

Yo dude! What's with the 'tude?

Find out your English Language attitude!

Answer the questions below, add up the score and find out what kind of personal attitude you have towards English. You will find the marks for each answer in brackets.

1. Have you ever corrected someone else's spelling mistake?
 - a. Yes, I always do. (3)
 - b. Sometimes, depends on the person and the situation. (2)
 - c. No, not fussed about spelling. (1)

2. When out and about, do you:
 - a. Find yourself getting irritated with missing apostrophes and misspellings in signs. (3)
 - b. Sometimes notice misspellings and wrongly used apostrophes in signs. (2)
 - c. Never pay attention to spelling or punctuation in signs as long as they make sense. (1)

3. With regard to British English, is your favourite accent:
 - a. One from a rural part of the UK such as the West Country (Cornwall, Devon, Somerset etc.), Wales or Scotland? (2)
 - b. No particular one - not bothered about accents. (1)
 - c. An accent like your own, normal. (3)

4. With regard to British English still, what is the accent you dislike most?
 - a. Don't have a particularly strong dislike of any accent. (1)
 - b. A really posh one, like the Queen's English or very serious BBC newsreaders' accent. (2)
 - c. An accent from a city like Scouse (Liverpool), Mancunian (Manchester), Brummie (Birmingham), Glaswegian (Glasgow) or Cockney (London). (3)

5. When considering English as a global language spoken by millions of people, do you dislike any particular kinds of English?
 - a. American English - they just don't know how to use the language! (3)
 - b. Australian and New Zealand English because they can be hard to understand. (2)
 - c. Not really bothered, it's all English to me. (1)

6. When using technology such as word processing applications or social media, do you:
 - a. Never notice what kind of English the predictive text/spellchecker suggests. (1)
 - b. Get very annoyed by the fact the spellchecker/predictive text is automatically set to American English? (3)
 - c. Change the language setting on your word document / social media platform to make it British English. (2)

Note: Pick as many answers as apply to you. Do you think it is unacceptable for English teachers in colleges or secondary schools:

- a. To make spelling mistakes during a lesson? (1)
 - b. To have a strong regional accent? (1)
 - c. To not know a difficult grammatical term on the spot in the lesson? (1)
 - d. To speak a non-British variety of English (e.g. Australian, South-African, Indian etc.)? (1)
 - e. To speak English as a second language? (They did not grow up speaking English, but learnt it later in life) (1)
 - f. To speak English with a foreign accent (in the case of the teacher being a speaker of English as a second language?) (1)
 - g. To not always correct every punctuation, spelling or grammatical mistake in a student's work? (1)
7. The Oxford English Dictionary includes slang words. What do you think about this?
- a. It's fine - it is all part of the English language and you'd expect a detailed dictionary to have all forms of English. (1)
 - b. It's utterly unacceptable. A dictionary needs to teach people the proper use of English. (3)
 - c. Depends on what the slang words are. For example, I would not want offensive slang words to be included. (2)
8. Considering the issue of non-native speakers speaking English. Do you think that:
- a. It is quite appealing when they have a foreign accent. (3)
 - b. If you are learning English as a foreigner, you should aim for a received pronunciation accent. (2)
 - c. As long as people speaking English as a foreign language can make themselves understood, it doesn't really matter what their accent is like. (1)
9. Do you think it's important for a native English speaker to study another language?
- a. Not really. English is understood almost everywhere. (3)
 - b. Depends, some people are not very good at it, so it would be hard and upsetting potentially to make them study a foreign language. (2)
 - c. Definitely. Studying another language makes you a better user of your own language and it opens a different culture up as well. (1)

The score:

Add up all your points (as indicated by the number in brackets).

24 - 34 points: prescriptivist

This is a traditional attitude. We feel protective towards 'our' language, and feel that some ways of expressing yourself are better than others. Prescriptivists have a clear belief in right and wrong when it comes to language use and often they like to tell others how to correct their 'incorrect' language use.

Frequently, this attitude is based on a lack of understanding how languages really work and the fact that they change over time. Prescriptivists often think that sometime in the past the language was better and more accurately used.

23 - 17 points: medium prescriptivist, with some descriptivist tendencies

This is perhaps a more typical attitude amongst English Language students, who have realised through their A-level course that English (or any other language for that matter) comes in a huge range of regional and social varieties and that none of these is necessarily better than any other.

However, because language is such an important part of who we are, it is hard to keep your emotions out of it and at times, we do feel protective of our language. Often, we express inadvertent prejudice (e.g. by insisting that certain words are 'chavy', a speaker is basically pandering to class prejudice, associating certain lexis with working class culture and expressing a superior attitude to this culture). We don't mean to, but we cannot help but be influenced by our wider culture and society and their current ideologies.

9 - 16 points: descriptivist

This is the attitude to adopt when studying language(s). Descriptivism is a scientific approach to language - we know that people use language in a range of ways, so when studying language, we describe how it is being used in different regions, societies and cultures. We try to keep our emotions (and any value judgements) out.

This is not always easy! Everybody has favourite accents, words, or expressions. The descriptivist realises that these are emotions based on the stereotypes and ideologies attached to particular language use.