



Pronunciation

Different English Accents

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Vocabulary

English	Definition	Class
standard	acceptable level of quality, normal	adjective
accent	pronunciation that is common to a group of people from a certain area	noun
regional	certain place that is separate from other places in some way	adjective
identity	who a person is	noun
resistance	act of remaining against something	noun
influence	power to affect something or somebody	noun
stereotype	a certain general characteristic about a group of people thought to apply to all individuals of that group	noun
to judge	to have an opinion after careful thought	verb
norm	standard for something acceptable	noun

Vocabulary Sample Sentences

A standard brand is good enough for our needs.

Smart phones have more features than standard cell phones.

Different regions have different accents even when speaking the same language.

She spoke with a French accent.

The regional director is a good person.

The regional newspaper had personal stories.

Her card showed her identity.

His identity is unknown.

His body developed a resistance to the medicine.

She sensed some resistance from the group.

Many different influences changed the style of her writing.

You can see some European influence in the architecture.

Racial and cultural stereotypes usually annoy individuals.

A stereotype of a nerd is a person wearing thick glasses and suspenders.

She judged that it was rotten by the smell.

He judged the performance and announced his score.

Social norms are always changing.

His score was under the norm.

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson Is Different English Accents.

In the last four lessons, you learned about English vowels, consonants, stress, and intonation. In this last lesson, we would like to concentrate on different versions of English that exist within the United States.

In its written form, English is standard across different accents, but as you may know, many accents exist when spoken. General American is the name given to the version of English that does not have a recognizable regional accent. (However, since all language has an origin, it's based on the version of English spoken in the Midwest.) This is known as the English spoken on the news, used in business, and used in government matters.

Along with the different types of English that exist comes a sense of identity among its speakers. People with the same regional accent may identify themselves through certain words or sounds that are distinct to that area. If they live outside their hometowns for a long time, they might find themselves adapting to another regional accent. This could be because they like the area they live in and are slowly growing an identity there. On the other hand, they might also find that they never adopt the accent because they have some resistance to it.

People tend to adjust their way of speaking according to the person they are speaking with and the situation as well. For example, the style of speaking and the words you choose when speaking to a friend may be different from when you speak to your boss or a person you've just met. Generally, the more formal the situation is, the closer the speaker might bend his or her style toward General American.

Along with different accents come stereotypes. Stereotyping may happen very easily when strong and repeated images of people speaking a certain type of English are associated with a particular character from popular media. For example, the Texan drawl regional accent may trigger images of cowboy hats and boots, women with big hairstyles from the 1980s, and lots of gun shooting. New York accents may have people thinking of a rude city person who is a loud baseball fan. A Miami accent influenced by Cuban Spanish may accompany images of beaches, bikinis, music, and dancing. Some people may argue that there is some truth in these images; however, stereotypes become dangerous when the speaker is disadvantaged by it. This could possibly hinder educational as well as job opportunities and even cause others to treat them poorly. It is also true for those who speak English as a second language. Attitudes toward accents not only apply to English, but toward all if not most languages with accents in the world.

It is important to be aware of such regional accent identities and stereotypes when learning English so that you don't find yourself judging other people because of what you've heard in the media and also so that you are aware of how others may perceive you. When American English is taught, General American is usually the norm. However, take a look at what things influence your accent and style of speech and how it's different from other styles. Isn't it interesting to hear the differences and even see what images come to your mind?