

Suzanne's Quick Tips

Episode #1: Slow down



Culips English Podcast

Transcript

Hey guys, this is Suzanne. And you're listening to Culips.

Welcome to our new series called Quick Tips for all of your quick and easy English tips. Sometimes we might cover speech, sometimes grammar, sometimes how to give presentations or do interviews in English. Today, we're going to be talking about a speech feature, slowing down or slowing down our speech rate.

I find that many people or a lot of my students think that fast means fluent or that you really have a handle on the language when you speak fast. But, this is actually a misconception because **most native speakers actually speak slower than you think** because English has a kind of a stress rule. So this means that English is what we call in linguistics or pronunciation research, "a stressed timed language." So it means we give a lot of weight or honour to the stress of a word or syllable.

So, in actuality there are some words that will be spoken faster and those are usually the words that we reduce or delete. The words that are not really important like, "in the" "out of the" "with the" a lot of "the." While the important words are slowed down or elongated and this makes them kind of stand out to the listener. So if you're doing a presentation in class or for anything in- in English, like a thesis maybe for example, try this simple tip of just slowing down your speech just a bit because you might be explaining very interesting concepts or high level concepts that you wanna make sure come across as understandable and make sense to your audience.

So, something you can do is to try in your practice text, maybe you've written out your speech for your thesis, maybe you've written or typed in some notes in your Power Point or slides. **I encourage you to underline or circle the key words that you think are important and try slowing down just a bit on those words.**

For example, let's take a little example, if you have a presentation text like "Today I'm going to talk to you about the dynamics of cultural change." So, you would probably underline "today" "talk" 'cause that's a verb so it's- it's important, "dynamics" "cultural" and "change."

Those seem to be the important, the most important words and I would try slowing down on those words. So here's how they would sound if they were fast, OK?

"Today I'm going to talk to you about the dynamics of cultural change."

"Today I'm going to talk to you about the dynamics of cultural change."

It wasn't bad, but it wasn't really highlighting my introduction to my presentation. Now, let's listen to how that would sound if we slowed it down just a bit, on or right before the key words that we highlighted.

"Today I'm going to talk to you about the dynamics of cultural change."

"Today I'm going to talk to you about the dynamics of cultural change."

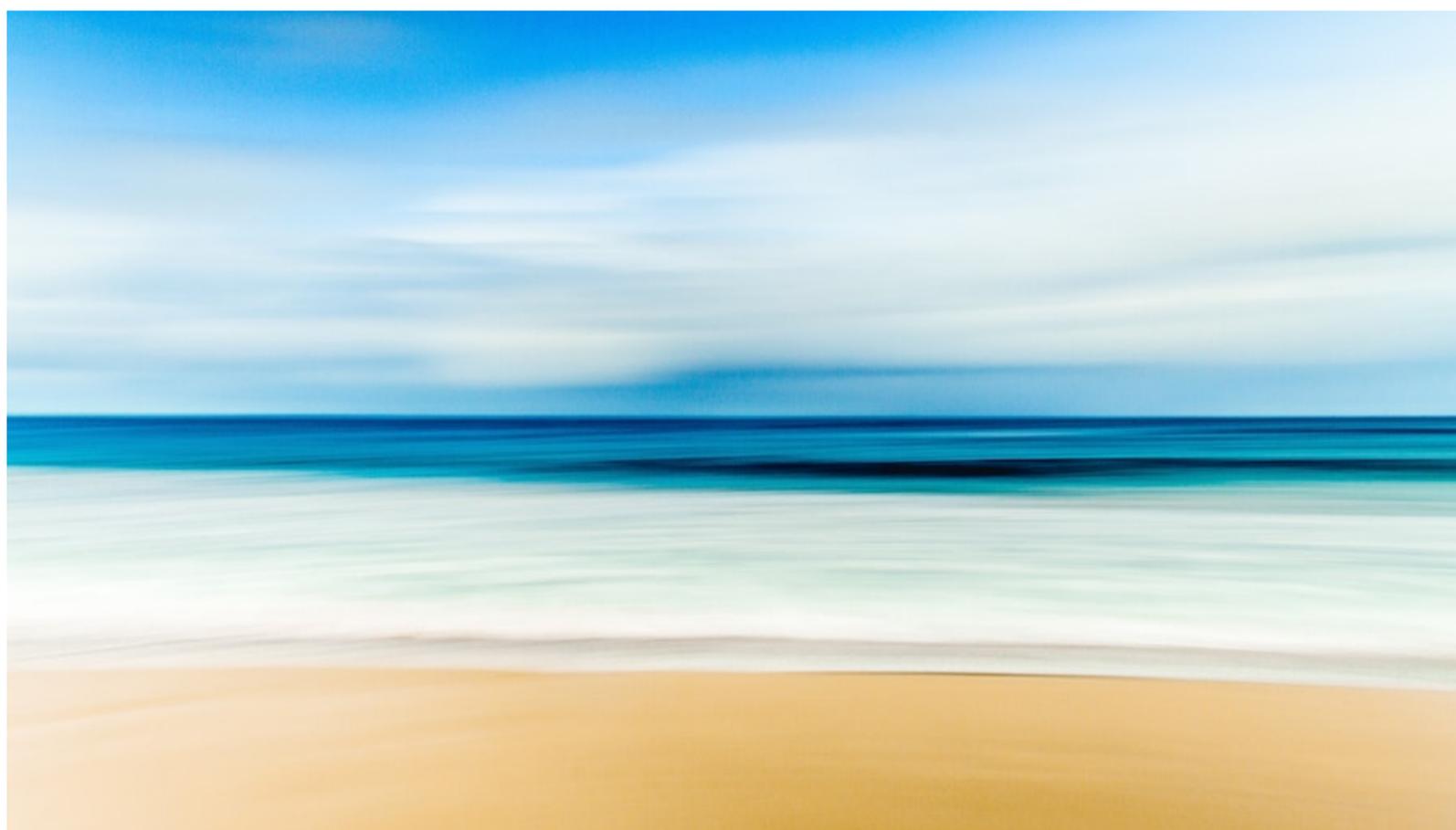
Just by slowing down our introduction just a bit, we are really taking in the audience. We're setting the stage, and we're creating an atmosphere and a feel that we're really allowing the audience to open up and listen to our message.

I encourage you to take a passage of text, maybe even online from maybe a TED Talk or something that you really enjoyed listening to in English. Maybe even try a transcript from one of your favourite Culips podcasts. **Take a few sentences and underline the words that you think should be stressed. Then try saying it faster, maybe slow down a bit on just the key words and maybe try slowing down on the whole sentence in general, see if you feel like you are making more sense when you slow down.** I guarantee that when you do slow down, you're not going to be as slow as you think you are. Most people speak faster than they think. So see how much more understandable complicated texts and messages can be, as you practice with maybe research, articles that you've read, try reading those out loud. Maybe your thesis or a presentation text, or even a transcript from Culips. And let us know how it goes.

So, your quick tip for today is to slow down a bit. To take your time with your speech, I promise it won't sound too weird. All right. Talk to you guys soon and don't forget to find us on Culips.com and on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Bye.

Quick tip takeaways

1. Fast does not mean fluent!
2. Elongate and stretch out the words you want to stress or emphasize.
3. Slowing down allows the person with whom you are talking to understand your message, making you more comprehensible.



Writing and Discussion Questions

1. In your experience, do you think you tend to speak too fast? If so, give us an example.
2. When you notice that your interlocutor or listener isn't understanding what you are saying, what is the first adjustment that you usually make?
3. In your opinion, do you think fast is more fluent? Why? What are some other forms of listening or input that you use to practice listening to native spoken English (besides Culips)? Do you find they speak fast or slower than you thought?

Study Challenges



1. Listen to a podcast or watch a few English-speaking shows. Notice the speech rate. Do the characters or reporters speak fast? Do certain characters speak fast? Who do you understand better, the fast speakers or the slower speakers?
2. Find an excerpt of a speech, like a TED talk, or take a few sentences from your research or an article you have read in class. Record yourself reading the text at your normal, regular pace. Listen to the recording and see if there are places that you either do not understand or places where you could slow down. Mark those places on the text, and try recording yourself again, slowing down at the selected places.
3. Next time you have a presentation, a phone call in English, or have a chance to speak in English with a teacher or friend, try slowing down by about 20%-30%. If your normal speech is a bit fast, label that as 80%-90% fast, and reduce your speed from there. What did you notice? What feedback did you get from your teacher, friend, or practice listener?

Credits

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