

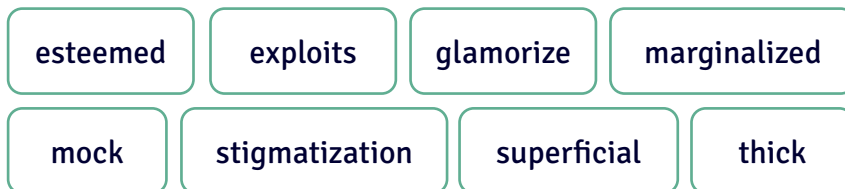
This is why we have accents (pronunciation activities)

1. Think about your experience communicating with people in a foreign language. Say how you feel when trying to understand other people or make yourself understood. Share some details.

2. Watch a [video](https://youtu.be/1jHfY0dDZxA) [https://youtu.be/1jHfY0dDZxA] and discuss the questions.

- Do you find it surprising that people who speak English as their first language have trouble understanding each other?
- Could that happen in your first language?
- Should it make learners of foreign languages feel more confident about their pronunciation?

3. Replace some words or phrases in the sentences with the words in the boxes.



- A. Not only socially disadvantaged groups speak with accents. It's common among people of all cultures and social statuses.
- B. People often romanticize certain accents and find people who have them attractive.
- C. A strong accent can sometimes be disadvantageous because it can get in the way of making yourself understood.
- D. It's not OK to make fun of someone because of their accent and encourage them to change their pronunciation, even if we think it's fun to do so.
- E. An accent alone is a simplistic way to assess language proficiency, similar to judging people by their physical appearance.
- F. Certain accents are frequently admired for their association with intelligence.
- G. The negative portrayal of accents in the media has become less common in recent times.
- H. The entertainment industry often makes use of accents for comedic effect, and it often works.
4. Look at the statements in ex. 3 again and choose one idea you agree with and one idea you disagree with. Give reasons or examples.

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5. Complete the gaps with the words in ex. 3 in their correct forms. One word is not used.

Apu, a character from the popular TV show *The Simpsons* is a notable example of how accents are _____ in the media and popular culture. Apu's _____ accent is often the subject of humour and _____ jokes on the show. However, this portrayal has sparked controversy and criticism of the _____ of South Asian immigrants. It's a reminder of how the media and popular culture can shape and reinforce stereotypes based on accents, which can have real-world consequences for _____ communities and lead to people being _____ .

- Have you seen the portrayal of Apu's accent in *The Simpsons*? If so, do you find it humorous or offensive? Why?
- Have you noticed any portrayals of accents in other TV shows, movies or media? Are the accents being ridiculed or on the contrary, _____ ?
- Have these portrayals shaped your view on accents and the people who have them?

6. Read the text in ex. 5 again and discuss the questions below it. Then, brainstorm ways to promote more accurate and respectful representations of accents and cultures in the media and popular culture.

7. Discuss the questions.

- Do you find English pronunciation difficult? If so, what makes it difficult for you?
- Is there 'one' true and authentic way to speak English that learners should work towards?
- What are some reasons people might be proficient in English and have a foreign accent at the same time?

8. Look at the words and think why they might be difficult for someone to pronounce.

- Paris
- Houston
- Mbappe (last name)
- Civilization

ESL Brains

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9. Watch the first part of a [video](https://youtu.be/FcN3HnQz3y4) [https://youtu.be/FcN3HnQz3y4] (to 02:04) and say what rule or aspect of English pronunciation the words in ex. 8 exemplify.

10. Watch the second part of the [video](https://youtu.be/FcN3HnQz3y4) (from 02:05) and make notes about one more thing that makes English pronunciation different from that of other languages.



11. Look at the tips on how to improve pronunciation in a foreign language. Discuss which you have tried, would like to try and wouldn't try. Say what other things you have tried or heard about that help to improve pronunciation.

singing songs

reciting tongue twisters

shadowing people who speak English as their first language

recording yourself and listening back

using speech recognition software

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PRONUNCIATION ACTIVITIES

EXERCISE 1: ASPIRATION IN 'P', 'T' AND 'K'

Look at the pronunciation tip in the box. Then, read the sentences pronouncing the words with the /p/, /t/ and /k/ sounds correctly.

- A. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
- B. Timmy took ten tiny turtles to the park.
- C. Penny paints pretty pink petals on a patch of prickly cacti.
- D. Kyle carefully carried a crate of crispy, crunchy crackers.
- E. Patty planted plenty of pink and purple pansies in her patch.
- F. Kelly's kitten kept kicking keychains in the kitchen.

PRONUNCIATION TIP

The /p/, /t/ and /k/ sounds are pronounced with aspiration (a puff of air) when they are at the beginning of a word. Hold a piece of paper in front of your mouth. When you release the air, the paper should move.

EXERCISE 2: WORD STRESS

Look at the pronunciation tip in the box. Then, find the words with double stress and mark the syllables with primary and secondary stress. Pronounce the words three times.

- A. deadline
- B. experimental
- C. authoritarian
- D. seventeen
- E. associate
- F. comprehend

PRONUNCIATION TIP

In longer English words, there might be a double stress: a primary (main) stress (marked as /'/) and a secondary stress (marked as /,/). We put a strong emphasis on the primary stress, while lightly emphasizing the secondary stress.

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EXERCISE 3: SENTENCE STRESS

Look at the pronunciation tip in the box. Then, look at the sentences and underline the words that are likely to be stressed. Read the sentences stressing the content words.

- A. Amelia made an appointment with her hairstylist because she wanted some changes.
- B. Before the meeting, we might go over the presentation again to check the slides for mistakes.
- C. I would like to apply for this position because I'm ready to change my job.

PRONUNCIATION TIP

In an English sentence, we normally stress **content** words: nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs, question words and demonstrative pronouns ('this', 'that', 'these', 'those'). We don't usually stress **structure** words: pronouns, prepositions, articles, forms of 'be' and 'have', conjunctions (e.g. 'and', 'but', 'so') or auxiliary verbs (e.g. 'do', 'can', 'will').