

ACCENT REDUCTION -

Latin Languages - Accent Breakdown

Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, French., Romanian plus Greek



Latin/Greek Language Features

Default Posture

Spanish, Italian, Romanian and Portuguese all hold a much more Horizontal mouth position than RP which brings nearly every sound further forwards.

Most French speakers hold a particular lip tension and a high tongue position, which again makes the position much less Vertical than RP. And whilst Greek speakers usually have quite a low jaw position, the jaw muscles usually hold much more tension than in RP and the overall vowel shaping tends to be more Horizontal.

These accents also tend to have much more back and middle of tongue tension, and much less strength in lifting the tip of the tongue than RP. Our Voice training Articulation exercises in Stage 1 help soften and strengthen the Speech Muscles so they fully adapt to English.

Stress & Intonation Patterns

French is a syllable timed accent, with every syllable carrying the same weight as the next. In English we have a strong hierarchy of stress (both tune and loudness) to point up our meaning. The French fluid evenness covers up the high points we are listening for.

Whilst the other Romance languages do use stressed (strong) syllables more than the French, there is still a tendency to pronounce each syllable strongly and hide the highs and lows that are needed for clarity in RP.

In Stage 1 we look at how to pronounce the tiny, unstressed Schwa vowel, which is often over-pronounced and over-emphasised by Latin speakers. Stage 2 will help you to link words together, to find speed for the weak sections of speech that are over-emphasised. And Stage 3 will go into our full Levels of Stress technique, which will help you start using the RP emphasis system fully. All of these will help you achieve a clearer meaning and a more English music.

Specific Consonant Differences

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

1. to adopt **TH** accurately (except for Spanish speakers from southern Spain who tend to have this sound);
2. to change the **R** sound to the RP one;
3. to improve word endings, which are often missing;
4. to adapt the **H** (missing for the French and Italians, often too heavy for other nationalities);
5. to relearn the articulation point and articulation of **T** and **D**;
6. Spanish speakers often also need to focus on **B, V, W** differences.
7. a lot of Latin Language speakers need to learn to make a clear N sound after a vowel in words like **line**. Portuguese and southern Spanish speakers in particular can find N and M tricky at the ends of words. And French speakers will often nasalise the n in words like **dance** or **interest**;
8. Spanish speakers often need to separate the sounds in **ship** and **chip**;
9. And there is the NG sound for everyone...

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. In general all of these accents need to address the differences between the long and short vowel pairs - in particular the Horizontal pair **sit** and **seat**.
2. The short Neutral vowel, 'the schwa' tends to be over-pronounced following the spelling.
3. Other vowels are affected strongly by the different Default Posture of the speech muscles, which produce a lack of Verticality in **cat, cart, cut** etc.
4. Lip rounding is absent in most vowel sounds. Except for French, lip rounding is not strongly present for Latin speakers, and for the French it is a different muscular shape; so **you** and **your, put** and **pot** also need practice and work.
5. A tendency to follow the spelling, means that Stage 2's focus on how to interpret spelling into accurate sound is particularly important.

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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