

Accent Reduction

Do You Know What it is and What it is Not

Why do people want accent reduction?

I want to **lose my accent** was the request from a young college student looking for advice.

Why Lose this Unique Quality?

As you consider the definition and practical application of Speechmastery, accent reduction is a drastic move that **may not be necessary**. There may be a different way to meet the challenge. This is a unique quality of speech and a gift from your homeland.

I asked why and her reply was that so many don't understand what she would say. The problem seemed obvious to her but the solution she chose may have not been the best solution.

What is an accent?

Accents fall into two different considerations.

Within the same language it involves differences of pronunciation.

Stress Accent

Could be a pattern of speech applying greater intensity or power and it could include pace to certain syllables.

Pitch Accent

Could involve the modulation of pitch or tone along with or without changing the pace.

It can also be a characteristic style of pronunciation differing from the norm normal. These differences are relative to region, socio-economic status, ethnicity, caste or social class and if it is a second language or not. In the Southern US on a whole is spoken of as being a distinct accent to those in the Northern US. If you are from and live in the south, your pronunciation is normal.

People from the five boroughs of New York City could each be considered as having distinctive accents. People from Texas would consider all New Yorkers as having an accent as New Yorkers would consider the same of those from Texas.

Perhaps one of the most easily distinguished of all accents is the English of the British and North American accent.

Accents vs Dialects

Accents are often confused with dialect. A dialect has a differing vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Dialects are usually found in geographical locations. Some countries have numerous dialects.

Foreign Accent

This kind of accent involves the phonetic habits of the original language of the native speaker. When these habits are carried over into and influence the use of the new language, they can make understanding difficult to an untrained ear.

Many accents are actually quite pleasant and enjoyable to listen to. However, if they should result in negative responses from listeners, the speaker usually desires to eliminate or at the least bring about foreign accent reduction.

The elimination of this kind involves extensive training, sometimes with little success.

Why keep your accent?

Accent Reduction, The Problem and Solution

What's the real problem and solution in this instance?

In discussing the matter with the college student mentioned at the outset, I asked her to say, "Hi, my name is Darleen." (not her real name)

It came out fast and audible. The problem was it came out too fast.

This was a problem with **pace**. This involved the speed of her speech and not necessarily her foreign accent. Someone not used to the accent would possibly have difficulty understanding her.

Slowing it down, the first time sounded like she was reading it, one word at a time. A bit too slow. However the pronunciation was clear. That was good because it indicated she had very good self control of her pace.

The next time it came out better. Only she put a bit too long of a pause where the comma is between Hi and my of 'Hi, my name is...' This was also good, many have a hard time with pausing at all. She was a natural.

Finally it came out, **Hi, my name is** Darleen. Each word clearly enunciated. However she added sense stress to each of the bold words.

The problem was again not the foreign accent, rather not understanding the proper place to stress the words. She didn't add stress to syllables, rather she added it to the entire word. The problem she faced was enunciation (articulating speech sounds), pronunciation (articulating speech), and diction (choice and use of words).

There were certain words she had problems with. The problem was not understanding or using the correct pronunciation. Upon learning the proper way of saying those words, she will only face the challenge of getting the correct pronunciation within the sentence used.

Accent reduction is not always the solution to the problem. It is a quality that can make our speech rich and enjoyable to our listeners. Don't easily give up this special gift.

Instead of accent reduction, consider other ways of improving your speech.

The Sense Stress Exercise will help you appreciate the different meanings sense stress can have in your speech.

Make up your own sentence to practice with words that you have trouble enunciating. Then discover how putting sense stress on each different word will change the meaning of the sentence.

By practicing it out loud you not only train your mind, you train your mouth.

Now back to the introduction. Once pointing out the problem, she quickly corrected it to Hi, my name is Darleen. I could not have hoped for a better student than her.

Master Accent Reduction with these two tips. Or use them to master your enunciation and pronunciation.