Doing English

"LKC² January 28th 2017, Tokyo"

JULIAN: I was going to say we should start, but we've already started. Normally, you see my videos, and the great thing about video is that I can keep going and "Ah no, that's no good!" and do it again and again. So what you don't see is: every time I say, "Hi!" actually, I do it ten times. I'm like, "Hi!" but then that's not good enough; I turn around and, "Hi!" But when you're watching, it looks a bit stupid if I keep doing it.

Actually, this seminar, to be honest, this seminar almost didn't happen for two reason. First is because whenever I do some kind of seminar, some kind of live event, every single time, I get sick and have to cancel. So I think maybe with some of you I've talked about this already. But last month I was supposed to do a presentation at Tokyo University. So I was really excited, a bit nervous, prepared everything. Everything was perfect. And then that morning: norovirus. I spent the whole day throwing up and I had to call and cancel: "I'm sorry, I can't come." So I was so upset about that. So today I was kind of worried: "Will I get sick on the day and have to phone everybody?" As far as I'm concerned, because I'm not sick, even if today goes really badly, it's OK.

The second reason this almost didn't happen, actually, is a little bit more deep and serious. I can see Hitomi-San is smiling because she knows what it is. So I've wanted to do a live seminar, event, like this in Tokyo, for years. So many years, I've been saying, "I'm going to do a live seminar." But every single time, I said, "Mmmm... No, not now. Not ready. Later. Later. Later. I can't do it now. People won't come. I'll have to do it in Japanese." So many excuses, so many reasons, and then I talked to Hitomi. And Hitomi just said, "Julian, just do it!" And she made me choose a date, and she said, "When are you going to do it?" I said, "Uh... The 28th?" "You're gonna do it!" "OK." And that's why I'm here today. So, do you want to give a few words? Over to you. And now Hitomi's going to do the rest of the seminar for me. You can do the rest for me? Next two hours? I'll sit down and relax. Three minutes? OK. Over to you.

So I thought it's only fair that I give Hitomi the introduction, because it's thanks to her that we're all here today.

HITOMI: *Hi! I'm Hitomi Horiguchi, and I'm a mentor because this name tag says so. But I've been watching the Doing English channel since 2014 in Autumn. I'm an entrepreneur so I'm interested in his way of making videos, fashion, the background and composition of the movies rather than just how to learn English. One day I saw some Japanese books on his bookshelf and I realized he lives in Japan and I wondered if I might bump into him.*

In August of 2016, my childhood friend asked me to go to a summer festival, a Bon-dance, at the city where I was born and raised. Actually, my mother asked me first but I said, "I'm not going because it's just a Bon-dance." But since my friend asked me too, I decided to go. However, it was raining, so I went to my mother's house for my niece's birthday party.

After the dinner, hey presto! It stopped raining and we could go to the Bon-dance after all. I enjoyed taking videos and photos of my nieces and talking with my sister and childhood friend. And then, I said to my nieces, "Let's go get some shaved ice." And guess what?! I saw a man I knew.
"Oh my God! Are you Julian?" I said. I couldn't help talking to him because I had hoped to meet him. "Could you take a photo with me?" I asked him excitedly. My sister took many photos like a photographer, so Julian said, "Can you send that to me and what's your name by the way?" Those questions made me calm down a little. I knew this was a good chance to make friends with him. So I wrote about my business and some articles in English. When I finished writing, it was 4 am. I emailed him. Actually, I didn't have any non-Japanese clients but I already wrote some articles in English just in case!

After one week, we had a lunch together at a curry restaurant. He was interested in my business. I had to concentrate to speak English and listen, so I didn't eat much curry. What a waste!

The focus of our conversation was his live seminar. He had been thinking about giving a live seminar in Japan for 2 years. On the other hand, I give a lecture once a month in 2016, so I said, "Many of my clients study English and some are high-level. I think they will join your Tokyo seminar. And we hardly ever attend a lecture in English, so we could feel like we are going abroad to study English."

He thought that there are many beginners in Japan, so he should speak Japanese to teach English but his target is intermediate and advanced. He had been struggling with to do it for 2 years. I think this conversation focused on his possibilities for the first time.

“Keep in touch!” Julian said, and I hoped this encounter may lead to others. And guess what happened! Only one hour later, I got his application for my next event! I was gobsmacked! He is one of the participants but like a guest speaker! I thought my clients would be pleased to meet him.

In November, we had a coaching session on Skype, and his theme was about how to give a seminar in Canada. He planned to go to Canada in February, so he thought it would be his first seminar. But he was worried about gathering participants. So I said, “I’d say before Canada, you should do it in Tokyo. You should try. I can help you and some of my clients would join and then the reports of the Tokyo seminar would attract other members. They think: “Someday I want to go to your seminar!” Just do it! Go with the flow!

“The Saturday of my birthday week I decided!” he said. After the session, I noticed that day was a new moon! It’s going to be the best of starts. What luck!

For Julian, Japanese was one of the barriers or an excuse for not doing live seminars, but after 2 years his Japanese skill has improved and there aren’t any language problems. Paradoxically, he gives a seminar in English, but my event is all Japanese, so he needed to acquire Japanese so we happened to meet each other.

People who try to open a new door that is behind a wall, they can meet other people who help them. In this sense “Other-Power” means the work done by others, not by myself. For me, I was promoted to a higher rank from coach to a mentor. This encounter takes me into another dimension.

Sometimes I was called “Mentor” from Japanese clients, but when a native speaker says it, it sounds like "An absolute mentor." It was a great honour. Thank you Julian!

My mentor said, “At your first seminar, you should invite people who you know well. They will give you good feedback that cheers you on!” So let’s pump up this event!
Thank you.

JULIAN: What Hitomi didn’t tell you was: when she met me at the Bon-dance, I had a can of beer in one hand, and I was dancing like this around the thing. Actually, that day was my daughter’s birthday. So my parents-in-law came to visit us, and we

drank a lot of Japanese *sake.* Very nice, very nice; and everybody is a little bit drunk. And, "Oh, let's go to the Bon-dance!" So I saw the picture the next day, and I will send you a link to the photograph. But I've got a can of beer in my hand, that I'm trying to hide from the photograph. Hitomi, thank you, thank you!

What was I going to say next? I've forgotten now. People who are used to Hitomi's seminars—you might be really surprised, but Hitomi, when she does a seminar, she stands very still, and she speaks very clearly and very elegantly. But I can't do that. When I speak, I move; and when I move, I speak. So maybe I'll be up and down and all over the place.

But you have an outline for this, because I thought maybe it's easier if you have some kind of note, the same note as me as we're going, but probably half of this will be different. So don't worry too much about it. It's just my note, so that I know what I'm talking about.

But the idea behind today's seminar is the concept of the LKC Triangle. And ever since I started Doing English, it really bothered me that, after the intermediate-to-advanced stage, I could see that everybody had almost the same kind of problem with their English. And that's the same for Japanese people, people from Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Korea, France. It's doesn't matter. Wherever in the world people are, they seem to have the same kind of problem.

And it isn't a problem with English; so what is the problem? If it's not a problem with English, then what is the problem? What is stopping people from going up to the next English level? So it's a bit of a paradox, a bit of a contradiction, in that people want to improve their English, but it's a not a problem with English.

And that's where the idea of the LKC Triangle came from. And I think the first time I really noticed this was when I was a teenager. When I was fourteen, I went to France. My school had a French exchange, and I was the laziest student at the school. I didn't study, I didn't participate, I didn't do anything. But when they said "Two weeks in France," I thought: "Great! I get two weeks off school."

So I went to France, and I did not speak even one word of French. I spent the whole two weeks speaking to my host family in English. So they got loads of English speaking practice. But even then, I was really aware that the way that they spoke English was very different to the way that people in the UK spoke English. And it wasn't the words that they used that were different, but rather the ideas, the things they talked about. The culture is completely different, the way that people in France

think is completely different to the way that British people think. And that means that the way they talk is different.

And that's kind of where this idea has come from. So this is what we're going to be talking about today: the LKC Triangle. And who is not familiar with this? Is this new to anybody? Let's have a show of hands. OK, so put simply, in order to speak a language really, really well, in order to master the language, you need three things. You need the L, which is Language. I mean, this is obvious: if you don't have words, you can't speak. The language is extremely important: you need language to speak a language.

But that isn't enough. You also need the background knowledge. That's the K of the LKC Triangle: Knowledge. If you don't know anything, you can't talk about it. If you asked me to stand here, and you said, "Julian, talk about electrical engineering." What? I haven't got a clue about electrical engineering! I don't even know what electrical engineering is. It is something to do with electric? I don't know. I couldn't talk about it. I couldn't talk about it in English, Japanese, Chinese… I couldn't talk about it in any language, because I don't have the background knowledge.

You also need something else: you need Culture. And this is extremely complicated. Culture can mean many, many different things. But put simply, culture is like the glasses that we see the world through. You put on a pair of pink glasses, you see the world in pink. You change it to a blue pair, the world becomes blue. It's the filter through which you see everything. And it's the same for people speaking, the same for understanding people. When I say something, what I say and what you understand is totally different. And the more different our cultures, the more different the gap will be. We're going to talk about this in a lot of detail today, because culture is really, really complicated. And it has many, many levels.

So I'm kind of jumping back and forth here. But we can say actually that human beings, humans, we have a culture, a world-wide culture. Imagine aliens come from outer space, and we're going to talk about this today, actually, that idea: they will have a different culture to us. We can also say that regions in the world, for example, Asia, tends to have cultures that are quite similar. Europe has cultures that are quite similar. The American region has cultures that are quite similar. And so on.

We can also say that countries have cultures that are quite different. Even within Asia, the culture in Singapore will be different to the culture in Japan and to the culture in Korea. But we can also say that cities have different cultures. The culture

in Tokyo is a bit different to the culture in Osaka, I guess, which is different to the culture in Sapporo, or another city in Japan. But we can also say that actually individuals have a culture as well. Because the way that I think is not the same as the way you think, and it's not the same as the way a third person thinks. We all have our own experience. And our experiences affect what we understand.

So that in a nutshell is the LKC Triangle. I've talked about this a lot in different places. But it's so much: I mean, language—there's so much language! What language? There's so much knowledge. Do you learn about everything? Well, no. The same with culture. So what I want to talk about today is what I guess is the 80/20 of the LKC Triangle. The 80/20 Principle: the idea that 20 percent of any effort gives you 80 percent of the results. We see this pattern everywhere. If you look at the carpet in your house, 20 percent of the carpet will have most of the damage, because you always walk in the same place. I always destroy my jackets on the elbows. 20 percent of my jacket will have 80 percent of the wear.

It's the same with this: just 20 percent of this idea can give you 80 percent of the result. And that's what I want to talk about today. Hence the name: "LKC squared." The idea is: an in-depth look. We're going to look at three points for each. And importantly, in this diagram, the most important part is here. And that is you. This bit in the middle: you are basically the combination of the language you have, the knowledge you have, and the culture you have. And that forms you, your identity.

If this is really confusing, don't worry about it; we're going to go over this in a lot of detail. Just to explain this a little bit easier, if you take a look at this picture; don't look at my notes, because that's cheating. If you look at these two bottles of wine: A and B. Which do you think is the better bottle of wine? The more expensive, the better tasting, the more desirable bottle of wine. A or B? Which do you think? Let's have a show of hands. Who thinks A? Oh, come on! Somebody's got to say A! Who thinks B? I told you this was too easy, didn't I?

Why do you think B?

"Because it looks old, like aged wine."

Very perceptive of you! Yeah, it is; it's B. This bottle A, this is "Cowboy Sisterhood." How about that for a name? You can buy a bottle of this for 500 yen. Can you guess how much B costs? Five million yen. This is a bottle of Penfolds Grange, which was distilled in 1951, in Australia. They made 160 cases of this, and that was it—never made it again. It's a very, very rare collector item. People sell it on auction. And the

last time somebody could buy a bottle of this, it cost them 5 million yen; I think it was about 50,000 dollars that they paid.

The point I want to make here is: if you look at these two bottles, you've got Bottle A. This wine is crap. I mean, let's be honest, it's a cheap bottle of wine. It's all right, you drink it, you get drunk. Great. But in order to sell this, they can't sell the quality of the wine: "Oh, here's our amazing wine! Buy it!" Because nobody will buy it. So instead they have to make it look gorgeous. So they've got this gold top on it and this gorgeous logo on the purple background. They've made it look elegant, fancy, with the design. But it's all surface; it's all surface-level. You've got a gorgeous design, but the stuff in the bottle...? It's not very nice. It's not a good wine.

Bottle B, on the other hand, I mean this wine is amazing. Nobody cares what the packaging is like. Nobody cares what this looks like. If you've got a bottle of this wine, people will pay a lot of money to get a bottle. So, I mean, look at the top. The top is all dirty and it's falling apart; the label is all stained. Who cares? It doesn't matter.

The point here is that true art isn't necessarily fancy. True art doesn't always look good on the surface. Rather, it's what is inside that counts. And it's exactly the same for English. And really that's the point I'm trying to make with this. Which leads, hopefully, into Point One. No, it doesn't! It doesn't lead into Point One at all. Which goes to show how well I planned this.

People have a tendency to focus just on the language. And we're going to talk about this a lot in a moment. Actually, let's talk about it now. People, in my experience, they want tricks: quick ways to sound good in English. "Tell me ten words that I can learn that will make me sound clever." That is what we would call a "tactical" way of thinking. And the internet is really bad for this. You go on the internet and you type in something like: "How do I sound intelligent in English?" And you get all of these terrible articles which will be just like: "Ten words that will make you sound clever." "Ten phrases to use at a party that will make you sound sophisticated."

But it's total rubbish, because it's the wrong way to think. In fact, a professor at Princeton University. You know: Princeton University—huge, super-famous university in America. Daniel Oppenheimer asked this question: "Do these clever-sounding words really make you sound intelligent?" And he did a test: he collected essays from all the students in the university, and then he sent them to some people on the outside. And he asked them: "Please rate these. Which are the most intelligent-sounding essays?" And they read all the essays, and they gave them all a

score. “From say, ten, this one sounds really, really intelligent; give it a ten. This one doesn’t make any sense; give it a one.”

They got all the papers back, and they counted them, and they analysed them. And do you know what they found? The papers that got very high scores were written in very, very simple, basic English: very simple, easy-to-understand words. The papers that used these really clever-sounding intelligent words, the same words as these internet articles claim: “These words will help you sound sophisticated in English. Just put these into your essay, and you’ll sound great!” These are the ones which all got a score of one. People didn’t understand them. And the problem was this: they focused too much on this—just on the language [and the packaging]. Tactical thinking: “I want to sound intelligent. How do I sound intelligent? Clever-sounding words.” But the result is that this becomes really unclear. We don’t know what they’re talking about! This…well, we don’t know what it’s about, so the result is that clever-sounding language usually has the opposite effect. There are times when that isn’t true, and we’re going to talk about that later. But first and foremost, it’s all about this [the quality inside].

When I was an art student… You probably heard this story before. When I was an art student, I spent a lot of time painting, drawing pictures, drinking Guinness in the bar. You know: typical art student. But we had to do art history, art theory lectures. And like any lecture, every term, what do you have to do? You have to write an essay! “I’m an art student!” I told everybody. “I can’t write essays. I’m here because I hate writing essays. That’s why I study art. I didn’t come to art university to write essays.” But you know, we had to do it. You have to do it, or you don’t get the grades. If you don’t get the grades, they kick you out.

So I was the kind of person who… I don’t like to have things just there, undone, waiting to be done. So every time we got one of these essays, I would start straightaway. I’d just go to the library, and I’d say, “Right, I’m going to write this now. I’m going to get it finished and then never have to think about it.” What would happen is I would sit there for hours just going, “Umm… Hmmm… Uuuhhh.” You know, I’d press a button: “What do I write next?” Press another button; have a nap. I had no idea what I was talking about; I didn’t know what to write.

And then there was this one essay, and it was something I was really interested in. It was basically an open question about art theory, the theory of what makes good art. And I was actually quite interested in that. At that time, I was studying Japanese photography. Nabuyoshi Araki, if you know him; he was the main person I was studying. And I was actually really interested in it. And I had an idea about what to

write, but I got books out of the library, and I read them. And I was like: "Wow! I know what I'm talking about." And that time, I sat down at the keyboard, and I just banged the whole thing out in about an hour. And it was the highest grade I ever got for an essay that I wrote in school. And the reason why? Nothing to do with this [the packaging]; all to do with this [the quality inside]. Just the background knowledge was there.

This sounds so obvious. And in a way, I kind of feel when I tell people this, "Are people going to be insulted when I say this?" Because it's so obvious: if you don't have the knowledge, of course you can't talk about it. But it happens so often: people say, "Oh, I went to a party." And this is where the problems come in. You know, in our professions, in our jobs, we know our jobs really, really well. It's easy to talk about them. But we go to a party, a work party, suddenly we don't know what to say. But it's all because of this: we have no content, nothing to say. And part of that is then because of the culture: different cultures talk about different things. Taking the time to get the knowledge is going to make a huge difference.

This is what I call a "strategic" approach to English. And *strategy* means a long-term plan. Versus a *tactic*, which is just a trick—the thing, the action that you do now. The best example I can give of this is actually my business adviser. Hitomi is helping me with this seminar. But I have a business adviser who basically helps me do all the marketing for Doing English: Meghan—you've probably heard me talk about Meghan before. An Irish lady, bright-red hair. Lovely lady. Just had a baby recently, so she's been gone for a while. But when I was looking for an adviser, I actually looked at two different people; or two different people were recommended to me. One of them was Meghan. Another one was a guy called Ryan. And at first I thought he was going to be the best kind of business coach for me.

But when I talked to him, he was really interested in: "Oh! If you change the headline on your sales page. You should say: *A scientific approach to English*." And people who have been with Doing English for a long time might have seen that. "And if you write better sales copy, more people will buy it. Oh, people don't want to work hard; they want an instant, quick way to learn English." And that was his advice to me. He said, "Oh, you should make a product that gives them instant English."

But I said, "But that doesn't work!" He said, "So what? You'll get more money from it." That is a *tactical* way of thinking; it's a tactic. "How can we get more money from the customer? Promise them instant English. They'll get fluent in a month." It's a tactic. Tactics don't work 99 percent of the time.

Meghan, on the other hand, when I talked to her, said the exact opposite. She said, "Who are the people you want to help? What is going to help them the most? That's what you need to give them. You need to find out how to give people the best experience, and work from that." That is a *strategy.* There's no tactics involved.

And it's exactly the same with English and when you speak English. And again, this is what I mean with these clever-sounding words, these intelligent phrases, these long, complicated words that you see a lot of people using. A great example of this: I was going to talk about this later, but it fits in here. I had to find an accountant recently, and I talked about this in a podcast recently. But the first accountant we had spoke in English, and I had no idea what he was talking about, because the language he used was not normal language. He used all these big-sounding, clever words, trying to, you know: "I'm an accountant, I really know what I'm talking about."

But I couldn't understand him at all, so we changed to somebody else in the end. It all comes down to clarity. And this is the key thing, and this is the key thing that I try to get into Doing English now. It's to make things as clear as possible. And if you've got this, if you've got this right, this is easy. The problem is when you don't have this right, when you don't have things clear.

This is just an example of clarity and why clarity is so important. Two very famous studies in psychology. Again, both American universities. We're going to talk a lot about America and American culture, because it's quite important for this. I'm not American, of course; but there's a very important aspect of American culture.

The photocopier study: it's very famous. It was done in the 1970s, I think. Basically, they did an experiment: they wanted to see how they could persuade people to let them do something. So what they did is they found a library that was really, really busy. And there was only one photocopier in the library. And every day, this photocopier had a long line of people queueing up. You know, they're all stood there with their paper: "I want to make a photocopy." There's ten people in the queue.

What they wanted to do is: Could they use language to skip the queue and go straight to the photocopier? And they had two groups of people: one came in and said, "Excuse me, can I go first?" And I forget the exact number… It was 60 percent of people said, "Oh yeah, go on then, OK." Which is not great. And then a second group of people came in, and they said, "Excuse me, can I go first? Because I'm in a rush." 94 percent of people…is that right? Yeah. Wow, my memory is getting better! 94 percent of people said OK. One change: "Because."

They tried it in loads of different way. They tried it and said, “Excuse me, can I use the photocopier? Because I need to do a photocopy.” Which is stupid: it makes no sense whatsoever. But again, 94 percent of people said OK. The only difference: this word ‘because.’

Another study: almost the same kind of idea…a donation study for charity. They went to people’s doors, and they said, “Could you give us money for charity?” And the phrases they used: they went to do the door and they said, “Would you be willing to give us some money?” And it was 28 percent of people said, “OK, here’s some money.” The second group of people comes in, and they only difference is they said, “Would you be willing to help us with a donation? Even a penny will help.” 50 percent success rate. The only difference is this word ‘even.’

The only difference here is clarity. When we hear someone say, “I need to use the photocopier,” we think: “Wait a minute; why are you more important than me?” But when they give us a reason, we feel: “Oh, OK. Sure, that makes sense.” Same with the donation. We say, “Will you give us some money?” But people’s first reaction is: “How much money? How much money do I have to give? Oh, but if I only give you five pounds, is that going to be enough?” But if we say, “Even a penny is OK,” we think, “Oh, OK, I can give as much as I want.”

It’s all down to clarity. And it’s not these words that are important. It’s not ‘because’ or ‘even’ that’s important. What is important is clarity: explaining what we’re doing simply and clearly to people.

Now who here uses English at work? How many people? You do, you do. Three people don’t. OK, so the chances are: people who use English at work, normally—and correct me if I’m wrong—but normally work is easy. You know: you’re talking about bicycles. I’m sure there’s nothing you don’t know about bicycles. You know, it’s your subject, your profession, your thing. I’m the same: psycholinguistics. I can talk about psycholinguistics for hours: “Blah, blah, blah, blah…” In English or Japanese—it doesn’t matter.

The problem then is not with the actual business, but it’s with the small talk, the other times you speak English. And I’m sure you’ve had this experience, but a friend of mine, an ex-student at the company I used to work in, he said every time he had the same situation. He was a chemist. And he’d go to these conferences, and he’d talk about different kinds of chemicals and give these amazing presentations; and he was really good at it.

But he said then what would happen is they'd get really excited: "Yeah! This is great! Such a great conference. Let's go out for a drink." And as soon as they'd get to the elevator, suddenly, everybody is speaking: it changes. Suddenly, people aren't in formal conference, business mode anymore. Everyone is just: "Blah, blah, blah, blah." And he said every single time, he couldn't understand and just made an excuse, just go home. "It's just too much; I can't understand."

This is also a part of this: Knowledge. Communication skills. Hitomi always laughs when I says this...when I say this. "When I says this." See: even I can't use proper grammar! When I say this. I'm not a good speaker. When I stand in front of people, I am so nervous now. I am so nervous now that I want to run straight past you, probably knocking people out of the way, out that door and go home. I am not a confident person in front of people. I'm quite a shy person. Even when I was a child, I spent most of my time reading books, reading science fiction novels at home. You know: friends would knock on the door, "Julian! Let's go play soccer!" And I'd just be like: "Uh... Mmm... I can't today. I've got homework to do." Which was a lie, because I never did homework. But you know: I'd make an excuse, I'd read my books.

And to be honest, I'm the same now. I feel nervous in front of people; I'm not a good speaker...not naturally, anyway. It's something that I learned to do, I taught myself to do. Anybody can learn communication, conversation skills. And I think it's an important skill to have, because just because English is my first language, that does not mean English is easy to speak. Quite the opposite.

There's actually statistics on this. And apparently, statistically speaking, most people are more afraid of public speaking than they are of dying. Which is crazy! You know, people are terrified of speaking in front of people. But it's something that can be learnt. Conversation skills. This is a part of Knowledge. Take the time to learn communication skills...in your own first language, in Japanese as well, and in English.

Top conversation skills or communication skills to master: small talk. Small talk is really, really hard, but small talk is so important. Who finds small talk easy? Chatting. Nah, it's really hard. But you know what? Small talk is the most important thing you can ever do. Small talk is what makes relationships. It's what bonds people together. It's a part of our evolution, the way that people have evolved. We live in groups; we need groups.

If you go back 10,000 years, without the group, you would die really, really quickly. We needed the group for protection. The way that the group stays a group is that it

has to be similar. If somebody in the group is really, really different… So if we're a group of people, and say, Eiko is completely different to everybody. She's like: "Yeah! Let's run off into that forest and see if we can find some tigers." She is really dangerous to everybody. She could get us all killed. I'm sorry, I shouldn't use you as an example, should I?

So what would happen is: you would be kicked out of the group. Communication is how we know people are similar to us. This is something I'm going to come back to: we do business, form relationships, with people that we know, people we like, and importantly, people who we trust. How do we find out if we are like someone, if we know that person, if we trust that person? Small talk. Small talk is probably the most important part of speaking: in Japanese, English, any language. Take the time to master that. And that's why in Doing English+, that's why we spend 90 percent of our time focused on small talk, just because it's so, so important.

Using your voice well. It sound really obvious, but people who speak like this all the time and don't vary their voice and don't change their voice at all, and don't have any stress or any tone, and just go on and on and on… I'm starting to lose my voice, actually! That's not good is it? How much longer have we got? I'm going to lose my voice before the end, but that's OK.

Um, talking about using your voice well. Don't' lose your voice half way through! Um, use your voice well: variation, tone; chunking is very important as well.

Storytelling. If you only study one skill, study storytelling. Storytelling… I'm mean, so far, I've told basically just stories. Hitomi, in her opening as well. Stories. People listen to stories, and this is also part of evolution, the way that we've developed as a species. Stories are how we learn about the world, how we experience the world. When we hear stories, we learn about things. Imagine the cavemen… You've got a group of cavemen: one of them eats some poisonous berries, drops down dead. Somehow we've got to learn about that. The way we learn is by telling stories. "Oh you know that caveman down the road? He ate these berries and he just dropped down dead! Terrible!" You know, it's just gossip, just talking, but we learn about the world like that. Telling stories is really, really useful for any kind of situation.

Am I going too fast? Easy to understand? If it's too hard, put your hand up, tell me. "Julian, shut up!" [People laugh.]

Who here, by the way, is a Doing English+ member? Most people. Who's not? I know some people are not. Three people are not. Who attended the Tell Great Stories

course that I did? Just two people. So this is nothing new to you. Did you do any of it?

“Yeah, I did the exercise: Fifty words.”

Right! What are they called? Fifty-word stories. Have you ever heard of this? This is a fantastic way to practise your English. It’s actually an art. There’s a competition which you can submit these stories to. But it’s a fifty-word story. The idea is to write a complete story within fifty words, which is just like three or four sentences long. I’m useless at it: can’t do it at all. But people write these amazing stories, and they’re only fifty words long. A great way to practise your storytelling skills.

But look for stories in your everyday lives. I mean: today is a great example. You’ve all come here to attend this seminar. That’s a story. You might have seen something interesting when you came here; that’s a story. Use these stories, tie these stories into your business presentations, into your meetings. Use them to demonstrate points; use them to sell cycling gear. Wherever you can, take your stories. Use them.

So I’ve rambled on about this for far too long. But basically the point I want to make here is: Know what you’re talking about, and say it well, say it clearly. That is intelligent-sounding language. Intelligent language is clear language. There are exceptions to this, because basically everything comes down to this. And this can cancel out everything else. So that’s what we’re going to talk about now.

So far, we’ve talked about the easy stuff, and I’ve got bad news for you now: this is just going to get really difficult from here. And I’m going to be perfectly honest, actually. A lot of what we’re going to talk about from this point…because everything else is related to this: the C, the Culture. There are no correct answers here. There’s no right way to do this. And that’s simply because…and this is the conclusion, which I’m going to give you now: everything has to be flexible. This is why you have to think strategy, not tactics. Everything will change, depending on the situation.

Language has culture. Language, basically, is habits. You’ve probably heard me talk about chunking before. Chunking is my speciality; it’s what I’m doing my PhD in. All of my research is based on chunking. Chunking is how native speakers speak so fluently, so naturally. You know, we always think about language: a language is grammar and words. But actually that’s wrong; that is a very old way of thinking. We used to think that’s how people spoke. We used to think: People have grammar in their heads; they use these grammar rules, they add words to them, and “Wow! I made a sentence.”

We now know that that's not correct. Native speakers don't speak like that. They can use grammar, but actually we speak in chunks. Basically, we store phrases, expressions, chunks, in memory. That's why native speakers speak so fast. Because the brain is actually not that powerful. The brain is like a really crappy computer. You put too much information into it, and it just goes "Agrrrrr!" It doesn't work.

And if we were to use grammar rules, and if I was to stand here trying to use grammar and words to talk like this, my head would just go "Pooffff!" It wouldn't work. Which is why we speak in chunks. Chunks are what make us fluent. Chunks are why we sound natural. I could stand here, and I could say something…yeah, try and think of an example off the top of your head… The example I always use: "Would you potentially aid me in this task?" It's grammatical, but it sounds weird. The natural chunk is: "Would you help me with this?" It's a chunk.

Chunks are part of the culture of language. And depending on the thing we are talking about, we have different chunks. Depending on the situation, we have different chunks. Small talk is kind of general English, and we have a lot of chunks for that. But depending on the situation, for example, if I'm talking about this to you, the language I use with you is completely different to the language that I would use with my PhD supervisor, which is completely different to the language I would use with a professor at another university whom I don't know.

It's a habit. This is the culture of language. And this doesn't really fit into this very well, but I wanted to talk about this. My own research at the moment is actually with junior high school English. Junior high school English in Japan is very, very interesting, because people always say, "Ah, the English education in Japan is no good! We studied English for ten years, and we still can't speak English."

But my research actually shows that third year junior high school students are very, very fluent in English. I went to a school in Ibaraki, and we did all these tests and experiments with the students there. And guess what? The students are so fluent in the language. They use the language like native speakers…except…the language that they learned in their textbooks is totally different to the language that native speakers use. So they are very, very fluent in…basically, in a different language. It's not English; it's a new language.

And this just highlights the importance of input: the materials that you study are really, really important. And I was going to talk about this somewhere; I can't remember where. But TOEIC, IELTS, these tests, are fantastic examples. Because the language that they use is again, it's actually a different thing; especially IELTS.

Has anybody taken IELTS? Taken IELTS? The writing tests are a perfect example. In order to get a good score on IELTS, you have to write in a certain kind of way, but it's not like normal language. It's like a completely different thing. Same with TOEIC. Anybody taken TOEIC? Who's really pleased with their TOEIC score? Nobody. Well, that's good, that's good. Because it doesn't really mean anything. Because it's what we would call a language culture. TOEIC is a culture unto itself; it's not like normal language.

This for me raises a very interesting question. And this is where we're going to start to get really deep now. Has anybody read the book *1984,* by George Orwell? No! You should read it! It's one of the best books ever written in history! Anybody read it? You've read it. Nobody else. I'm shocked. It's like a literary masterpiece; it's one of the defining books of…well, ever.

It's by George Orwell. Basically, he wrote it actually in 1949. If you know anything about history, that's the time when China was in the middle of its cultural revolution: communism had hit. Soviet Russia, basically communism, socialism, was spreading across the world. George Orwell saw this; he was a very political person, very much a libertarian, very much against socialist thinking.

He saw this, and he said, "This is terrifying!" And he imagined this world in the future. And the book is set in 1984, which was the year I was born, actually. So a long time ago. And it's basically about a world that has become socialist; it's the communist world. But the people, the government, have just become this quite scary thing. Everybody's watched, all the time, by cameras. And a very important part of this book is a concept called *newspeak*. Newspeak is a new language that they are trying to develop. And the whole idea of newspeak is that, if we reduce the language, we can change people's thinking. And they didn't want people that would argue against the government. Anybody who had free thinking was considered dangerous.

Through language, they wanted to crush free thinking; they wanted to create a language where it was impossible to say anything bad about the government, about the system. This was newspeak. And the way that George Orwell writes it, he says the whole aim of newspeak is to narrow the range of thought. The idea being that language and thinking are connected.

This is actually a really important question in linguistics and in psycholinguistics. And it's something called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. And you don't need to remember this, but the best example I can give of this is a story by guy called Ted

Chiang. I don't know how to pronounce that actually; maybe that's the wrong pronunciation. He's an American writer, Chinese-born American, I think. It's a story called "Stories of Your Life." And I'm really, really sorry if you're going to watch this film, but this is coming out as a film in Japan in March? May? It's going to be called *Message*. Do you know it? Are you familiar?

"*Arrival*."

Yeah, its original title is *Arrival*. Have you seen it?

"Yes, I've seen it."

Ah, fantastic! I haven't seen it, because in Japan it's not out yet. Was it good?

"Yeah, it was good."

Great, you know the story, so you know what I'm going to be talking about here. Everybody else…I'm going to totally ruin this film for you. So, I'm sorry. It's coming out in Japan soon; It's going to be called *Message* in Japan. In English, it's called *Arrival*. Basically, it's a story about a scientist named Louise… No, she's a linguist, named Louise. And aliens land on earth. And they just land, and they just stay there; they don't do anything.

And they're just like: "What are these aliens doing? Are they going to kill us all? What are they going to do?" They don't do anything; they're just watching. And the story is about Louise, and the military hires her, and they ask her to go into the spaceship and communicate with these aliens. And over several months, she learns their language.

But something very strange happens: as she learns their language, she learns about the aliens. And these aliens have a totally different culture to human beings. They understand time in a totally different way. We understand time as: you know, it starts here, and we go forward. Each minute, each second, we go forward. These aliens don't see time like that. The aliens see here and here at the same time. They see future, they see past, and they experience it together.

And what happens is that Louise learns their language. And as she learns the language, she starts to remember things which happen in the future. And the whole idea behind the story is something called "linguistic relativism." The idea that the language that we have in our heads allows us to understand, allows us to think about the world.

And the question then that I have is: if we learn a second language, if you learn English, does it change the way that you think? Does anybody here think that you think or act differently when you speak English? Anybody? Most people. I had a conversation with somebody recently—a YouTuber, actually. I did an interview with him which you might see soon.

But he said that when he speaks English, his personality totally changes. He said, "When I speak Japanese, I'm very calm, very polite, very reserved. But when I speak English, I go crazy!" That's how he said it.

And we see this all over the place. Colour is a great example. I don't know if you know this, but almost all languages understand colour in a different way. Japanese is a great example. I still get confused about the idea of: why do you call the traffic lights "blue"? It doesn't make any sense to me. It's not blue, it's green! But in Japanese, you see it… This is how Meio explained it to me. She's blushing in the background. You see this colour green and associate it with something which is young: the young green leaves on a tree. And therefore we see it as "blue," we call it "blue." In English, we don't think like that; it's a different way of thinking.

There's a tribe in New Guinea called the Dani tribe. They only see two colours. They only understand two colours: hot and cold. That's it. You say to them, you show them red and orange. "Are they different colours?" "Nope. It's a hot colour." You show them red and pink. "Are they different?" "Nope. Hot colour." You show them green and blue. "It's a cold colour." They see it in a totally different way.

There's another great example: there's an Amazonian tribe called the Piraha, which you might have heard me talking about before on YouTube and on the podcast. There's a fantastic book by a guy called Daniel Everett: *Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes.* And the Piraha have no concept of counting. The only numbers they have is one and lots. That's it: one or lots. And Daniel Everett tried to teach them mathematics: one plus one equals…? Lots! But then he couldn't go any further, because they have no concept of two; it just becomes: Lots plus lots equal lots. And he tried to teach them math, but they couldn't understand it; they couldn't understand the concept of mathematics, because they don't have this in their language. It's not how they think.

The language and the way we think is very, very closely connected. And the reason why this is important is because you are not going to speak English with other Japanese people. Well, you might… Meaning: when you speak English to somebody else, it's actually the same kind of thing. These are extreme examples: the Piraha

have no numbers; the Dani tribe have no colours. All cultures are different; all languages are different. And the way that we think is very, very different. The aliens from "Story of Your Life" from *Arrival,* is very extreme. I don't think there are human beings who can see the future. But if there were, the way that we communicate with them changes completely.

And the best way that I can describe this really is one of my favourite Japanese words: *KY*. How am I doing for time? I am never going to finish everything that I wanted to talk about! Actually, I might. I'm terrible: I wrote this outline actually this morning, because I can't follow outlines; I'm terrible for planning. When I plan things, I do something totally different. But we talked about it, and we said, "Ah, we should give people an outline, so that they have something to follow." But I'm trying my hardest not to digress, but I'm digressing right now.

I came to Japan in 2007. Which incidentally is the same year… Which is the newspaper? There's a newspaper in Japan, every year they ask people to vote for their favourite word. Do you know that? I can't remember.

"U-Can."

U-Can. It's not a newspaper. Ah, there we go then! So you shouldn't be listening to me at all. Here's me: "Ah yeah, there's a newspaper in Japan; they do this every year." It's not a newspaper! I'm sorry: U-Can. People vote, anyway, for their favourite word. And it just happened: I came in 2007, and guess what the word for 2007 was? *Keiwai*. And it also just happens that the very first time I worked in a junior high school, I got a job as an ALT. You know, those guys who stand with the English teacher, basically like a human tape recorder. The English teacher says, "Please write this sentence," and I just: "Ken went to the shop. Repeat after me." I did that job for years! I really enjoyed that job. It's very, very easy to do; there's no thinking involved: just do what you're told.

But it was the first time I ever went to a junior high school. It was in Akabane, a school there. And I walked into the classroom and I was terrified. You know, all these teenagers—second-year students just looking at me. I walked in and I thought, "Right, I've got to pretend I'm confident." But I'm terrified, I'm sweating, and I'm like, "God!" And the teacher just said to me, "Ah, Julian, we've got ten minutes. Introduce yourself." So I'm stood here like this. I said, "Hi!" Nothing. I said, "My name's Julian." Nothing. So I said, "Nice to meet you!" Nothing. So you know at this point I'm starting to get nervous. I was sweating and I'm shaking and I'm like, "Oh my God! So I've got 50 minutes to go!"

So I did the obvious thing: “What’s your name? Put your hands up!” Nothing. And then one girl in the corner just says, “*Cho KY.”* And I had no idea what it meant. And after, I asked the teacher, “What does that mean?” She says, “Ah… It means *kuki yomenai.”* “Can read the atmosphere.” I was like, “OK!” I had no idea what she was talking about: “Fine, fine!”

But then years later, I remembered that, and I thought: “Oh! That’s what that means: Reading the air.” Japan is an interesting culture. And this comes naturally for you, and I am so jealous. Because I’m the typical foreigner who, no matter how much I learn Japanese, I don’t know if I’ll ever, ever be able to do this well. The idea of reading the atmosphere, reading the air. Understanding the things that are not said. How do you do it? Is it like kind of a special ability? Like telepathy, just kind of zoom in, understand what people are saying? I don’t understand it. How can you read the air? Do you see something that I don’t’ see? Are there words floating above people’s heads?

Japan is not just a high…what we call a “high-context” culture. And what that means is: things that you say, or the things that we say in Japanese, you need the context to tell you what it means. Because often the words that you use, the words that we use, and the actual meaning, can be quite, quite different. And the best example of this, I think, is *tatemae…honne.*

When I started my ALT job, actually, this was the training they gave us. They said, “Oh, don’t worry, we’re going to give you training; we’re going to teach how to be an English teacher.” Do you know what they talked about in that training? For one hour? *Tatemae…honne*. “The Japanese teachers will tell you, ‘You are an amazing teacher!’ It’s not true.” That is the first thing that company told me. That was my training. It’s basically what they wanted to say: “Don’t get excited. They’re going to say you’re an amazing teacher. They don’t mean it. It’s a cultural thing.”

And Western people have a huge problem with this, especially American people. And actually, English people and American people have the same problem as well, so this is not a criticism of Japanese culture at all. It actually might be a criticism of Western culture, in that we’re quite slow to understand these things.

America is what we call a “low-context” culture. And in fact, it is the lowest context culture in the world. What this means is that what American people say is what they mean. There’s no hidden meaning in American English. What people say is exactly what they mean. They think your haircut is horrible, they say, “That’s a horrible

haircut!" And they mean it. But if they say, "I love your shirt. Oh, your hair looks so great! Those shoes are wonderful." They mean it exactly.

Obviously, this causes trouble; this causes problems when American people and Japanese people talk. And I know certainly in Japanese culture…well any country—any country is the same. Any country criticises foreigners. You know foreigners have a very different culture. "The way they behave is really strange compared to what people in our culture do."

But actually it works the other way. And I had a student… Again, this was student whom I worked with when I worked for a company in Japan; this is not through Doing English. A guy called Tatsiya. And he had just come back from America, actually; his company had sent him to America for two years to work. And he had a really, really hard time in America. He was really good at English. I mean, his English was excellent. But he went to this company. And I think what he didn't realise was the differences in the cultural way of doing business.

And he told me that he would spend every conversation, every meeting with people, trying to read the air, trying to get the meanings that were not being said. And he'd pick up all these messages from his American colleagues, and he would act on them. And then things wouldn't work out; people would get upset because he'd done something that he shouldn't have done. "Why is Tatsiya acting like this?" they would say.

And he said, after two years, he finally realised there were no hidden meanings. What they were saying was what they meant. There was no hidden nuance. And this is a really extreme case, but it happens with English people and American people as well. And if you look in this list, actually, British English is still quite low-context; it's down here. But British English is higher-context than American English. And we do have a lot of misunderstandings between British people and American people.

A great example of this: my step-father…not my Japanese father, but my mother's husband. My mother remarried when I was quite young. And her husband was an officer in the navy, a communications officer in the navy. So he'd been all around the world. But he'd spent a lot of time in America, working with Americans.

And he taught me about this one time. He got into loads of trouble because he said something that in British English is a funny thing to say. And I think they'd had some kind of meeting, and it went really, really well. And he'd been invited out with the American officers. And they were drinking, and I think the American officer said

something like, “This was a very productive day. We achieved a lot today.” And my step-father, being the typical British, very dry, very sarcastic sense of humour, he said, “Yeah, it was pretty good. It would have worked out better if he wasn’t American, though.”

In British English, we think that’s really funny; that’s how we speak. But the American guy got really upset: “What do you mean? You don’t like Americans? You hate Americans? You think Americans can’t do their job?” And my step-father said, “Oh, I’m sorry, I’m only kidding.” And they said, “Oh, you’re kidding? OK, no problem.” But between American English and British English we have this kind of problem all the time, because of this different level of context.

In low context communication, in American English…Australian, Canadian, German, good communication is very clear, very simple language. What you say is exactly what you mean. Whereas in high context cultures, good communication has what we call layers, and that’s really hard to explain. But it’s very nuanced: what you say often is not what you mean.

The reason for this, by the way, if you know the history of the world, America is completely made up of immigrants. America is made of people who have come from other countries. The result being: if people don’t speak clearly, other people won’t understand. Japan, on the other hand, is an island country, and it was closed for a very long time. Japanese people mostly communicated with other Japanese people. Which is why you have this almost telepathic ability to understand Japanese people. It’s because you’ve got lots of practice. Whereas American people have grown up speaking to all kinds of different people. It’s to do with the history of the country, basically.

As a Japanese person, you might not be talking to American people. You might be talking to people from Singapore. What do you do then? Well, Singapore is like Japan: it’s quite a high context culture. What do you do? You might be speaking to French people. French is right in the middle. And this is what I noticed when I went to France and I did the French exchange. When I said the people in France, the way they talk, seemed to be quite different to the way that people in Britain talk, this is what I meant. The things that they say—it’s always hints. Not everything is what they mean.

What should you do in international communication? And I have no good answer to this. The way that English is taught in most schools in Japan…and I’m very critical of this, and I’ve done a lot of research, and I’ve written papers on this, basically

arguing against this. Generally speaking, people are taught American English; they're taught to be American. That's a problem. It's a huge problem because it ignores this huge difference in the way that people think. And this is what it all comes down to: the way people think.

It's a problem. But now I'm going to completely contradict myself and say: actually, when I speak to people, I speak as if I were an American. And the reason I do that is, particularly in Doing English, we have students, people in Doing English, from all over the world. And the huge problem that I had in the beginning was: I'd get the same kind of emails from people, but said in a very, very different kind of way. And some people I found really offensive: "Why do you say that?" Whereas Japanese people are very polite when they write emails, I'd get emails from people in Germany which would be so blunt. So the way that I deal with this now is I take the American approach, and I aim for perfect clarity—even if it might offend some people, even if it might seem rude, I go for perfect clarity over anything else.

I think that is a good baseline—clarity: clear, simple, easy-to-understand English. That is intelligent, sophisticated-sounding English. But you have to be flexible. If you're speaking English with people in Korea, don't try to be an American, because it's not going to work.

Does anybody speak English with Korean people on a regular basis? No? Who here uses English with native speakers—native English speakers? A few people. Who mostly uses English with non-native speakers? Yeah, and this is where you have to be very flexible. You have to study culture, study their culture. If you're going to go to India… This is very interesting, actually. I think you probably know, but my children go to an Indian school; they go to the India International in Japan. And we chose that school not because of English, but because of science, mathematics. You know, they're just top of the top for science and mathematics.

The language of the school is English, but the English they use is very interesting. Indian people are like American people in that they are very forward, very blunt, about everything. But their English is so ambiguous. They say things that could mean two totally different things. And whenever we get the kids' homework, we're like, "What does that mean? It could mean this, but it could mean that. But it could mean that as well! Which one is it?"

And for me, I'm from a very low context English-speaking culture, for me, we explain things very, very clearly. Indian culture, despite being very forward, very blunt, is very high context. Which is something that you have to consider when you speak

English with them. They will look for meaning that American people wouldn't, that British people wouldn't.

Any questions so far? Which is basically my way of saying I need a drink of water! No questions are good. This is a good example, actually, of the nuanced meaning: "No questions" could mean everybody understands everything I said perfectly. I'm displaying my ability to use the LKC Triangle perfectly: everybody understands everything I'm saying. It could mean that I'm just talking, talking, talking…and everybody is like: "What?" So, we'll find out later!

Who is coming to the wine bar with us? Quite a few people? That's good. I'm looking forward to that. I could do with a glass of wine now, actually.

Knowledge and Culture. This is the most important part. This is where we start to get a bit more practical now. This is where I'm going to give you very specific advice about how I think you should use English. This is my opinion; this is what I think. This is what I do; this is the way that I use language in Doing English, because this is what I've found to be the most effective dealing with people from all over the world—whether they're Japanese or they're Chinese, Indian, French, German, Greek… This is what I've found to work very, very well, and it's a framework that I've found very, very effective.

I've already mentioned this, but when it comes to business, sales, relationships…because relationships are a form of business, really; all the relationships that we have are part of our business, sales, our professional lives. We do business with people that we know, that we like, and that we trust. These three things are essential. If you don't know somebody, you might like them, you find them attractive, but you probably don't trust them. If you don't trust someone, it's very unlikely that you're going to want to do business with that person.

Again, when I say 'business,' it could be… I know most people here use English at work, in business. It could be sales, it could be selling your company's product, it could be selling your service to people who speak English. But it could also be your relationships. Perhaps you're looking for an English-speaking husband, an English-speaking girlfriend. In a way, that's a business transaction. You wouldn't marry somebody whom you don't like; you wouldn't marry somebody—I hope—whom you don't trust.

So the way that we use English, then, the way that we use language…and this is what I try to do in all of my communication in Doing English, is to constantly demonstrate to people what kind of person I am, and basically trying to get people

to like me. Not everybody, because not everybody is going to like me. Lots of people hate me; a lot of people hate me. I know, because I get hate mail every single day. Every day I'll get emails from people saying, "You're despicable! You're horrible! I hate you so much." And people will email me and tell me this.

Not everybody likes me, but that's OK; it doesn't matter. I cry… Every single day I cry into my keyboard! It's not true, it's not true. After years of hate mail, I'm completely immune to it now. But all of the communication that I use, I'm trying to display to people who am I, what kind of person I am, what are my values, why should you like me, why should you trust me, do you want to know me.

And the only way I can describe how I do that is with these three points. Be empathic. Empathy means the ability to see the world as the other person sees it. My experience is that Japanese people have no problem with this whatsoever. Japanese is an extremely empathic culture. And again, you're the highest context culture in the world.

Authenticity. Being yourself. This is why Western people have such a hard time understanding the Japanese concept of *tatemae…honne*. And a lot of Western people—and I'm going to be completely honest here—a lot of people find it extremely offensive. A lot of Western people come to Japan and feel like Japanese people are liars, like they are lying to them. Because, especially American culture, but British culture as well… British culture less. I think we are a little bit more similar to Japanese people in that we tend to not express a lot of things. We don't like confrontation. British people tend to be quite stiff, quite formal, quite shy, in a way, compared to American people, I think.

Authenticity. But when it comes to international communication, I think it's really important. And it's definitely really important to know how people on the outside experience the Japanese way of speaking. And again, I'm used to it. I've lived here long enough now that I find it second-nature. And to an extent, I do it now as well; and I think that's just because my thinking has changed from learning and using he language. People who don't speak Japanese, however: it doesn't translate into English in a way that it's pleasant. It translates into English in a way that people find quite offensive.

Be relentless. Screw up…you're going to screw up. It's fine; it doesn't matter. I've screwed up loads of things today already. You probably haven't noticed.

Empathy. Another great story about British people and their terrible sense of humour. This appeared in the Nike weekly; and if anybody wants the link, tell me

and I'll send it to you. It's a story about a meeting. Apparently it's true. Whether it is true or not, I don't know. But apparently it's true. And it's a Japanese international company, and I don't know what the company is. And they're having a meeting, and there's the Japanese director, and then there's the guy from the UK. Then there's a German guy and a Dutch guy. And German people and Dutch people tend to be very forward with their arguments. They're arguing their point. And it's getting quite aggressive. And the British guy is starting to feel really uncomfortable. And the Japanese director is starting to feel really uncomfortable, because we've got these two people, and they're basically just having a fight in the meeting room.

When British people get uncomfortable, they make very stupid jokes… It's true: terrible jokes, things that we should never say. I do it all the time, and it never works in Japan. I just upset people, but it's British culture. The Japanese director, he needs to stop this, so he speaks up and says, "Perhaps maybe I could give my opinion now…?" And the British guy who's really uncomfortable turns around and says, "Oh, nobody wants to hear your opinion!"

In British culture, we would laugh at that. If it's a meeting with only British people, everybody would laugh at that; everybody would have a good laugh, and the situation would settle down. Humour doesn't translate into other languages, other cultures. And the Japanese director, he's going to lose it. He just stands up and just walks out. Everybody is stunned. The British guy runs after him: "I'm so sorry; it was a joke. I didn't mean it." But it's too late; the damage is done. And the business relationship is just over.

And it's almost the same story that I told you about my step-father, with the American navy people. You know, my step-father did the same thing: "Oh, it would have been better if he weren't American." British people make this kind of joke, and it doesn't work at all.

Be empathetic: understand the way that the person you're speaking to thinks. This is so important when they're from another culture. Take the time to study the culture of the people that you're talking to. If you spend time with American people, learn as much as you can about American culture. If you speak with British people, you need to learn about British culture.

And you need to understand that British people say these stupid, stupid things. And you know, what kind of joke is that? "Nobody wants to hear your opinion." It's not funny, but it's what British people do. When we get really uncomfortable with this kind of confrontation, then we say stupid things.

Empathy: it's the ability to see the world as other people see it. And common sense… This is something I talk about a lot. But common sense: this idea is actually not common at all. What Japan people consider common sense is totally different to what British people consider common sense, which is totally different to what people in Singapore, Korea, Germany, France, Canada, Australia…. We all have totally different ideas of common sense.

Just understanding that simple fact changes a lot about the way you communicate. How are we doing for time? Oh, we've just about 25 minutes; that's good. I've still got a lot to talk about. You know, I could do this for hours; I could just stand here. Do you know the phrase: "he loves the sound of his own voice"? He just loves to talk and talk and talk. It's me… Terrible.

There's a great story that illustrates this. It's from a book called *The Culture Map*, by a lady called Erin Meyer. A fantastic book: if you ever get a chance, read it. But it's a story about a lady called Cara Williams, and she is not famous at all; she's just in this book; this is where I read this story. She is an engineer: very, very successful in her career, and very well-known for being able to deliver these amazing presentations that just change the way that people think.

Her speciality, apparently, is reducing carbon emissions: making better cars, better machines, that don't pollute the atmosphere. So she gives these presentations to companies basically arguing for these changes to be made to their cars, vehicles, to stop polluting the world, to stop global warming.

She was extremely successful in her career, and she got offered a position with a German company—an amazing position, paid so much money for it. She jumped on the chance. And the first presentation that she gave there completely failed, because she had to give this presentation convincing them about these changes that needed to be made to their car designs. And she did the same presentation as she would have done in America, with American companies. You know, she went straight into it, into the point: "This is why you've got to do it!" And before she'd even finished the first slide of her presentation, a German person put his hand up: "Please explain the methodology. How did you come to these conclusions?"

And she was stunned: "This isn't how a presentation is done!" But the Germans just ripped her presentation apart. They wanted to know the details: "What method did you use? How did you come to this conclusion? Why do you think this is important? Please tell us the details." And her presentation completely failed. And she didn't

lose her job, but it was a huge blow to her confidence. You know, this super successful career woman goes for this new job and “Bam!” First presentation: “Out!”

And the reason is because she didn’t take the time to understand that German people have a totally different culture. They had a common language: she was speaking in English. German people tend to be extremely good at speaking English—no problem. Same level of knowledge, but the culture is different. The delivery was wrong. She had no empathy for the audience. She didn’t take the time to think: “How are these people at the German company going to understand what I say?” And, as a result, she failed.

Another great example of this, and I’ve done a podcast on this, so you might have heard me talk about it. But I don’t think he’s very popular anymore; I forget his real name… Hard Gay, you know, the Japanese comedian, who wears the police hat and the glasses. There have actually been studies done about him. And his character is very, very interesting, because he goes on Japanese TV, and he’s the stereotype of an American gay guy, but a very extreme version of it. And people love it; people find it really, really funny.

Only American people don’t find it funny; they find it quite offensive. And the reason it’s interesting is because if he had modelled the stereotypical Japanese gay guy, made that into a comedy routine, gone on to TV, what do you think would have happened? No way! It would never happen; he wouldn’t be allowed on TV to do it. And the reason is because we all like to laugh at other cultures; and that’s fine, that’s what people do. British people laugh at the French. People who have been following along with the recent Doing English+ lessons, there are a couple of cultural points in there with British people laughing at the French. That’s what British people do.

But it’s appropriate in the context of Japan. In Japan, he can go on TV and he can do that, and it’s funny and it works. But if he tried to take that to America, no way—it wouldn’t work. And that’s again because the culture is too different. It’s just a perfect example of how if you don’t understand the way that people think, your communication isn’t going to work.

Authenticity. In a way, this is a complete contradiction. And authenticity is, I think, something which English learners all over the world, everybody, has a lot of trouble with. I think it’s part of the way that we are taught English. You know, we’re taught that English is the language of America. English is the language of the UK. And the result being that often people tend to focus too much on this—on the tactics. “I

want to sound intelligent when I speak English; I want to sound sophisticated. What is a sophisticated way to speak English? I'm going to get a British accent."

And there's a fantastic story that a guy called Brian Paltridge told me. Brian Paltridge is what we call a "discourse analyst." He analyses the way that people speak and tries to explain how it works. And he is a professor at a university in Australia. And he had this guy come to him—a Chinese guy, who was having a lot of problems in Australia. He couldn't get a job; he wasn't making any friends, and thing were just really not working for him.

And it was weird, because his English was basically perfect. He was like a native speaker when he spoke. Not 100 percent, but pretty much there. But he spoke with this very classic RP accent. He spoke like a member of the British royalty. And that was the problem. The problem was: you've got this Chinese guy speaking with a British accent that even most British people can't do. If you've seen BBC TV, it's the BBC announcer accent. Nobody in the UK speaks like that. That's how people are trained to speak on TV. And that's what it is: they're trained to speak like that. BBC announcers don't speak in that way in their daily lives. That's the announcement accent; that's what we use for TV.

He had taken elocution lessons, accent lessons, basically, to perfect this BBC announcer accent. So we've got this Chinese guy speaking like a BBC announcer, living in Australia. And people found it really strange. "Who is this guy? Is he British?" But the way he acted was not British. He didn't have the British culture. He had a very much Chinese culture. So it was just this weird mix of classic British, but with a total alien culture to this person, then living in a completely different country. And Australian people found him really strange.

And the way that Brian Paltridge explained this: it was like he was wearing a mask. And people subconsciously—maybe they didn't even know it, but people subconsciously wanted to see behind the mask. They wanted to see the real person, but they couldn't get there, because he had this barrier, this accent barrier, in front of him. And people didn't trust him. That was basically what it came down to. Remember: we do business with people that we know, like and trust. You don't hire somebody for a job if you can't trust that person. And that was the problem: it was a trust issue. Because it was like he was hiding his true identity.

Why was he ashamed of his Chinese accent? Why did he have to speak with a British accent? Of course, if he'd lived in the UK, it would have been fine, because there's a connection there. British accent, British culture—great. But people would

assume, “Oh, he’s British… But wait, he’s not.” And again, it was like a mask was there in front of him.

Completely opposite side of the coin. There’s some really interesting research been done in fashion and psychology: psychology research with fashion. And they studied these very high, expensive brands: Prada, Gucci, Louis Vuitton. And they’d go to these shops and they’d basically ask the staff to pick out the people who they thought were going to be the high-spending customers. And the staff also did the same thing. They completely ignore people who come in wearing Prada, people going into Louis Vuitton wearing like a suit and looking really smart—they just ignore them. The people they pay attention to are the people who come in wearing a jersey, trainers, haven’t even brushed their hair. These people are the people who have the confidence to go into Prada looking like crap; these are the people with real money, real class. They don’t care what people think. They buy Prada because they can afford it.

And the sales assistants will all go straight for those people, because unusual fashion gets a lot of respect. If you stand out, you must be confident. It’s all to do with authenticity. It’s the people who think: “Oh, I’m going to go into Prada! I’ve got to wear my best suit to go in there.” They don’t understand… They’re not the people who are going to shop in that place.

The same sort of thing: Lady Gaga is a great example. People love Lady Gaga. Why? Because she’s got this… You know, she’s so forward about her crazy personality. It’s partly character: she emphasises that, she builds it up, she tries to be this crazy dresser, you know with the slices of meat all over her on the TV and things. That is what has just dragged her up to the top of the music industry. And she gets so much respect because of this crazy fashion.

That doesn’t mean you have to go to work with meat attached to your jacket! If you do that, you might get fired. So—disclaimer: Don’t go to work with meat on you. And if you do, it’s not my fault! But what it means is that your personality… Certainly, when you're using English with other cultures, your personality should come through. You should be yourself; don’t be afraid to express your personality. Don’t feel like you have to be the person that other people want to see.

In a way this is a contradiction. We were talking about empathy: understanding how other people see the world. But when that doesn’t match your values, you don’t have to do that. Sometimes it’s good to clash; sometimes it’s good to disconnect from someone.

When I talked about this once in the Doing English+ community, actually, one member, a Polish lady, Grażyna… I've met her in person before, actually. She interviewed me once. She's a very clever lady—very, very sharp. And I'm very happy she's in the community, because whenever I say something that doesn't quite make sense, Grażyna is the person who stands up and says, "Hey, Julian, I think that's rubbish." She keeps me sharp, she keeps me thinking.

And when I talked about this idea of empathy: "Be empathic, be authentic," she said, "Surely it's impossible to be both empathic and authentic. Surely it's a contradiction." I disagree. And if you take a look at the back page, I think this sums it up perfectly. Have you ever heard of this place? There's a place called Death Valley in California. If you look at the top picture, this is what most people see. 99 percent of the time, this is what this place looks like almost all the time. It's in the desert. But even in the desert, occasionally—very, very occasionally, it rains. And when it rains, this valley transforms: the flowers bloom, and it becomes this beautiful place with all these coloured flowers. And you go from this grey, barren valley, to this multi-coloured rainbow that anybody would want to have a painting of hung up in their living room.

The question is: Which of these two is more authentic? Which is real? Which is authentic? Now, when it comes to Death Valley, it's a valley, it doesn't think. People, on the other hand, tend to misunderstand the idea of authenticity. And they tend to think, "I'm going to be authentic, I'm going to stand out. I'm going to be like this all the time." That's not authenticity. That's creating a personality that doesn't necessarily match who you are. Authenticity changes all the time. And when you use English, it's going to change: every single conversation, the real You is going to be different.

So the answer to the question: Which of these is more authentic? Neither! But both. It depends. It depends on the situation; it depends on the conversation.

A great example of this is the Japanese talent Rora. Is that the right pronunciation? I can never say that name: "Rora." I've got a friend who's doing her PhD at Tokyo University. And she studies Rora. Her thesis is called "Taniguchi Rora." Basically what she does is she analyses the language that Rora uses. And it's very, very interesting because apparently in real life, Rora speaks like any other Japanese person. So this personality is created; so it's not a great example, but it's a good example.

But on TV she has this persona: you know, she's half Japanese, so she speaks in this very casual kind of way; even when she should be using very respectful language, she uses this super casual language. Except she doesn't all the time. And, you know the TV show *Tetsuko no Heya*. I can never say her name: Kuroyanagi Tetsuko. There was one time when Rora went on to that show, and this is what my friend wrote her thesis on. In that situation, will even Rora use causal language? And the answer is No. She tried to keep her character, her personality, still very, very casual, saying things you would normally never say to somebody so…you know, the social level is totally different. But actually she changed her language quite a lot to be very respectful in that situation.

That's a perfect example of someone who is remaining authentic, being their true self…although it's a created character, so it's not really her true self. But she remains authentic to her character, but she still has empathy—empathy for the person she's talking to. And it's very, very subtle, but it's very clever—the way that she uses language. Google it: just google *Tetsuko no Heya: Rora*, and it will come up; and just study the way that she speaks. And it's very, very clever. And if you can emulate that in English: understanding the person that you're talking to, matching the way that you talk to that person, that person's personality, that person's values, then you will very quickly get into this area where you know them, or they know you, they like you and they trust you.

And the third part of this is just "Be Relentless." And just assume you're going to screw up; you're going to screw up. You're going to get this wrong. You're going to say things that make people angry. That's a part of international communication. You know, the theme here is: What is an intelligent, sophisticated speaker? And intelligent, sophisticated speaker is someone who can make mistakes, who can go into a conversation, completely screw it up… It's people like Cara Williams, who can give a presentation in Germany, completely fail, but then still stand back up and try again, learn from the experience.

And there's no easy way to do this; there's no easy way to learn about culture. Culture is extremely difficult; it's extremely complicated. And most of what we've talked about here is country-to-country culture. But remember: it's more complicated than that. We've got city-to-city culture, people-to-people culture, region-to-region. People are extremely complicated. It's normal not to succeed. Most of us fail most of the time. It's fine, it's fine. You need to be comfortable with not being perfect. Nobody's perfect; perfect doesn't exist.

I particularly like the phrase from William Hickson, who was an educational speaker in the UK, about a hundred years ago, actually. And he said, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, and try again.” I think basically that’s what it comes down to.

And that’s it! That’s basically my conclusion. So basically I’ve just gone from the beginning and I’ve gone all the way around and just said, “There’s no answer to it,” but that’s fine. That’s the way that we need to speak English in any kind of situation.

[Applause]

I’m still very uncomfortable when people clap. I used to be a secondary school teacher, teaching in junior high. And we say, “OK, the lesson’s finished!” Students just go “Aahh… Thank God for that! He’s finished, he’s going now.” Nobody claps. Thank you.

We’ve still got four minutes. Wow, look at that for timing! I thought I was never going to have enough time to talk about all this. Does anybody have any questions?

“During my experience, Julian, you have made my life much easier than before.”

Julian: Thank you! I’m starting to blush.

“In 2006, I believe, I got the first grade of EIKEN. I never speak about it before. But I found Julian on the internet… [inaudible] That was my “Ah ha!” experience. And I wanted to say thank you again.

Julian: Thank you for you! The same with everybody. I can’t take credit for this. You work really, really hard. I know you work really, really hard. So anything that I do is just advice, just help, just support. So I think you deserve a round of applause.