

# Learning English with a native speaker: advantages and disadvantages

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**Annotation:** This article is dedicated to exploring the issue of learning English with native speakers.

The best way to learn a foreign language is to talk to a native speaker. However, do not be misled: not everyone who knows English can give quality knowledge to someone who wants to learn it. As it is known, a native speaker knows the language better, so many people think that this option is definitely more effective. In reality, this is not such a simple matter. There are advantages as well as disadvantages to lessons with a native speaker.

In this article, I will try to sort out the pros and cons of learning English with a native speaker.

**Key words:** English, native speaker, advantages, disadvantages

## Introduction

English is widely used as a lingua franca (= a language in common) between people from different countries who do not speak each other's native tongues, whether in face-to-face interaction or via phone or the Internet. Thus, for example, when a Greek businesswoman meets a Vietnamese businessman, the one language they are most likely to both know (even if it is only at a very elementary level) is English.

More than 300 million people speak it as a first language and more than 600 million as a foreign language. All major companies, such as shipping and airlines, use this language. Every educated person should know a foreign language, or maybe several foreign languages. In order to learn a language well, you need a good teacher.

In 1985, Braj Kachru proposed visualizing this usage as three concentric circles of English.

The inner circle represents the countries where people would consider English as the first language. The outer circle contains all those countries where English is not a first language but has historic roots, for example, countries of the Commonwealth. The expanding circle represents all the countries where English is not formally a central part of the country's systems but where many people still study it as a foreign language and use it as a lingua franca. This circle is expanding constantly. It is probably more than twice the size of either the inner or outer circles.

The vast majority of English-language interaction in the world is not between native speakers, but between non-native speakers. Having a native speaker join a conversation between non-native speakers is often actually a hindrance for them.

The native speaker may be less experienced at understanding a range of varieties of English, less aware of his own language use and less able to adjust its complexity and cultural references to make it more accessible for people from other countries.

Which raises an increasingly important and increasingly difficult question for teachers: what English is it appropriate to teach my students? Is an 'inner circle' native-speaker model still appropriate?

A native speaker is a person for whom a certain language is native: he or she has learned it in early childhood without the use of special methods and learning programmes. Native speakers intuitively speak the language correctly without effort or strain, speak without an accent, and actively use it in various life situations.

Native English speakers are British, Americans, Australians, Canadians and people from other countries who use English as a first language. They are ordinary people from all professions and social backgrounds. Some of them have decided to devote their time to teaching English to foreigners: it is enough to take special courses and pass an exam for that.

As a rule, these English teachers do not know student's mother tongue. They only speak English during lessons. Lessons are usually in the form of communication: in addition to exercises and explanations, student often talks about different topics. There are advantages and disadvantages to this format of lesson.

Is it still worth learning English with a native speaker or will a non-native English teacher be enough?

In my opinion, the most important thing is the English teacher. Of course the teacher has to be competent, but as we will soon see, this concept can be understood in different ways in the case of learning English. In practice we enjoy lessons of some teachers and not so much with others. So, by and large, it is all very individual.

Let us also not forget that the most important thing is actually the learner! If someone really wants to learn English, nothing can stop them, not even the worst teacher!

However, a good teacher can be very helpful in learning English. So let us look at the pros and cons of both learning English with non-native users and lessons with natives.

### **The advantages of lessons with a native speaker**

- **Vivid language**

Firstly, no one knows spoken English better than a native speaker. Often non-native English teachers are very good at all pedagogical techniques, have higher education and in-depth knowledge of various methods, and teach academic language or in other words "book language" very well. But since they themselves are not constantly in the English-speaking environment, it is rather problematic to accumulate a base of colloquial vocabulary. Therefore, if your aim is not to learn a deep language, with all the grammatical turns, but just a conversational one, a native speaker is a must in this case.

When you study with a native English speaker, you are learning a living language - the kind of language that is spoken right now in their country, with all its modern vocabulary, interesting turns, abbreviations and simplified grammar rules. No outdated expressions, no formal words, and no complicated grammar structures that no one uses.

If you are learning English to speak it, a live language with a native speaker is a huge plus. You will easily and effortlessly learn exactly the modern spoken vocabulary and grammar.

As a result, your speech will immediately become modern, simple and understandable to others. You will not sound too formal, literary or old-fashioned when speaking English. And you will find it easier to understand the everyday speech of ordinary English speakers, not just the specially prepared dialogues of audio lessons or the perfect speech of a good English teacher.

- **Listening and spoken language development**

Lessons with a native speaker are intensive training in listening and speaking. Native-speaking English tutors usually do not know the source language of learners, so you only have to speak in English. It is hard at first, but it is great oral practice.

You will be listening only in English - you will not be able to relax hoping for a translation or explanation in the source language. You will need to concentrate and listen all the time getting used to the accent and the pace of the speech. It will be intense listening practice, which will quickly bring great results.

- **Cultural information**

One Chinese proverb says "To learn a new language is to open another window from which to see the world".

A native speaker, unlike a non-native one, unwittingly teaches not only the language but also the culture of their country. You will be talking on different topics and you will discover the differences between cultures - for example, in habits, holidays, traditions and news. This is one thing

to read about an interesting foreign custom in a textbook, but it is another thing to find out all the details from the foreigner themselves.

Studying culture is important if you intend to live and work in another country or communicate closely with foreigners. It is also useful for those who are simply interested in English-speaking culture and want to know more about the lives of other nations.

So-called integrative motivation in learning English is more effective than instrumental motivation, where we are interested only in passing the exam.

Therefore lessons with a native speaker can awaken in us a deep motivation to learn a language, and it will be enjoyable and above all effective.

- **High intensive lessons**

Lessons with a native speaker are very intensive and effective. Each lesson is a lot of new vocabulary, new information, intense listening and constant practice of speaking the foreign language. All of this literally makes it hard to relax, you have to constantly push yourself, feel stressed and go further. Such classes quickly yield results: new information and new skills are acquired in a shorter time than in lessons with a non-native English teacher.

- **Absorbing lessons**

Generally, English lessons with a native speaker are more engaging than with non-native teachers. Several factors come into play here. Most students are more interested in speaking and listening than in writing, reading and comprehending the rules. Communicating with a foreigner is in general more captivating than with your own countryman: you can not only learn a lot, but also tell something unusual about your country and culture. Thanks to the high intensity, successes become quickly visible and you soon start to enjoy new skills.

- **Overcoming the language barrier and preparing to communicate with foreigners**

If you have psychological difficulties using English with foreigners, lessons with a native speaker can quickly remedy this. Even people with a high level of English can have a so-called language barrier. In real life, it is difficult to overcome on your own: such people may simply avoid situations requiring the use of English, or pretend not to speak it.

A good English speaking teacher can help you overcome the language barrier, release the psychological tension and boost your self-confidence. This is much easier to do in a lesson format than in everyday life. By gaining practice with a native speaker in an English class, you will feel much more confident talking to foreigners in different situations in life.

### **Disadvantages of lessons with a native English speaker**

The advantages of learning with a native speaker can also become disadvantages in some situations. Here are some examples.

- **High difficulty of lessons**

Intensive and efficient English lessons can be a drawback for those who are not ready for them. If a person has only recently started learning the language, has difficulties with concentration, has a poor perception of foreign speech by ear, is not ready for a rather stressful regime of lessons, it is better to choose a teacher with the knowledge of their source language - a native speaker either will not help in such situations, or will not cope better.

- **Lack of linguistic nuances**

Paradoxically, native speakers know less about their language than foreigners who learn and teach it. They do not go into grammatical rules and lexical subtleties. More often than not, they find it difficult to give answers to questions like "Why is this tense used here?" or "How are these two synonyms different from each other?" Such things will have to be understood on an intuitive level on their own or look for answers elsewhere.

It is particularly difficult for native English teacher to explain the grammar of their language, even if they are good at it. The fact is that they have a poor grasp of the source language grammar and cannot show analogies and give examples. Practice proves that English grammar is well explained by competent non-native teachers. And this is a very significant disadvantage if you need to tighten your grammar or prepare for an exam.

- **Slang expressions and accent**

Every native speaker has an accent and manner of speech - a peculiar intonation, specific words, slang and other features accepted in a particular field and in a particular circle. This is not a disadvantage, but something to think about if your teacher is not a native speaker of Received Pronunciation or General American. This means that you are also likely to speak with the same accent and pick up specific words that others may not understand.

- **Psychological difficulties**

Some people have a particularly strong language barrier. Strong psychological difficulties when communicating with a native speaker hinder the effectiveness of the lessons. In such a case, it is better to start speaking English with a non-native trainer, gain experience and increase the level of the language until your self-confidence allows you to communicate with a native speaker.

- **Expensive**

This is the simplest but also the most important point for many English language learners. On average, a lesson with a native speaker costs more than a lesson with a non-native tutor of about the same qualifications.

To conclude, a native speaker is an ideal choice if you need to improve your speaking skills, have fun communicating and getting to know another culture, prepare for moving to an English speaking country or communicating with foreigners, and get rid of the language barrier. But if you need to pass exams, improve your grammar or are just starting to learn English, a teacher who speaks your language is the best choice.

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