

TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 75

Do Not Worry About Your English Accent

Full episode script · English

271 lines

Your English Toolbox

What if everything you believe about your accent is completely wrong?

Not just a little wrong, completely fundamentally upside down wrong.

That is a big question to start with.

It is.

And it is the most important question we have ever asked on this podcast.

Because today we are not talking about grammar.

We are not talking about vocabulary.

We are talking about something deeper.

We are talking about the story you tell yourself every time you open your mouth.

Welcome to your English toolbox, your slow English podcast, where we train your ears and your mind step by step.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

So, Martin, what are we going to explore today?

Today we are not going to talk about grammar rules.

We are not going to talk about vocabulary lists.

We are going to talk about something that blocks more learners than any grammar mistake ever could.

Your accent.

But not in the way you

expect.

And here are three things you will walk away with if you stay until the end.

First, you will understand what science actually says about foreign accents.

Second, you will learn the difference between accent and intelligibility.

And why that difference changes everything.

Third, you will do one short exercise that helps you own your voice instead of hiding it.

Stay with us, friends.

This episode could change the way you speak forever.

I want you to meet someone.

Her name is Amara.

She is a financial analyst from Lagos, Nigeria.

She has been working for a large company in London for three years.

Her English is excellent.

She knows complex vocabulary.

She writes detailed reports that her colleagues admire.

But there is one moment that fills her with dread every single week.

What moment?

The Monday morning Zoom call.

Twelve people on screen.

Her manager asks for updates.

And Amara goes silent.

Not because she does not have

anything to say, but because the moment she hears her own voice coming through the speakers, she thinks the same thought.

They are judging me.

They are thinking I sound less professional.

They are wondering why someone with my accent is in this meeting.

That thought is not rare.

That thought lives in the minds of millions of English speakers around the world.

It lived in mind for years.

And here is what I want to tell Amara.

And every

single person listening right now.

That thought is a lie.

Not a mistake.

Not an exaggeration.

A lie.

And we are going to prove it.

I want you to think about something before we go further.

Have you ever stayed quiet in a conversation because you were afraid of how you sounded?

Have you ever typed a message instead of making a call just to avoid speaking?

Have you ever felt your confidence drop the moment someone said, sorry, could you repeat that?

If the answer is yes, this episode is for you.

And you are not alone.

I want to take a moment here, Martine, because I think some of our friends might be listening and thinking, but Julia, my accent really is strong.

People really do struggle to understand me sometimes.

Maybe this is different for me.

I hear that.

And that feeling is real.

But I want to offer a different way of looking at it.

problem is almost never the accent itself.

The problem is what the accent has come to mean in your mind.

It has become a symbol of not belonging.

A symbol of being less than.

And that symbol is what we are going to dismantle today.

Peace by peace.

There is a word that sits at the center of this conversation.

A word that most language schools never teach you.

What word?

Intelligibility.

Explain that for us.

Intelligibility means, can the

other person understand what you are saying?

That is the only real standard that matters in communication.

Not perfection, not a particular accent, not sounding like you grew up somewhere else.

Clarity.

That is the goal.

And clarity is something you can build with your own voice, your own accent, exactly as it is.

So let's talk about the myth first.

The myth that has caused so much unnecessary pain.

The myth of the neutral accent.

Yes.

For decades, language

schools, movies, and textbooks sent one very clear message.

The ideal English speaker has no accent.

The ideal English speaker sounds like they are from nowhere.

The ideal English speaker sounds like a newsreader from 30 years ago.

That message is false.

And it is also, if we are being honest, completely impossible.

Because every single person on earth has an accent.

Every person.

Someone from Texas has an accent.

Someone from London has an accent.

Someone from Sydney has

an accent.

The question is never do you have an accent.

The question is, does your accent carry meaning clearly?

And that is a very different question.

It changes everything about how you think about your voice.

Now I want to share something that changed the way I think about this completely.

Me too.

When Martin first told me about this, I had to read it twice.

Researchers at the University of Chicago conducted a study.

They asked native English

speakers to evaluate information, facts, data, arguments.

Some of the information was delivered by native speakers.

Some was delivered by speakers with foreign accents.

And here is what they found.

Tell us.

The listeners rated the information from accented speakers as more credible, not less.

More.

More credible?

More credible.

Why?

Because the listeners subconsciously associated the accent with experience.

With a journey.

With the courage it takes to operate in a second or third language.

Think about what that

means for a moment.

When you speak English with your accent, you are not signaling weakness.

You are signaling that you have lived in more than one world.

You are signaling that you have crossed a linguistic border that most people never attempt.

That is not a deficit.

That is a credential.

Your accent is proof that you did the work.

And there is another dimension to this.

English today is a global language.

More than 1.5 billion people speak

And the majority of those people are non-native speakers.

Which means that in most English conversations happening right now on this planet, both speakers have an accent.

The game has changed.

The standard has changed.

And the fear that kept Amara silent on that Zoom call is based on a world that no longer exists.

Let's make this very practical now.

Because I know some of our friends are thinking, but Julia, people do sometimes ask me to repeat

myself.

People do sometimes look confused.

So something is going wrong.

That is a fair point.

And here is where we need to separate two things that people often confuse.

The first is accent.

Accent is the music of your language.

It is the rhythm, the intonation, the melody that comes from your mother tongue.

It is part of who you are.

The second is intelligibility.

Intelligibility is whether your message lands clearly.

And intelligibility depends on very specific, trainable things.

Things like, are you stressing the right syllable in a word?

Are you pausing in the right places?

Are you opening your mouth enough when you speak?

Are you rushing through the ends of your sentences?

These are not about accent.

These are about habits.

And habits can be changed.

So if someone asks you to repeat yourself, the question is not, is my accent too strong?

The question is, which habit can I adjust right now to make this clearer?

That is a completely different mindset.

One mindset makes you feel broken.

The other makes you feel capable.

One mindset sends you to copy someone else's voice.

The other sends you to practice your own voice, more precisely, more confidently.

Amara does not need a different accent.

Amara needs to slow down by 10%.

Amara needs to pause before key words to give them weight.

Amara needs to finish her sentences with the same energy she starts them.

And when she does those things?

She does not sound like someone else.

She sounds like the most powerful version of herself.

Now we are going to do something together.

This is practical.

This is short.

And if you do this seriously, it will stay with you.

We call this exercise your signature phrase.

Here is the idea.

Every confident speaker here in any language has phrases they own completely.

Phrases that come out naturally, clearly, without hesitation.

Phrases that

sound like them.

We are going to build yours right now.

Think of one situation where you often need to speak English.

Maybe it is a work meeting.

Maybe it is a customer service call.

Maybe it is just introducing yourself to someone new.

Got it?

Good.

Now I want you to create one sentence.

Just one.

That you will use in this situation.

It should be true.

It should be simple.

It should be yours.

For example.

I'd like

to share a few thoughts on this if that's okay.

Or let me explain what I mean by that.

Or simply.

That's a great point.

Here's my perspective.

Write it down right now if you can.

Say it out loud once at your natural speed.

Then say it again 10% slower.

Notice the difference.

Notice how the meaning lands more clearly the second time.

Notice how you feel more in control.

Not because you changed your accent.

But because you

owned your pace.

This is what fluency actually feels like.

Not speed.

Not perfect pronunciation.

Control.

Presence.

The feeling that you are exactly where you need to be.

In this conversation.

In this language.

In this moment.

That feeling is available to you right now.

With your voice.

With your accent.

Exactly as you are.

Let's go back to Amara for a moment.

She is still on that Zoom call.

Her manager has just asked for updates.

And this time,

instead of going silent, she does something different.

She takes a breath.

She uses her signature phrase.

She speaks at her own pace.

She finishes her sentence.

And the room listens.

Not because she changed her accent.

But because she changed her relationship with her voice.

That is the shift we want for every single person listening today.

You have spent years believing that your accent is something to apologize for.

We want to offer you a different belief.

Your

accent is your linguistic identity.

It is the sound of every book you read.

Every conversation you had.

Every moment you chose to keep going when English felt impossible.

It is not a flaw.

It is a signature.

And a signature is something you own.

Not something you hide.

Here is what we worked on today.

We challenged the myth that a neutral accent is the goal.

We looked at the science that shows accented speakers are perceived as more credible, not less.

We separated accent from intelligibility and gave you the real target to aim for.

And we built your first signature phrase.

A sentence that belongs to you, spoken at your pace, in your voice.

You are not someone who hides from English.

You are someone who speaks it with everything you have in the voice you were given.

That is not a limitation.

That is power.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

Thank you for being

here today, friends.

Keep showing up.

Your voice matters.
