



# WATCH & LEARN: LANGUAGE & DICTION

## BUILDING FLUENCY: PRONUNCIATION

### WHY YOU HAVE AN ACCENT (2:58 min)

#### VIDEO Script & Vocabulary (page 1 of 2/v31926)

PRE-INTERMEDIATE (A2 - B1) AND ABOVE

- ◊ Read the script and note new vocabulary
- ◊ Write three sentences using new vocabulary
- ◊ Prepare for the discussion questions

Starting Off

*Ever wondered why it's so hard to sound like a local when you go on holiday? Discover the pronunciation tips your teachers may have missed.*

- 1 Read the **Video Script** below. The words in **bold** are defined in the **Vocabulary** section. Look up any new words in a dictionary.
- 2 Go to the **Your Turn** section at the end of this document. Practice using new words and expressions from the video script to prepare for your next class.
- 3 Look at the **Discussion Questions** and prepare your responses for the next class.

### Discussion Questions:

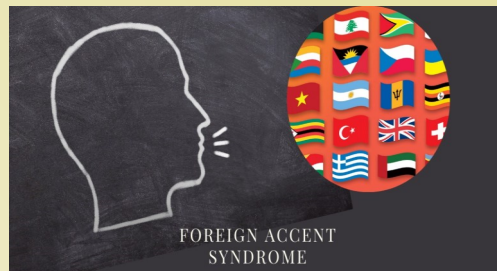
- ◊ Why do you think you have an accent when speaking a second language?
- ◊ Are there certain words in other languages that you find particularly difficult to say?
- ◊ What advice might you give yourself to try and sound more like a native speaker?

### Vocabulary:

- **weird** - strange; bizarre
- **abroad** - outside the country; overseas
- **native speaker** - a person who has spoken the language in question from earliest childhood
- **differ** - be unlike or dissimilar
- **puff** - a short, explosive burst of breath or wind
- **forbidden** - not permitted; prohibited
- **subconsciously** - in a way that is influenced by the part of the mind of which one is not fully aware
- **fit the rules** - in compliance with an accepted principle or instruction that tells you what you are allowed or are not allowed to do
- **emphasis** - stress given to a word or words when speaking to indicate particular importance
- **pitch** - the quality of a sound governed by the rate of vibrations producing it; the degree of highness or lowness of a tone

### Video Script:

**Narrator:** Have you ever found yourself speaking English with a **weird**, hybrid accent when you go **abroad** or know someone who doesn't sound like a **native speaker** of a language even when they're fluent? This is why you have a different accent in a foreign language.



The first reason is that sounds **differ** from language to language. Open a textbook and one of the first things you'll see is an alphabet explaining, for example, that the "p" in French is very different from the "p" in English.

Hold the palm of your hand up in front of your mouth and say "Paris" in English. You'll feel a little **puff** of air on your hand. Now try the same thing again, but try to remove that puff of air and you'll get something closer to the French sound... "Paris".

Learning about letters individually tells you very little about how they work when they come together. For example when certain consonant combinations are **forbidden** in your native language, you'll often find yourself inserting sounds to make them pronounceable in a foreign one.

The reason a Spaniard might tell you that he is from eh-Spain is because "sp" is just not possible at the beginning of Spanish words. It's the same reason that when English commentators talk about the French footballer Kylian Mbappé they often find themselves inserting a third syllable to make it more pronounceable "Embappé". It's because in English starting a word with an m and a b next to each other is just not done. So people find themselves **subconsciously** adapting words of a foreign language to **fit the rules** of their own.

The next reason is stress. No not that kind. It's where people put the **emphasis** on words. For example, all French words are stressed on the final syllable usually with a higher **pitch** and greater volume. That's why French speakers will call the Texan city – yooston instead of the English – Hyooston. Meanwhile, English words often have a secondary stress in addition to the primary one – civilization for example.

*Video Script continued on next page...*

### THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE FOREIGN ACCENT IS...

# 'BRITISH'



By gosh and terribly sorry, but Brits have by far the world's most dateable accents – according to a blimey-rogering

## 27 BLOODY %

... of respondents listing hot accents other than their own.

And the next 9 hottest are...

AMERICAN	8.7%
IRISH	8.1%
AUSTRALIAN	8%
FRENCH	7.7%
ITALIAN	6%
SPANISH	4.9%
SCOTTISH	4.7%
LATIN AMERICAN	4.1%
SCANDINAVIAN	3.3%



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**Video Script continued...**

**Ditching** your language's stress pattern is often very **hard** and is not always well taught. Other elements of a language's rhythm can be hard to **pin down**. Cantonese and Italian, for example, are syllable-timed which means that every syllable has **roughly** the same duration.

If you repeat this sentence with every syllable roughly equally timed, you may find yourself halfway to imitating an Italian. **Whereas** in English, the stressed syllables come at roughly regular intervals and the remainder are less distinctly pronounced. This is how you could distinguish Italian from English being spoken through a wall even if you can't make out any individual words or sounds.

If pronunciation, stress and rhythm were better taught, you might not find yourself speaking like this next time you go on **holiday**.

**Vocabulary continued...**

- **ditch** - get rid of or give up
- **hard** - difficult; challenging
- **pin down** - define or identify something precisely
- **roughly** - approximately
- **whereas** - in contrast or comparison with the fact that
- **holiday** - vacation; annual leave

**Your Turn! Using new vocabulary is the best way to learn and remember it.**

- 1 Choose three words or expressions from the video that are new to you and write a sentence using each one in the box below.
- 2 Try to use them in a context that is familiar to you to help you retain them.
- 3 Please ask for feedback on your sentences in the next lesson.

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3 \_\_\_\_\_  
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