

My English

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Levels	<i>Intermediate+</i>
Context	<i>Pre-experience and in-work</i>
Aims	<i>Build awareness of English competence in an international context</i> <i>Understand personal attitudes to language learning</i>
Class Time	<i>60–90 minutes</i>
Preparation Time	<i>5 minutes</i>
Resources	<i>Questionnaire (see Appendix)</i>



As English cements its role as the global lingua franca of business and trade, it has now become important for many learners to hone their ability to communicate internationally and to prioritize intelligibility in the discourse community they operate in, rather than focusing on trying to emulate British/U.S. speakers of English and trying to understand their culture and discourse styles.

This shift consequently leads us to revised notions as to what constitutes accuracy, fluency, and communicative competence in the world of international communication. Yet most learners still base the success of their language learning on the idealized native-speaker model and continue to feel disillusioned about their inability to seem British or American in their use of the language. Their lack of confidence often stems from distorted views of their own English that they hold up against British or U.S. role models for comparison.

In order to encourage reflection and to raise awareness of these issues, the questionnaire in this activity, used alongside a needs analysis at the beginning of the course, could encourage debate and discussion regarding how learners feel about their own English and how they would like to see it develop.

PROCEDURE

Before Class

1. Read through the questionnaire (see Appendix). Adapt it as necessary to suit your class/teaching context. For example, if you are working in-company, make reference to the channels of communication and genres that your client deals with.

In Class

2. Explain to the class that you would like to explore what is meant by the term *my English*. This will enable you to understand the needs of the class better, but it will also enable learners to reflect on their own needs.
3. Hand out the questionnaire in the Appendix. Allow enough time for learners to complete it. If necessary, circulate and assist.
4. Carry out a class discussion, ensuring that each answer is thoroughly explained, elaborated upon, and challenged, if appropriate. In some contexts it may be advisable to look at the answers beforehand, and to do this discussion in a subsequent class.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. Depending on the teaching context, the questionnaire can also be presented as homework or answered in plenary. The discussion can also be done in pairs or small groups before involving the whole class.
2. In some classes and teaching contexts, learners may insist that that they need to learn one variety of English. In such cases it is worth reminding learners that the object of the exercise is to explore how English is used in the world—there are no right or wrong answers. Every class is different and will make up its own mind about the type of English they want to learn.

APPENDIX: Questionnaire

1. How do you feel about your English? Why? _____

2. Do you feel more confident speaking, writing, listening, or reading? Why? _____

3. When do you normally use English? Give examples. _____

4. Do you watch any films, read any websites, or listen to any music in English? How do you feel when you do these things? Why? _____

5. Do you have any friends or colleagues that you speak or write to in English? Give examples. _____

6. Do you use English for your social media interactions? _____

7. How do you feel when speaking and writing in English? Why? _____

8. Do you hate making mistakes? _____

9. What do you consider a mistake in your English? How do you know you have made a mistake in English? _____
10. If you could wake up in the morning and speak English differently, what kind of English would you speak? Why? _____

11. Who would you want to speak English like? Who are your role models? _____

12. Would you consider having role models who are not British/American? Why might this be helpful? _____
13. On a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*), how much do you agree with the following statements? :
- a. It is more important to be communicatively successful than to be grammatically accurate.
 - b. If I want to be a successful English user, I must learn to speak like a British or American person.
 - c. I think my own accent is part of who I am, and I wouldn't want to lose it completely when speaking English.
 - d. People who need English for business should speak it perfectly, otherwise they look unprofessional.