



Copy native speakers and incorporate their words in your speech. It is easier for people to understand you if you speak in a similar way to them.

Better Speaking: Imitate Natives

We can convince people by using their language style. If we want to help listeners understand us better one way is to politely imitate them by using the same kind of expressions they use.

Native speakers might be more or less intelligent than us, more or less creative, more or less talkative but they all know their language better than we do so it makes sense to listen to what they say.

For instance, when someone replies changing one word you used for another, adopt that new expression in your answer. The word you originally said might be wrong and they're politely correcting you; or it might just not be the appropriate expression in that context. Whatever the reason, follow their suggestions.

If you ask "Where's the *manufacturer* plant" and they reply "The *manufacturing* plant is in Cambodia" they're indirectly telling you that

you said something wrongly. What to do? Adopt the new expression and include “manufacturing plant” in your next sentence. Listeners will be delighted to hear that you’ve accepted their suggestion.

Another case could be this one. As you probably know, it is common to say *lift* in the UK and *elevator* in Canada, US and Asia, as in “This *lift / elevator* will take you to the twelfth floor”. Both words mean the same but it’s always better to say the one your listeners use, not only to make understanding easier but also to let everyone realise you are aware of the way they speak.

Another good way to improve communication is to listen to the other person’s metaphorical language. He compares business to football? Use an example from sport. She talks about holidays? Think of a story that involves travelling. They like food? Compare a process to cooking.

This works because when you talk about subjects your listeners find familiar they connect your words to what they know well and therefore understand you better.

You might also want to listen to the verbs other people apply. If they use visual verbs (like see) answer with graphic expressions, such as “*It looks fine*” or “*I picture it this way*”. If they use aural verbs (like hear) try with “*It sounds OK*” or “*This is music to my ears*”. For actions connected with touch (like catch) say “*It feels all right*” or “*I get your idea*”.

Andrew’s advice: In the end, it’s logical for us to copy natives. After all, they speak better than we do, don’t they?



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