

Mastering English Communication

December 2023



Introduction

Target Students: This material is thoughtfully designed for upper intermediate to advanced English language learners. It is ideal for those who aspire to elevate their listening and communication skills to a higher level. The exercises and content are structured to challenge and enhance the language abilities of learners, facilitating their journey towards fluency and confidence in diverse settings.

Educational Instructions

Engaging with the Audio:

Begin each unit by listening to the linked audio recording. This step is crucial for developing listening skills, helping students become familiar with different accents, speech tempos, and language nuances.

Reading Aloud:

After listening, read the transcript aloud. This 'shadowing' technique is effective for improving pronunciation and understanding speech rhythms and patterns. It helps in mirroring native-like fluency and enhancing spoken English.

Comprehension Questions:

Complete the comprehension questions following each unit. These questions are designed to test the students' understanding and encourage deeper engagement with the content.

Discussion and Reflection:

Participate in discussions based on the unit's content or guided by the questions. This practice is key to developing the ability to express thoughts, opinions, and responses in English, enhancing both speaking and critical thinking skills.

Pedagogical Rationale:

The combination of listening, speaking, and comprehension exercises is rooted in immersive and active learning principles. Engaging with authentic audio enhances auditory processing and retention, while reading aloud and discussing improves articulation and conversational skills. This comprehensive approach ensures a well-rounded advancement in English language proficiency, preparing English learners for a variety of communicative contexts.

Giving gifts boosts happiness, research shows. So why do we feel frazzled?

Link to audio [\[HERE\]](#)

A MARTÍNEZ, HOST:

Buying, wrapping and then **schlepping** gifts during the holiday season takes money and time, but is it worth it? Well, there's actually some research on this. NPR's Allison Aubrey takes a look.

ALLISON AUBREY, BYLINE: The idea that it's better to give than to receive **goes way back**. And the tradition of gift giving is ancient. But sometimes the time and effort it takes feels like a lot, says psychologist Michael Norton of Harvard Business School.

MICHAEL NORTON: People get very, very stressed about getting all the gifts in time. Is it the right gift? You know, what does this person really want? Do I have time?

AUBREY: I always imagine strolling through **quaint** shops as carolers sing, spotting something unique for everyone on my list. But the reality is far more **tedious** - more like scrolling online and just hoping something can be delivered by next week. So when the holidays feel more **frenzied** than festive, it's easy to question whether it's all worth it. But Norton assures me that science shows giving is good for us.

NORTON: We can show in our research that that act of giving actually does improve your happiness.

AUBREY: He and his collaborators have studied the effects of giving going back to a study published in 2008. In one experiment that included about 700 people, they randomly assigned participants to make either a purchase for themselves or for somebody else. Afterwards, the participants reported how happy they felt. Turns out giving to others led to a significant boost.

NORTON: If you take \$5 out of your pocket today, the science really does show that spending that \$5 on yourself doesn't do much for you, but spending that \$5 on somebody else is more likely to increase your happiness.

AUBREY: Imagine you spot a scarf. It's a cold day. You think, ah, I might like that for myself, but you already have scarves. So do you really need one more? The decision to gift that scarf to somebody else could be the better play.

NORTON: Maybe they don't exactly need the scarf either. But what an act of giving you've engaged in - you've showed them that they're important to you. And it's a very different act. It's the same exact object. It's just a scarf. But it can either be a throwaway object or something that **cements** a relationship between two people.

AUBREY: And the magical thing about giving is that when we're generous, we're more likely to receive because humans tend to unconsciously imitate other people's acts of giving, says Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley.

DACHER KELTNER: Yeah. This is one of the really striking discoveries in this new science of giving or kindness, which is it's **contagious**, right? So if I am given something by somebody else, I will then give more to other people in subsequent interactions.

AUBREY: **Reciprocity** is a foundation of good relationships. And when we surround ourselves with generous people, we tend to feel the same. And when it comes to what to give, Keltner says, it can be exhausting to buy. So why not **gift** the people on your list with an experience. Buy them a park pass or theater tickets or invite them out to dinner with you.

KELTNER: Because when we give experiences to people, they're almost, by definition, more **personalized**. They're reflective of our relationship to them. You give a visit to a museum to a friend who loves art. We, you know, take somebody out camping. We build in the fabric of our relationship to gift giving, make it more special.

AUBREY: And one more thing. It's always nice to be present when someone receives the gift you're giving. The research shows this can give an extra lift to see the gratitude or someone's face light up in thanks. That's the spirit of the season.

Vocabulary and Definitions:

1. **Schlepping:** To haul or carry something heavy or awkward.
2. **Quaint:** Attractively unusual or old-fashioned.
3. **Tedious:** Too long, slow, or dull; tiresome or monotonous.
4. **Frenzied:** Wildly excited or uncontrolled.
5. **Reciprocity:** The practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit.
6. **Contagious:** (Of an emotion, feeling, or attitude) likely to spread to and affect others.
7. **Personalized:** Designed or produced to meet someone's individual requirements.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What is the main topic discussed in the transcript?
2. How does Michael Norton describe the stress associated with gift-giving?
3. What findings does Norton share about the effects of giving on happiness?
4. How does Dacher Keltner describe the contagious nature of giving?
5. What alternative to traditional gift-giving does Keltner suggest and why?

Conversation Questions:

1. Have you ever felt stressed about finding the right gift for someone? Share your experience.
2. Do you agree that giving gifts can increase your happiness? Why or why not?
3. Can you recall a time when you gave a gift that strengthened a relationship? Describe that experience.
4. Discuss your thoughts on the idea that generosity is contagious.
5. How do you feel about gifting experiences instead of physical objects? Have you ever received or given such a gift?

A lawsuit says a man died after drinking a highly caffeinated beverage at Panera

Link to audio [\[HERE\]](#)

STEVE INSKEEP, HOST:

The Panera restaurant chain faces a lawsuit related to a highly caffeinated beverage on the menu. A family in Florida **contends** that 46-year-old Dennis Brown died after drinking three large servings of Panera's Charged Lemonade. According to Panera, a large serving of this lemonade can contain as much as 390 milligrams of caffeine, which is equal to about four cups of coffee, so it's like the guy drank a dozen cups of coffee. Panera denies its drink was responsible for the death, but this is not the first such lawsuit. So what are the risks of a refill?

Jennifer Temple directs the Nutrition and Health Research Laboratory at the University at Buffalo. Good morning.

JENNIFER TEMPLE: Good morning.

INSKEEP: At what point does caffeine become dangerous?

TEMPLE: Well, it's really different among different people, so there's a lot of individual variability. But in general, people start to experience some negative side effects when they've had too much, so they feel nauseous or jittery or anxious or irritable. And if they continue to consume caffeine beyond those feelings, then they can start to have some more serious side effects, like heart palpitations and then even cardiac arrest, which is what happened in this case.

INSKEEP: This would be - I guess the cardiac arrest would be somebody with a comorbidity, as they say, right? This might be somebody who already has an issue, and the caffeine makes it worse.

TEMPLE: Yes. Typically, these deaths don't happen in people who are healthy. They typically happen in people with an underlying cardiac condition or something cardiovascular, like in this case, I think the man had high blood pressure. And so in those cases, high levels of caffeine would be contraindicated.

INSKEEP: Is it normal to be out in the world and come up with a drink that has the equivalent of four cups of coffee in the one drink, and you can get another and another and another? Is that normal in restaurants?

TEMPLE: No, it's not normal. Actually, this is - it's - one of the unique things about this case is that, typically, beverages with very high levels of caffeine, like energy drinks, are sold in discrete packaging that are clearly labeled. And the lemonades were out with all the other

drinks, and they were able to be refilled over and over again. So it would be difficult for somebody to know exactly how much caffeine they've consumed.

And the other thing that's a little bit **insidious** about this is that lemonade is not something that people would expect to have caffeine, so they may refill it over and over again, not even knowing it had caffeine or not even thinking it had caffeine if it wasn't clearly labeled or if they weren't paying attention.

INSKEEP: Oh, this is a really useful...

TEMPLE: So people who have sensitivity to caffeine avoid beverages that they know have caffeine, but they not - they may not be thinking to avoid lemonade.

INSKEEP: This is a really useful insight about human nature, I think. Now, Panera has told NPR that if you want to know the Charged Lemonade caffeine content, it's available in the cafe, as well as online. Let's assume that that is true. You can get the information. But you're telling me it's not **intuitive**. If I buy one of those 5-hour Energy drinks, I assume there's probably a bunch of caffeine in there. I understand there's a bunch of caffeine in there. But it's not intuitive to think that you would find it in lemonade that you get out of the dispenser in the restaurant.

TEMPLE: Exactly, especially when they are with all of the other lemonades and all of the other drinks. There was - there's nothing - unless you did a little bit of digging or unless you knew, there's nothing that really makes it obvious that it has caffeine. Now, I think that they have changed their labeling since, but that requires people to pay attention, and it also requires that people understand. So you mentioned that the amount of caffeine was equivalent to four cups of coffee. But if somebody sees 390 milligrams of caffeine, they may not know what that means.

INSKEEP: Jennifer, thanks so much.

TEMPLE: Thank you for having me, Steve.

Vocabulary and Definitions:

1. **Lawsuit:** A case brought to a court of law by one party against another.
2. **Caffeinated:** Containing caffeine, a stimulant found in coffee and other beverages.
3. **Cardiac Arrest:** A sudden, sometimes fatal, occurrence of heart failure.
4. **Comorbidity:** The presence of one or more additional diseases or disorders co-occurring with a primary disease or disorder.
5. **Contraindicated:** Advised against; usually refers to a medical condition or treatment that could be harmful.
6. **Insidious:** Proceeding in a gradual, subtle way, but with harmful effects.
7. **Intuitive:** Using or based on what one feels to be true even without conscious reasoning.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What is the main incident discussed in the transcript?
2. How much caffeine does a large serving of Panera's Charged Lemonade contain?
3. What are some of the negative side effects of consuming too much caffeine mentioned by Jennifer Temple?
4. According to the transcript, under what conditions can caffeine consumption be particularly dangerous?
5. How do they describe the way caffeine content is presented in Panera's drinks?

Conversation Questions:

1. Have you ever experienced any side effects from consuming too much caffeine? Share your experience.
2. In your opinion, should restaurants and cafes have more responsibility in informing customers about caffeine content? Why or why not?
3. Do you think caffeine sensitivity varies among different people? Why might this be the case?
4. Discuss a time when you consumed something without fully understanding its contents. What happened?

5. How important is it for consumers to be aware of what they are drinking or eating? Discuss the balance between personal responsibility and corporate responsibility.