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# New Pronunciation en route to world Englishes

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## Introduction

Since English is the dominant choice of language in international settings, there are now more non-native speakers (NNS) of English than native speakers (NS) (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 8). Previously, learners of English as a second or foreign language generally opted for British or American English as the standard model, but it can now be questioned whether this is appropriate. A large proportion of NNS interactions do not involve a NS (Jenkins, 2007), and NS styles of pronunciation are not necessarily the most intelligible in international settings.

This chapter first looks at historical aspects of standardization and the emergence of new varieties of English. It then discusses crucial issues concerning intelligibility, giving examples from a case study involving conversations between non-native speakers. The chapter finally summarizes the current status of standards for pronunciation in world Englishes, considers the challenges that are faced in a globalized world, and attempts to speculate briefly on what the future might hold.

## Historical perspectives

The standard variety of a language is generally promoted in the classroom and in society. The dominant standard varieties for the pronunciation of English have in the past been received pronunciation (RP) for British English and General American (GA) for American English, but newer standard varieties have emerged in countries such as Australia and New Zealand (Schneider, 2007). Before looking into the emergence of new varieties of English, this section will briefly describe the historical process of standardization in spoken English.

The emergence of norms for English began with the standardization of writing. In the early fifteenth century, official documents were written in English in the variety known as Chancery Standard, which was based on London usage (Beal, 2012, p. 70). The introduction of the printing press in Britain by William Caxton in the late fifteenth century accelerated the process of standardization, as written conventions became more established once the language was widely printed (Fennell, 2001, p. 157). However, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there still continued to be a great deal of variation in terms of morphology and syntax, and also in spelling, which reflected regional differences in pronunciation.

A standard type of spoken English only emerged in the late eighteenth century, when pronunciation began to be codified. Dictionaries showing pronunciation were published by Thomas Sheridan in 1780 and John Walker in 1791 (Hickey, 2014), both of whom selected the speech of educated Londoners as their model. This is not surprising as London was the political, legal, administrative, commercial and cultural centre of Britain (Mugglestone, 2003, p. 13). Baugh and Cable (2002, p. 314) further note that RP in British English is spoken ‘with a fair degree of uniformity by cultivated people in all parts of the country’ and that it is class-based rather than a regional dialect. Differences between British and American English were reinforced with the publication of Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* in 1812 (Hickey, 2014, p. 344), which asserted that the two varieties are distinct in terms of spelling, pronunciation and lexis.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the emergence of varieties such as Australian English and New Zealand English, and they have now become established as mature varieties (Schneider, 2007). This can be seen, for example, in the publication of dictionaries of each variety to assert its distinctiveness from other varieties of English (Butler, 2002; Deverson, 1999).

Today, English is the world’s leading international language and it is used in many countries in politics, business, education, technology and the media (Jenkins, 2009, p. 38). Crystal (2003, p. 59) states that the status of English as the world’s primary global language is mainly due to the expansion of British colonial power towards the end of the nineteenth century and the emergence of the United States as a leading economic power in the twentieth century. The use of English worldwide has resulted in the emergence of new varieties of English as the language has become indigenized in many non-native English-speaking countries (Schneider, 2011). The term ‘world Englishes’ is used to refer to these newly emergent varieties, and the most influential model to represent them is the three circles of English, in which the circles ‘represent the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts’ (Kachru, 1992, p. 356). The inner circle represents the traditional base of English where it is spoken as the mother tongue, including countries such as Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The outer circle involves the spread of English in former colonies, where English may be used in the administration and it plays a second language role, including places such as Singapore, India and Nigeria. The expanding circle includes countries where English is a foreign language and has no official status, such as China, Japan and Germany.

English today is also used as a lingua franca throughout the world, and the term English as lingua franca (ELF) can be defined as ‘English as it is used as a contact language among speakers from different first languages’ (Jenkins, 2009, p. 143). Jenkins (2009, p. 147) proposes a set of essential pronunciation features called the lingua franca core (LFC), which aims at ensuring mutual intelligibility in international communication. Some of the features included in the LFC are:

- all consonant sounds except /θ/, /ð/, and dark /l/;
- contrasts between long and short vowels;
- avoidance of consonant deletion in word-initial clusters, and only certain deletions permissible in word-medial and final positions;
- placement of nuclear (tonic) stress.

Excluded from the LFC are /θ/ and /ð/, vowel quality, reduced vowels, word stress, rhythm and intonational tones. Jenkins (2000) asserts that students should be allowed to choose how

to realize these features of pronunciation, and this gives rise to substantial variation in English around the world without compromising intelligibility. Indeed, Pakir (2001, p. 84) suggests that ELF represents multiple identities because of nativization of the language as it is used in different geographical speech communities. Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) note that a number of distinct regional varieties seem to be emerging rather than one global English lingua franca, so the English lingua franca spoken in South East Asia may be distinct from that used across Africa (Gramley & Pätzold, 2004). However, Kirkpatrick and Deterding (2011, p. 375) also suggest that some phonological features seem to occur in many new varieties of English throughout the world, including the substitution of dental fricatives, the reduction of final consonant clusters, the avoidance of vowel reduction and the use of syllable- based rhythm.

In summary, the emergence of varieties of English involves new ways of speaking that deviate from the traditional standards. One key issue is whether these emergent styles of pronunciation lead to loss of intelligibility in international settings. This question is addressed in the next section.

## Critical issues

Trudgill (1999) states that the standard of spoken English is hard to define, and Gupta (2006, p. 97) suggests that this is partly because it is not established by government bodies or academies but by 'a loose consensus of writers'. However, there exist pronunciation dictionaries such as Wells (2008) and Jones, Roach, Hartman and Setter (2003) that provide pronunciation guidelines for RP and GA, and also comprehensive reference works such as Cruttenden (2014), who prefers the term General British (GB) instead of RP to refer to the standard variety of British English.

In the past, learning English as a second or foreign language generally involved adopting either RP or GA as a model, and there was an expectation for interlocutors to try to speak like a NS in order to be easily understood. In reality, however, as a large proportion of interactions in English in international settings nowadays do not involve a NS, imitation of NS English is increasingly regarded as inappropriate. This is not just because many NNS do not want to sound like someone from the UK or the USA, but also because some features of NS pronunciation fail to enhance the intelligibility of speech in international contexts (Smith & Nelson, 1985). In an early study on the intelligibility of NNS and NS English spoken by people from nine countries (Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and the USA), ratings show that the NS from the USA was judged to be one of the least intelligible speakers by listeners from Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand (Smith & Rafiqzad, 1979). It was thus concluded that NS pronunciation is not necessarily more intelligible than that of NNS varieties.

Smith and Nelson (1985, p. 333) also note that it is important to consider the listener's expectations of the speaker in influencing their perception of how intelligible the speaker is. In fact, the listeners' negative attitudes and low expectations of speakers can influence their perception of the pronunciation of the speakers as incomprehensible (Derwing, Rossiter & Munro, 2002; Munro, Derwing & Morton, 2006). For example, Lindemann (2010) looked at ratings by native US English speakers about the intelligibility of non-native Korean- accented English, and the results show that those who had a negative attitude towards the non-native speakers beforehand rated their interactions as 'unsuccessful' even though most of them actually were successful.

Many NNS varieties of English have distinctive ways of pronouncing words that are different from NS varieties. For example, the first syllable of words such as <advance> and <concern> tends to have a reduced vowel in most NS accents, but many speakers of new varieties of English use a full vowel instead. Similarly, in much of South East Asia, <salmon> is pronounced with an /l/, so, when talking to people in the region, pronouncing the word as [sælmøn] is probably more intelligible than the standard pronunciation (Deterding, 2013, p. 73). This illustrates how new styles of pronunciation are becoming increasingly acceptable, though it must be acknowledged that many challenges remain. These challenges and the implications for pedagogy will be discussed in the following sections.

In this chapter, the term ‘new pronunciation’ is used to refer to the speech of new varieties of English, and it is often quite distinct from NS speech. When it is used for communication between people with different first language backgrounds, it can be considered as ELF pronunciation. According to Kirkpatrick (2010, p. 80), discussion of distinctive pronunciation features of varieties of English or of ELF must address the extent to which their features affect intelligibility, as ensuring mutual intelligibility across linguistic and cultural boundaries is essential. This chapter therefore discusses the impact of new pronunciation on intelligibility, focusing on conversations between speakers of Brunei English (the variety of English spoken in Brunei, a small country located in the north of the island of Borneo in South East Asia) and NNS speakers from elsewhere.

## Current contributions and research

This section provides a case study to illustrate new pronunciation in ELF interactions, focusing in particular on the impact of certain features of new pronunciation on intelligibility. Data analysis is based on recorded conversations between speakers of Brunei English with people from elsewhere, to provide insights into new pronunciation in naturally occurring speech. Because of the extensive range of pronunciation features in conversational speech, the analysis will focus only on polysyllabic words, considering just the following features: spelling pronunciation; vowel reduction; stress placement; yod-dropping (omission of the palatal approximant /j/ in words such as <museum>); and the distinction between nouns and verbs.

### *Research methodology*

The corpus used in this case study consists of 10 audio recordings collected at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) in Brunei over a period of six months in late 2013 and early 2014. Each recording consists of a conversation in English between two participants, a Bruneian and a non-Bruneian, who do not share the same L1. Seventeen participants took part in the study, eight Bruneians and nine non-Bruneians, and they are identified by their gender (F or M), followed by a two-letter code representing their country of origin.

The Bruneians are identified as FBr1, FBr2, FBr3, FBr4, FBr5, MBr1, MBr2, and MBr3. Of the non-Bruneian participants, four are from China (FCh1, FCh2, FCh3, FCh4), one from Korea (MKo), one from France (MFr), one from the Maldives (FMd), one from Oman (FOm), and one from Vietnam (FVn). Sixteen of the participants were students at UBD and one, MFr, was a visiting researcher at the university. All of them listed English as either their second or foreign language, and when asked to rate their fluency and proficiency in English they gave a range from ‘very good’ to ‘fair’. Brunei English can be categorized under Kachru’s outer circle, and all the non-Bruneians represent speakers from expanding circle

Table 13.1 Recordings

<i>Code</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>	<i>Duration (min:sec)</i>
MBr2+FCh1	MBr2	FCh1	20:48
FBr3+FCh2	FBr3	FCh2	22:46
FBr4+FCh3	FBr4	FCh3	20:56
FBr5+FCh4	FBr5	FCh4	20:27
MBr3+MFr	MBr3	MFr	22:28
MBr3+MKo	MBr3	MKo	21:04
FBr1+FMd	FBr1	FMd	21:45
MBr1+FMd	MBr1	FMd	21:31
MBr1+FOm	MBr1	FOm	22:29
FBr2+FVn	FBr2	FVn	25:12
		Total	3:39:26

countries. Although Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011) have acknowledged that NS may be included in ELF data, this study does not include any speakers from the inner circle, as it seeks to gain insights into NNS–NNS interactions. It is believed that NNS tend to feel more comfortable speaking with other NNS, as they can speak naturally without fear of criticism by a NS. The participants were also selected partly because they were all able to meet the researchers to help clarify any speech that was unclear and give feedback about misunderstandings.

In the recordings, the Bruneian participants were being interviewed by the non-Bruneians, who mainly asked questions about the culture and history of Brunei. Altogether, the 10 recordings last just over 3 hours and 39 minutes, with each recording lasting an average of about 22 minutes, ranging from just under 21 minutes to a little over 25 minutes. Details are shown in Table 13.1. Most participants participated in one recording, except for three participants who took part in two separate recordings: MBr3 in MBr3+MFr and MBr3+MKo; FMd in FBr1+FMd and MBr1+FMd; and MBr1 in MBr1+FMd and MBr1+FOm.

The recordings were conducted in a quiet room at UBD, using a Handy H4n recorder, and they were saved in WAV format. When transcribing the conversations, any problems involving unclear speech were resolved by asking the participants for clarification. Indeed, Deterding (2013, p. 25) notes that it is important to be able to obtain feedback from participants, because it allows researchers to correct transcription that is uncertain, and it also facilitates the identification of occurrences of misunderstandings that are not signalled in the recordings. In fact, the majority of misunderstandings in ELF communication do not result in any obvious communication breakdown, as speakers in ELF interactions have a tendency to adopt a ‘let-it-pass’ strategy in the hope that failure to understand a few words will not matter in the long run (Firth, 1996; Mortensen, 2013, p. 35).

When considering new pronunciation in polysyllabic words, it is important to investigate whether they are intelligible or not. In obtaining feedback from the participants, instances were identified where misunderstandings might have occurred by selecting short extracts from the recordings, playing them to the participants and asking them to transcribe what they heard. This dictation task is one of the most common methods of assessing intelligibility of speech (Munro et al., 2006, p. 112). However, although this method is reported to be reliable in assessing objective intelligibility, a disadvantage of the methodology is that it does not take

Table 13.2 Tokens of polysyllabic words (121) involving new pronunciation

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Spelling pronunciation	72	58.7
No vowel reduction	61	50.4
Stress placement	36	29.8
No yod	13	10.7
Noun/verb distinction	4	3.3

into account the context of the situation, and that understanding individual words does not always indicate a general understanding (Osimk, 2011, p. 66). Furthermore, it must be admitted that it is not possible to be certain that a misunderstanding actually occurred in all instances based on this kind of subsequent feedback. Nonetheless, it provides useful insights about the listeners' comprehension (Munro et al., 2006, p. 113).

The term 'token' is used to refer to a polysyllabic word involving new pronunciation. A total of 121 tokens of polysyllabic words involving innovative pronunciation have been identified from the corpus of a total of 48,727 words. In cases where a speaker repeated a word, only one token is counted; in cases below in which two tokens are listed (e.g. <separate>), they involve different speakers.

The tokens are classified in terms of the pronunciation features: spelling pronunciation, vowel reduction, stress placement, no yod, and lack of distinction between nouns and verbs. The frequency of the classified tokens is summarized in Table 13.2. Many of the tokens involve cross-classification, so the percentages add up to more than 100 per cent. It can be seen that most of the tokens involve spelling pronunciation followed by no vowel reduction. Of the 121 tokens involving new pronunciation of polysyllabic words, only five were misunderstood by the listeners. These five tokens are included in the total of 152 instances of misunderstanding that have been identified in the corpus, many of which arose from other features of pronunciation and use of unfamiliar lexis. Two of the instances of misunderstandings were evident from the recordings, as the listeners signalled a misunderstanding by asking for clarification, but the other three were identified from the transcription by the listeners in which words or phrases were transcribed inaccurately, and also from the listeners' feedback.

It is important to note that although the linguistic features that may have contributed to the problems can be suggested, the real cause of the misunderstandings cannot be determined with certainty. Indeed, Pitzl, Breiteneder and Klimpfner (2008) note that it is often hard to determine what the precise cause of a misunderstanding is, and multiple factors are regularly implicated. This study will only look at the 121 tokens, including the five tokens that are misunderstood, and it will not consider the rest of the tokens of misunderstanding as they do not involve new pronunciation of polysyllabic words under the categories identified.

### *Data analysis*

The analysis of the tokens presented in this study will provide one or two examples to illustrate each category. They are presented in separate subsections based on their classification. Brief discussions of the five instances of misunderstanding and their possible causes will also follow, to show how new pronunciation can sometimes cause problems in an international setting.

### Spelling pronunciation

One way in which language undergoes change is a shift in the pronunciation of a word to reflect its spelling (Algeo, 2005, p. 46). For instance, the word <forehead> was once pronounced as [fɔːrɪd] but nowadays it is increasingly pronounced with [h] in the middle, reflecting its spelling and also its etymology, and Wells (2008, p. 317) reports that 65 per cent of people in Britain prefer the latter pronunciation, including 80 per cent of younger speakers, indicating that use of [h] is becoming the norm. Similarly, although <often> is usually pronounced as [ɒfən] without /t/, Wells (2008, p. 560) shows that some speakers in both Britain and America now prefer a pronunciation with /t/. These examples reflect a changing trend in NS varieties, but spelling pronunciation is even more common in new varieties of English around the world. Deterding and Salbrina (2013, p. 42) report that the pronunciation of <salmon> with /l/ is widespread in South East Asia and it seems to be more intelligible in the region than the standard pronunciation without /l/. However, Wells (2008, p. 708) does not list a variant with /l/, even with a symbol to suggest it is a pronunciation that is considered incorrect.

In the corpus in the current case study, 72 out of the 121 tokens of new pronunciation for polysyllabic words involve spelling pronunciation. In one example, MBr1 produced the first syllable of <comfortable> with /v/ rather than the expected /ʌ/, and in another example, FVn pronounced <usually> with /z/ rather than /ʒ/. There is no indication by the listeners, FOM and FBr2, that either of these tokens caused a problem for understanding.

However, two tokens were found where spelling pronunciation may have played a part in a misunderstanding. In the first instance, MBr1 pronounced the word <turrets> with /v/ in the first syllable, probably influenced by its spelling, and also maybe reflecting the pronunciation of his first language, Malay, in which 'u' is always pronounced as /u/. However, although subsequent feedback from FMd indicated that she did not understand the word, she told the authors that she was not familiar with <turrets>, so even if MBr1 had said it as ['tʌrɪts], she still would not have understood him. Although <turrets> seems to be a low-frequency word, it is listed as occurring 393 times in the online Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA, 2016). The main cause of the misunderstanding is therefore actually lexical, and the conclusion should be that pronunciation only played a secondary role.

In the second instance, MBr3 pronounced the word <counsellor> with /v/ in the first syllable rather than with the expected /ʌ/. This caused a misunderstanding that MKo signalled by repeating the first syllable [kʌn] with a rising tone, seeking clarification. Perhaps MBr3's pronunciation is influenced by the letter 'o' in the spelling after the initial consonant, though this remains uncertain as 'ou' is only pronounced as /v/ in a few words of English such as <cough>, <trough> and <Gloucester> (Cruttenden, 2014, p. 126).

In his investigation of misunderstandings in ELF interactions in South East Asia, Deterding (2013, p. 74) reported that four out of 183 tokens of misunderstandings involved spelling pronunciation. However, he concluded that two of the tokens, <Berlitz> and <niche>, involved unfamiliar lexis, and spelling pronunciation probably played a major part in causing the misunderstanding for just the other two, <tubers> pronounced as [tʌbʊs] and <virgin> pronounced as [vɪdʒɪn]. His findings therefore confirm that spelling pronunciation can be problematic, but only occasionally.

Overall, most of the tokens in this study involving spelling pronunciation did not seem to cause any problems in intelligibility in ELF communication. The examples therefore illustrate spelling pronunciation as a feature of New Englishes, and some examples may become

standard in all accents, just as spelling is influencing the pronunciation of <forehead> and <often> in Britain and America and <salmon> with /l/ is widespread throughout the world.

### Absence of vowel reduction

In standard English, vowels are commonly reduced to schwa when they occur in weak forms of function words and the unstressed syllables of polysyllabic words. However, it has been reported that there is a lack of vowel reduction in many new varieties of English (Deterding, 2010). According to Kirkpatrick (2010, p. 79), the absence of vowel reduction is presumably influenced by many Asian and African languages that have syllable-based rhythm, because when English is produced with syllable-based rhythm there tends to be equal prominence on each syllable, and this leads to a lack of reduced vowels. In contrast, most NS varieties of English have stress-based rhythm, so there is an alternation between prominent syllables with a full vowel and unstressed syllables that often have a reduced vowel such as a schwa.

In the corpus of the current study, 61 tokens of polysyllabic words were found in which there is no vowel reduction where a reduced vowel such as a schwa would be expected in traditional varieties of English. Some examples include the use of /ɒ/ in the first syllable of <polite> by FOM, and the occurrence of /ʌ/ in the first syllable of <sustains> by FBr5.

Just two tokens were misunderstood, <Atlantis> and <police>. <Atlantis> was pronounced with a full vowel at the start by MBr1, and FOM heard it as <Atlantic City>. However, it turns out that she did not know about the mythical underwater city of Atlantis, so this token should be classified as a lexical issue, and the lack of vowel reduction played no part in the misunderstanding. The pronunciation of <police> by FBr4 with a full vowel in the first syllable will be discussed in the section on stress placement.

The conclusion that the absence of vowel reduction in new pronunciations rarely causes a problem is consistent with the findings of Deterding (2013, p. 71), who found just two tokens out of 183 that may have been caused by lack of vowel reduction: <attend> and <agenda>, both of which had a full vowel in the first syllable.

### Stress placement

There are two kinds of stress: word stress, or the syllables in a polysyllabic word that receive most prominence; and utterance stress, which refers to placement of the intonational nucleus within an utterance. This section will only look at word stress since the focus is on polysyllabic words.

Because the rhythm of many new varieties of English has been described as syllable-based, many of them have unpredictable word stress or no clear stress placement. Thirty-six tokens with unexpected stress were identified. For example, FBr1 pronounced <chaotic> as [ˈkæptɪk], even though stress would be on the second syllable in RP or GA (Wells, 2008, p. 137); and FMd produced <challenging> with even stress on all three syllables. There is no indication that these tokens were misunderstood.

However, two instances of misunderstanding were identified that may have involved stress placement. In the first, FBr4 said <police> as [ˈpɒlɪs] with stress on the first syllable instead of the expected [pəˈliːs] (Wells, 2008, p. 624), and FCh3 subsequently stated in her feedback that she heard <policy>, a word that does have initial stress. In addition to the unexpected stress, one might note the use of a full vowel rather than a schwa in the first syllable, so this token can be classified under lack of vowel reduction as well as shifted stress. In the second instance of misunderstanding, FCh3 produced <business> with even stress in both syllables instead of the expected [ˈbɪznəs] (Wells, 2008, p. 112), and FBr4 signalled that she did not

understand the word by repeating the first syllable, apparently seeking clarification. Although it is probable that unusual stress may be the main cause of the misunderstanding in <police>, it remains uncertain whether the even stress on <business> was the cause of the problem. Perhaps this was just a case of unclear speech.

Overall, a misunderstanding was found in just these two out of the 36 tokens involving stress placement, so it is suggested that unusual word stress is not an important feature for mutual intelligibility in new pronunciation. This concurs with the proposal of Jenkins (2009, p. 148) that word stress be excluded from the LFC, as it rarely causes misunderstandings in ELF settings. Deterding (2013, p. 76) further suggests that word stress placement may only be important with native speaker listeners.

### **Yod-dropping**

Yod-dropping involves the omission of /j/ after a consonant, something which typically occurs in American English after the alveolar consonants /t, d, n/. For example, <new> is pronounced as [njuː] in RP British English, but Wells (2008, p. 538) reports that 86 per cent of Americans prefer the pronunciation [nuː]. Similarly, in America, <tune> is generally pronounced as [tuːn], but in this case a shift seems to be taking place in British English, as older speakers prefer [tjuːn] while younger speakers tend to opt for [tʃuːn] (Wells, 2008, p. 845). This combination of /t+/j/ to result in /tʃ/ can be described as coalescence (Wells & Colson, 1971, p. 55).

Thirteen tokens in the current study involve yod-dropping with no coalescence. Some examples include <articulated> pronounced as [ɑrtɪkələɪtəd] by MBr1, in which /j/ is omitted from the third syllable, and <museum> with no /j/ after the initial /m/ by FBr3. In both these examples, /j/ would be expected in both RP and GA. None of the 13 tokens was misunderstood.

Historical coalescence mostly involves the pronunciation of the affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ in words spelled with 'tu' as in <actual>, 'ti' as in <question>, or 'du' as in <gradual>, and occasionally also 'di' as in <soldier> (Cruttenden, 2014, p. 190). Several tokens in the current study exhibit neither yod nor coalescence after /t/ and /d/, including <situate> and <graduate> with /t/ and /d/ respectively and no following /j/. In these words, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ would occur in American English, though Wells (2008, p. 745) notes that pronunciation of <situation> with medial /t/ and no /j/ occurs in 'BrE non-RP' pronunciation in Britain (which he indicates using the symbol §), and it was the preferred pronunciation of 1 per cent of his respondents. In the current study, there were three tokens involving /t/ and no following /j/: <situation> (two tokens) and <situated>; and there were six tokens involving /d/: <graduate>, <graduating>, <graduated> (two tokens), <educated> and <educational>.

It is possible that omission of yod could be a feature of Brunei English. However, it does not seem to have much impact on intelligibility. In addition, one may note that the spelling of the words may have an influence on the way they were pronounced, and for this reason they might also be classified under spelling pronunciation.

### **Noun/verb distinction**

In native speaker Englishes, some words with the same spelling involve pronunciation differences to distinguish whether they function as verbs or as nouns or adjectives (Cruttenden, 2014, p. 253). In many words, the verb is distinct from the noun and/or adjective based on the location of stress, so when <digest> functions as a noun, stress falls on the first syllable, but when it is a verb stress is on the second syllable. In other cases, only the quality of a vowel is affected, so <graduate> is a verb if it ends with [et] but a noun if it ends with [ət].

It seems that there is a tendency of failing to distinguish verbs from nouns and adjectives in this way in some new pronunciations. In one token in the current study, MFr used the noun <rebel>, but instead of the expected [ˈrebəl], he pronounced it as [rɪˈbɛl], which would be the verb form in standard pronunciation (Wells, 2008, p. 671). However, MBr3 understood him with no problem. In another token, FMd used the word <separate> as an adjective, but instead of the expected [ˈsepəreɪt] she said [ˈsepəreit], which is the standard pronunciation for the verb form. This token also did not cause any misunderstanding. In total, four tokens were included in this category: <rebel>, <graduate> and <separate> (two tokens).

One can therefore suggest that these few instances of lack of a distinction in pronunciation to indicate word classes do not seem to cause a problem in an ELF setting. One could investigate whether it might be more likely to cause misunderstandings in conversations with NS.

### Misunderstandings

In total, there were five instances of misunderstanding in the tokens analysed in the current study: <turrets>, <Atlantis>, <police>, <counsellor> and <business>. The first two of these should actually be classified as lexical, as the listeners did not know the words.

<police> misunderstood as <policy> was probably caused by the unexpected stress on the first syllable as well as lack of vowel reduction. For <counsellor>, the occurrence of /ɒ/ in the first syllable seems to have been the problem. And for <business>, it is unclear what the problem was, but uncertain stress placement might have been an issue. The conclusion is therefore that spelling pronunciation, lack of vowel reduction, unexpected stress placement, absence of /j/, and failure to distinguish nouns and adjectives from verbs are rarely problematic in new pronunciations in ELF interactions between NNS speakers.

### Recommendations for practice

This case study has investigated some features of new pronunciation in cross-cultural interactions, specifically those that occur in polysyllabic words, and it seems that these features are generally not problematic for intelligibility, though there were a few exceptions. It is acknowledged that general conclusions cannot be made based on the analysis of only a few features of ELF speech, but it does seem that at least some aspects of distinctive new pronunciations do not generally result in communication breakdown in international settings. In fact, one could argue that avoiding vowel reduction can in many cases enhance intelligibility, as for example <vacation> with a full vowel in the first syllable would never be misheard as <vocation>; and speakers who have a full vowel in the auxiliary <have> would never write ‘could of’ instead of ‘could have’, an error that is rather common among NS writers. Furthermore, <computer> and <consider> with a full vowel in the first syllable seem to be the preferred pronunciation in many parts of the world, and if this enhances intelligibility in an international setting, there seems little reason for teachers to seek to discourage it.

When discussing the use of English in cross-cultural communication, there seems to be an assumption that a NS is likely to be more intelligible than an NNS, however well-educated the latter might be, even though research has shown that this is not necessarily true (Smith & Rafiqzad, 1979). If NS are not more intelligible than NNS, this raises fundamental questions about the continued use of NS styles of speech as the model for learners of English as a second or foreign language.

Another key issue involves teachability, as it is unrealistic to expect all learners to develop perfect NS pronunciation (Walker, 2010, p. 20). Indeed, attainment of native speaker

pronunciation is not possible for the overwhelming majority of ESL and EFL learners, especially those who learn the language in adolescence or adulthood (Moyer, 1999; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2005; Ortega, 2009), and so there seems to be little reason to try and insist on it. If learners are set unattainable goals, this can be highly demotivating, and it should therefore be avoided (Murphy, 2014).

As a consequence, it is questionable whether continued use of NS standards is appropriate. Because speakers in the international speech community come from different language backgrounds, most of them speak with their own accents, and these new ways of speaking are gradually gaining acceptance. Furthermore, the goal of teaching pronunciation should be to achieve intelligibility while at the same time retaining the identities of the speakers through their distinctive accents (Brown, 1991, p. 41), and in the future teaching is likely to focus more on enhancing intelligibility than adhering to irrelevant NS norms (Munro, 2008, p. 213).

In order to achieve intelligibility in international settings, some people have proposed that there should be a single universal standard that can be shared by all speech communities. In fact, Crystal (2003, p. 185) suggests that a single standard he terms World Standard Spoken English (WSSE) might arise to cater for the demands of international communication. However, such proposals for WSSE do not seem to have been widely accepted internationally. In contrast, ELF-based teaching envisages substantial diversity in pronunciation, reflecting the varying backgrounds of the speakers, rather than a single standard.

Instead of promoting a single standard, we should focus more on what is required in order to achieve intelligibility in international situations, and Jenkins (2000) has laid the foundation for this with her LFC, particularly for ELF speakers who do not necessarily want to sound like a native speaker. Adopting an ELF approach for pronunciation teaching has many benefits, as outlined by Walker (2010, pp. 61–69):

- (a) It lightens the workload for both teachers and learners because the pronunciation syllabus for ELF does not include features of speech such as vowel reduction and word stress that are excluded from the LFC.
- (b) It generates a sense of achievement for ELF learners who are able to gain new skills such as accommodating to the speech of their interlocutors and dealing with accent variation.
- (c) It allows NNS to retain their own accents and take pride in their national or linguistic identities while at the same time they become highly intelligible.
- (d) It accepts the influence of the learner's first language as a positive feature, for example in allowing teachers to use the pronunciation of the learner's first language to help them attain a good command of the LFC features.
- (e) It acknowledges that NNS are often the best instructors for ELF teaching because they provide an excellent example of the kind of internationally intelligible accent that their learners aspire to, and because they share a common learning experience with their pupils, which allows them to empathize with them and help them overcome their problems.

Although it makes sense to allow some NNS features in the teaching of pronunciation in an ELF setting, this concept has yet to be accepted by the majority of teachers and education policymakers, so there are still many challenges to face. Indeed, there have been concerns about adopting a new model that is not based on clearly defined standards, and there is also a worry that the use of new models will lead to an increased diversity of NNS varieties of English that might result in speakers being unintelligible to listeners from elsewhere. Walker

(2010, pp. 51–52) adds that there have also been concerns that an ELF approach will lower standards if what are perceived to be errors in native speech are regarded as acceptable.

Furthermore, there is a lack of reference materials for the newly emergent styles of speech. Indeed, Firth (2009) questions whether ELF can be codified, and he contests this on two bases: first, he suggests that there is too much variability in ELF, both linguistically and pragmatically, as ELF interactions demand a wide range of conventions in phonology, grammar, lexical range and pragmatics to suit the proficiency of interactants in diverse interactional settings; and, second, he argues that there are no established theoretical foundations for ELF, as scholars are still exploring its concepts and pedagogical implications. Svartvik and Leech (2006, p. 234) suggest that it will take a long time to overcome the widespread preference for standard native speaker norms, especially in pedagogy, and they question if the concept of ELF will ever gain general acceptance.

Although it has been suggested that the main aim of learning English as a second or foreign language should be for NNS to achieve maximum intelligibility in international communication, one must also accept that some learners have other motivations for trying to achieve NS proficiency, including gaining respect when engaging in international forums. Furthermore, there are also some learners, such as people working in the burgeoning call centre industry in the Philippines and in India, who need to sound like native speakers, and for them new styles of pronunciation are not advisable even when they are highly intelligible. The conclusion should be that ELF-based teaching is only appropriate in some language teaching contexts, and teachers and educational planners should always assess the needs of their pupils.

## Future directions

Despite NS varieties still being preferred in most teaching contexts, new styles of pronunciation will continue to emerge, allowing speakers to emphasize their distinctive identity while at the same time endeavouring to maintain intelligibility for listeners from elsewhere. And it seems likely that ELF-based teaching will become increasingly accepted in the future as teachers focus on ensuring that their students achieve intelligible pronunciation while not worrying too much whether they sound like native speakers or not. However, it is unlikely that dependence on traditional NS norms will disappear in the immediate future.

Further research on misunderstandings is needed to establish more clearly which aspects of pronunciation are key to maintaining international intelligibility; and, when the outcome of this research becomes widely disseminated, perhaps the argument for accepting new styles of pronunciation will be accepted by more teachers. One possibility with the development of new pronunciations is that speakers in many parts of the world may adopt shared features that serve to enhance the intelligibility of their speech, regardless of what native speakers do. For example, if the majority of speakers in the outer and expanding circles tend to avoid vowel reduction in the unstressed syllables of polysyllabic words and they find that this makes them more intelligible in international contexts, perhaps this will emerge as the *de facto* standard for world English. It will then be NS who find that others cannot understand them, and new pronunciations will truly have emerged from continued domination by the traditional inner circle standards.

## Further reading

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This book discusses the global status and role of English and predicts some of its future directions.

- Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. This seminal work introduced the LFC and explained the rationale behind it.
- Jenkins, J. (2009). *World Englishes: A resource book for students* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge. This book outlines some key topics for world Englishes from their historical contexts and development up to their present status, and it introduces students to the concept of ELF. It also discusses current debates in world Englishes and provides examples of emerging varieties of New Englishes.
- Schneider, E. W. (2007). *Postcolonial English: Varieties around the world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This book gives a detailed account of how New Englishes emerged and explains the processes involved in their development.
- Walker, R. (2010). *Teaching the pronunciation of English as a lingua franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. This book provides welcome guidelines to teachers on ways to teach ELF pronunciation based on the LFC. It additionally describes how the learner's L1 can benefit from the ELF pronunciation approach in the classroom.

## Related topics

Pronunciation teaching; world Englishes; intelligibility; English as a lingua franca (ELF); the lingua franca core (LFC)

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