Diction lessons - accent reduction - accent neutralization

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Diction lessons are taken to accomplish some accent reduction, also known as accent modification or accent neutralization, is a systematic approach for learning or adopting a new speech accent. It is the process of learning the sound system (or phonology) and melodic intonation of a language so the non-native speaker can communicate with clarity. In some cases the student's goal may be to eliminate their accent completely.

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Training
Accent modification is offered by various speech-language trainers and linguists.

Areas of focus may include teaching students clear articulation of vowels and consonants as well as the intonation patterns that are unique to each language. The learning sequence is typically broken down into progressive learning segments until they cumulate into using the newly learned skills in conversation. Additional areas might include linking, rate, or voice projection. Instructor-led accent training will also frequently include conversational practice to help the student transfer these newly learned skills into everyday conversations.

Training timelines can vary from a few days to several months depending upon the chosen model of instruction.

Although accents can be minimized through training, eliminating an accent is difficult and can take years.

By language
In English
Accent improvement focuses on teaching students how to pronounce difficult sounds such as /?/, /ð/, /?/, /l/, and /w/; intonation, stress, and rhythm. Spanish and Portuguese speakers might add an /h/ before the vowel /?/, as in "his" for "is". Therefore, vowel sounds are also covered in accent reduction training. Practicing of the vowel /?/ most commonly spelled "i" is done by reciting a few of the following differences: his versus is, hit versus it, hill versus ill. By not letting the back of their tongue touch the palate, native speakers of Asian languages (Chinese, etc.) can avoid adding a /j/ before the /?/ for example in speaking "yin" instead of "in".[1]

Although the accents can be reduced through training, some linguists warn against giving students a false hope that they will lose their accents. According to Dennis Baron, a linguistics professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, eliminating an accent is difficult. Calming an accent, he said, takes years of interaction with native English speakers. Even so, under U.S. labor law, employers can make job decisions based on accent if it interferes with work. The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission does receive a number of complaints every year from individuals who believe they are victims of accent-related job discrimination.[2]

The actors Portia de Rossi, Tom Holland, Anthony La Paglia, Katherine Langford, and Charlize Theron are examples of notable people who received such training to lose their native accents and develop American accents, even in everyday

speech.

With regard to English accent training, the two most distinct choices of accent reduction are the British or American pathways.

See also

Anglophone pronunciation of foreign languages
Koiné language
Non-native pronunciations of English

References

^ Hope, Donna (2006). American English Pronunciation: It's No Good Unless You're Understood. Cold Wind Press. p. 10. ISBN 1-58631-050-X.
^ Gorman, Anna (October 23, 2007). "Surge in accent reduction classes speaks volumes (Immigrants and others wanting to sound more American flock to the courses. But some linguists are skeptical.)". Los Angeles Times. Vol. Part B, no. Home Edition. p. 1.

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