

WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

Overconfidence: The Dunning-Kruger Effect

One day, a man robbed two banks in broad daylight. He didn't wear a mask or any sort of **disguise**. He even smiled at surveillance cameras before walking out of each bank. Later that night, he was arrested by the police. When they showed him the surveillance tapes, the robber stared in disbelief. "But I wore the juice," he **mumbled**. Apparently, the robber thought that rubbing lemon juice on his skin would **render** him invisible to videotape cameras. After all, lemon juice is used as invisible ink so, as long as he didn't come near a heat source, he should have been completely invisible.

The man was neither crazy nor on drugs, he was simply *ill-informed (*see definition on page 2).

This led to two psychologists, Dunning and Kruger to do some research. Their studies have shown that people display illusory superiority. We judge ourselves as better than others to a **degree** that violates the laws of mathematics.

The Dunning-Kruger effect refers to the cognitive **bias** that leads a lot of people to assess their cognitive ability as greater than it actually is. It causes the least qualified to overestimate their skills and the most qualified to underestimate theirs.

The less you know about a subject, the less you know how much you don't know, whereas when you truly master a subject, you know how rich and complex it is and how little you master it.

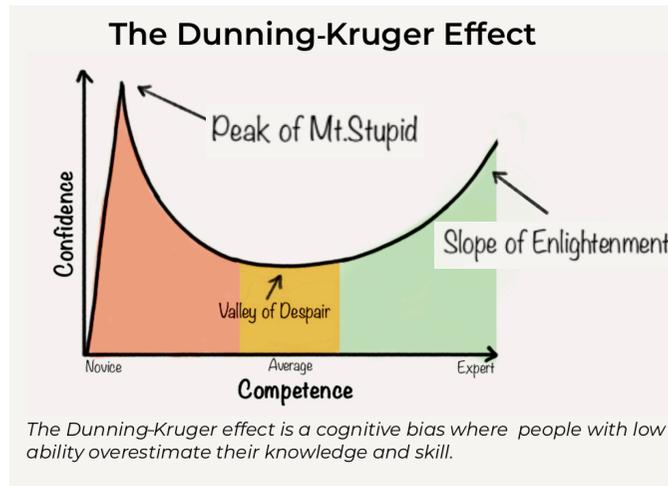
People who display high levels of incompetence within a field are unable to detect and acknowledge their incompetence and do not acknowledge other people's competence. Typical **instances** of this would be on TV talent shows where some contestants truly believe they are very good singers when, in fact, they are terrible.

Another example of this was when software engineers at two companies were asked to rate their performance: 32% of the engineers at one company, and 42% at the other, put themselves in the top 5%.

Research also indicates that 80% of drivers believe their skills are above average, something that is statistically impossible for obvious reasons. People measurably poor at logical reasoning, grammar, financial knowledge, emotional intelligence and chess, to name but a few, all tend to rate their expertise almost as highly as actual experts do. *Turn to page 2*

03/12/20 / Keyword: Overconfidence

We all suffer the Dunning-Kruger effect when we don't know enough to know what we don't know. ECP coach Darren finds out more about the phenomenon of overconfidence.



Useful vocabulary

disguise: something that gives someone a different appearance in order to conceal one's identity.

to mumble: to say something indistinctly and quietly, making it difficult for others to hear.

to render: to cause to be or become; make.

degree: the amount, level, or extent to which something happens or is present.

bias: (partiality) inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.

instance: an example or single occurrence of something.

Let's chat about that!

1. What is the double curse of the Dunning-Kruger effect?
2. Why do people think they know more than they do?
3. What in your opinion causes the Dunning-Kruger effect?
4. What do you think are the dangers of the Dunning-Kruger effect?
5. Imposter Syndrome is the flip side of the Dunning-Kruger effect. How do you think it affects people and why do you think people would feel this way?

LIVE! English Events

Come and socialise in English

Coffee Saturdays

1st Saturday 11:00

3rd Oct ✓

7th Nov ✓

5th Dec

9th Jan

6th Feb

6th Mar

Not in April

8th May

5th Jun

Sports Dive

2nd Friday 18:30

16th Oct ✓

13th Nov ✓

11th Dec

15th Jan

12th Feb

12th Mar

16th Apr

14th May

11th Jun

Cinema Nights

Last Friday 19:30

30th Oct ✓

27th Nov ✓

Not in Dec

29th Jan

26th Feb

26th Mar

30th April

28th May

25th Jun

Coffee Saturdays

An ECP LIVE! English event

The first Saturday of every month: 11:00

An ECP LIVE! English event

SPORTS DIVE!

The 2nd Friday of every month: 18.30

Cinema Nights

An ECP LIVE! English event

The last Friday of every month: 19:30

Socrates once said that his wisdom was knowing how much he did not know. It probably made very little sense at the time, but now it's obvious just how wise he actually was. The overconfidence of the Dunning-Kruger effect is not simply about showing off. It is a genuine inability to see one's own shortcomings.

Written by ECP coach Darren Lynch



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Malinformed (vs misinformed & ill-informed): a Collins 'New Word Suggestion'

ECP coach Darren talks about the suggestion for a 'new word': **malinformed**

Malinformed is a 'New Word Suggestion' in the Collins Dictionary.

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/submission/21694/Malinformed>

In the article on page 1, the word "ill-informed" is used to describe the robber. However, I had thought about using the word "malinformed".

Malinformed is an adjective: *describing a person or institution as only valuing information that supports a bias, and disregarding or attempting to discredit anything that would contradict said bias.*

Examples of usage of **malinformed**: *Bill is so malinformed; all his news comes from one station. Or: If you only read articles that support what you think, you'll be completely malinformed on the issue.*

Word origin: the latin prefix "mal" (bad) and "informed" (having information)

As opposed to "**misinformed**", malinformed doesn't mean having the wrong information, it means not caring if you have the wrong information because you believe your position to be inherently correct. To be "ill-informed" is when someone is lacking adequate or proper knowledge or information in one particular subject or in a variety of subjects.