

Strong Accent Transcript

Today's vlog is more conversation a conversation that actually needs to happen after you watch this video or maybe it's a debate yeah it's definitely a debate. A debate that I've been desperately trying to have with everyone I meet for years no credit to me but just saying. See at boy science I'm honored to meet a diverse mix of clients on a daily basis in fact if you were to tell you the mix of heritage languages among our clients at any given moment you'd get anywhere between 20 to 30 different languages now my role is a speech pathologist makes me aware daily of how little I know but also at times makes me angry and the reason for this is because I perceive all too often barriers to communication comfort that don't have come down to education intelligence having the right words to say a lot of it comes down to things that you need to speak up about so today let's get into it. Here is how we'll do it. Close your eyes. I want you to imagine yourself standing on the steps of Flinders Street Station right under the clocks. Now look out from the steps imagine you're in normal circumstances and there's lots of people there and see the crowds crossing Swanston and Flinders Street maybe you can see as far as Secura a road too. Look across the circumference in front of you and tell me lookout and listen and tell me, is everyone a monolingual mainstream Australian English speaker? You know the answer. The answer's no now tell me who's the majority? It's pretty hard to say right yeah say it. Who's the majority what do you hear? Languages, accents we'll talk about that a little bit more later now tell me where do you feel chances are if you're watching this channel you make up the global majority and the global majority of people is not a speaker of Main Australian English. In fact it's not even a native English speaker. Thank God no offense to native English speakers, but let's be real here we need a shift in perspective. The past seven years at Voice Science I've been working with internationals and locals to boost communication clarity and comfort but deep down I've been doing something else that I don't often speak publicly about and it's time to really open up sure the message underpins all the content that I make, but I really want to share the position that I'm coming from. I've been advocating as best as I can with my privileged position as a native speaker of this notion of what Australian English is and frankly I've been challenging you all to see that there's not one way to speak and why well because until people stop saying "you've got a strong accent", I'm going to have to keep fighting. See the very phrase in itself makes us feel small it also total outsiders. The speaker and suggests that the way they speak is simplistic I've received it I'm unscathed but I have received this statement "you've got a strong accent" while living abroad speaking other languages and it's okay for me but this is being said against people who are not just living abroad.

Question: Do you think she has a strong accent? Yes?No?

It's been said against people who are here in Melbourne in Australia trying to live in their home, trying to feel at home, trying to feel accepted, trying to get merit for their hard work and it's not okay there is no such thing as a strong accent we all have an accent so who is to say how strong it is. If I go and live in London my strong accent will be registered there too so how can I keep anyone happy? It's all based on the context of my listener and I don't have a lot of control over that, so this shows me logically that no accent is superior to another there is no such thing as a strong accent; furthermore, the comment is rude and inflammatory saying someone has a strong accent shows your listener bias. Strong against what ? Strong against yours? Who are you to judge so please stop using this phrase and call it out if you hear it being used it's really not okay. It's both xenophobic and belittling so speak up together we need to eliminate this kind of language from the vernacular.

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Question: She says that if you think someone has a strong accent, that you are xenophobic and belittling. Do you agree? What could you do on your class to counteract this?

Promise me because by the time I meet someone at voice science wanting to work on their strong accent, it's really much too late for me to be the first person to tell them that this concept simply does not exist and my question is how long is that person being held back because of the false belief that they English is not good enough. There is no right way to speak English, but there is a right way to listen good listening involves flexibility, tolerance, effort, diplomacy, good values, and ethics. There is no one way to speak English and trust me in time the Australian accent won't necessarily sound like mine I hope sure if you need to be clear if you want to get your message across you really do need to be clear but I'm the last person here telling you you're wrong if you sound different from me. In fact I like it you get my positive bias. No accent is superior to another and let me let you in on a secret if there really is an accent that is superior to another, it is an accent that shows that you speak more than one language because we all know that is the better position to be in better two or four languages than one. Right until we get this conversation happening more in Australia we will continue to see barriers and negative bias in the workplace, in the shops, socially everywhere we look. If people make reference to your strong accent see this as a chance to educate someone that the concept frankly does not exist. Please educate those people who are not as linguistically educated or insightful as you. Don't be held back. Speak up. Call it out. Promise me. Thank you so much for being here. Take care and remember your voice and your message matter immensely. So speak and make a difference with your words. Empower others. Fight for rights for anyone you see being sidelined and have a great week.

Seneca

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