

I could not hear anything but the noise of my thoughts, churning chaotically. I had had things to say, but I was consumed by my self-awareness. I felt stupid.

Anxiety is overwhelming and much of learning another language is overcoming the anxiety of performing it. To become proficient in English you must practice it, but you will never be able to practice it if you are too afraid to speak. Believe you can speak English and so you shall. Become confident and realize that people tend to think about themselves more than they think about you and your language. Learning something often requires making mistakes, and “perfection” is probably not your goal.

Most people are self-conscious. We are adults with complicated thoughts. When learning English, you will often not be able to say what you really think. You may think that you sound like a child and feel embarrassed. However, try not to worry about how other people perceive you because most likely they will quickly forget what you said as they go back to pondering their own problems. Thus take every opportunity to interact in English and then take note of what was successful and unsuccessful.

Making mistakes is part of the learning process. When I was learning to skateboard on a half-pipe, I always fell in the beginning. It was painful, but unconsciously my brain made little adjustments. These adjustments were unnoticeable at first as I failed and failed again. It was then rather amazing to go from almost certain failure to consistent success. For this reason, I encourage you to endure through the mistakes, which can only injure your pride, in order to realize your potential of consistent success when communicating in English.

As you correct your mistakes, perfection may still seem impossibly far away. Do not let this discourage you. As an English speaker, I sound like I am from the United States. Other English speakers sound like they are from England, Australia, South Africa etc... We all speak “English” differently. You are likely from Japan; accordingly, you will sound like you are from Japan. You do not have to sound American, British or Australian to speak English. I honestly cannot tell you what perfect English is. In my opinion it does not exist. I therefore encourage you to focus on what you want and need to do with English.

Have confidence in yourself and your English capacity and take ownership of your learning. Do your best, practice, and do not be afraid to make mistakes. You will eventually succeed and your new English skills will open the door to new experiences, friends, and better job opportunities. Don't be afraid and it will happen.