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On The Edge

A free newsletter from ExpatEdge®

Answering Your Questions Regarding International Assignments

Accent Modification Training: An Overlooked Benefit for Foreign Nationals

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Dear Karen, Welcome to **On the Edge**, a monthly newsletter from **ExpatEdge®**, that answers your questions regarding international assignments. This month, Karen Yates, President of Global English Training in Dallas TX, answers your questions regarding accent modification training for foreign nationals.

- [Many of the foreign nationals my company brings on assignment to the U.S. are fluent in the English language, but are still routinely misunderstood because of their accent. Are training programs available that can help our transferees?](#)
- [What are the benefits of an accent modification training program and how do they work?](#)

Submit your questions for future issues to ontheedge@expatedge.com
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Many of the foreign nationals my company brings on assignment to the U.S. are fluent in the English language, but are still routinely misunderstood because of their accent. Are training programs available that can help our transferees?

Language training may be the most obvious form of support for foreign nationals in the United States. This may be the case for those transferees who speak little or no English, but many companies overlook those transferees who relocate from countries where English is a first or second language. Companies often assume that when a transferee relocates to the United States from an English speaking country such as India or Singapore, they have a command of the English language and need little assistance. Many companies are beginning to realize that a foreign national who is completely fluent in the English language may still be routinely misunderstood because of their accent. Accent modification training is provided by universities and private training companies where individuals are trained how to identify incorrect pronunciations and how to exercise their mouth and tongue to correct the problem. Other teaching methods include mimicry. This method helps students correct pronunciation, rhythm, and stress by watching videos of native language speakers, then mimicking what they hear and see, including body language. Most training programs incorporate individualized programs developed as a result of a comprehensive speech analysis. These programs typically last between ten and twenty sessions. Most programs can be provided one-on-one or in a

classroom setting. Classroom programs generally take longer and are less expensive than one-on-one tutoring, but one-on-one tutoring is more effective and quicker. For some, improvement can be seen immediately, but it can also take between three and six months for others.

What are the benefits of an accent modification training program and how do they work?

Companies bring foreign nationals to the United States at great expense. They are often experts in their field and are brought to this country because of their technical expertise, qualifications, and experience. Much of this value can be lost if they are unable to communicate effectively with their work colleagues, teams, or clients. Not only does this impact a transferee's effectiveness, but it can also lead to frustration and feelings of isolation. By making accent modification programs available to foreign nationals, organizations can maximize their expertise and knowledge. It can help ensure a positive return on the company's investment in the transferee and further the individual's career development. A foreign national's accent may impede their communication ability, even though they are fluent in English. Research indicates accents are caused mostly through differences in rhythm and stress, as well as difficulty in making certain sounds linguistically. A common example is putting an emphasis on the wrong syllable. Accent is almost impossible to improve without training. Speakers seldom can hear what they are mispronouncing. For example, certain regions mix up "L" and "R" sounds because they cannot hear the difference. They may not notice a mispronunciation, but others may not be able to understand what they trying to communicate. Accent and grammar are usually established by ages six and twelve respectively. In order to help someone change their accent, an instructor needs to be a linguistics specialist and have the knowledge of a speech therapist. Accents are influenced by the tongue, lip position, vocal cords, and air movement through the mouth or nose.

Instructors must be able to show students how to manipulate these in order to limit mispronunciations as a result of their accent. There is much that can be done to correct accent-related problems. As companies research the various options available, they will find that it is surprisingly cost effective and beneficial for both the company and the transferee.

Global English Training works with individuals and corporate clients to find the best linguistic solutions that meet their needs.

To learn more about the various language training programs available or how accent modification can help foreign nationals better communicate, contact Karen Yates, President, Global English Training, at (972) 687-9005. Please visit www.globalenglishtraining.com for additional information.

ExpatEdge® is a web-based solution to help HR departments support their international assignees. For further information see www.expatedge.com. [<http://www.expatedge.com>](http://www.expatedge.com) .
