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Two Minutes With

Karen Yates

President, Global English Training

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by [Conrad Wilson](#)

Staff Writer

Karen Yates, president and owner of Global English Training, works with students and professionals whose native language isn't English and who have accents that make them difficult to understand. She teaches at Southern Methodist University and University of Texas Southwestern Medical School at Dallas and currently is working with Dallas Mavericks player DJ Mbenga. Yates was interviewed by Staff Writer Conrad Wilson.

Q. What does your program seek to accomplish?

A. The program is not about removing the accent, but it is about removing a language barrier. If a person can communicate better with their boss or clients that is a real asset for them. An accent that is too hard to understand is a hurdle in a career. Those are people who won't get promotions, but maybe should.

Q. How do you teach someone with an accent to communicate more clearly?

A. When you have an accent you cannot change what you cannot hear. I work on speech sounds and rhythm. Speech sounds come from working with a CD and having the individual listen to the way they speak. Rhythm is improved through mimicry and reworking the muscles in the mouth.

Q. What non-native English speakers have the greatest difficulty?

A. Thai and Vietnamese people often have the greatest difficulty speaking English. The sounds and muscles are so different. I tell those students that if I were to try to speak Thai or Vietnamese, the reverse would be true for me.

conradwilson@bizjournals.com 214-706-7118

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