

Simplify Language

Agenda

- Problems with language barriers
- Your personal experience
- Goals of the training
- **Mini training – 8 simplifying tips and practice**
- What's covered in the full customized training
- Review, next steps, questions and answers

Lee Shainis

Co-Founder and CEO of Intercambio 2000-2021



SIMPLIFY LANGUAGE

Being accessible

Leif Parsons for NPR

Picture this: A group of nonnative English speakers is in a room. There are people from Germany, Singapore, South Korea, Nigeria and France. They're having a great time speaking to each other in English, and communication is smooth.

And then an American walks into the room. The American speaks quickly, using esoteric jargon ("let's take a holistic approach") and sports idioms ("you hit it out of the park!"). And the conversation trickles to a halt.*

Decades of research show that when a native English speaker enters a conversation among nonnative speakers, understanding goes down. Global communication specialist Heather Hansen tells us that's because the native speaker doesn't know how to do what nonnative speakers do naturally: speak in ways that are accessible to everyone, using simple words and phrases.

*I prefer the term U.S. American when we refer to people born in the U.S.



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Self awareness

- When in your life have you struggled to understand others because of language barriers? What was it about the interaction that made it difficult?
- How aware are you when people don't understand your written or spoken English?
- How often do you adjust your English when speaking or writing to people who are not 100% confident understanding English?



Small group
discussion



Simplify Language self-assessment for native English speakers

Please be honest. Your response is anonymous. Thank you!

What is the Simplify Language Training?

- Builds lifelong skills to make spoken and written communication more understandable
- Eliminates barriers to full participation and builds confidence, trust and stronger connections
- An actionable piece of equity and inclusion
- It doesn't replace translation and interpretation. It reduces the need for it and makes it easier



Non-verbal language is important too, but this is about spoken and written communication!

Who am I and why am I focusing on this?

- ▶ I dedicate my life to cross-cultural human connection.
- ▶ When we understand each other, we form better relationships.
- ▶ This is an easier way to reduce language barriers when compared to learning new languages.
- ▶ This problem is common and ignored.
- ▶ Language is one of my many privileges.
- ▶ I love leading trainings!



2022 Virtual Spring Workshop

Making New Connections



Plenary Speaker Lee Shainis

Co-founder of Intercambio,
Author of *The Immigrant Guide* and *Pronunciation Fun*

Why is this a widespread problem?

- People don't speak up when they don't understand. They either:
 1. Pretend they understand
 2. Avoid you
 3. Misinterpret
- We put the burden on English learners.
- Native English speakers think they're good at simplifying language, but they aren't!



A few things before we learn some tips

- ▶ This is a lifelong skill. It is NOT easy and it requires practice.
- ▶ Know your target audience.
- ▶ The goal is for people to not know that you are adapting your language.
- ▶ Simplifying language is not “dumbing down” or changing content.
- ▶ If you are not a native English speaker, this is for you too!



Basic tips

1. Speak clearly, not too loud and not too soft 😊
2. Slow down a little. Pause
3. Use fewer words and shorter sentences.

Offering the most concentrated level of support to our participants and aimed at alleviating poverty for the next generation, our nonprofit has expanded programming to go deeper with families with children.

-> Our nonprofit programs now provides more support for families to reduce poverty for the next generation.

Basic tips part 2

4. Use simple words that more people can understand

- *When we look at health issues, we must bring our gaze up and look around at all of the different elements that contribute to their causes. From this vantage point, we are able to address all aspects of health, including those that lie beyond the doctor's office.*

5. Avoid slang, idioms, metaphors, acronyms and abbreviations

- *We will be working to bring you back up to speed*

6. Limit phrasal verbs (*wrap up, give in, let up, break down, etc.*)



You need
to kick
back
more.



Feeling
under the
weather?



We
need to
catch
up!



Basic tips part 3

7. Avoid excess words (from www.plainlanguage.gov)

- *A number of* → *many*
- *On a monthly basis* → *monthly*
- *Conduct an analysis* → *analyze*
- *Do an assessment* → *Assess*
- *Come to the conclusion* → *Conclude*
- *Provide assistance* → *Assist or Help*
- *Are able to* → *Can*

8. Avoid big fluctuations in speed or volume when speaking.

- Play at [minute 13](#) from this NPR show as an example of how not to be easily understood 😊.

Activity - simplify this:

Hello everyone, welcome to another semester of English classes! We are very pleased that you're here and we hope that you have an amazing experience with the program. We know that it takes a great deal of courage to even show up to take classes because learning English is a long and difficult journey, but we will be with you every step of the way. You'll need to persevere, practice a lot, and not give up when things get hard. It's easy to stop coming to class, but quitting will not help you achieve your goals. If you are ever feeling stuck or frustrated don't hesitate to reach out to us.

Instructions

- Don't change the content.
- Identify what might be complicated. The length or order of a sentence? Words or phrases?
- Practice, try different ways to write it. How does it sound or look?

There are no “correct” answers. One small change can make a big difference



Small group
practice



SIMPLIFY LANGUAGE

Activity - simplify the following:

Hello everyone, welcome to **another semester** of English classes! We are very **pleased** that you're here and we hope that you have an amazing experience with us. We know that it **takes** a **great deal** of courage to **even show up** to take classes because learning English is a **long** and difficult journey, but we will be with you **every step of the way**. You'll need to **persevere**, practice a lot, and not **give up** when things get **hard**. It's easy to stop coming to class, but quitting will not help you achieve your goals. If you are **ever** feeling **stuck** or frustrated **don't hesitate** to **reach out** to us.

Hello, welcome to English class! We are very happy that you're here. We hope you have a great experience. You have a lot of courage to be here. Learning English is not easy or fast. To learn English and achieve your goals, you need to continue to practice and come to class. When you feel frustrated or have problems, talk to us. We are always here to support you.

What is the process to bring the full training to your organization?

Step 1: Conversation and assessments to determine if this supports your goals.

Step 2: Lee observes team meetings and scans written communication.

Step 3: Discussion with your team to customize the training.

Step 4: 2-8 hours of training (quarterly 2-hour trainings is ideal). 10-20 people per group.

Step 5: Follow up twice a year about outcomes from post-surveys and next steps.



Review, accountability, and next steps

- What are you taking away from this training?
- What is an action you will take and when?
- How will you and your organization encourage people to continue to practice and develop this skill?
- Questions?



Large group
discussion

Contact me to share and learn more

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