is that only those with good English will ask the questions. And those with the low English will probably not even understand the questions asked by the good-English-speaking colleagues.

19.20 Avoid saying 'OK?' to check understanding

If you ask the audience if they understood, some will certainly say 'yes' including some people who have understood nothing, simply because they don't want to lose face. So it may be useful to get someone to repeat back in their own words what they think they have understood.

Constantly be on the look out for vacant expressions. It is very easy to fall into the habit of addressing only those people who you know are following you and thus ignoring those who are not.

Note that when checking whether your audience are following, the questions below are rarely effective - they are the equivalent of just saying *OK?*

> *Is that clear? Does everyone understand? Everybody with me? Does anyone have any questions at this point? Does that all seem to make sense?*

As with putting their hand up (see 00 above) participants are likely to be too embarrassed to admit that they don't understand.

One possibility is to get everyone to write down a couple of questions to ask. They can then compare questions with the person sitting next to them. They might be able to answer the questions without your help, if not you can read their questions and choose some to focus on. Either way, it takes the focus off you for a while and they can relax without having to concentrate on listening to you.

19.21 Remind the audience of the big picture

Make sure the audience is always aware of the big picture, by:

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- referring back to the agenda to show where you are
- referring back to previous slides either verbally or by reshowing them the same slide
- reminding them why you are telling them something
- giving them mini summaries (remember you are very familiar with what you are talking about, but they may need reminding)
- warning them about what's coming next.

19.22 Have recap slides in addition to or as an occasional alternative to questions slides

You can create variety in your workshop if you occasionally insert slides containing a summary (i.e. a recap slide). You can ask your audience to read the summary and ask them which points they would like you to explain again, or which points they found the most difficult to understand. You can then say

Can you explain exactly what it is that you did not understand?

This should then automatically force them to ask you for clarifications.

In any case, always go over key points more than once.

19.23 Reduce your talking time during workshops, seminars and training sessions

Being a participant at a workshop that is held in your own language is very different from being a participant and listening to a foreign language. When listening to your own language the effort is minimal, you can happily listen to the speaker telling jokes and anecdotes, going off at a tangent. You also know when you can tune out and tune back in again when the speaker goes back to the main point.

When the presentation or workshop is in another language, you don't have this control over your own level of participation.

This means that you as a presenter need to heavily adapt any workshops you've done in your native country, when you hold them outside that country.

Whereas in your own country you might speak for about 40-50% of the time, with non-natives you need to cut down your talking time as much as possible by avoiding:

- anecdotes
- digressions
- improvising

In the above three cases we tend to use a lot more words and to speak more quickly, neither of which are going to help our audience.

Finally, when giving any instructions make them short, clear, and phrase them in short sentences spoken very slowly.

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19.24 Timing and breaks: using exercises

Exercises and demos take much longer to set up with a non-native audience, so you are likely to achieve much less in a session than you would with native speakers.

You also need to schedule in breaks. This is because it is quite exhausting listening to someone speaking in another language for long periods of time.

19.25 Handouts

Every audience appreciates a handout with the key points summarized.

19.26 If you are a participant, never dominate the discussion

If you are not actually holding the workshop or seminar, but are instead attending it, make sure you don't ally yourself with the other native speakers and take over the workshop. Remember that you have a distinct advantage over the non-native participants. You can understand and react much more quickly. So always give the others time to collect their thoughts and mentally prepare what they want to say.

The same guidelines apply to when having a conversation on a social occasion - it is very easy for those with the best command of English to take over the discussion.

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