

ACCENT REDUCTION -

East Asian Languages - Accent Breakdown

Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Thai, Korean, Burmese, Vietnamese, Lao



East Asian Language Features

Default Posture

All these accents hold a more horizontally spread mouth tension than RP, and hold a much more closed jaw position. This means that the lip rounded sound of English are usually unformed, and the lip muscles need more strength to achieve them.

There is also very little Vertical space in the mouth for sounds like car and cut. Chinese 'placement' of the accent (where the sound is) tends to be very far back in the throat, or focused high in the skull, whilst other Asian languages can resonate very sharply in the mask of the face. All need to bring the 'sound' into the mouth and focus it easily through the back of the front teeth for a softer, rounder resonance.

Our Voice training Articulation Exercises will help train these various elements to bring your default posture closer to a native speaker of English.

Stress & Intonation Patterns

In 'character' based written languages, the words tend to be separated out. This makes a lot of East Asian accents seem very choppy in comparison to RP. As the syllable combinations often don't have consonant endings, the ends of words can very often be missing too, although in Japanese these can be over-pronounced.

'Tonal' Asian languages don't use intonation (high notes) to add emphasis – as the change of tone indicates different words. This can mean that only volume is used which can sound almost aggressive if overdone.

You need to start linking words up into fluid groups and using tune to indicate important meaning and your opinion. Japanese speakers don't tend to use much tune at all, so here the idea is to add much more emphasis and variety. All 3 stages of our course will help you build these skills, especially 2 and 3.

Specific Consonant Differences

The main points of work are as follows. They are covered in Stages 1 and 2:

1. to adopt **TH** accurately;
2. adopt **R** and **L** accurately, including at the ends of words (**L**);
3. to focus on pronouncing word endings and linking to the next word;
4. the difference between voiced consonants (made with voice) and voiceless consonants (made with air) is often missing and needs work;
5. quite often syllables will end with a nasalised vowel in Asian languages, but this is different from a word like **thin** which has a vowel followed by a separate **N** consonant. For this reason word final **N**, **M** and **NG** all need work;
6. **V**, **B** and **W** all need separating and strengthening depending on the native tongue;
7. Japanese speakers need to work on **SH** in combination with **I** – is **six** not **shicks**;
8. some Chinese speaker may need to focus on removing a /j/ sound (as in **you**) from in front of certain vowels.

Specific Vowel Differences

These are the general points, again mostly covered in Stages 1 and 2 (although Stage 3 will revisit the all important Short Neutral (Schwa) vowel):

1. all of these accents need to address the differences between the long and short vowel pairs - in particular the Horizontal pair **sit** and **seat** and Vertical pair **cart** and **cut**;
2. the short Neutral vowel, 'the schwa' tends to be over-pronounced, following the spelling, while the long Neutral **bird** is also cut off short;
3. other vowels are effected strongly by the different Default Position of the muscles, with a lack of Verticality in the sounds and not strong enough lip rounding for words like **you** and **your**, **pot** and **put**.

These are just some of the specific issues we will focus on in your lessons and homework. See the syllabuses for all three stages below for more information, and bear in mind that our teachers always adapt the work to provide the most useful experience for the exact make-up of your group.

ACCENT REDUCTION - Stage 1 - Course Contents English Pronunciation & Elocution

Week 1

How to release the jaw and face muscles
Default setting of RP English
Neutral vowels

Before filming

Week 2

How to release the back of the tongue
Strong and weak stress/strong and soft vowels
Vertical vowels

Week 3

How to strengthen and use the tongue tip
The most common consonants, TH, S, Z, T, D, N, L
Horizontal-Vertical vowels

Week 4

How to strengthen and use the lips
Lip consonants - W, V, F, M, B, P
Sagittal and Vertical-Sagittal vowels

Week 5

Middle of tongue mobility and strength
The R, L and /j/ sounds
Horizontal vowels
Short and long vowels

Week 6

Complete articulation workout
Your consonant targets
The whole RP basic vowel system

After filming

Please note:
your teacher will personalise the contents of your course to your group's precise needs, but this is a rough outline of what you will study.

ACCENT REDUCTION - Stage 2 - Course Contents

Total Speech Accuracy

Week 1

How to say the 'o's
Plosive consonants
Word endings - voiced/whispered

Before filming

Week 2

How to say the 'a's
Fricative consonants
Reduced vowels & contractions

Week 3

How to say the 'u's
Nasal Consonants
Linking - consonant to consonant

Week 4

How to say the 'e's
Semi-vowel consonants
Linking - vowel to vowel

Week 5

How to say the 'i's
Affricate consonants
Clusters and syllabic consonants

Week 6

How to say the 'gh's
Accent self-analysis
Your vowel and consonant targets

After filming

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ACCENT REDUCTION - Stage 3 - Course Contents Stress and Intonation

Week 1

Basics of Stress - Strong/Weak system
Syllable stress - Level 1
Sentence stress - Level 2

Before filming

Week 2

Weak forms and the Schwa
Linking
Stress in word groups - introduction

Week 3

Stress in word groups - noun phrases, descriptions
Stress in word groups - numbers, names, verb phrases

Week 4

Tonic syllable - Level 3
Phrasing
Intonation basic patterns - Level 4

Week 5

Question intonation
Tag questions

Week 6

Stress and intonation in rhetorical patterns
Public speaking practice

After filming

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