

THE CENTER FOR SPEECH EXCELLENCE

Accent and Dialect Reduction Fact Sheet

Definition: Foreign accents and regional/cultural dialects involve differences in pronunciation and/or intonation. These are differences compared to Standard English/General Dialect, which is the dialect associated with education and business. In some professional settings, general dialect is perceived as more formal and business-like and therefore conveys a professional image.

For certain positions where individuals interface with representatives from other sections of the country or manage public relations, a general dialect is sometimes preferred by the company. Employees who can speak in general dialect will have increased chances at promotion to those positions. This does not mean that accents and dialects are disorders of speech. They are not wrong, only different from the standard. Individuals can learn to be bi-dialectal; to speak in general dialect when needed and in native dialect at other times.

Characteristics: Individuals who speak with an accent or dialect may:

- Reduce consonant cluster (examples: srimp = shrimp; guess or guest = guests).
- Omit word endings (examples: play = played; go or goin' = going).
- Omit voicing on voiced consonants (examples: sip = zip; hat = had).
- Substitute one sound for another (examples: den = then; wif = wth; aw = all; thang = thing)
- Use different intonation (pitch, stress, duration, rate) in words and sentences (example: speci' fic = spe ci' fic).
- Use different rules of grammar (examples: He mowing the lawn; He lucky; She's they mother).

Assistance: We can offer the following assistance:

- A full evaluation of accent or dialect with recommendations on how to bring it closer to standard American pronunciation.
- A complete report which can be shared with family, employer, or other individuals/agencies.
- Private or small group sessions.
- Computer assisted instruction.
- Materials available for home practice.
- Follow-up sessions for carryover.
- Workbook with tapes or CD by Pamela H. Bashor, CCC- SLP

Adapted from Speak Standard, Too by Mary I. Berger; Mastering The Intonation Patterns of American English, by Lorna Sikorski; and from ASHA materials. Compiled by Susan E. Hance, M.S., CCC-SLP, © , 1994

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