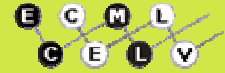




ICOPROMO

Intercultural competence for professional mobility
*Compétence interculturelle pour le développement
de la mobilité professionnelle*



Who's talking funny?

Awareness of the Self and the Other

Recognising similarities and
differences

Rationale

Different status of linguistic performances

Learning Outcome

Recognising prejudice

Competences:

Awareness of the Self and the Other

Valuing different types of linguistic performance

Time

40 min

Participants

Up to 25

Materials required

Photocopies of handout



Procedure

1. The handout is distributed
2. Participants read through the situation and briefly take notes on the first two guidelines for discussion
3. The answers are discussed and compared in the group.
4. Participants are asked to reflect upon the next topics, which should then be discussed in the group.
5. Some kind of introduction to the subject may be necessary, but the facilitator may choose to leave all further explanations and details until during and after the group discussion.

Debriefing

- (1) During the discussion the participants should become aware of people's frequent habit to jump to conclusions about a person's lack of abilities or intelligence, if this person's language or pronunciation deviates from the norms we are familiar with.
- (2) The participants should be encouraged to reflect upon occasions where this may have happened to them or where they made a wrong premature judgement.



Who is Talking Funny?

Situation: You are working for an international organisation in Brussels. This is day 1 for a new team and you meet your new colleagues, each one of them representing a different European country. You are sitting next to your German colleague and find her very nice and dynamic during the first meeting. But ... her English accent sounds a bit strange to you.

What would you say? Justify why you would (or wouldn't) say any of the possibilities below:

- a) Nothing
- b) "Your English sounds unusual, I've never met a German with an English accent like that."
- c) "You have an English accent that I cannot recognise, where did you get it from?"
- d) Other:

You then find out that she lived in Kenya for five years and is now living with her Kenyan partner. Therefore, she speaks English with an East African accent. What are your thoughts on this? Justify.

- a) None
- b) "That is interesting!"
- c) "I am sure that due to her accent she will have some trouble on a professional level in dealing with our European and American counterparts."
- d) "It was a good choice to have her in our multicultural team."
- e) Other:

For Discussion:

- 1) Do you think that the fact that she has that accent will make her speech less intelligible and, therefore, constitute a hindrance to that team's work?
- 2) Should she be hired to work in a European institution?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- 1) We often display prejudice against non-European performances of European languages.
- 2) Linguistic performance of European languages must follow European standards.

Non-European Performances of European Languages

Do you know any examples of non-standard pronunciations or expressions? For example, in Mozambique, the prefix “*des-*” is often used where we wouldn't expect it in European Portuguese, e.g. “*desconseguir*”. Furthermore, there are usages like “*o problema é sua*” – here, the possessive pronoun is used in the feminine because the interlocutor is female. Do you know of other examples in other languages?

Now, think about your language on a local scale:

- 1) Have you ever experienced that someone was prejudiced against non-standard performances of your local language, for instance against different “accents” or grammar?
- 2) Can you think of any concrete examples? For instance, in Portuguese the word “*peixe*” is often pronounced “*pêxe*”, or some pronunciations add an “*i*” sound to words, e.g. “*senhori*”. Find similar examples in your own language.
- 3) *In order to gain respect when speaking in public, a fluent standard pronunciation is essential. A strong local accent will earn you disregard with the majority of your audience.* – Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
- 4) Think about public figures like politicians. They often have diction and elocution lessons to improve their speech. But one of the aims of these lessons is to eliminate any non-standard pronunciation they may have.
 - a. Why do you think politicians attend those lessons?
 - b. Do you know of a politician or other public figure who attends / attended this type of lesson? Do you know in what way their speech / pronunciation changed?
 - c. Would you be prepared to attend such lessons if you had to speak in public a lot?