

Unit 2: Understanding different accents in English

Getting started

1. Write the quotation on the board.
2. Ask your learners to discuss it in pairs and then report back for a whole class discussion. (They might say that an accent is OK as long as it's understandable. You could teach the word 'comprehensible' if they don't already know it.)

Part A

Exercise 1

1. Before playing the recording, get learners to focus on the rubric and the questions. It's impossible to guess exactly what Kara is going to say, but learners could prepare by saying which accents *they* find difficult to understand.
2. Play the first part of the recording to the end of the first paragraph in the transcript (00:48). There should be no vocabulary difficulties. Instruct your learners to answer questions 1 and 2.
3. If you haven't already done so, discuss the position of English in the learners' own countries. Is it an 'official' language in any way?
4. Play the second half of the recording and tell the learners to answer questions 3 and 4. Ask them to guess the meaning of 'blurry'.
5. Ask learners how they feel at the end of a day when they have been dealing with native and other non-native speakers of English.

Exercise 2

1. Ask the class to look through the rubric and the sentences/expressions and ask individual learners to pronounce them as they would normally. Correct any major mispronunciations.
2. Play the recording again, stopping after each of the sentences/expressions, and ask your learners to comment on the way that Kara pronounces them.

Useful vocabulary and phrases: checking understanding

1. Get your learners to repeat the expressions after you, with correct and polite intonation.
2. This is a good opportunity to discuss the fact that incomprehensibility need not be because of accent or mispronunciation – it can equally be because of background noise levels, eating, angle of holding the phone, etc. Ask your learners for examples of things that can make a conversation difficult to follow, and then ask them to make their own dialogues out of these situations instead.

3. Organize learners in parallel pairs to have exchanges using all the expressions. Then get each pair to 'demonstrate' each expression in use. (For example, for noisy situations they could say 'It's very noisy in here.')

Clear usage: used to

1. Go through the information and the examples in the box.
2. Check that your learners are clear about the difference in meaning between 'used to' in the sense used here, and 'used to' as in 'accustomed to'. Also, ensure that they don't confuse this use of 'would' with its use in conditionals.

Did you know? – Nigerian English

1. Go through the information in the box. Point out that although these expressions might look quite different from the 'standard English' alternative there will be lots of clues to help them understand. Discuss with your learners what these clues might be (above all, the context). Others are fairly similar to standard English, e.g. 'More grease to your elbow' is very similar to 'More power to your elbow', but incorporating the idea of 'elbow grease'. Encourage learners to look up these expressions in the online *COBUILD Advanced Dictionary*: www.collinsdictionary.com/COBUILD.
2. Ask learners if they know of other varieties of English with non-standard expressions, giving some examples.

Part A continued

Exercise 3

Get your learners to anticipate what might go in the gaps. Then ask learners to listen again, stopping the recording after each utterance, and get them to complete the utterances as a quick-fire whole class activity.

Part B

Exercise 1

1. As the rubric suggests, get your learners to read the comprehension questions and guess the number of official languages in India.
2. Play the recording and elicit and discuss the answers.
3. Ask your learners to talk about regional accents of native speakers of the language in their own countries. Is there a wide range of accents?

COBUILD check: 'regional'

1. Go through the examples with your learners and explain any difficulties, e.g. *scope*.
2. Point out that *regional* is being used in different ways in the examples. In some examples it means 'relating to a part of a country' and in others 'relating to a part of a continent or several continents'.
3. Get students to look at the definitions and examples online in the *COBUILD Advanced Dictionary*, perhaps as a homework task.

Part B continued**Exercise 2**

Play the recording again and get learners to comment on Gayatri's pronunciation of the expressions.

Exercise 3

Ask your learners to say if they remember (or can guess) what goes in the gaps and then check by playing the recording again.

 **Part C**

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Exercise 1

1. Tell your learners to look at the rubric and the questions. Play the recording once and get them to answer the questions.
2. As a whole class activity, ask your learners to say more about what they understand by 'reading between the lines'. Do they use this technique? Are there other techniques that they use when dealing with other non-native speakers, a) to understand them and b) to make themselves understood?

Exercise 2

Ask your learners to say if they remember (or can guess) what goes in the gaps and then check by playing the recording again and stopping after each expression.

Did you know? – Varieties of English

1. Spend time on this in relation to your learners' interest.
2. Go through the description of the position of English in India and explain any difficulties. You could then relate this to any earlier discussion you had about the position of English in the learners' own countries.

Part C continued**Exercise 3**

1. Ask your learners to discuss the greatest barriers in parallel pairs. Make sure the discussion is structured by writing headings on the board: 'Pronunciation/accent', 'Vocabulary' and 'Grammar'. Circulate, monitor and assist if necessary, but don't interrupt them if they are working well.
2. Get pairs to report back in a whole class discussion, ensuring that the discussion is structured under the headings above. (In discussing language, there is sometimes a tendency to jump from one thing to another.)
3. For homework, if your learners do have contact with speakers of English from different places (not necessarily the US and India), ask them to make short recordings and be ready to come back next time to present and discuss them.

Further study

Learners can listen to the extra recordings on the website for homework and report back in the next lesson.

Homework task

Depending on interest, for homework you could instruct your learners to research Indian English and report back in the next class in the form of short presentations. (There is an article about this on Wikipedia, including a lot of discussion on phonetics, as well as Indian English vocabulary and expressions.)