Hidden struggles of the non-native speaker in academia.
Issues to be discussed affect not only non-native English speakers, but anyone who moves for work to somewhere whose language is not their own.
How many non-native English speakers do we have within the astrophysics group?

vevox: 117-347-371

vevox.app
or
https://www.vevox.com/
Two VEVOX sessions

Native speakers:
117-347-371

Non-native speakers:
158-263-735
- Financial burden
- Time investment
- Worsening of already existing problems
- Perception of accents
- Cultural complexity and subtleties
- Countries whose language is not English can be less inclusive
Financial Burden
Financial burden

→ Learning a language costs money... but that's just the start!
Financial burden

Some visa types require an English certification.
How much do you think that costs?

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Non-native speakers #158-263-735
Financial burden

- Some visa types require an English certification.

BRL R$ 995,00

(Monthly salaries: BSc: R$ 400; MSc: R$ 1400; PhD: R$ 2200)
Financial burden

→ Some visa types require an English certification.

BRL R$ 995,00 (Monthly salaries: BSc: R$ 400; MSc: R$ 1400; PhD: R$ 2200)

→ People often have to travel to do that = more money.

Register your IELTS Test for UKVI

*Start by selecting your Country/Territory:

- Select Location -

  - Brazil

  - Sao Paulo
Financial burden

→ Some visa types require an English certification.

→ People often have to travel to do that = more money.

"Long waits for English-proficiency tests have also vexed Stefan Bon, a chemical engineer at the University of Warwick in Coventry, UK. Last year, one of his postdocs had to travel from Germany to the Netherlands to take the test, and the whole process — scheduling it, taking it and waiting for the results — took almost six months."

From: https://www.nature.com/articles/nj7643-139a
For students in particular, official translation of documents (certificates, transcripts) is also required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Pages</th>
<th>Translation Cost</th>
<th>Standard Certification Cost</th>
<th>Delivery Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>£175 + VAT</td>
<td>£10 + VAT</td>
<td>3-4 working days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial burden

And that's all on top of visa fees...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fees category</th>
<th>Current Fee</th>
<th>New fee from 6 April 2022 (unless noted in fee category)</th>
<th>Fee Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student - main applicant and dependants</td>
<td>£348</td>
<td>£363</td>
<td>£15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial burden

And that's all on top of visa fees... ...and (for the UK) health surcharge fees.

Cost for a year
You'll have to pay:

- £470 per year for a student or Youth Mobility Scheme visa, for example £940 for a 2-year visa
- £470 per year for visa and immigration applicants who are under the age of 18 at time of application
- £624 per year for all other visa and immigration applications, for example £3,120 for a 5-year visa
Financial burden

Situation is worsened for people moving with family! Total cost can easily reach a few thousand pounds... all to be paid before moving.

"When various charges, such as those for obtaining sponsorship documents, are tallied, a five-year visa for highly skilled work costs about £16,000 (US$21,000) for a researcher with a family of five"

From: https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-05632-w
Financial burden: how to help

➔ Be aware of the situation, bring it up when hiring someone from overseas.
➔ Tell people about Warwick's relocation package:
  https://warwick.ac.uk/services/humanresources/internal/payroll/expenses/relocation/
➔ Put pressure on 'the powers that be' to change things...
Time Investment
Learning and adapting to a new culture is a long process.

- Learning a new language is hard.
  - Applies to non-native English speakers, but also anyone moving to a new country where they speak a different language than their mother tongue(s).
  - Language courses, learning on your own.
  - Need **time** to learn, to process information.
  - Language certifications / exams.
**Time Investment**

- **Scientific / informal language**: need both
  - Articles, formal communication with colleagues, job applications...
  - Social activities
- **Bureaucracy (mostly related to financial burden)**
  - Official document translation
  - Visas
Time Investment

Work environment is in English → Anything work-related can take longer

- Reading / writing articles, applications, proposals
- Sending emails, communication, overthinking
- Preparing talks
- Teaching: presentations, handouts, tests
Time Investment

Also outside of work

- Visiting family/friends back home can take longer.
- All holiday time = family visiting. If not, can feel guilty, mental health?
- Travel constraints / requirements
  - Different in home / residence / destination country
  - Not being able to travel at all
Worsening of already existing problems
Imposter Syndrome

➜ Not being able to explain what you mean and/or formulate an idea/question like you want to
➜ Struggling when trying to follow a talk
➜ Is using simple English going to make me sound stupid?
Anxiety

- Social situations
  - Asking & answering questions
  - Networking
  - Giving talks
  - Having to repeat sentences
- Loud locations, multiple conversations
- Non-work life: calling doctor’s etc.
Physical Disabilities

- Having to set up a whole new support network in your non-native language
- Figuring out a new health care system
  - Do I get the same care/medication/etc. that I’m used to/that I need?
  - Explain your medical history again, in your 2nd language
So many more ...

→ Dyslexia
→ Neurodiversity
→ Deafness, blindness
→ Any chronic illness
→ Mental health
→ Homesickness
→ ...

→ ...
Perception of Accents
Perception of Accents

Accents: Distinctive variations in the pronunciation of a language.

- Provide information about a person’s background (locality, socio-economic status, ethnicity).
- Shape our perception of people.
- Can lead to stereotype-based judgement & discrimination.
How much influence do you think your accent has in the way people perceive you?

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How much influence do you think other people's accent have in the way you perceive them?

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Perception of Accents

You don’t **look** like a scientist.

You don’t **sound** like a scientist.
Perception of Accents

This seems to be a subjective topic and research seems to lead to different conclusions, but based on our experiences and a quick read of some papers...

► An accent can have more influence on how we are perceived than the way we look.

► Strong-accented speakers can be perceived more negatively than speakers with native accents.

► Perception depends on the listener’s own background and accent.

► Awareness and more exposure to different accents can reduce biases.
Perception of Accents

Other than how we are perceived, sometimes an accent can make simple communication difficult.

If a speaker has an accent we are not used to, or if we have an accent we think won’t be understood easily, it is harder to:

- Follow a seminar / conference talk / lecture
- Ask / answer questions
- Have informal conversations
- Do anything involving oral communication

This can have negative consequences:

- Less citable work
- Less networking
- Less collaborations
- Bad feedback from students / supervisors
CULTURAL COMPLEXITY AND SUBTLETIES
What do you think could be an issue when it comes to cultural differences?

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What do you think could be an issue when it comes to cultural differences?

Language subtleties e.g.
“This is shit” vs “This is the shit”
or accentuation
“I didn’t steal your bag”
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Conversations at lunch/pubs:
- Crosswords
- Too loud
- Very draining
- More than one conversation happening at once
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From very formal (Germany, Spain) to very informal (Brazil)
From very direct (Germany) to very indirect (UK)

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or **accentuation**
“I didn’t steal your bag”

**Email conventions:**
From very formal (Germany, Spain) to very informal (Brazil)
From very direct (Germany) to very indirect (UK)

**Non-work life:**
Complicated in its own way
e.g. council tax, food, GPs, getting a bank account, etc.

**Conversations at lunch/pubs:**
- Crosswords
- Too loud
- Very draining
- More than one conversation happening at once

**Email conventions:**
From very formal (Germany, Spain) to very informal (Brazil)
From very direct (Germany) to very indirect (UK)
Countries whose language is not English
When English is not the language...
Even if the work is done in English, socialising is often done in the native language.
Even if the work is done in English, socialising is often done in the native language. This can lead to a feeling of isolation.
Have you ever felt isolated due to a language barrier?

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Which situations do you think could lead to a feeling of isolation for those who are non-native speakers?

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When English is not the language...

And often, all paperwork and bureaucracies are also only in the local language.
Liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen,

am Mittwoch, 12.02.2020 findet um 13:00 Uhr in Haus 27, Raum 2.27.1.001 (Kleiner Chemiehörsaal) eine allgemeine Sicherheitsunterweisung statt. Die Teilnahme ist für alle Kolleg*innen auf Haushaltsstellen verpflichtend. Nichtdeutschsprachige Postdocs u. ä. auf Drittmittelverträgen können durch den jeweiligen dienstvorgesetzten Professor die Sicherheitsunterweisung erhalten.

→ Mandatory safety briefing... but only if you can speak German.
How to help:

- Offer help with local bureaucracies.
- Tell people about resources available.
- Check if university offers language courses and inform newcomers.
- Try to include the person in conversations.
- Minimise the use of local slang, and explain it if necessary.
- Speak slowly if needed.