

This is why we have accents (pronunciation activities)

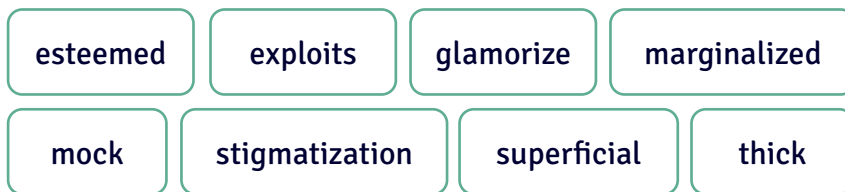
1. Think about your experience communicating with people in a foreign language. Say how you feel when trying to understand other people or make yourself understood. Share some details.

T If they can remember, ask students to share a memorable case or a funny story connected to communicating in a foreign language.

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. **marginalized**
- B. People often romanticize certain accents and find people who have them attractive. **glamorize**
- C. A strong accent can sometimes be disadvantageous because it can get in the way of making yourself understood. **thick**
- 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. **mock**
- E. An accent alone is a simplistic way to assess language proficiency, similar to judging people by their physical appearance. **superficial**
- F. Certain accents are frequently admired for their association with intelligence. **esteemed**
- G. The negative portrayal of accents in the media has become less common in recent times. **stigmatization**
- H. The entertainment industry often makes use of accents for comedic effect, and it often works. **exploits**

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 **exploited** in the media and popular culture.

Apu's **thick** accent is often the subject of humour and **superficial** jokes on the show. However, this portrayal has sparked controversy and criticism of the **stigmatization** 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 **marginalized** communities and lead to people being **mocked**.

- 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, **glamorized**? If students can't think of any other examples, ask them if they've seen films like *Borat* or *The Pink Panther* and TV shows like *Mind Your Language* or *Family Guy*.
- 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.

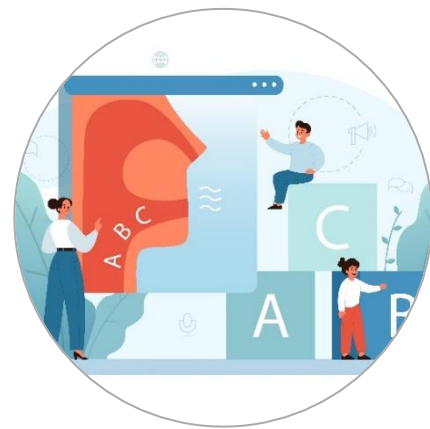
- Paris
- Houston
- Mbappe (last name)
- civilization

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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.
- A. Paris: The /p/ sound in English is pronounced with aspiration (a puff of air) which might be different in other languages (e.g. French). [00:17]
 - B. Mbappe: There are unusual letter combinations at the beginning of words that are difficult for people who speak English as their first language to pronounce. [00:55]
 - C. Houston: In English, words can have different syllables stressed, unlike in French, for example, where the stress always falls on the last syllable. [01:36]
 - D. civilization: Some English words have double stress. [01:57]

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

The speaker mentions that the rhythmic patterns of English, where stressed syllables occur at regular intervals while the others are less distinct, make its pronunciation differ from other languages, like Italian.



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.

T If necessary, explain to students that 'shadowing' people who speak English as their first language is a pronunciation technique that involves simultaneously listening to and repeating aloud the words or phrases they say in order to mimic their pronunciation, intonation and rhythm.

singing songs	reciting tongue twisters	shadowing people who speak English as their first language
recording yourself and listening back		using speech recognition software

T Below you can find some pronunciation activities. You can choose the ones that you think might be most beneficial for your students, or do all of them.

PRONUNCIATION ACTIVITIES

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

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

T You can ask students to exaggerate and pronounce the sounds with more aspiration than they usually would. They can also take a small piece of paper, put it in front of their mouth and make the paper move.

- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
- Timmy took ten tiny turtles to the park.
- Penny paints pretty pink petals on a patch of prickly cacti.
- Kyle carefully carried a crate of crispy, crunchy crackers.
- Patty planted plenty of pink and purple pansies in her patch.
- 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.

All the words except for 'deadline' /'ded.laɪn/ and 'associate' /ə'səʊ.si.eɪt/ have double stress.

T In the answers below, the main stress is on the bolded syllable and the secondary stress is on the underlined syllable.

- deadline
- experimental **ex-per-i-men-tal** (/ɪkˌsper.ɪ'men.təl/)
- authoritarian **au-thor-i-tar-i-an** (/ɔːθɒr.ɪ'teə.ri.ən/)
- seventeen **sev-en-teen** (/ˌsev.ən'tiːn/)
- associate
- comprehend **com-pre-hend** (/ˌkɒm.prɪ'hend/)

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.

T You can also tell students that they can stress any word in an English sentence if they want to emphasize it or because it's important for the context.

- 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').

T To help students understand sentence stress in English compared to their own language, you can also encourage them to pick a short text in their first language and read it aloud, stressing the content words. It might be any text they find online.

T **This worksheet includes an additional task that you can use as homework or revision.** It's only available in the teacher's version of the worksheet. The task with the answer key is below, while the students' version is on the last page. Print it, cut it up and hand it out to your students.

Create sentences on a given topic, using the two requirements in brackets.

T If you do the task in class, ask students to work in pairs, exchange their sentences and ask their partner to read them out loud, paying attention to pronunciation (/p/, /t/ and /k/ sounds, word stress and sentence stress).

EXAMPLE: the challenges of working on pronunciation (use three words that start with the /p/ sound and the word 'mock')

*People often get **mocked** for their **pronunciation** which leads to even more **problems** and challenges when they try to improve it.*

Possible answers:

- A. teaching pronunciation with technology (use three words that start with the /t/ sound and the word 'esteem') **Technology** is highly **esteemed** as a **tool** for **teaching** pronunciation through various **platforms** and **techniques**.

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- B. different accents in the workplace (use three words that start with the /k/ sound and the word 'stigmatization') **Cultural diversity in the workplace creates a variety of accents, sometimes leading to stigmatization among coworkers.**
- C. globalization and accents (use two words with double stress and the word 'glamorize') **,Globali'zation makes it easier for people to travel abroad to improve pro,nunci'ation but also leads to glamorizing certain accents.**
- D. the prestige of some accents (use three words that start with the /p/ sound and the word 'superficial') **Certain accents are often associated with power and prestige, although such perception is superficial.**
- E. pronunciation and music (use two words with double stress, and the word 'exploit') **A lot of artists exploit various accents and pro,nunci'ations for ,authen'ticity.**

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