

Feedback on Adrian Wallwork's courses

The following feedback was requested specifically from attendees.

Initially the course was in person in the classroom. The lessons were practical, dynamic and well balanced. We would alternate between short oral presentations made by the students, written tasks, brief discussions with colleagues and Adrian's explanations and stories. It was dynamic and fun - Adrian is not the stereotypical professor, in a good way.

Meanwhile, COVID forced us to switch to online lessons. I absolutely dread online lessons and have no faith in such a thing as "practical online classes". Adrian proved me wrong, he did what he keeps asking us to do: Be empathetic with the audience.

He managed to keep the lessons structure and dynamic even using the online platform. He shared lots of examples through videos and images, and kept me interested with the intelligence games. (Bonus points for the breaks we got mid-lesson to get up and grab a cup of tea). Additionally, we still had the chance to interact with other students. Adrian created parallel sessions, where he would randomly put us to discuss specific topics. Being a non-native speaker, I enjoyed the extra practice on English comprehension and speaking and the opportunity of meeting my colleagues. Finally, I just want to elect the lesson about "Online presentations" as my favourite. It became very helpful, considering that most of our conferences and workshops are currently virtual.

As a PhD student all the practical advices I took from Adrian's course were extremely useful and I put them in practice basically every day.

Eduarda Mota da Silva (Portugal), Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa (in class followed by online)

The course that I took with him was part of my PhD program. As it was online I expected it to be bland and boring. But to my surprise, it was completely the opposite!

The disadvantages that you would have when you are taking lessons online were not to be seen at all. His method of using the slides and letting us read them before commenting on them, using the platform to quickly split us into groups, and discussing everything with my mates made it so much easier. You are engaged all the time, his positive and constructive approach during the lessons made it much easier, fun and hassle free to learn.

Conveying complex scientific concepts that are easy to comprehend is always a difficult task. To develop this skill takes many years even for native English speakers. The professor adequately taught us to solve key problems in this area.

His lessons direct you to think outside the box. Not to be afraid to improvise, but to think logically that leads you to a formidable outcome. Tips that are very practical and not impossible to apply.

I feel I have learnt a lot and I will now be able to present much better, not because he gives 10 tips that instantly make you an English god, but his lessons provide valuable knowledge that can be applied over time and with practice, and in any language. Professor Wallwork is one of the best English teachers I have come across during my career.

Andy Seelam (India), University of Milan (online only)

I think the reasons I really enjoyed the class – despite speaking English as a first language and having had various training courses previously – were:

- the informal, engaging and interactive model;
- the very practical and example-led approach, rather than theoretical;
- the perspective of how non-native speakers learn and express English.

The sessions on writing for academic papers were really useful, again with great examples to bring this to life. This is obviously be very important for the PhD students – particularly on the need for concision (something I still have a lot to work on!). Also, the very practical tips about writing (and speaking) e.g. have sentences of varying length to avoid monotony,

The exercises about showing empathy in emails and communication with others were useful. I have noticed when working with others in previous roles that many people really don't get this right.

Regarding the presentations part, I found the following particularly useful:

- The input on slide design. I've had various sessions on giving presentations before, which always almost exclusively focus on one's speaking style and manner and not on the slides themselves. I am very aware of my weaknesses in public speaking, but much less clear on how the visual element can be most effectively delivered.
- The actual practice and feedback from the group – as a way to see how others do things and get ideas to improve one own style as much as for the feedback itself.

Kendall Jamieson Gilmore (NZ/Scotland), Scuola Sant'Anna Superiore

The following emails were sent spontaneously by international students.

Your lessons were amazing, the improvements we made in a week I couldn't believe could be done in an entire year!

It was a truly useful experience, not only because of the subject, but above all because of your way of teaching. You were able to involve and empathize with everyone, from the most sociable until the most speechless.

I'm sure you taught us not only how to use English in the best way during our scientific career (and a lot of useful tricks for the conferences as well!),

I'm sure you helped all of us to be more and more confident about ourselves, which is one of the most important things I learned: know and understand your limits, take a different point of view, be dynamic and do it, because you CAN do it!

I'm planning with Riaz to write to each participant to create a PhD student group, because this is another wonderful thing you did: you created a new web of relationships, which could lead to new scientific collaborations and new friendships as well!

PhD student (India), University of Parma

Extremely helpful course. Happy to complete it at my first steps in academia. The course includes the solutions how to be clear for the reader from the title to the conclusion, how to be competent in CV and emails, how communicate with editors. Specific, well structured knowledge accomplished with experience, empathic personality and intelligence of Adrian. Each lesson is a pleasure.

Anton Shiriaev (Russia), Scuola Sant'Anna Superiore, Pisa

Coming to this course made me realize how writing and presenting science has to be done thinking about my audience. There might not be unique solutions, but there are plenty, and I have learned

that I need to find the way it works for me. Being in a classroom where opinions flew and you could take and leave whatever works for me was great.

Mikel Lavilla (Spain), Scuola Sant'Anna Superiore, Pisa

Personally, I enjoyed the humor in every lesson that I attended. I learnt not only from the theoretical perspective but also on the practical application of every topic. Adrian is one of the best native English teachers that I have ever come across and the way he presents his lessons is fascinating. He has a talent of bringing the best out of someone's weakness and before the course, I did not know much on how to approach a diverse group of audience. Through his teachings, my presentation skills, stage management skills and articulation of ideas tremendously improved. At the end of the course, it was evident that most of the students had a sense of what needs to be done at a particular time of presentation.

I used to write scientific papers with not much knowledge on how best I could capture the attention of the readers, but through the topic on article writing, I became more confident on what to put in the paper and what not to include. For instance, I found Adrian's rule on "Delete-Delete-Cut-Cut" being effective in reducing redundancy of the paper and therefore improving its quality. Lastly, his take on "Have fun in doing your work...don't take it too seriously" made me to realize that I need to have passion in all that I do and with this passion, I can conquer every corner of my academic life.

Gilbert Koskey (Ethiopia), PhD student, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna

Through the vast set of skills that I gained during this course, I am now more confident in presenting my research work. I have learnt the art of reducing redundancy and putting more focus on what is important when writing scientific papers. Many of the things I learnt in this course are also applicable in my day to day social life and now I approach matters in a more dynamic way.

Blessing Mhlanga (Zimbabwe), PhD student, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna

Thank you for the wonderful lectures. The course actually exceeded my expectation. I know that what I learnt would impact positively on my professional and personal life.

Chinedu Obi (Nigeria), University of Pisa

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to take the English course. Your method of teaching is really amazing and how you encouraged all the way to learn and contribute in the course. I learnt a lot and hope to implement it throughout my career. Many wishes and prayers for you.

Adil Farooq, Scuola Sant'Anna Superiore, Pisa

Friday I had my first official presentation of my work for PhD. All the people were enthusiastic for my nice slides and for what I told them, because I make understandable also for engineers. It goes without saying that most of the credit is yours.

Italy

I wanted to thank you for the English course, which I really enjoyed. Although I've already written a number of papers in English, much of the things you told us are really useful (e.g. tips on using Google Scholar, and the bit on conciseness and short sentences). And then your classes were simply enjoyable and much fun, in comparison to the statistics teacher we had, who read her slides to us (which were copy-pasted from Wikipedia) like a Buddhist prayer wheel.

Germany

From my personal experience and from what I heard from my colleagues, yours was the most useful course we had in our whole schedule. And this opinion is vastly shared among students.

Spain

This email just to thank you again about the “paper presentation” course which has been really useful. Last week I was having an invited tutorial talk (3 hours) in Brazil, followed by another invited talk (1.5 hours). I tried to follow all your suggestions and the techniques presented in the course and in the book. I have to say, this presentation improved a lot compared to previous ones I held. I also felt more confident in front of a broad audience. I also have to say that my “italian pronunciation” was wonderful since the audience was only brazilian. Everybody congratulated since they understood everything! I know my pronunciation is bad from an English point of view, but in this case was perfect to allow portuguese speaking people to understand! 😊

Italy

The course was also of interest to native English speakers like myself. Native speakers were able to pick up a lot of little ‘tricks’ and strategies which will be valuable when writing their first articles.

USA

The contents of the course were extremely useful. I especially liked the way the facilitator made this course enjoyable despite the fact that some of the contents are by nature boring. I personally would be happy if more time were given to grammatical stuff and report writing.

Nepal

As you taught me I’ll be concise... thank you for your English course. I’ll be there the next year too!

India

I found the course is quite fabulous and interesting. Grammar and the common mistakes sections were really impressive. I enjoyed and learnt many things throughout the course.

Nepal

I found the course very useful, the content was very appropriate and the teaching method surely increased the assimilation of the information.

Columbia

Thank you very much for the notes and very interesting lectures. Teaching method, which you followed, is really smart for us to be alert in the lectures. I definitely appreciate your best performances.

Sri Lanka

I've learned how to write in English in a scientific way: being concise, removing redundancy, simplifying sentences to make them clearer. I have learned how to structure a paper, what to write in every paragraph and the most correct way to do it. I've also learned how to write a formal email in a clear, concise and effective way, without bothering or offending the reader. I would summarize the most important thing I've learned with a few words: When writing, do not think about yourself but about your reader. The most important things I have learned from the course is this: good results are important, but writing in appropriate structure in order to be understood easily is more important. For me, the teaching of this course is very good. I can understand and remember them very easily and quickly. Thank you very much.

China

I learned how to reduce my sentences and how to be more oriented to the subject. After the first course I used the techniques I had learned in my Arabic wikipedia –I realised that Arabic could be easier when we speak directly

Egypt

The course was very useful since it investigates on mistakes that we commonly make. All the arguments were useful. I would have liked to have done more of email, especially more examples of typical email we can refer to. Moreover I think that a course on speaking English would be useful, as well : we all would need to practice speaking English and a course like that could be proposed for the future. The intelligent tests were curious and tested our comprehension capacity. They were good breaks.

Italy

I chose this course because I haven't had such a kind of training course with so clear aims. As I expected I learned some useful rules in English writing and improved my skill on how to write concisely. The most important thing for me is that on your advice I began to make records when I read the literature, and I keep these sentences as good models for my future use.

China

Antes de empezar el curso pensaba que iba a ser realmente difícil aprender algo en sólo 10 horas. Pero me equivocaba, porque vas derecho al blanco de forma clara y sencilla. ¡Un curso estupendo!

Argentina

First of all I would like to thank you for the best English course of my life.

Italy

This course has been really useful for two reasons: 1) to reactivate my English because all the lessons were spoken in English 2) to learn some simple rules on scientific communication that no one has told me before. Moreover it was an opportunity to learn more about my colleague's research

projects. A point that may be improved is a deeper use of our scientific production. This may also include the reading and discussion of our previous communications in the same way as you did with our presentations.

Italy

The course was very interesting and useful. Now I am able to find some typical “Italian mistakes” in my articles and I am able to correct myself. I think it would be useful to increase the grammar with more exercises, and if it will be possible to dedicate more hours to it.

Italy