Topic	Accent matters	**Duration**	90 minutes
Type	Activity (reading, speaking)		
CEFR level	B2		

GOALS/PURPOSE/AIMS

- To educate students on key concepts related to accent discrimination.
- To improve students' critical thinking and speaking skills through discussions and debates on accent discrimination and its implications.
- To improve students' reading skills through reading an article and answering reading comprehension questions.
- To involve students in researching different English accents and their social, cultural, and historical significance.
- To improve students' presentation skills by having them present their research findings.
- To prompt students' creativity and anti-discrimination activism through the creation of anti-accent discrimination memes.

MATERIALS/RESOURCES USED

- Poster/Markers (for group work and presentations)
- Whiteboard

- Article: "The Sound of Discrimination: How Employment Law Handles Linguistic Profiling" https://onlabor.org/the-sound-of-discrimination-how-employment-law-handles-linguistic-profiling/
- Video Clips (for teachers): Fox News video on Melania Trump's accent (https://www.foxnews.com/video/5764491076001)
- NME article on Sadiq Khan and accent-based criticism (https://www.nme.com/news/music/morrissey-talks-racism-left-wing-hitler-says-sadiq-khan-can-not-talk-properly-2295226)
- Sofia Vergara and accent discrimination (https://luzmedia.co/spanish-accent)
- SNL skit on air traffic control with a Scottish accent (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGRcJQ9tMbY)
- Research Tools: Access to online meme generators (e.g., imgflip, Canva) for homework assignment

PROCEDURES (STRUCTURE)

1. Warm-up: Class Discussion (15 min):
The teacher asks students about their perceptions and experiences with English accents:
- *What English accents are you familiar with?*
- *What is your favourite English accent? Why?*
- *Are some of these accents superior to others? How would you describe these different accents? How do you perceive people using these accents? Do you associate different accents with people's socioeconomic status?*

- *Do you think we should all try to eliminate our ethnic accents and strive for native-like proficiency? Why (not)?*
- *Do you feel that people with different accents are treated differently in school, work, or society? Can you think of prominent examples of real cases from the media, sports, politics, etc. experiencing different treatment because of their accent?*

(Some prominent people from different domains that were ridiculed for their accents might include: Melania Trump, Sadiq Khan, a former mayor of London, Sofia Vergara, etc. For more see the links in the Materials section).

- *Have you ever been judged for your accent?*

(Teachers can also share their own observations and experiences as EFL English teachers in terms of native and non-native English teachers and professors in educational/academic settings).

OPTIONAL: Instead of initial discussion, the teacher can ask students to do the idea speed dating activity for a more dynamic, engaging warm-up (The teacher distributes all students into two circles: inner and outer circles. Inner circle students sit facing the outer circle students. They have 2 minutes to discuss each question that the teacher asks. After each round, students in the inner circle will rotate one seat to the right (or left) to form new pairs. The students in the outer circle remain in place. so fresh discussions are made with each rotation. Then the teacher asks students to comment on their discussion).

2. Article reading: Individual work (20 min):
In this activity students are asked to read and discuss a newspaper article on linguistic profiling in a workplace: *The Sound of Discrimination: How Employment Law Handles Linguistic Profiling.*

The teacher introduces the topic of accent discrimination in workplace settings. After reading the article, students answer the reading comprehension questions:

- *What is the primary issue discussed in the article?*
- *What is linguistic profiling?*
- *What are the key consequences of linguistic profiling according to the article?*
- *Which law offers some protection against linguistic profiling in the United States?*
- *The article mentions a law in which country that makes accent discrimination illegal. Which country is it?*
- *How is linguistic profiling different from other forms of discrimination?*
- *Why is linguistic profiling a problem in the workplace?*
- *How does linguistic profiling affect people from minority groups?*
- *What legal protections exist against linguistic profiling in the U.S., and how effective are they according to the article?*
- *What role can employers and educational institutions play in preventing linguistic profiling?*
- *Do you think accent or speech pattern should be a factor in hiring decisions? Why or why not?*
- *Do you think that your accent might influence your future career success?*
  In your opinion, what steps should be taken to ensure that people are not judged unfairly based on how they speak?

3. Teacher presentation (5 min):
After being introduced to the topic of linguistic profiling, the teacher explains that this kind of practice is also a form of discrimination that many people are not aware of and which is often overlooked. As a tribute to Zero Discrimination Day (https://www.internationaldays.org/march/zerodiscriminationday), the teacher writes the following concepts on the whiteboard and briefly explains them to students: *accent discrimination/accent bias/linguistic prejudice/glottophobia*, *linguistic imperialism*, *language prestige*, *linguistic reduction*.

4. Group Research Project (30 min):
Following the teacher's presentation and having learned something about the topic in general, students are asked to form research groups of three/four.

Each group should research a teacher-assigned accent (e.g., Cockney, Texas, New York, AAVE, Californian, Irish, Scottish, South African, Caribbean, Arabic-English, Spanish-English, Chinese-English, Indian) presenting their findings on a poster. Each group first presents the accent's features and commonly associated stereotypes, then asks other groups to guess which accent they are talking about. They should also find a sample of an accent and play it for others. After identifying the accent, each group adds a bit more information on its history and cultural significance.

5. Mini-debates (20 min):
In the final activity, students are asked to think about the topic in a more nuanced and focused way by evaluating some of the stances related to accent perceptions. The teacher reads the

following statement/scenarios, asking all students to raise their hands if they agree with the statement. Then the teacher asks students from each side of the viewpoint to elaborate more on their stance.

The thought-provoking statements:
- Most stand-up comedians from immigrant families use their parents' accents when impersonating people belonging to their ethnic groups as their comedic shtick. However, a few oppose this. For example, Hari Kandabolu, an American-Indian comic never does accents as part of his comedy, saying: *I think some people are used to accents because that's how they see immigrants: Immigrants are funny voices. Immigrants are foreign, strange experiences. And I think there are tons of examples where comics have spoken about their [immigrant] parents and all they are is an accent.* Do you agree with him?
- Accent reduction (i.e. modifying a person's accent to sound more "neutral" or "standard", often to improve communication in professional or social contexts) is a common educational strategy taught in English classes. Do you agree that accent reduction should continue to be an English learning/teaching goal?
- Certain professions should hire people speaking only certain English accents. (An aid to prompt discussion: Think about traffic control, court transcription, or emergency services).
OPTIONAL: The SNL skit on air traffic control and a Scottish air traffic controller can be played too.

- Every country needs to pass laws against accent discrimination. Then accent discrimination would not be socially (and legally) acceptable anymore.

6. Homework:
- **Creating memes:** Each research group is given a task to create a meme (or two) combating accent discrimination and present their memes in the next class. The teacher can provide info on some of the meme-generators available online (e.g. imgflip; Canva, IloveIMG). The memes can be posted in schools' public spaces as a part of the Zero Discrimination Day campaign.

- **Post-lesson written reflection:** Students are asked to reflect on what they learned in today's class and whether their views on accent discrimination might have changed. They should identify their own biases and think of ways/plans to decrease their linguistic prejudices in the future and to promote linguistic diversity.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Increased awareness of accent discrimination.
- Students will define and differentiate the key concepts taught in class.
- Students will be familiar with several different accents and their historical and cultural associations.
- Students will critically evaluate controversial statements about accent discrimination.
- Students will reflect on their own experiences with accents.
- Students will be equipped to be involved in activism on accent discrimination.

Speaking:
- Student participates actively in discussions in a coherent way.
- Student demonstrates the ability to explain complex concepts clearly and uses the appropriate terminology.

Reading:
- Student demonstrates comprehension of the reading material by answering reading comprehension questions.
- Student extracts relevant information from the text to support their arguments/answers.

Writing:
- Student produces a creative and thoughtful meme addressing accent discrimination.
- Student writes a reflective piece after the lesson, demonstrating personal insights into accent discrimination and the steps they plan to take to promote inclusivity.

Collaborative skills:
- Student works effectively in a group (contributes to the group project, listens and incorporates peers' comments, shares responsibilities).