

Accentism in Britain: Do You Speak "RP"?

"Accentism" is the new classism which determines social status

Before you read the complete article, look at this vocabulary and find it in the text:

posh: *in an upper-class way*

speech: *the act of speaking*

make an impression: *produce a strong effect on someone*

notion: *a belief about something*

flatten: *flatten an accent means making it softer, more standard*

rough: *not smooth, coarse, unpleasant*

fall into the trap: *do something that seems good at the time but is not sensible or wise*

elocution lessons: *classes to help a person's diction and pronunciation*

The Queen's English is known as "Received Pronunciation" or "RP" and according to recent research, people who speak with strong regional accents experience discrimination. Therefore, many "Brits" are under pressure to **posh** up their **speech** in order to climb the career ladder or **make a better impression of** themselves.

Accent prejudice is the perception that certain accents are inferior to others and in modern Britain there are many examples of this. A broad Birmingham accent is stigmatised as ugly and uneducated. The "Scouse" accent, spoken by people from Liverpool, gives the impression that this person is a thief and is likely to steal from you.

A colleague of mine who speaks with a Geordie accent, which he is very proud of, was once asked by an "RP" speaker if he was going to change his accent to teach English as it was unthinkable that he teach a regional accent from Newcastle to students in the Basque Country. Of course my colleague rightly rejected the **notion**.

This is a common problem and is equal to racism or sexism. It has a negative effect on people, encouraging them to change the way they speak and, in so doing, making them feel fake. What is more, if they do not **flatten** their accent, they are less likely to get the job they desire.

This ingrained linguistic prejudice makes people believe that those with more standard accents are more competent, intelligent, effective communicators and better suited to high profile jobs while those with regional accents are perhaps suited to less desirable jobs. Only this morning, listening to Irish radio, a journalist commented on the accent of the newly appointed football manager, stating that behind the **rough** Yorkshire accent, there was actually a very astute and intelligent man. This is typical of the English speaking world. Judging one's intelligence by their accent.

Academics who keep their regional accent are far and few between as they are aware that their students are likely to find them less effective if they have one, regardless of their expertise. The contradiction is palpable.

This is undoubtedly a scary reality and more so when interviewers **fall into the trap** of judging a person's ability on a mere accent. A surprising 80% of employers admit that they do discriminate based on accent. Would Margaret Thatcher have become the British Prime Minister if she hadn't received **elocution lessons** to give her an exaggerated upper-class accent? Probably not.

Written by ECP coach *Darren Lynch* [Watch the video here :-\)](#)

Let's chat about that!

Write your opinions in an email and send them to your ECP coach!

- Does accentism exist in your language?
- What accents do you dislike in your own language?
- What is considered to be the most beautiful accent in your language?
- Have you ever been teased (made fun of) because of your accent?
- How do people in other regions view your accent?



In the video, Alison explains how friends teased* her at school because of her "posh" accent.

*to make fun of someone



In the video, Darren mentions football stadiums and "prawn sandwiches".

Ask your ECP coach why :-)



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The last Friday of every* month from October to June, come to ECP to watch a film in English (with English subtitles) and talk about it afterwards.

October 26th - November 30th -
January 25th - February 22nd - March 29th - May 31st - June 28th

WhatsApp John for more details on:
657 73 13 54

Time: 19:30 to 21:30

Place: ECP Hub (C/San Ignacio de Loyola 15)

Price: Free!

Friends welcome

**Please note: there will be no Cinema Nights in December or April.*

The first* Saturday of every month from October to June, come to Panadería Bertiz, C/Francia for a coffee and a chat in English.

October 6th - November 10th - December 1st
January 12th - February 2nd - March 2nd
April 6th - May 4th - June 1st

WhatsApp Alison for more details on:
608 42 64 92

Time: 11:00 to 12:30

Place: Panadería Bertiz, C/Francia

Price: Just bring enough for a cup of coffee (and perhaps a slice of cake)!

Friends welcome

**Please note: Coffee Saturdays will take place on the second Saturday in November and January.*

English Pronunciation Is A Pain!

Look at the words in **bold** and try to both pronounce them correctly and understand their meaning in the sentence. Ask your colleagues, friends and ECP coach to help you!

1. You have a small **tear** in your eye and a big long **tear** in your dress.
2. His **horse** is **worse** than mine.
3. When I **sew** my clothes, they look almost **new**!
4. **Lord**, may I have a **word**?
5. My **daughter** fills the room with **laughter**.
6. That's **enough**! Please don't **cough** so **loud**.
7. He **said** that he had already **paid**.
8. There are so many beautiful **creatures** in **creation**
9. The **previous** song was so **precious**!
10. Do you **fear bears**?