Professors who speak English with an accent: A common situation requiring a practical approach
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Even heavily accented speech may be perfectly intelligible! UNINTELLIGIBILITY happens when the presence or absence of an aspect of pronunciation makes the listener think something else was said, or leaves the listener unable to figure out what was meant.

BUT if you're aware of phonetics, you may be able to characterize the person's accent and process their speech more effectively.

VOWEL LENGTH: English speakers are not often aware of vowel length and the fact that it's predictable in English-- short vowels precede voiceless consonants ("seat") and long ones are used elsewhere ("seed"). Therefore: an error in vowel length can cause an English-speaking listener to mis-hear the following consonant (RC Major, 2001). Listeners can use context to ascertain meaning. Also, these features are consistent in individuals-- once you recognize them, you can "translate" them.

MINIMAL PAIRS: These are pairs of words that both exist in a language, that only differ by a single sound, for example "they" and "day". These can be problematic for intelligibility when the speaker makes an error pronouncing the minimal difference. Listeners can use context to work out what the speaker logically meant to say. Speakers can use visual or printed material to establish clear contexts.

THE AFFECTIVE BARRIER: Non-Accent factors in intelligibility also include the emotional receptiveness of the listener (C.J. Sato, 1991). People frequently treat the Other with caution and emotional distance, which can in turn lessen the effort put into understanding accented speech. Therefore: reinforcing positive emotional connections can help to improve comprehension. Listeners can focus on the expertise of the speaker and what they can learn from him/her. Speakers can engage with listeners collaboratively on the level of discourse and the level of content.

PROCESSING TIME: Difficult-to-understand speech takes longer for the listener to process mentally (Munro & Derwing, 1995).

Therefore: minimizing distractions and giving extra time to think can help improve comprehension. Listeners can focus only on listening. Speakers can insert pauses for listeners to take notes after they process a chunk of discourse.