

Intelligibility in SE Asian English

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Interviewer : what did you do in your last vacation /vəkeɪʃən/

Student : pardon?

Interviewer : what did you do in your last vacation /veɪkeɪʃən/

Student : oh, i went to ...

Interviewer : what did you do in your last vacation /vəkeɪʃən/

Student : pardon?

Interviewer : what did you do in your last vacation /veɪkeɪʃən/

Student : oh, i went to ...

Sometimes, native patterns of speech are not the most intelligible in an international setting.

Overview

- Pronunciation in England
- Norms of pronunciation
- Voiceless TH in Brunei and other SE Asian Englishes
- Reduced Vowels in Brunei and other SE Asian Englishes
- Misunderstandings in ELF recordings in SE Asia
- Misunderstandings in Brunei English
- Teaching pronunciation

Pronunciation in England

Speech Influenced by London Accent (from Deterding, 2005)



we went out a few times we were
only there for three nights



we were only there for three nights

- R1 : we don't have enough free nights
- R2 : what I really don't have free life
- R3 : ???
- R4 : we don't have free licence
- R5 : we were only there for three nights
- R6 : we don't have free life.

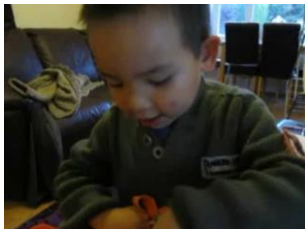
voiceless TH in Britain
(Oliver, aged 4;7)



three lollipops

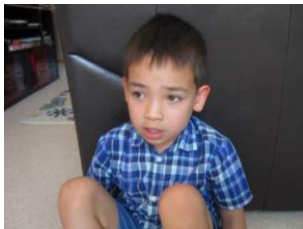


three lollipops



We get our pronunciation from our
friends, not from our parents.

Is voiceless TH as [f] permanent?
(Oliver, aged 7;5)



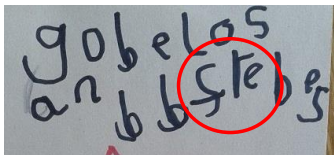
three bears
(Elsie, aged 4;8)



She even uses ‘f’ in writing



Goldilocks and the three bears



Reduced Vowels in
England

a wolf **that had** just escaped
from the zoo

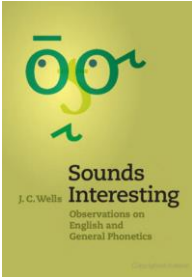


proceed/precede

from Wells (2014, p. 12):

“Every now and again my students would reveal they were confused by the words *proceed* and *precede* ...”

Most speakers in SE Asia would not confuse these words.



could of

- People in England and the USA often write ‘could of’ instead of ‘could have’.

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

	have	of
could	43,508	176
should	31,747	76
would	110,263	212

http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/

could of

m halfway and fight there. We **could of** had people living in Mars, to survive. " " Wh , trying to avoid what she **could of** the punishing thorns. They were all scratched by on very often and it **could of** done corkscrews in the pan, would have been okay wi him into the Platte. He **could of** drowned, probably would of but Dave Arthur was rid and the window and described what he **could of** the Mortons' party. " I've been to S ended like a vulture to devour what it **could of** Japan's now-moribund empire. In the s -- I think he **could of** been criticized for some of the past statements. This is one f the little engine that **could of** this straw poll. Prof-TRAYNHAM: Absolutely. CHIDEY/ VEINTRAUB: Yes, he certainly **could of**. And also, he might have been prescribing it ng through such a monacle **could of** course be just as deluded as one using ordina ring to take in what he **could of** this new information. Jesus! What the hell had he g outside her usual frame of reference. She **could of** course be happy again. In the frz ossberg 500 is the Little Engine That **Could of** shotguns. Although O.F. Mossberg m 'he decision not to seek out birth kin **could of** course be seen as equally constituti obligation to take out what we **could of** Iran's nuclear capabilities. We may not be i snowbirds from Florida **could of** put it in there. " # " No, " Rudisell said. sh I seen **could of** eaten that rainbow for breakfast. " # Meekins smiled, showing a sral Japanese scholars abroad to learn all they **could of** modern ideas and technolo lot. You made what you **could of** sand, wind, saltwater, and other people. Perhaps i

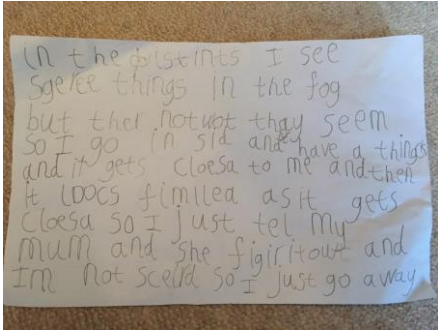
Some of these are grammatical:

m halfway and fight there. We **could of** had people living in Mars, to survive. " " Wh , trying to avoid what she **could of** the punishing thorns. They were all scratched by on very often and it **could of** done corkscrews in the pan, would have been okay wi him into the Platte. He **could of** drowned, probably would of but Dave Arthur was rid and the window and described what he **could of** the Mortons' party. " I've been to S ended like a vulture to devour what it **could of** Japan's now-moribund empire. In the s -- I think he **could of** been criticized for some of the past statements. This is one f the little engine that **could of** this straw poll. Prof-TRAYNHAM: Absolutely. CHIDEY/ VEINTRAUB: Yes, he certainly **could of**. And also, he might have been prescribing it ng through such a monacle **could of** course be just as deluded as one using ordina ring to take in what he **could of** this new information. Jesus! What the hell had he g outside her usual frame of reference. She **could of** course be happy again. In the frz ossberg 500 is the Little Engine That **Could of** shotguns. Although O.F. Mossberg m 'he decision not to seek out birth kin **could of** course be seen as equally constituti obligation to take out what we **could of** Iran's nuclear capabilities. We may not be i snowbirds from Florida **could of** put it in there. " # " No, " Rudisell said. sh I seen **could of** eaten that rainbow for breakfast. " # Meekins smiled, showing a sral Japanese scholars abroad to learn all they **could of** modern ideas and technolo lot. You made what you **could of** sand, wind, saltwater, and other people. Perhaps i

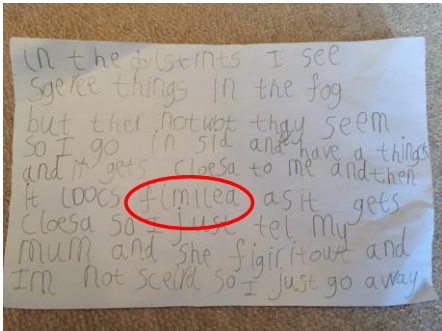
But some should be ‘could have’:

m halfway and fight there. We **could of** had people living in Mars, to survive. " " Wh , trying to avoid what she **could of** the punishing thorns. They were all scratched by on very often and it **could of** done corkscrews in the pan, would have been okay wi him into the Platte. He **could of** drowned, probably would of but Dave Arthur was rid and the window and described what he **could of** the Mortons' party. " I've been to S ended like a vulture to devour what it **could of** Japan's now-moribund empire. In the s -- I think he **could of** been criticized for some of the past statements. This is one f the little engine that **could of** this straw poll. Prof-TRAYNHAM: Absolutely. CHIDEY/ VEINTRAUB: Yes, he certainly **could of**. And also, he might have been prescribing it ng through such a monacle **could of** course be just as deluded as one using ordina ring to take in what he **could of** this new information. Jesus! What the hell had he g outside her usual frame of reference. She **could of** course be happy again. In the frz ossberg 500 is the Little Engine That **Could of** shotguns. Although O.F. Mossberg m 'he decision not to seek out birth kin **could of** course be seen as equally constituti obligation to take out what we **could of** Iran's nuclear capabilities. We may not be i snowbirds from Florida **could of** put it in there. " # " No, " Rudisell said. sh I seen **could of** eaten that rainbow for breakfast. " # Meekins smiled, showing a sral Japanese scholars abroad to learn all they **could of** modern ideas and technolo lot. You made what you **could of** sand, wind, saltwater, and other people. Perhaps i

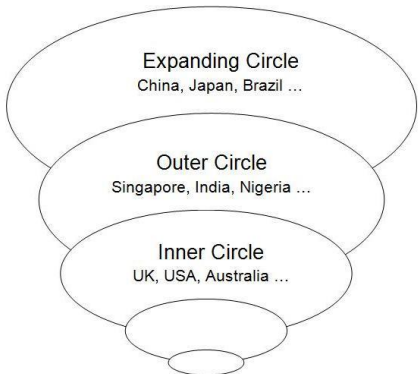
Elsie’s writing aged 5;8



familiar



Norms of Pronunciation



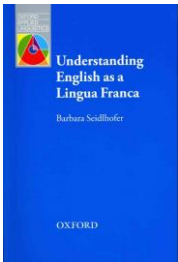
[The Three Circles of English (from Kachru, 1992: 356)]

Norms in English: Kachru

- Kachru (1992) suggests
- Outer Circle countries should develop their own norms.
 - Expanding Circle countries should still refer to the Inner Circle for their norms.

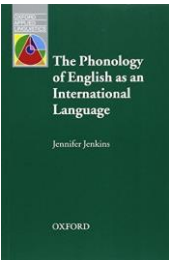
Norms in ELF: Seidlhofer

- Seidlhofer (2011) argues
- Norms of English should be based on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).
 - Speakers from the Expanding Circle are just as important as those from the Outer Circle.



The Lingua Franca Core (LFC) (Jenkins, 2000)

- Only some features of English pronunciation are essential for intelligibility.
- These constitute the LFC.
- Features excluded from the LFC do not need to be taught.



LFC : Some Excluded Features

- /θ/ and /ð/
- reduced vowels

Questions

- How is voiceless TH pronounced in Brunei and the rest of SE Asia?
- Do reduced vowels occur in Brunei and SE Asia?
- Which features of pronunciation in South-East Asia cause problems for intelligibility?

Voiceless TH in Brunei, Singapore, and the rest of SE Asia

Deterding, D., & Salbrina, S. (2013). *Brunei English: A New Variety in a Multilingual Society*. Dordrecht: Springer



UBDCSBE

- 53 undergraduates
 - 38 female
 - 15 male
- 2 kinds of data
 - reading a short passage: the Wolf passage
 - 5 minute conversation

Educated Speech

- The data is educated Brunei English.
- Many speakers do not have good English, and there is a wide divide (Jones, 2007).
- Students from unfashionable rural schools may only have rudimentary skills in English when they leave school (Wood et al, 2011).

Voiceless TH

- Voiceless TH
- voiceless TH is sometimes pronounced as [t]
 - influenced by Malay: *terapi, teater, tema, termos, atlet, Katolik...*
 - These words are pronounced with [t] in Malay; it is hardly suprising if they are also pronounced with [t] in English.



Kompleks Dewan Kemasyarakatan Daerah Tutong.
Manakala pada 6 hingga 8 November pula akan diadakan Car Booth Sale bertempat di Taman Rekreasi Sungai Basong.
Selain itu, Daerah Tutong juga mengadakan Pasar Malam Ria Tutong yang berkonsepkan

car booth sale instead of the standard car boot sale reflects the lack of a distinction between /t/ and /θ/

Voiceless TH in the passage

- he **thought** up a good plan
- and began to **threaten** the sheep
- he was trying to fool them a **third** time

Results for Voiceless TH

(Deterding & Salbrina 2013: 25)

	[θ]	[t]
thought	28	25
threaten	23	30
third	24	29
Total	75 (47%)	84 (53%)

Voiceless TH in the interview

i didn't (0.5) **think** [tɪŋk] of it at first but (0.6) now, now that i've (0.6) worked there, i **think** [θɪŋk] it's something that i might (1.1) go into after (.) university



Voiceless TH in SE Asian (Deterding & Kirkpatrick 2006)

- FSingl : and i **think** [tɪŋk] er anyway you all may er join in the ... celebration
- FLao : new many **thing** [tɪŋ] from Singapore
- FViet : i don't have to teach **theories** [tɪrɪz]
- FMyan : er **three** [tri:] times



CAA Radiotelephony Manual

Numerals or numeral element	Latin alphabet representation
0	ZERO
1	WUN
2	TWO
3	TREE
4	FOUR
5	FIVE
6	SIX
7	SEVEN
8	AIT
9	NINER
Decimal	DAYSEEMAL
Hundred	HUNDRER
Thousand	TOUSAND

Voiceless TH

- If pilots are required to have [t] at the start of *three* and *thousand*, why should we insist on our students having [θ]?

Avoiding Vowel Reduction

Avoiding Reduced Vowels

In the UBDCSBE read passage, every single speaker has a full vowel in *that* and also *had* in:

a wolf **that had** just escaped from the zoo



Japan (F35)

(Deterding & Salbrina, 2013, p. 40)

erm (0.5) i would want to go to
japan [dʒæpæn] first



Japan (M4)

err anime soundtrack ... er from japan



Japan (F24)

Interviewer : if you if you could travel
anywhere in the world, where
would you like to go to

F24 : mmm ... japan /dʒepæn/

Interviewer : why japan /dʒepæn/

F24 : i wanted to see the sakura



Japanese

currently i'm taking Japanese



(from Nur Raihan, forthcoming)

solidity / terminology

The transcription of students can indicate
their pronunciation.

2. solidity /sɒlɪdɪti/
6. terminology /tɜːmɪnɒlədʒi/

solidity & terminology
transcriptions by 50 students

	/ə/	/ɒ/	/ɔ:/	/ɔ/	/ʊ/	/ʌ/
solidity	43	3	1	1	1	1
	/ə/	/ɒ/	/ɔ:/	/e/	/ɑ/	
terminology	35	11	1	2	1	

sociology

i would love to teach um (.) sociol**o**gy



anthropology / sociology

i want to be a (.) an anthropol**o**gist or a sociol**o**gist



sociology / anthropology

sociol**o**gy (.) and anthropol**o**gy



phonology

is it phonol**o**gy



(from Nur Raihan, forthcoming)

continuously

and then **co**ntinuously the next day we went to labuan



comparisons

we only care about the price **co**mparisons



(from Nur Raihan, forthcoming)

purple or violet
(Brunei Child Aged 3;11, Nurhana 2015)



Reduced Vowels in Brunei

- Some speakers have reduced vowels in the unstressed syllables of polysyllabic words such as *japan*, *computer*, *advice* ...
- Almost nobody has reduced vowels in function words such as *of*, *as*, *than*, *to*, *that* *had*
- Does the absence of reduced vowels enhance or reduce intelligibility?
- If you avoid vowel reduction, *vacation* would not be misunderstood as *vocation*.

Reduced Vowels and Spelling

- Nobody in Brunei would write *could of* instead of *could have*.
- --- unless they have lived in the UK for a while (Aznah Suhaimi, personal communication).

Absence of Reduced Vowels in
SE Asia

(Deterding & Kirkpatrick 2006)
MThai : grammar translation **method** [meθbd]
MIndon : it's **officially** [ɔfɪʃəli] launched
FBrun : i can't **compare** [kəmpeə] now
FPhil : these er six grade **graduates** [grædju:erts] from the elementary level

CAA Radiotelephony Manual

Numeral or numeral element	Latin alphabet representation
0	ZERO
1	WUN
2	TWO
3	THREE
4	FOUR
5	FIVE
6	SIX
7	SEVEN
8	EIGHT
9	NINE
Decimal	POINT
Hundred	HUNDRED
Thousand	THOUSAND

The CAA and Vowel Reduction

- For the crucially important domain of air-traffic communication, reduced vowels are avoided in *hundred* and *thousand*.
- It seems that use of full vowels and evenly stressed syllables enhances intelligibility.

Syllable-Based Rhythm and Intelligibility

- Many people in the world find syllable-based rhythm more easily intelligible.
- In stress-based rhythm, many syllables are not clear.
- Maybe avoiding vowel reduction and using syllable-based rhythm enhances intelligibility.

However, sometimes
misunderstandings do occur

data from Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006)

Speaker from Laos
Listeners from Malaysia and the Philippines



Speaker from Vietnam
Listeners from Brunei and Malaysia



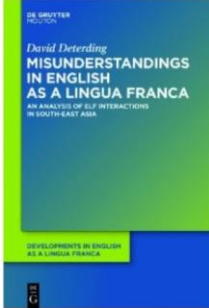
Speaker from Myanmar
Listener from Indonesia



Misunderstandings in
English as a Lingua
Franca

(Deterding, 2013)

Deterding, D. (2013). *Misunderstandings in English as a Lingua Franca: An Analysis of ELF Interactions in South-East Asia*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.




CMACE Data

- 183 tokens of misunderstanding
- obtained from 6.5 hours of recordings in the Brunei component of the ACE Corpus (<http://corpus.ied.edu.hk/ace>)
- all tokens are available in the CMACE corpus: <http://fass.ubd.edu.bn/research/CMACE/home/index.html>

Speaker from Laos

MLs : so but (.) erm: (.) for the food (2) for the ?? the ?? er: i would say similar in my country laos




Speaker from Laos

MLs : so but (.) erm: (.) for the food (2) for the weather the weather er: i would say similar in my country laos


3 contributing factors:

- medial TH as [t]
- vowel in first syllable as [eɪ]
- MLs starts to talk about food




Speaker from Laos

MLs : so usually: i: see: er: the food er they serve in (.) ??? or: the ?? is usually er have the chicken



Speaker from Laos

MLs : so usually: i: see: er: the food er they serve in (.) coffee-break or: the lunchtime is usually er have the chicken



Speaker from Laos

i saw: (.) some ?? from er: my former president to your ??



Speaker from Laos

i saw: (.) some **present** from er: my former president to your **sultan**



- /r/ is missing in *present*
- *sultan* has three syllables

Speaker from Laos

oh: everybody open your menu? oh no sorry
sir i don't like ?? . erm (.) so you see (.)
no i don't talk about the ??



Speaker from Laos

oh: everybody open your menu? oh no sorry
sir i don't like **Man U**. erm (.) so you see (.)
no i don't talk about the **football**



Speaker from China

er the president of er international ?? they talk to the: (.) the office?



Speaker from China

er the president of er international **club** they talk to the: (.) the office?



- *club* has /kr/ at the start
- the listener heard *crowd*

Speaker from Nigeria

MNg : the way you have to ?? me if i
come to your office (.) can you sit
down? can i offer you something?
that is what they want in the place of
work



Speaker from Nigeria

MNg : the way you have to handle me if i
come to your office (.) can you sit
down? can i offer you something?
that is what they want in the place of
work



The listener from Brunei heard 'undo'.

Speaker from Nigeria

i'm not sure maybe (.) it's on the right one
i'm not sure it's like (.) it's ?? again to know
(.) am i right



Speaker from Nigeria

i'm not sure maybe (.) it's on the right one
i'm not sure it's like (.) it's help us again to
know (.) am i right



Speaker from Nigeria

they are not looking for anything. that time
they will be calling them because they are
?? (.) they need their service



Speaker from Nigeria

they are not looking for anything. that time
they will be calling them because they are
hot cake (.) they need their service



The listener from Brunei heard 'outkick'.

The Following are Included in the LFC

- initial consonant clusters (*present, coffee-break*)
- distinctions between /l/ and /r/ (*lunchtime, club*)
- distinctions between /l/ and /n/ (*football*)
- initial /h/ (*handle, help, hot cake*)

183 Misunderstandings

Category	Examples	Number
/pr/, /br/, ..	present, coffee-break	20
/l/ ~ /r/	lunchtime, club	6
/l/ ~ /n/	football	10
initial /h/	help, handle, hot cake	6

Most of the issues with pronunciation involve features included in the LFC.

Misunderstandings in Brunei English

(data from Ishamina, forthcoming, b)

FBrunei + FMaldives

Md: <1> yeah yeah yeah </1>
Br: <1> for the </1> a religious school yeah
Md: so what are what are the subjects (.) they are studying
Br: in ??? <2> school? </2>
Md: <2> yeah </2> yeah yeah



FBrunei + FMaldives

Md: so what are what are the subjects (.) they are studying
Br: in ugama <2> school? </2>
Md: <2> yeah </2> yeah yeah
Br: erm ah
Md: you mean (.) government?
Br: goven- in the government will be like erm how do you say?



Code-Mixing

- Code-mixing is very common in Brunei (McLellan, 2010).
- Code-switching can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.
- Use of the term *Ugama school* is also very common (Noor Azam, forthcoming).
- Speakers need to remember that people from elsewhere may not understand terms like *Ugama school*.

MBrunei + Listener from France

MBr : so your last resort is to speak malay to them (.) that's what they thi:nk (.) they think that erm (.) by: when you speak that ah malay ah you ?? ah you have a ?? that you're not er a good english speaker



MBrunei + Listener from France

MBr : when you speak that ah malay ah you **thought** ah you have a **thought** that you're not er a good english speaker

The listener could not understand this; he guessed it as 'tell'.



MBrunei + Listener from France

MBr : when you speak that ah malay ah you **thought** ah you have a **thought** that you're not er a good english speaker

However, the problem is not just the initial TH sound; it is also the absence of a final /t/.



FBrunei + Listener from Vietnam

er last time i: (.) have my diploma? then i teach er in primary school? then after that i (got) er the chance to ?? my studies er here?



(Ishamina, forthcoming, a)

FBrunei + Listener from Vietnam

er last time i: (.) have my diploma? then i teach er in primary school? then after that i (got) er the chance to **further** my studies er here?



There is a [d] for the medial voiced TH. Medial voiced TH can sometimes be misunderstood.

FVietnam heard 'final'.

FBrunei + Listener from China

FBr: yeah that ?? was the last one i: (.) not only visited but i studied there



FBrunei + Listener from China

FBr: yeah that (the) korea was the last one
i: (.) not only visited but i studied there



FBrunei + Listener from China

FBr: yeah that (the) korea was the last one
i: (.) not only visited but i studied there

FCh heard 'today'; this might be because of the spurious 'the' before it. It seems unlikely to be because of a full vowel in Korea.

(Ishamina & Deterding, 2015)



Teaching Pronunciation

Pronunciation Teaching

- Good pronunciation is important.
- It is vital for speakers to know where the problem is and how to fix it.

Big Holes

MLs : yeah we have some problem. we
have big holes [houns] (.) in in some
areas

MMa : hones? sorry?

MLs : holes [hount] you know holes [hount]



Fixing the Wrong Thing

- The speaker tries very hard to fix the problem.
- He even adds a spurious [t] on the end of *hole*.
- But the problem is actually [n] instead of /l/.
- He does not know what the problem is.

Pronunciation Teaching

- Raising awareness about a speaker's pronunciation is important.
- Speakers need help in fixing their pronunciation.
- Some features of pronunciation are more important than others.
- Teachers should focus on the features of pronunciation that are important.

Attitudes towards the LFC

- How would students in Thailand and Indonesia feel about LFC-based teaching?
- Most students in China still prefer a native speaker model (Ho & Miller, 2011).
- Many teachers would not be willing to allow [t] for voiceless TH.
- However, there seems to be an increasing acceptance of local norms.
- Ho (forthcoming) finds many UBD students prefer teachers with standard usage but local pronunciation.

Accents of English

- Use of [t] for voiceless TH is probably not very important; there are more important things for teachers to focus on.
- Use of vowel reduction does not seem to improve intelligibility in an international setting.
- Some features of British pronunciation hinder rather than help intelligibility.
- You don't need to pretend to be from the UK in order to be highly intelligible.

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