

Speak up for a workplace that includes all kinds of voices

Overview

It's not what you say, it's how you say it. An old adage that's true in many instances, like nuances in speech and physical mannerisms. But when it comes to accents, it's important that we listen more to the "what" and not the "how." It can already be challenging for those new to English to communicate, and sometimes even harder to get others to listen. The hard truth is that we tend to place less value on thoughts, opinions and ideas coming from non-native speakers, often dismissing their differences as inferior intelligence. In order to be fully inclusive, we need to afford everyone an equal opportunity to be heard and to be taken seriously.



Insights

- Studies indicate that those with foreign accents are seen as less suitable for high-level positions, and are less likely to be considered [by prospective employers](#)
- Ethnic and socio-economic profiling based on speech alone usually happens in [under 30 seconds](#)
- Research shows that someone's perceived credibility decreases significantly in relation to the severity [of their accent](#)



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Discussion

What is your personal experience with this topic?

- Have you ever witnessed bias towards non-native speakers? Did you do anything in the moment?
- Do you think people are becoming more aware of the negative impact this has on a workplace environment or community?
- What do you feel are the barriers to overcoming this issue?



Strategies to empower all voices

- Show respect by actively listening to others, and ask for clarification if needed
- Regardless of whether someone has an accent or not, when someone is trying to communicate, always focus on the actual message—[not the delivery](#)

To learn more, visit [the RBC Inclusion Learning Centre](#)



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