



ENGLISH

AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE:

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

Tony T.N. Hung

Language Centre, Hong Kong Baptist University

Unit 3-1

INTRODUCTION



- Rise of English as a global or world language in second half of 20th century

- Emergence and development of ‘New Englishes’ around the world (e.g. India, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong, etc.)

- Irony: Just when English is turning into a global *lingua franca*, it is also giving rise to many new varieties – thus potentially undermining its very effectiveness as a global language.



❖ **Issue of ‘international intelligibility’**

❖ **Should British RP, or General American, be the international model for second language learners all over the world?**

• **English in the 21st century is no longer the exclusive property of Britain or U.S.A. or any single group of countries or speakers. It is a *global* language – therefore variety is its very essence**

• **Language and identity**

- **‘Intelligibility’ is not a matter of pronunciation alone: lexical, grammatical, discoursal and cultural factors are also important**
- **Importance of good *articulation* -- clarity, voice projection, etc. These are *universal* qualities independent of any particular accent**

- ‘Intelligible’ *to whom?*
- English in the 21st century is a *global* language, where ‘non-native speakers’ increasingly outnumber ‘native speakers’. Any consideration of ‘international intelligibility’ should take ‘NNS’ into account as well.
- ‘Native’ accents of English are not necessarily more intelligible to an *international* audience than educated non-native accents (cf. Smith & Rafiqzad 1979).

A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

- Due to natural processes of language acquisition and the language environment, English learners everywhere will *always* speak English with an identifiable local accent.
- The teacher should not try to eradicate that accent and inculcate a foreign accent, but accept the local accent as a *basis* to build on, and to ‘modify’ it only where necessary, for reasons of international intelligibility.
- A modern approach to the teaching of pronunciation will need to be *pragmatic* rather than *purist*.

Factors to consider in deciding whether to teach a particular phonological feature or sound not generally found in local varieties of English:

- 1) *how useful* is the given feature or sound in distinguishing different words in English?**
- 2) *how frequent* is the occurrence of the given feature or sound -- (a) within the system, and (b) across different varieties of English?**

3) how *difficult* is it for our learners to acquire the given feature or sound?

4) how *appropriate* is the given feature or sound for our learners? In particular, will it actually *impede* intelligibility for some groups of speakers (including our own) more than it enhances intelligibility for others?



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HOW USEFUL?

HOW USEFUL?

- All languages depend on **contrast**.
- Some contrasts do a lot of ‘work’ in distinguishing different words
- E.g. [i:] vs. [ɪ], as in *bead/bid, bean/bin, beat/bit, deem/dim, deep/dip, heed/hid, heel/hill, peak/pick, leave/live, feast/fist, etc.*
- [t] vs. [d], as in *tin/din, tip/dip, ten/den, too/do, team/deem, town/down, tuck/duck, time/dime, bit/bid, neat/need, etc.*

Neutralisation of contrasts in NVE's:

- ◆ [ɪ] / [i:]

hit vs. *heat* (HK English)

bit vs. *beat*

(Chinese, Singaporean, Japanese English)

this is a bit vs. *this is a beat* (Mongolian English)

- ◆ [e] / [æ] *bet* vs. *bat*

[u:] / [ʊ] *hoot* vs. *hood* (HK English)

[ɒ] / [ɔ:] *cot* vs. *caught* (Philippine English)

- ◆

[s] / [z] *seal* vs. *zeal*, *racing* vs. *razing* (HK English)

[t] / [θ] *tin* vs. *thin* (Philippine English)





















VOWEL CONTRASTS IN CHINESE ENGLISH:

Speaker 1 – Beijing

Speaker 2 – Min

Speaker 3 – Wu

Speaker 4 - Cantonese

		B	M	W	C
1. <i>bit</i>	7. <i>beat</i>				
5. <i>bet</i>	11. <i>bat</i>				
2. <i>foot</i>	8. <i>food</i>				
4. <i>cot</i>	10. <i>court</i>				
6. <i>cart</i>	12. <i>cut</i>				

- **Not all contrasts are equally useful or important.**
- **E.g. [u:] vs. [ʊ] -- extremely few minimal pairs, e.g. *pool/pull, fool/full*.**
- **[ʃ] vs. [ʒ] -- almost no minimal pairs.**
- **Makes little or no difference to intelligibility if *hood* and *hoot* are pronounced with the same vowel [u] instead of [ʊ] and [u:], or *pleasure* and *vision* with [ʃ] instead of [ʒ], as [pleʃə] and [viʃən], etc.**

- **Useful guide to ‘functional load’ (or contrastive value) – table of minimal pairs:**
<http://www.marlodge.supanet.com/wordlist/index.html>

[i:/ɪ] (e.g. *beat/bit*): 471; [e/æ] (*bet/bat*): 302; [ʌ/ɑ:] (*duck/dark*): 172; [ɒ/ɔ:] (*cot/caught*): 157; [æ/eə] (*dad/dared*): 31; [ʊ/u:] (*pull/pool*): 18.

[r/l] (e.g. *rice/lice*): 589; [r/w] (*reed/weed*): 213; [v/f] (*van/fan*): 130; [θ/t] (*thin/tin*): 117; [ð/d] (*then/den*): 58; [w/v] (*wet/vet*): 52; [ð/θ] (*either/ether*): 8; [ʒ/ʃ] (*confusion/Confucian*): 5.

Minimal Pairs - Consonants

	b	t	d	k	g	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	h	m	n	ŋ	l	r	j	w	tʃ	dʒ	null	vowel
p	612	882	524	1009	401	570	227	129	66	613	222	216	3	377	620	561	84	683	374	87	433	296	197	916	139
b		431	400	458	350	411	129	63	34	342	79	186	2	228	385	270	37	346	289	64	196	225	179		
t			682	731	319	405	232	117	57	1258	379	247	8	231	453	517	109	575	318	46	216	238	248		
d				466	250	332	285	126	58	481	2660	242	7	185	414	484	1619	507	440	39	142	206	208		
k					341	464	176	112	42	472	214	213	4	272	413	460	87	470	229	50	193	211	155		
g						196	79	52	18	201	54	145	1	125	239	240	61	207	155	26	109	97	108		
f							130	50	35	371	73	137	2	185	312	236	22	272	218	49	178	156	171		
v								25	30	204	148	49	2	66	187	222	83	233	112	7	52	63	93		
θ									8	91	59	41	2	36	60	67	10	65	37	10	42	42	36		
ð										28	34	18	2	15	63	53	7	45	18	3	19	22	16		
s											232	220	9	217	361	384	51	467	299	42	169	182	184		
z												65	11	24	159	317	1135	253	50	8	17	102	94		
ʃ													5	129	179	148	83	180	155	34	105	115	103		
ʒ														none	9	6	none	6	none	none	1	3	1		
h															226	139	none	216	225	70	191	95	101		
m																359	59	513	259	52	150	172	175		
n																	78	681	239	35	142	151	147		
ŋ																		58	2	none	none	21	76		
l																			589	68	204	182	202		
r																				58	213	120	151		
j																					48	28	45		
w																						61	93		
tʃ																							92		
	b	t	d	k	g	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	h	m	n	ŋ	l	r	j	w	tʃ	dʒ	null	vowel

Minimal Pairs – Vowels

	i	e	æ	ɔ:	ɒ	ɔ:	ʊ	u:	ʌ	ɜ:	ə	eɪ	aɪ	ɔɪ	ɔʊ	aʊ	ɪə	eə	ʊə	null	cons
i:	471	338	394	316	362	489	82	381	301	309	66	561	532	98	527	157	133	144	38	170	64
ɪ		316	498	183	383	271	61	222	456	178	362	334	257	59	358	88	48	28	7	1348	
e			302	142	227	212	43	130	233	147	36	250	222	57	213	118	32	30	11		
æ				179	409	179	56	159	425	160	11	256	237	29	240	103	23	31	9		
ɔ:					172	156	34	75	172	127	11	184	125	37	169	51	46	48	22	61	
ɒ						157	73	141	300	153	1	218	172	22	203	96	26	19	8	46	
ɔ:							56	142	168	180	21	251	207	71	243	106	82	92	23	88	
ʊ								18	19	41	1	61	52	3	28	15	6	8	3		
u:									119	74	9	234	200	45	208	97	26	33	11		
ʌ										126	4	211	148	29	181	85	18	20	7		
ɜ:											8	182	141	33	149	63	35	41	14		
ə												82	20	3	48	3	none	7	none		
eɪ													353	90	336	154	41	47	15		
aɪ														56	269	166	43	33	13		
ɔɪ															75	33	14	7	6		
ɔʊ																115	42	44	13		
aʊ																	22	18	6		
ɪə																		67	22		
eə																			19		
	i	e	æ	ɔ:	ɒ	ɔ:	ʊ	u:	ʌ	ɜ:	ə	eɪ	aɪ	ɔɪ	ɔʊ	aʊ	ɪə	eə	ʊə	null	cons



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HOW FREQUENT & HOW DIFFICULT?

HOW FREQUENT?

- **Order of frequency of sounds in English speech (based on RP, from Gimson 2001):**
- **Vowels:** ə, ɪ, e, aɪ, ʌ, eɪ, iː, əʊ, æ, ɒ, ɔː, uː, ʊ, ɑː, aʊ, ɜː, ɛə, ɪə, ɔɪ, ʊə
- **Consonants:** n, t, d, s, l, ð, r, m, k, w, z, v, b, f, p, h, ŋ, g, ʃ, j, dʒ, tʃ, θ, ʒ

- **Frequency should not be taken in isolation, but in the context of the number of *different words* in which a given sound occurs, and its *contrastive value***
- **Frequency of a given sound across *different varieties* of English in the world, especially the better known or more widely spoken varieties. E.g. the [i:]/[ɪ] and [e]/[æ] contrasts occur more widely than [u:]/[ʊ] and [ɔ:]/[ɒ] across varieties of English.**

HOW DIFFICULT?

- **The acquisition of a second language is influenced (negatively or positively) by the learner's mother tongue, and by the linguistic environment.**
- **Some phonological features or sounds will prove more difficult for our learners than others.**
- **In teaching a difficult sound or feature, we will need to balance cost and benefit – is it *worth* all that effort?**

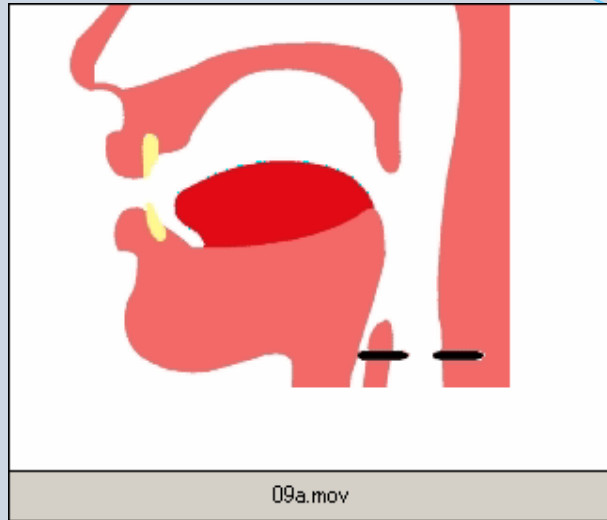
Segmental phonology (articulation of individual sounds):

- **Vowel distinctions ([i:]~[ɪ] etc.) not easy to acquire -- do not involve any clearly identifiable points of contact between two articulators, but different *degrees* of tongue height and frontness**
- **[i:/ɪ] and [e/æ] are the most worth acquiring, followed by [ʌ/ɑ:] and [ɒ/ɔ:], but [ʊ/u:] is hardly worth the effort**

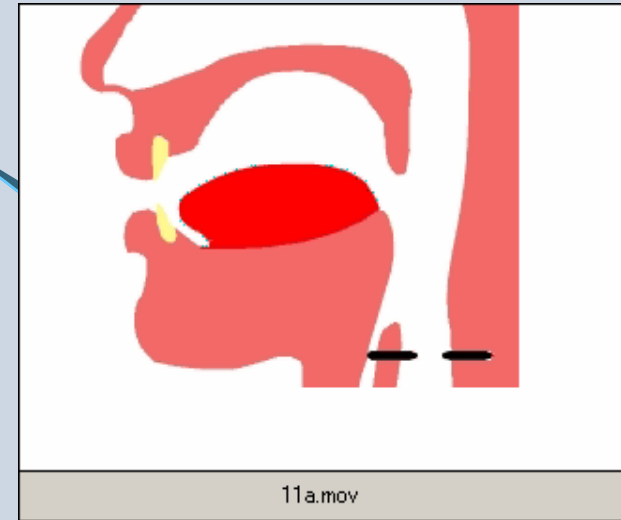
- **Diphthongs [eɪ], [oʊ], [eə] -- probably not worth special attention, as [e:], [o:] and [æ:] are acceptable (and gaining currency worldwide)**
- **Voiceless consonants (e.g. [s], [f], [θ], [ʃ]) are generally easier to acquire than voiced (e.g. [z], [v], [ð], [ʒ])**
- **[ð] and [ʒ] probably not worth the trouble; substitution by [d] and [ʃ]**

USE OF ANIMATED GRAPHICS

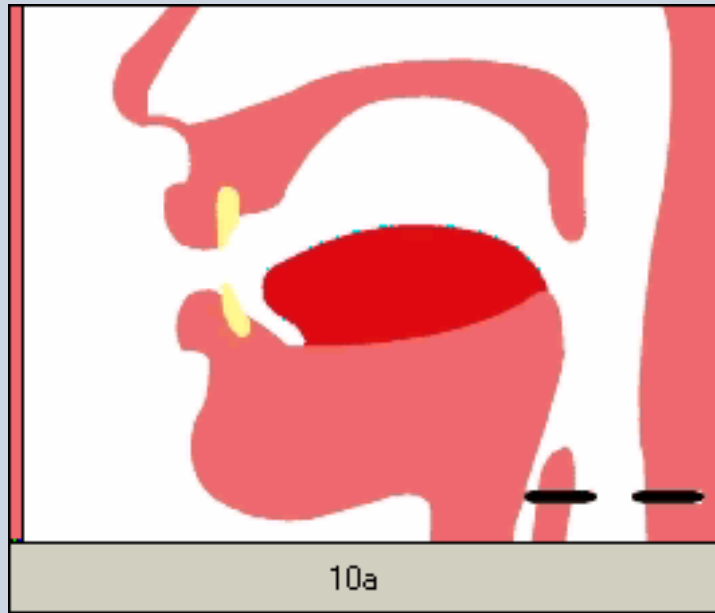
[θ]



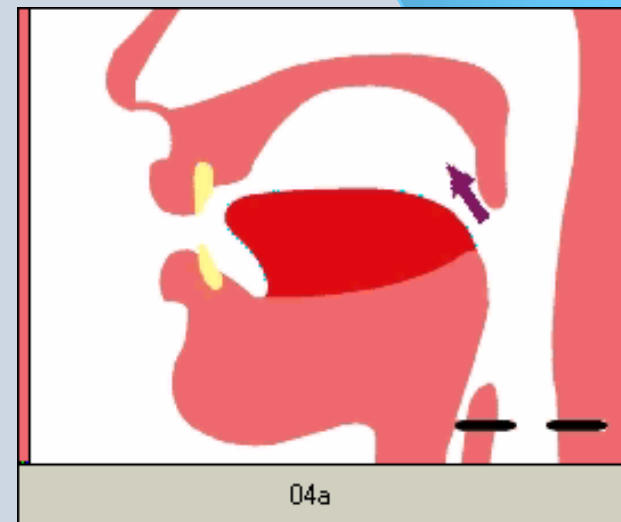
[s]



[ð]



[d]



Suprasegmental phonology (word stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.):

Word stress:

- Important for intelligibility, especially in shorter words -- 2- or 3-syllable, e.g. *'marshal vs. mar'shal, im'portant vs. 'important*
- Pitch as primary marker for stressed syllables



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HOW APPROPRIATE?

HOW APPROPRIATE?

Rhythm:

- **‘stress-timed rhythm’: intervals between stressed syllables are more or less equal**

(e.g. in’credible expla’nations vs. ab’surd ‘theories)

- **Necessitates considerable speeding up and reduction of unstressed syllables**

- **Virtually all New Varieties of English have ‘syllable-timed rhythm’, i.e. each syllable occupies more or less equal space.**
- **Extremely difficult to teach stress-timing to these learners.**
- **Even if successful, how does it help intelligibility?**
- **Most speakers of NVE’s would find stress-timed English *less intelligible* than syllable-timed, on account of the massive reduction and speeding up of unstressed syllables.**

Intonation:

- Also extremely difficult to teach.
- Do we really need to acquire *all* aspects of native-like intonation -- and would we *want* to?
- Three main functions of intonation:
- (1) Attitudinal and emotive: highly culture-specific and subjective, varies greatly even among native varieties of English and among individual speakers.

- **(2) Grammatical: Intonation as a marker of grammatical functions, e.g. declarative vs. interrogative ('He is here' vs. 'He is here?').**
- **(3) Information Structure: Use of intonation boundaries to mark out information units, and use of focus to highlight prominent or new information.**
- ***Grammatical* and *information-structure* functions can enhance intelligibility; also less difficult to acquire than attitudinal -- less subjective and more transparent (e.g. intonation group = information unit, focus = prominence).**

Recommended Readings

- Hung, T.T.N. (2002) 'English as a global language and the issue of international intelligibility'. *Asian Englishes*, Vol.5, No.1, pp.4-17.
- Jenkins, J. (2001) *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford University Press.