

ACCENT REDUCTION -

South Asian Languages - Accent Breakdown

Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Assamese and Sindhi – plus some we've missed...



South Asian - Language Features

Default Posture

The major contributing factor to the South Asian sound is the position of the tongue for many of the front consonants – particularly t and d. In most of these languages the position of some or all of the variants of these consonants is much further back and often retroflex. This usually means position of the whole tongue is held further back in the mouth and higher up, with tighter, higher jaw.

The accent feels focused almost at the top of the spine, and the tight tongue-back and jaw can also lend a nasal quality to the voice. A British English RP accent will send the sound forward over a released back tongue, with a lower, softer jaw and more lip rounding. Jaw tension (for southern India speakers in particular) is a major area needing work.

With some variations, these are the major blocks to an RP sound that our Voice Training Articulation Exercises will help you overcome.

Stress & Intonation Patterns

Many Indian accents have a strong, rhythmic tune that is not connected to the specific meaning of an utterance, but overlaid like a kind of music. RP uses intonation, rhythm and tune very specifically to convey meaning.

You need to be accurate which is the strong syllable in a word. You need to only stress the meaning words in a sentence (South Asian speakers will often land lots of energy on small words that are fairly low in the meaning hierarchy, according to their habitual rhythm).

And you need to be able to use intonation (high notes) to communication the emotion and extra significance of the Key Words in a phrase. This relates the intonation and rhythm entirely to meaning and will feel very different to the normal rolling, South Asian cadence.

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. to differentiate **W** and **V**;
3. to change **R** and **L** as required;
4. to bring the **T** and **D** forwards (or possibly choose a different T and D from the wide range available. Hindi, for example has 4 of each!);
5. to aspirate plosive consonants - T, D, P, B, K and G need to be accompanied by a little puff of air. Many South Asian accents close a consonant at both the mouth and throat (glottis) not allowing the stream of air to continue forwards. This chops up the sound and cuts the vowels short. Learning to release the consonants (again choose the aspirated versions in your own accent if there's a choice) will help the overall flow of English RP enormously;
6. to separate **chip** and **ship**, and sometimes also **sip** and **zip** from each other;
7. some speakers (for example from Nepal) will need to work to separate the **P** and **F** sounds - as in **pipe** and **Fife**.

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, and develop much longer vowels, e.g. **car** and **four**;
2. the more closed jaw position affects vowel pairs like **pet** and **pat**;
3. strong back of tongue tension can squeeze the Neutral vowel **bird**, and the 'schwa' (short Neutral) tends to be over-pronounced, following the spelling;
4. there's a lack of lip rounding for words like **you** and **your**, **pot** and **put**; these are strongly affected by the different Default setting of the muscles.
5. the most distinct sounds needing work are the very strong monophthongs (single vowels) that replace the diphthongs in words like **go** and **day**.

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

Please note:
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