

Upper Intermediate – Be a successful non-native speaker

Aim: to help students become aware of how they can communicate successfully in English with other non-native speakers

Lead-in: As a class, brainstorm all the situations, now and in the future, in which students will need to use English. (e.g., visits to the UK or the USA, phone calls for work, study in an English-speaking country, watching films, etc). Write the students' ideas on the board.

Ask students to work alone and write down three situations in which they personally use English now or will need to use English in the future. They can choose from the ideas on the board, or add other things relevant to themselves.

Ask students to work in pairs and to compare their lists. Did they have the same things? In their pairs, ask students to think of the skills they need for each of the situations on their own list (e.g., watching films in English: listening skills: understanding fast speech, pronunciation; vocabulary skills: understanding slang, etc).

Ask students if they feel they have adequate skills for the situations on their lists. What do they need to focus on in their learning to develop the skills in English that they need now or in the future?

Choose A Scenario: Ask students to work in pairs and choose one of the three scenarios (A–C). Explain to students that they should read the scenario and first work alone to answer the question at the end of their scenario and think about which aspects of their skills in English that they personally would need to focus on and improve if they were in that situation. Ask the following questions:

- What are the challenges?
- What communication skills in English do YOU need to develop?

Write the following on the board, to focus the students' answers and help them think about their lists:

- listening
- speaking
- pronunciation
- conversation
- formal situations
- informal situations
- grammar
- vocabulary

They should then share their ideas with their partner, and compare their lists. Did they have the same things, or different?

Ask students to discuss in pairs and think of other skills apart from those in English that would help them in the situation described in their scenario. How can students develop those skills? Encourage students to look at the Reflection Point while they are working.

Reflection Point: Explain to students that many non-native speakers use English to communicate with other non-native speakers, rather than native speakers. Issues such as pronunciation and accents and cultural differences can be an additional challenge in such situations. But when this kind of communication works, it can be rewarding, effective and fun!

Class discussion: Ask each student to work with another student who chose the same scenario, and who was not their partner in stage 2. Ask students to compare their lists of communication skills they chose to improve to help them in their scenario. Did students have similar lists, or not?

Ask students to exchange ideas about what they could each do to help them improve the skills on their list. Ask students the following questions and discuss them as a class:

- Are there any native-speaker accents or non-native accents that you find difficult to understand?
- What are the typical mistakes people from your country make when speaking in English?
- What are some rules for eye contact and how close you stand to people in your country?
- Are there any other customs in your country that are important when meeting new people (e.g., shaking hands, kissing, etc.)?

Work alone: Ask students to work alone and choose a second scenario from A–C and follow the same steps as in section 2. Their list of skills they identify for themselves could be similar to the list they made in the first scenario, but they should try to think of some different things, too. Once they have finished, invite volunteers to present their ideas to the class.

Extension: Write the following words on the board:

*confident, shy, embarrassed, comfortable,
uncomfortable, talkative, quiet, nervous*

Ask students to work in pairs and imagine they are in a social situation with a group of non-native English speakers. Ask students to choose words from the list to describe how they would feel in the situation, and to say why.

Encourage them to think of five questions they could ask a non-native English speaker in a social conversation. Are there any topics that should be avoided?