ACTOR-OBSERVER BIAS

A simple presentation guide • World English 3

1. What Is Actor-Observer Bias?

Actor-observer bias is a way of thinking that makes us explain our own behavior differently from other people's behavior. When someone else makes a mistake, we may blame their personality. We might say they are lazy, careless, or irresponsible. But when we make the same mistake, we often blame the situation. We might say we were tired, busy, or in a hurry. This happens because we know our own situations and problems, but we don't always know what other people are going through.

2. Why Does It Happen?

Different points of view: We know our own problems and reasons, but we don't know everything about other people's lives.

Protecting ourselves: Sometimes, we don't want to accept that we made a mistake. So, we find reasons to explain our behavior.

Lack of information: We only see what other people do. We don't always know why they do it.

3. What Are Its Effects?

Problems in relationships: We may misunderstand friends or family because we don't know the reasons for their actions.

Unfair judgments: We may make excuses for our own mistakes but criticize others for similar mistakes.

Problems at work or school: People may blame others instead of trying to understand what happened.

4. Everyday Examples

At school: A student fails a test and says, "The questions were too difficult." But when a classmate fails, the student says, "He didn’t study enough."

In traffic: A driver runs a red light and says, "I was in a hurry." But when they see another driver do the same thing, they think, "That driver is careless!"

At work: An employee misses a deadline and says, "I had some unexpected problems." But when a co-worker misses a deadline, the employee thinks, "He’s lazy!"

5. How Can We Avoid This Bias?

Think about other people's situations: Try to understand their point of view before judging.

Be honest with yourself: When you make a mistake, think about your own responsibility.

Talk to people: Ask questions instead of making quick judgments.

Show empathy: Try to understand other people's feelings and problems.

Conclusion

We don't always know what other people are going through. Before judging someone, we should stop, think, and try to understand their situation. Being fair to others also means being honest about our own mistakes.

GLOSSARY

Useful words and phrases for your presentation

Word / Phrase	Simple English Definition
Actor-observer bias	A way of thinking that makes us judge our own and others' actions differently.
Psychological	Related to the mind and behavior.
Tendency	Something that a person often does or feels.
Behavior	The way someone acts.
Explain	To make something clear or easy to understand.
Blame	To say someone is responsible for something bad.
Character	The qualities that make someone who they are.
External factors	Things outside a person that affect a situation.
Circumstances	The conditions or situations around an event.
Perspective	The way someone sees or thinks about something.
Experience	Something that happens to you or that you do.
Self-protection	Trying to protect yourself from feeling bad or responsible.
Responsibility	Something that you should take care of or accept.
Misunderstanding	A situation where people understand something incorrectly.
Unfair	Not treating people equally or correctly.
Assumption	Something you believe is true without knowing all the facts.
Deadline	The latest time to finish something.
Unexpected	Something you didn't know would happen.
Perspective-taking	Trying to understand a situation from another person's point of view.
Self-awareness	Understanding your own feelings and behavior.
Empathy	The ability to understand other people's feelings.
Reduce	To make something smaller or less.
Criticize	To say what is wrong with someone or something.
Judge	To form an opinion about someone or something.
Careless	Not giving enough attention to what you are doing.
Irresponsible	Not doing what you should do.
Lazy	Not wanting to work or make an effort.
In a hurry	Doing something quickly because you don't have much time.
Point of view	The way someone thinks about a situation.
Go through	To experience a difficult situation or process.

Useful Expressions

Expression	Simple English Meaning
Blame someone for something	Say someone is responsible for something.
Make excuses	Give reasons to explain a mistake or problem.

Expression	Simple English Meaning
Make a mistake	Do something wrong.
Jump to conclusions	Make a judgment too quickly, without all the facts.
Put yourself in someone else's shoes	Imagine how another person feels.
See things from someone's point of view	Try to understand how another person thinks.
Take responsibility for something	Accept that something is your duty or fault.

CRITICAL THINKING

10 questions to discuss after the presentation

1. Why do people sometimes blame others for mistakes but make excuses for their own mistakes?

Possible ideas: Because they know their own problems but don't know other people's situations.

2. Do you think it's fair to judge someone without knowing their situation? Why or why not?

Possible ideas: No, because there may be reasons we don't know about.

3. Have you ever blamed someone for something and later discovered there was a good reason for their behavior?

Possible ideas: For example, I thought my friend was ignoring me, but later I found out they were very busy.

4. Imagine your friend is late for an important meeting. What could be some reasons for being late?

Possible ideas: There could be traffic, an emergency, or a problem with transportation.

5. Why is it easier to make excuses for ourselves than for other people?

Possible ideas: Because we know our own feelings and problems, and we want to protect ourselves.

6. Can actor-observer bias damage friendships or family relationships? How?

Possible ideas: Yes. People may misunderstand each other and have unnecessary arguments.

7. Do you think social media makes people judge others too quickly? Why?

Possible ideas: Yes. People often see only photos or short videos, not the whole story.

8. Is it always wrong to judge someone's behavior?

Possible ideas: No. Sometimes we need to judge actions, especially when safety or fairness is involved. But we should avoid judging someone's whole personality too quickly.

9. What can you do when you notice that you are making excuses for your own mistakes?

Possible ideas: I can be honest, accept responsibility, and try to do better next time.

10. What would the world be like if people tried to understand each other's situations before judging them?

Possible ideas: There might be fewer arguments, more understanding, and better relationships.

Presentation tip: Don't memorize every word. Understand the main ideas, use your own examples, and speak clearly. Use the suggested answers to prepare, but try to express your own opinions.