

Accents

WORKSHEET A

Maria:	Oh, Dave, I wish I could speak like you.
Dave:	Speak like me? What do you mean?
Maria:	You know, the model American accent. I've lived in Los Angeles for six years now, and I still sound Brazilian. I open my mouth and everyone knows I'm a foreigner.
Dave:	So what?
Maria:	Well, I want to talk like a native speaker. It sounds nicer.
Dave:	Does it? I think your accent's nice.
Maria:	But —
Dave:	No, honestly. I like foreign accents. I find them interesting. And anyway, what's a "model American accent"? There are lots of different regional accents in the United States: Southern, Upper Midwestern, Eastern ... not to mention specific states or even cities with their own accent: Hawaiian, Bostonian, etc. And what about the native English speakers from other countries? British, South African, Australian accents — they all sound different. For me, when I listen to a non-native speaker, it's just another accent.
Maria:	OK, but I'd like to speak more like a broadcaster – like on the news.
Dave:	But which broadcaster do you mean? You can hear all kinds of different regional accents on the TV and radio these days. Sure, the accents are usually mild, but the newscasters don't all sound exactly the same, do they? Maybe they did forty years ago, but not anymore.
Maria:	Hmm. Maybe in another six years I'll lose my accent.
Dave:	If I were you, I'd forget about losing your accent. The important thing is whether people can understand you or not, and I've always understood you perfectly.
Maria:	But not everyone does. Sometimes when I'm talking, I'm sure the other person isn't finding it easy to understand.
Dave:	You know what that probably is, though? Some people spend all their time with people who speak exactly the same way they do, so anything even slightly different is a shock. You shouldn't think of it as your fault.

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WORKSHEET **B**

Exercise 1

Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F), or if the text doesn't say (D).

1. Maria wants to speak English more like an American.
2. Dave likes Maria's accent.
3. Dave says that all Americans speak with a similar accent.
4. Dave says that Australians and South Africans have the same accent.
5. Maria likes the way people from Hawaii speak English.
6. Dave wants to help Maria lose her Brazilian accent.
7. Dave says TV broadcasters do not usually have strong regional accents.
8. When Dave first met Maria, he found it difficult to understand what she said.
9. Maria believes that the people she speaks to sometimes find it difficult to understand her.
10. Maria believes that, because of her accent, the people she speaks to often think she is American.

Exercise 2

Answer the questions about the text on Worksheet A.

1. How long has Maria lived in Los Angeles?
2. What does Dave say there are many of in the United States?
3. What is Dave's opinion about foreign accents?
4. Dave gives eight examples of different accents among native speakers of English. What are they?
5. What does Dave think is much more important than whether or not a foreigner has an accent?
6. What change does Dave suggest there has been in the accents of TV broadcasters in the last forty years?
7. When Maria says that sometimes people seem to find it difficult to understand her, what is Dave's explanation?
8. Early in the conversation Maria talks about something that Dave, later in the conversation, seems to think doesn't exist. What is it?

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 3

Fill in the blanks to complete the text.

Maria:	Oh, Dave, I (1) _ _ sh I could speak like you.
Dave:	Speak like me? What do you (2) m _ _ _?
Maria:	You know, the model American accent. I've lived in Los Angeles for six years now, and I still (3) s _ _ n _ Brazilian. I open my (4) _ _ ut _ and everyone knows I'm a foreigner.
Dave:	So what?
Maria:	Well, I want to talk like a (5) _ at _ _ _ speaker. It sounds nicer.
Dave:	Does it? I think your accent's nice.
Maria:	But —
Dave:	No, (6) h _ _ _ _ tly . I like foreign accents. I find them interesting. And anyway, what's a "model American accent"? There are lots of different (7) r _ _ _ _ n l accents in the United States: (8) S _ _ _ _ _ _ _ , Upper Midwestern, Eastern ... not to mention specific states or even cities with their own accent: Hawaiian, Bostonian, etc. And what about the native English speakers from other (9) c _ _ _ _ _ _ _ s? British, South African, Australian accents — they all sound different. For me, when I listen to a (10) n _ _ - native speaker, it's just another accent.
Maria:	OK, but I'd like to speak more like a broadcaster – like on the news.
Dave:	But which broadcaster do you mean? You can hear all kinds of different regional accents on the TV and radio these days. Sure, the accents are usually (11) i _ d , but the newscasters don't all sound (12) e _ a _ _ _ y the same, do they? Maybe they did forty years ago, but not anymore.
Maria:	Hmm. Maybe in another six years I'll lose my accent.
Dave:	If I (13) w _ _ _ you, I'd forget about losing your accent. The important (14) t _ _ _ g is whether people can understand you or not, and I've always understood you (15) p _ _ _ _ c _ ly .
Maria:	But not everyone does. Sometimes when I'm talking, I'm sure the other (16) p _ _ _ _ n isn't finding it easy to understand.
Dave:	You know what that probably is, though? Some people (17) sp _ _ _ all their time with people who speak exactly the same way they do, so anything even (18) s _ _ _ _ tly different is a (19) _ h _ _ k . You shouldn't think of it as your (20) fa _ l _ .