TED Talks on Language Prejudice and Power — C2 Level

A collection of advanced-level reflection and vocabulary tasks (60–90 min lessons)

John Baugh — The Significance of Linguistic Profiling

Vocabulary focus

- What does *linguistic profiling* mean, and how is it similar to *racial profiling*?
- Define *speech variety* and *code-switching*. How can they become social markers?

Discussion and reflection

- What are the real-world consequences of judging someone by their accent?
- How does Baugh connect language to institutional power or inequality?
- Do you think people are aware when they engage in linguistic profiling?

Nethra Gopalakrishnan — Accentric (Accent Discrimination)

Vocabulary focus

- Explain *accent discrimination* and how it differs from *linguistic prejudice*.
- What does *linguistic identity* mean, and how can it be threatened?

Discussion and reflection

- What emotions does the speaker associate with her accent?
- How does she describe society's perception of "native" and "non-native" English?
- How might accent discrimination affect someone's professional opportunities?

Safia — Accent Discrimination (TEDxYouth)

Vocabulary focus

- Define *assimilation* and *linguistic conformity*.
- What does *code-switching* reveal about identity and belonging?

Discussion and reflection

- What challenges does Safia face as a first-generation speaker?
- How does her experience illustrate hidden biases in education or media?
- What solutions does she suggest for overcoming prejudice toward accents?

Fahad Saeed — The Importance of Using Inclusive Language

Vocabulary focus

- Define *inclusive language* and *microaggression*.
- What is *linguistic sensitivity*, and how does it relate to respect?

Discussion and reflection

- According to Saeed, how can word choice perpetuate stereotypes?
- What role does language play in shaping workplace culture?

- Which examples of inclusive vs. exclusive language stood out to you most?

Safwat Saleem — Why I Keep Speaking Up, Even When People Mock My Accent

Vocabulary focus

- Define *mockery* and *resilience* in the context of communication.
- What does *linguistic authenticity* mean to you?

Discussion and reflection

- How does the speaker's stutter and accent become symbols of strength?
- What strategies does he use to challenge social expectations of "good speech"?
- Why is this talk a strong example of reclaiming one's linguistic identity?

Jamila Lyiscott — 3 Ways to Speak English

Vocabulary focus

- What is *code-meshing*, and how does Lyiscott use it in her performance?
- Define *linguistic double consciousness* — how can it describe her experience?

Discussion and reflection

- What message does Lyiscott convey about "standard English" and power?
- How does her spoken-word style itself challenge linguistic prejudice?
- What emotions and identities coexist in her three "ways" of speaking English?

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie — The Danger of a Single Story

Vocabulary focus

- Define *stereotype* and *narrative bias*.
- What does *representation* mean in the context of culture and language?

Discussion and reflection

- How does Adichie connect storytelling to prejudice and misunderstanding?
- In what ways can language create or challenge stereotypes?
- What parallels can you draw between "a single story" and linguistic prejudice?

Anne Curzan — What Makes a Word "Real"?

Vocabulary focus

- Define *prescriptivism* and *descriptivism* in linguistics.
- What does *lexical innovation* mean?

Discussion and reflection

- How does Curzan challenge the idea of "proper" English?
- What social power dynamics are hidden in language rules?
- Should dictionaries reflect usage or define standards? Why?

Lera Boroditsky — How Language Shapes the Way We Think

Vocabulary focus

- Define *linguistic relativity* and *cognitive framing*.
- What is *grammatical gender*, and how can it influence perception?

Discussion and reflection

- What examples show how language influences thought?
- Do you agree that speakers of different languages "see" the world differently?
- How might linguistic diversity help combat prejudice?