



ABOUT YOU

Answer the questions and compare your ideas.

- 1 What can we learn about someone from their accent – in their first language or in another language?
- 2 Can you think of any reasons why someone might want to change their accent?
- 3 How easy do you think it would be to change your accent?
- 4 Do we treat people differently depending on how they speak? Why / Why not?

Professor Higgins and Colonel Pickering are both experts on language. One night they go to Covent Garden – a flower market in London – where they talk to a girl selling flowers. Her name is Eliza Doolittle. The following day, Higgins and Pickering discuss their work in Higgins' house. Professor Higgins makes recordings of different accents.

1 Read the dialogue. As you read the dialogue think about this question.

What do you notice about how Mrs Pearce and Higgins behave towards the flower girl?

Pygmalion

George Bernard Shaw

Higgins: Well, I think that's **the whole show**.

Pickering: It's really amazing. I haven't **taken half of it in**, you know.

Higgins: Would you like to go over any of it again?

5 Pickering: No, thank you; not now. I'm quite **done** for this morning.

Higgins: Tired of listening to sounds?

Pickering: Yes. It's a terrible strain. I was rather proud because I can pronounce twenty-four distinct vowel sounds; but your hundred and thirty beat me. I can't hear a bit of difference between most of them.

10

Higgins: Oh, that **comes with** practice. You hear no difference at first; but you keep on listening, and presently you find they're all as different as A from B. What's the matter?

15 Mrs Pearce: A young woman wants to see you, sir.

Higgins: A young woman! What does she want?

Mrs Pearce: Well, sir, she says you'll be glad to see her when you know what she's come about. She's quite a common girl, sir. Very common indeed. I should have sent her away, only I thought perhaps you wanted her to talk into your machines. I hope I've not done wrong.

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Higgins: Oh, that's all right, Mrs Pearce. Has she an interesting accent?



Mrs Pearce: Oh, something dreadful, sir, really. I don't know how you can take an interest in it.

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Higgins: Let's have her up. Send her up, Mrs Pearce

Mrs Pearce: Very well, sir. It's for you to say.

Higgins: This is rather a bit of luck. I'll show you how I make records. We'll set her talking; and I'll get her on the phonograph so that you can turn her on as often as you like with the written **transcript** before you.

30

Mrs Pearce: This is the young woman, sir.

Higgins: Why, this is the girl from last night. She's no use: I've got all the records I want of her accent and I'm not going to waste any time on her. **Be off with you**: I don't want you.

35

Flower girl: Don't you be so cheeky. You ain't heard what I come for yet. Did you tell him I come in a taxi?

Mrs Pearce: Nonsense, girl! What do you think a gentleman like Mr Higgins cares what you came in?

40

Flower girl: Oh, we are proud! He **ain't above** giving lessons, not him: I heard him say so. Well, I ain't come here to ask for any **compliment**; and if my money's not good enough I can go elsewhere.

45

GLOSSARY

the whole show

everything

taken (something) in

understood or made sense of (something)

done

finished

comes with

develops or improves with

transcript

an exact written copy of something

be off with you

go away

ain't

an informal way of saying 'isn't' or 'aren't'

above

too good or important for something

compliment

a remark that expresses approval, admiration, or respect

2 Read the dialogue again and answer the questions.

- 1 Why do you think Higgins wants to show Pickering his research into speech and accents?
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- 2 Why does Higgins initially welcome the girl's arrival?
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- 3 What do you notice about the way the flower girl speaks?
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- 4 What do you think the flower girl wants?
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- 5 Do you think Higgins will now talk to the girl or send her away? Why? / Why not?
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.....

VOCABULARY

3 Replace the words and phrases in *italics* with the correct word or phrase from the box.

compliment isn't above the whole show
transcript

- 1 We went on a tour of the museum and saw *all the exhibits*.
- 2 She made a *nice positive comment* about my work.
- 3 Although he is the restaurant owner he *doesn't mind* helping in the kitchen.
- 4 Here's a *copy* of the conversation you heard in the listening exercise.

4 Match the sentence beginnings (1–4) with the sentence endings (a–d).

- 1 The talk she gave on astronomy was really interesting ...
- 2 I thought it was rude of him to say 'be off with you,' ...
- 3 Understanding different English accents is something ...
- 4 When you are done ...
 - a ... but it was a lot to take in.
 - b ... that comes with time.
 - c ... please make sure you tidy up the room before leaving.
 - d ... when we only went to ask if he wanted any help.

WRITING

5 Work in groups of six. What happens next? Imagine the writer has two ideas for how the play continues.

Idea 1

The girl asks for speaking lessons to improve her accent. / Higgins refuses. / Pickering offers to teach her. / Higgins and Pickering argue. / Mrs Pearce gets angry with the flower girl. / The flower girl accepts Pickering's offer and they leave.

Idea 2

The girl asks for speaking lessons to improve her accent. / Higgins agrees. / Pickering and Mrs Pearce try to persuade him not to. / The flower girl gets angry. / Higgins tries to calm everyone down. / Pickering and Mrs Pearce leave. / Higgins starts the first lesson with the girl.

Discuss the ideas and decide which you think is the best. Write the dialogue for the idea. Write about 20 lines of dialogue.

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SPEAKING

6 In your group, decide who is going to play the different characters. Practise what you have written and be prepared to perform it to the class.