L2 LEARNERS AND THE INTELLIGIBILITY OF THE BOSTONIAN AND CALIFORNIAN ACCENTS

Russell Paul Kapryn

California State University - San Bernardino

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L2 LEARNERS AND THE INTELLIGIBILITY OF THE BOSTONIAN
AND CALIFORNIAN ACCENTS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition:
Applied Linguistics and Teaching English as a Second Language

by
Russell Paul Kapryn
March 2019
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Approved by:

Caroline Vickers, Committee Chair, English

Parastou Feiz, Committee Member
ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates issues of intelligibility through the lens and focus of prosody when the Bostonian and Los Angeles-based accents are heard in casually occurring conversation by native and non-native speakers. Over the spring and summer of 2017, six native speakers and 11 non-native speakers of English were interviewed from having listened to two 2.5 minute audio sample clips of speakers who have these accents. Respondents were asked questions such as what was difficult or easy or whether they could summarize the recordings for me. Findings indicate that while the native speakers often had difficulty with vocabulary due to context, non-native English speakers frequently found the same recordings to sound continuous, blended or merged together when the Boston and Los Angeles audios were played to them.

Native English speakers, by contrast, did not seem to face the same prosodic challenges of intelligibility as their non-native English-speaking counterparts when these two accents were heard in informal conversation. It has been found that L2 learners have a strong desire to learn English from their teachers through more naturally or informally occurring conversation. The argument is made that the teaching, practice and engagement of informal conversation is woefully inadequate for non-native speakers of English. Within this thesis the core subsets of the perceptions of prosody are analyzed between native and non-native speakers of English. The purpose of doing so is to pedagogically improve learning in EFL and ESL contexts.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank a number of people for their gracious support as I endeavored to work on and complete this project. These are Joel Harris, Jessica Williams, Wan Yu, my readers Dr. Caroline Vickers and Dr. Parastou Feiz, my parents Lynne and Ken, my interview participants, and everyone else who has given their support in the development of this project. The "never-ending thesis project", as I've called it for some time, may now finally seem to have reached its conclusion.
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CHAPTER ONE
CONFERENCE PAPER PROPOSAL

The purpose of this study is to inform the field of learning English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) on phonological intelligibility by assessing the differences in intelligibility of the Bostonian and Los Angeles-based accents in the responses given from native and non-native speakers of English. As has been found through conducting interviews and analyzing the responses of participants for this project, there is a high level of variability to be seen between native and non-native speakers of English when comparing the intelligibility of those with Bostonian and Los Angeles-based accents.

I interviewed a total of 17 participants from a total of 10 countries by playing two 2.5 minute recordings from speakers who come from Los Angeles and speakers who come from Boston. After they listened to each recording I interviewed each of the participants to collect their summaries of the recordings and to determine which segments of the recording each of them found to be easy and difficult.

After transcribing the data, I analyzed each recording in terms of comprehension and intelligibility, rates of pausing, rates of exhaling and inhaling, ease and difficulty with specific vocabulary, rates of distractions, instances of overlapping, acclimation to hearing the audios, conducted interpersonal and expository analysis, quantified patterns found in difficulty with vocabulary and
intelligibility based on country of origin, analyzed interview responses qualitatively and quantitatively, conducted a co-construction analysis, quantified rates of laughter, and conducted a qualitative assessment of lexical adjustments and transitions, as well as took and analyzed Praat spectrogram screenshots of specific examples of vocabulary that was found to be challenging to the interviewees. I then assessed various ways in which this data may be of use to ESL and EFL instruction.
CHAPTER TWO
DIFFERENCES IN INTELLIGIBILITY FOR NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS: VOCABULARY SPOKEN IN BOSTONIAN AND LOS ANGELES ACCENTS

Native and non-native English speakers of English differ when it comes to the intelligibility of speakers who come from various areas of the English-speaking world. This paper focuses on a variety of aspects which deal with accent and intelligibility. Such aspects include the features that typically exemplify the Bostonian and Los Angeles-based accents, as well as the notion of intelligibility in terms of an individual’s comprehension of spoken conversation. The primary focus of this conference paper centers on the distinction made between approximately six native and 11 non-native English speakers in terms of intelligibility of these two accents when they are heard being spoken as everyday conversation. Additionally, through the use of accompanying Praat spectrogram screenshots, a review and analysis of interview responses from these speakers will be conducted to assess the ways in which different or similar responses are given as to what is deemed intelligible or unintelligible. The motivating purpose behind this paper’s development and overall contribution to the field is to attempt to determine the causality of these assessed differences of vocabulary. It is also to inform the utilization of pedagogical approaches regarding the intelligibility of
second language learners when these accents are used in everyday conversation.

**Literature Review**

This review is being conducted to help further the pedagogical focuses of accent, intelligibility and phonetics. These are topics which are of high importance to the teaching of English as a second or foreign language as they help to build the foundation of key pedagogical approaches in the field. The sources for this literature review, which were published between 1993 and 2014, encompass a variety of leading writers in the field of learning English as a second or foreign language. This review has been organized in a linear format that covers the basic hallmarks of Bostonian and Californian English, phonetics, the notion of standardness of accent, accent within regions, and intelligibility. Hallmarks of the Boston and California accents can be seen as follows. An example of the Bostonian accent includes the well-known non-rhoticity of /r/ such as can be seen with “pahk the cah in Hahvahd Yahd” (Hartley, 2005, p. 389).

Likewise, the California accent can be exemplified by Kennedy and Grama’s claim that “a chain shift that lowers short front vowels /i/ (as in kit), /ɛ/ (as in dress), and /æ/ (as in trap)” can be seen in “the acoustic properties of the vowels of young adults” who come from varying regions of California (2012, p. 39). Lodge states that “phonetics is about the physical nature of human speech sounds, irrespective of which language is being spoken” (2009, p. 8). It is worth
noting that "phonetics" should not be confused with "phonology", which is the study of the way in which native speakers store and structure the sounds of their native language and in so doing allows these speakers to properly use such sounds in an appropriate context regardless of the occasion (Lodge, 2009, p. 8).

A goal for speakers from differing language backgrounds from each other is, as Jenkins puts it, "to be able to communicate successfully with other non-native speakers of English from different L1 backgrounds" (1998, p. 119). Without a coherent level of intelligibility neither listener nor speaker will accomplish their goal of utilizing English as an L2. Without that basic cohesiveness the goal of being mutually intelligible in English for speakers who have differing L1 backgrounds is rather moot. English, after all, "most frequently serves as a worldwide lingua franca for its vast numbers of non-native users" (Jenkins, 1998, p. 119).

This ties into the notion of intelligibility, which is defined by Munro and Derwing as the level of which an individual's message is comprehended by the listener(s) although the caveat is added that there is no globally accepted method of evaluating the message in question (1995, p. 76). Clopper and Pisoni, in their 2004 article state that "just as a single talker leads to more accurate speech processing, familiar talkers can also facilitate spoken word recognition" (p. 208). In other words, listening to just one speaker leads to a clearer level of intelligibility in addition to a listener already being familiar with a speaker or speakers. This supports the overall concept from Smith et. al. that listeners
comprehend more poorly when listening to speech in an accent that differs from their native accent but that a different accent which one is familiarized with on a long-term level would seem to shrink or potentially vacate the challenge of comprehending the accent in question (2014, p. 591-592).

In Izumi et al., which looks at vocabulary usage and intelligibility in learner language, it is stated, “Vocabulary skill development has become one of the high-priority issues in recent foreign language education” (2006, p. 1). Second language learners realize the need for having a high level of vocabulary proficiency. The benefit of this can be seen in the following statement by Izumi et al., “Language learners often use related words such as hypernyms, hyponyms, synonyms, and even meronyms when they do not know or cannot retrieve an appropriate word” (2006, p. 8). The greater the level of proficiency in vocabulary, the greater the level of communicative proficiency that will be extant wherein “related words” such as hyponyms and synonyms can be successfully used.

Finally, Izumi et al. states, “It is important for learners to broaden their word association network because it makes it possible to retrieve an alternative word when they cannot retrieve an appropriate word…” (2006, p. 12). As can be seen, the higher one’s level of vocabulary, the more one will be able to seek out successful synonym replacement, thus allowing for greater communicative proficiency.

These findings certainly support my observations from the interviews that were conducted for this project, especially those of the non-native English
speakers. A factor to consider with the interviewees is that nine out of the 11 non-native English speakers started learning English at a young age when they were only 3-5 years old. Exceptions are with two Slovene and Japanese respondents, who started learning English at ages eight or nine and 13. Learning English at a young age has likely resulted in a higher level of intelligibility of English than they otherwise would have if they started learning English when they were older. Indeed, van Wijngaarden et. al. supports this claim by stating that second language speakers who are experienced and those who began learning a second language at a young age, are less likely to suffer a sizeable decrease in the intelligibility of speech (2002, p. 3004). A key element to consider with these elements deals with the idea of standardness of accent, or lack thereof.

As Tamasi states, "…nonlinguists definitely do associate speech and region" (2003, p. 133) and that a multitude of respondents made comment on a speaker's "lack of accent" by confirming her as being a standard American orator (2003, p. 140). Pursuant to this, Tamasi goes on to state that individuals of a nonlinguistic background frequently do not portray themselves as having an accent and think they have speech of a standard nature regardless of what their views may be towards the dialectal features of their native "home area" (2003, p. 140).

In Haeusler, which looks at "regional and local varieties of American English", it is stated that “American Standard English is evaluated as influential, reflected
in wordings (by non-native speakers) such as *a lot of people/ everyone speaks it, all over the world, everyone understand*. Plus, it is also the language of the mass media“ (2011, p. 33). Approximately 102 L2 speakers of English (2011, p. 7) were played audio clips of a variety of English audio clips from a variety of regions throughout the United States. Among those were recordings from Boston and California. When asked to label which accents they heard as being either from native or non-native speakers, only 14 and 13 percent of listeners correctly identified the California and Boston speakers as being native speakers of English from the United States (2011, p. 22). It should be noted that all of these L2 speakers were enrolled in ESL classes in northern California at the time the interviews were conducted (2011, p. 7).

This research serves to contrast well with my findings from multiple native Los Angeles-based speakers that what they heard from the recordings of speakers from Los Angeles is they felt the speakers (erroneously) had no accent even though they were able to clearly attribute the speech to having the same origin as their own. The idea of a standard English-speaking accent belonging to any one area is one that has been steadily declining over the preceding decades. Jenkins states that, in crediting an author named Quirk, "Few today would suggest that there was a single standard of English in the world" (2000, p. 212).

Preston supports this statement, noting that it is common in linguistic discoursal communities in the United States that "every region supports its own standard variety" while noting that no one area exemplifies a set standard variety
(1993, p. 24). Pursuant to this, Preston states that there is no one cultural, governmental, or economic area whether it be Paris or London, to have ever shown dominance with one variety or the other (1993, p. 24). Essentially, there is no dialectal region which exemplifies itself as being the model of a standard variety of English (1993, p. 25). What would be seen as "standard English" in New York City would certainly not be seen as the standard variety in Fort Worth, Texas. Invariably, each geographic locale (in the United States, at least) represents itself as being the standard English variety (1993, p. 25).

The review of this literature has covered a variety of topics that relate to learning English as a second or foreign language. The literature in question has been found to be soundly cohesive whereby it is almost entirely supportive of each other. Essentially, the individual scholarship builds off from each other in a finely tuned fashion. While this conference paper focuses on the assessment of word-level intelligibility of the Bostonian and California-based accents, further research needs to be done to assess the current state of how intelligible accents are to non-native speakers when such accents are typically considered to be standard.

**Methodology**

Approximately 17 individuals were interviewed for this project. Eleven of the interviewees are non-native English speakers. Participants came from the countries of Australia (2), Colombia (5), El Salvador (1), Hong Kong (1), Japan
(1), Mexico (1), Slovenia (1), South Africa (1), the United States (3) and Yemen (1). Participants were either active university students (15) or had just recently graduated from a university (2). For the non-native speakers, English proficiency ranged from a considerably low level of proficiency to near-native proficiency.

All interviews, which were conducted individually, occurred over either Facebook Video Calling or Skype (6), in person in California (1) or most commonly in person while abroad in Slovenia (10) in the summer of 2017. The interview in California occurred at the participant’s residence located in a quiet neighborhood in the city of Fontana. The interviews in Slovenia occurred either at a hostel participants were staying at or in classrooms at a nearby university in the capital city of Ljubljana.

A two and a half minute recording was each played of speakers from Los Angeles, California and speakers from Boston, Massachusetts. The recording of the speakers from Los Angeles is comprised of two female cousins in their thirties who are having a ‘lively’ discussion of recent events in their lives. Likewise, the recording of the speakers from Boston is comprised of a family of ten speakers who are engaged in a relaxing backyard discussion that centers on a house that belongs to one of the participating family members being renovated.

The audio recording samples are from the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) Corpus of Spoken American English. After listening to each recording, participants were asked a variety of questions pertaining to what they just heard. Questions varied but generally followed a consistent pattern: if they
could summarize the recording for me, how easy the recording was to understand, which words were challenging or particularly difficult to understand and why. After playback was completed and my round of questions asked about the speakers from Los Angeles, the same process would occur with the speakers from Boston. These interviews lasted for an average of 31 minutes and 37.5 seconds.

Upon completing the last interview, the process to meticulously transcribe each one using a foot pedal and transcription software began. The phonetic transcription process followed the symbol guidelines entitled, "Basic Symbols for Discourse Transcription Level 3+ by Topic" by Du Bois: Representing Discourse. This process took an estimated six weeks to complete. Once this operation was completed, the data extraction process could begin. I analyzed the 17 interview transcriptions of the interviews that I conducted for fourteen different items or elements. These methods of analysis encompass comprehension versus intelligibility, pause measurements, rates of exhaling and inhaling, ease and difficulty found with specific vocabulary, rates of distractions, rates of overlapping, acclimation to hearing the audio, interpersonal and expository analysis, patterns in difficulty with intelligibility, assessed rates of laughter, the taking of spectrogram screenshots, conducting a co-construction analysis, as well as analyzing lexical adjustment transitions. It is noted that pseudonyms are used in the table of the following section.
Quantitative Findings and Analysis

There were approximately 536 words spoken by the speakers from Los Angeles and 548 words spoken by the speakers from Boston. A breakdown of the number and percentage of words that were and were not understood by a selection of interviewees can be seen in the following table:

Table 1: Overview of the Percentage of Words that were and were not Understood by a Selection of Nine Different Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Interviewees</th>
<th>Number of words not understood</th>
<th>Total number of words understood</th>
<th>Percentage of words understood</th>
<th>Percentage of words not understood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles recording heard by non-native speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoko</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilio</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston recording heard by non-native speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles recording heard by native speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston recording heard by native speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soren</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flynn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in the preceding table, the percentage of words that were not understood by the selected interviewees ranges from 0.2% to as high as 1.2% while the percentage of words that were understood ranges from 98.8% to 99.8%.

The following is a quantitative breakdown of the vocabulary interviewees found to be difficult, separated by native and non-native speakers:

**Difficult vocabulary found in the Los Angeles recording by non-native speakers**

Australian
Computer
Hint
Insulted
Jawahar
Jerk
Paddlers
Spargo
"he'd keep 'em away"x1
"go back to school or something, do something with her life, or, (H) she's too into computers"x1
"I said, if I say I'm showing up I show up"x1
"The Wonder Years"x1
"I went to that party"x1
"something a little bit unusual"x1
"where I got insulted by this other little assistant twat who uh, who has since been fired"x1
Rom
Ram

**Difficult vocabulary found in the Los Angeles recording by native speakers**

Fielding
Spargo
Jawahar
Paddlers
Protective stuff
Rom
Table 2: Quantified Breakdown of the Responses Given about the Los Angeles Speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total words spoken by the Los Angeles speakers:</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of nonrepeating words or phrases found to be difficult by non-native speakers:</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of nonrepeating words or phrases found to be difficult by native speakers:</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of words and phrases not understood by non-native speakers:</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of words and phrases not understood by native speakers:</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instances of commonalities found: Paddlers, Jawabar and Spargo</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difficult vocabulary found in the Boston recording by non-native speakers

"cut off point"x1
Decibelx5
Fieldingx1
Helicopterox1
Helicoptersx1

Difficult vocabulary found in the Boston recording by native speakers

Coffeex1
Refusex1
Talkingx1
Table 3: Quantified Breakdown of the Responses Given about the Bostonian Speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total words spoken by the Bostonian speakers:</td>
<td>548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of nonrepeating words or phrases found to be difficult by non-native speakers:</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of nonrepeating words or phrases found to be difficult by native speakers:</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of words and phrases not understood by non-native speakers:</td>
<td>0.009%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of words and phrases not understood by native speakers:</td>
<td>0.005%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instances of commonalities found: Decibel:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see, non-native English speakers reported 17 unique instances of difficult vocabulary from hearing the Los Angeles speakers while native English speakers reported seven unique instances. This represents a difference of 41%. In contrast, the non-native English speakers reported five unique instances of difficult vocabulary from hearing the Bostonian speakers while native English speakers reported three unique instances, a difference of 60%.

Respondents often reported having difficulty with the same set of words as other interviewees. Common and frequent examples between both native and non-native speakers include "Jawahar", "Paddlers", and "Spargo". The
The overwhelming reason given for the difficulty of these three words in particular is that they are seldom used or encountered in written or spoken English discourse and as such, they are unfamiliar vocabulary.

In addition to the preceding vocabulary, non-native speakers reported vocabulary such as “fielding”, “cut off point”, “decimal” and “jerk”, to be difficult. Reasons for difficulty given can be seen as follows: an interviewee from Colombia found “fielding” to be difficult as it is unfamiliar vocabulary to the speaker. Likewise, an interviewee from Japan found “cut off point” to be difficult to understand as it was also unfamiliar vocabulary to the listener. With “decimal”, it was found that this word was challenging to one speaker each from Colombia and El Salvador. Both listeners were unsure if they heard “decimal” or “decibel” from the speaker. The reason they were uncertain of what they had heard is that the speaker erroneously pronounces the word “decibel” as “decipel” when she attempts to state, "their decibel level". One may argue that this is both a listening and a vocabulary issue. It is a listening issue in that the listeners were thrown off by the incorrect pronunciation of “decibel”. At the same time, they were unable to correctly decipher what they had heard due to the mispronounced vocabulary word by the speaker. “Decipel” can be seen in the following Praat spectrogram (interview excerpts of the spectrogram analyses that follow may be seen as appendices starting on page 60):
Here it can be seen that the speaker pronounces what should have been a bilabial /b/ sound as a bilabial /p/ sound. The erroneous /p/ in place of /b/ pronunciation error made by the speaker no doubt led to a sense of confusion as to what these two non-native speakers thought they heard.

For “jerk”, it was found that this word was challenging to the same interviewee from Colombia who found “fielding” to be difficult due to the sound that is made by the speaker because of how he says the vowel /a/ (schwa) sound is pronounced. Here is “jerk” from “…and he knew that this guy was a jerk” being pronounced in a Praat spectrogram screenshot:
Figure 2. “Jerk”.

We can see that the /j/ sound is clearly articulated, as is the ending /k/ sound. However, it is apparent that the schwa /ə/ vowel sound and /r/ consonant sounds blend together as one auditory unit. It would appear that the listener was unable to separate the two sounds from each other, which resulted in a breakdown of intelligibility with this word.

While native speakers tended to state that their difficulty with certain vocabulary often stemmed from having a lack of context in describing what they were challenged in understanding, non-native speakers would often state that the Los Angeles-based speakers spoke too fast and that words sound like they blend
together. This can be exemplified with the following Praat spectrogram, wherein the speaker states: “I said if I say I’m showing up, I show up.”

Figure 3. “I said if I say I’m showing up, I show up.”

The interviewee, who is from Yemen, stated that the rate of speech was too fast and challenging, sounds blended, that she got confused and couldn’t understand what was said. In this instance the speaker does have a comparatively high rate of speech when generally compared to other areas of the recording. The reason for this may be explained in that the speaker was focused on paraphrasing herself in telling her fellow speaker in the room a story of what had happened
when she attended a Halloween party and a friend had left to attend another party without telling her.

Additionally, they would often state that they were challenged by rapid changes in rising and falling intonation or that they were simply unfamiliar with the Bostonian or Los Angeles-based accents. An example of these intonation issues can be seen in the following spectrogram from the Los Angeles speakers:

Figure 4. Intonation levels of the Los Angeles speakers.

The speakers remain fairly calm and consistent for the first 54 seconds of the two minute and 31 second recording. After computers are mentioned, instances of overlap, laughter, and intonation levels sharply increase, resulting in notably increased decibel levels of pitch and intensity throughout most of the rest of the recording. By contrast, the Bostonian speakers can be seen in the following spectrogram:
Figure 5. Intonation levels of the Bostonian speakers.

Perhaps not too surprisingly, respondents stated that the Boston speakers were easier to understand because of the flatter and more clearly articulated pronunciation, slower rate of speech and the consistent intonation levels used than by the Los Angeles speakers.

One respondent, a native English speaker from Australia, was surprised that the Boston speakers weren’t more difficult to understand because of his perception of the accent from watching Hollywood movies. Likewise, a native English speaker from South Africa pondered that the Boston accent was perhaps easier to understand from her having previously heard the accent from watching movies. With that said, approximately three respondents stated that the Los Angeles recording was easier to understand with a large reason namely being that the Los Angeles speakers speak louder than the Boston speakers.
Pedagogical Implications

Approximately fourteen interviewees found the intelligibility of the Los Angeles-based speakers to be more challenging than the Bostonian speakers. Non-native English speakers reported 17 unique instances of difficult vocabulary from hearing the Los Angeles speakers out of 536 words spoken while native speakers found seven unique instances of difficult vocabulary. In contrast, non-native speakers found five unique instances of difficult vocabulary from hearing the Bostonian speakers while native speakers reported three instances of difficult vocabulary out of 548 words spoken. It has been established that, by and large, this is due to the higher rate of speech from the Los Angeles speakers, rendering the vocabulary to often sound blended. Another complicating factor is that listeners were often challenged by rapid changes in rising and falling intonation, as well as having a greater level of unfamiliarity with the vocabulary used than by the Boston speakers.

From having listened to the recordings, two of the non-native speakers who were interviewed stated that that they need to practice and better familiarize themselves with English through more informal, natural conversation. Doing so would better help to not only improve their level of English proficiency but also help to integrate themselves within the English-speaking world in areas where native speakers are prevalent.

With this in mind, teachers and instructors of English as a Second or Foreign Language would do well to better integrate more natural and informal conversation (ideally with a variety of accents and dialects) into their teaching
apparatuses. After all, as we have seen with McCarthy and O'Keefe (2004), students are not being adequately prepared to handle the unpredictable nature of unscripted and authentic conversation. The aspects of conversation that deal with vocabulary comprehension are called top-down processing, bottom-up processing, and segmentation. Bottom-up processing “helps us to decode incoming speech” and “provides the “data”, so to speak” while we then use top-down processing for “our background knowledge and schemata to interpret data and create expectations for new input” (Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M., 2014, p. 366). Essentially, bottom-up processing is a “skill that listeners perform” and is known as segmentation, which is the process wherein speech is a stream that is divided up into separate words (Celce-Murcia et al., 2014, p. 367).

There are a variety of recommendations that can be given for the teaching of word comprehension when casually spoken speech or discourse is heard. Students would do well to learn to discern between pauses, to listen for stressed syllables, as well as to distinguish between rising and lowering intonation. Students may also be taught the concept of connected speech, wherein words in English (and other languages) often "run together" and "sounds within and between words" are placed together (Celce-Murcia et al., 2014, p. 163-164). Through the correct utilization of these pedagogical approaches, students will learn how to better engage in segmentation and increase their intelligibility of casually spoken discourse.
Activities one and two in Appendix B are useful examples for how students can improve their listening comprehension through practicing both intonation and connected speech. In the first activity, students may practice dialoguing sentences while learning how to differentiate between lowering and rising intonation. In the second, students may familiarize themselves with connected speech and learn to comprehend vocabulary even after audible deletion may occur.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, the results given between native and non-native English speakers when it comes to the intelligibility of speakers who come from differing areas of the English-speaking world are copious. Pursuant to this, the Bostonian and Los Angeles-based accents proved to be an excellent area from which to focus on from a phonetical point of view and perspective. Clear explanations that help to explain the differences found between the 17 native and non-native English speakers who were interviewed have been exemplified in a prudent fashion. It is my great hope that the findings presented herein, including the suggestions for improved pedagogical fortitude as well as the suggested activities, are found to be utilizable in the field of teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language.
CHAPTER THREE
THE EMBODIMENT OF PROSODY IN THE INTELLIGIBILITY OF THE
BOSTONIAN AND LOS ANGELES ACCENTS BETWEEN NATIVE AND NON-
NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH: THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR
L2 ENGLISH LEARNERS

The teaching, practice and engagement of informal conversation is woefully inadequate for non-native speakers of English. Essentially, there is steady room for advancement in the research of the Bostonian and Los Angeles accents. This is especially true in terms of prosodic features of intelligibility with these two accents when it comes to the teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language. As a result of conducting these interviews, it has been found that L2 learners have a strong desire to learn English from their teachers through more naturally or informally occurring conversation. Over the spring and summer of 2017, approximately 17 native and non-native speakers of English were interviewed from having listened to two 2.5 minute audio clips of speakers who have these accents.

Respondents were asked questions such as what was difficult, what was easy or whether they could summarize the recordings for me. While the native speakers typically had difficulty with vocabulary due to context, non-native English speakers often found the same recordings to sound continuous, blended or merged together when the Boston and Los Angeles audios were played to
them. As a result of these findings, this paper focuses on intelligibility at the phrasal level, as well as the perceptions of prosody between native and non-native speakers of English. The purpose of doing so is to contribute to the development of improved pedagogical methods for L2 English learners when informally spoken discourse is heard and used in everyday, casual conversation.

Literature Review

The following literature deals with features that exemplify the Bostonian and Los Angeles-based accents, aspects of intelligibility as it relates to accent, communication, and the integral elements that define what prosody comprises. The sources for this literature review were published between 1995 and 2014.

Given that California English is considered to be standard, in part due to influences from Hollywood and the entertainment industry (Haeusler, 2011, p. 33), and Boston English less commonly heard outside of Boston, these are two interesting varieties to contrast in terms of intelligibility for people who use English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL and ESL, respectively). Hallmarks of the Boston and California accents can be seen with the following examples: the Bostonian accent includes the well-known non-rhoticity of /r/ such as can be seen with "pahk the cah in Hahvahd Yahd" (Hartley, 2005, p. 389). The California accent can likewise be exemplified by Robert Kennedy and James Grama when they claim that "a chain shift that lowers short front vowels /i/ (as in kit), /ɛ/ (as in dress), and /æ/ (as in trap)" can be seen in "the acoustic properties
of the vowels of young adults” who come from varying regions of California (2012, p. 39). From this we can begin to see how accent exemplifies features of one particular region or another.

This raises the question of what the notion of accent is in spoken discourse. Campbell-Kibler states that accent may be conceptualized as an observation in that groups and people speak differently from other ones. While this observation may appear to exude simplicity, accent is indeed a "loaded construct" that connects patterns of a linguistic nature through the paradigm of economic and social divisions among groups and individuals (2007, p. 32). One may deduce that people and groups in general speak differently than others as accent is not only a loaded construct but a distinctly regional one at that. Pursuant to this, Berns, in quoting scholarship that comes from Larry E. Smith on page eight of his 1981 article states that communication is essentially a "two-way street", meaning that communication of an effective nature is the shared responsibility of both listener and speaker. In other words, both the speaker and the listener bears some level of responsibility to be comprehended and that both parties must put in the effort to understand and be understood (2008, p. 329). This ties into the notion of intelligibility, which is defined by Munro and Derwing as the level of which an individual’s message is comprehended by the listener(s) although the caveat is added that there is no globally accepted method of evaluating the message in question (1995, p. 76).
Through the concept of intelligibility we are led to its related counterpart of prosody. Veenendaal, Groen and Verhoeven state, “Prosody is the melodic speech pattern that modifies the meaning of utterances; prosody is not what is said but how it is said” (2014, p. 521). Let us take "cuisine" as an example to see how intelligibility and prosody are related. The emphasis or intonation starts on the second syllable so if one were to put the intonation on the "cui" instead of the “sine”, an English speaker would likely be hard-pressed to understand and find this word to be intelligible. Essentially, prosody is an aspect of proficiency and it may be argued that prosody has more so to do not with what is being said but how it is said. One may argue that this is key to being intelligible for native and non-native speakers alike as one can have an excellent grasp of a language but if one’s delivery of it is prosodically poor then listeners will have a challenging time grasping what it is that the speaker wishes to convey. This is especially true if a listener’s level of proficiency is already low to begin with.

Harley likewise states that prosody is “the information provided by the intonation and stress patterns of the sentences” (2000, p. 769). This brings us to Mo, who states, “Prosody is an aspect of phonological structure above the level of the individual phone (consonant or vowel). Prosodic structure comprises hierarchically organized domains, from the syllable up to the utterance level…” (2012, p. 24). Here we can see that the very structure of prosody is one that is tied to various levels. These start from the very basic phonemic placement all the way to the level of the production of utterances. She goes on to state,
“Prosodic features are also understood to convey information about the intentional and attentional structure of discourse and thus play a role in sentence or discourse processing” (2012, p. 26).

Indeed, my analysis of the transcriptions for this project certainly seem to support this aspect of prosody. It is through the lens of intentional and attentional structure that many of the responses were given as the processing of the discourse played itself out. Veenendaal et al. states, “Linguistic use of prosody affects the meaning of spoken information, such as the emphasis put on important words according to the speaker. An example of this would be someone saying ‘I wanted TEA, not coffee’ after having been served a cup of coffee” (2014, p. 522). In going back a more straightforward and basic understanding of prosody, we can see how one’s usage of prosody will often either make or break the correct relay of information. In the preceding example we can see how a communicative breakdown occurred wherein the listener thought that they had heard “coffee” and not “tea”, which is what the individual in question wanted.

This kind of scenario exemplifies an all too common issue of dealing with prosodic issues, especially when one is accustomed to listening to discourse in another accent or when he or she has a different L1 background altogether. With the correct context now in place, we can see that intelligibility is commensurate with prosody in that listeners attempt to “make linguistic sense of a speech signal” and that listeners strategize to retrieve the correct linguistic message by
doing the following: “1. Listen for stress and intonation patterns. 2. Derive a phrase structure. 3. Try to recognize words 4. Pay special attention to stressed vowels” (Kent, 1996, p. 8). Here we can see how Kent does an excellent job of explicating the various quickly-occurring stages of prosodic input and its accompanying processing that goes along with it. Essentially, there are four strategic levels that listeners experience as they attempt to make sense of the speech signal that they have heard. With this knowledge of prosodic processing in mind, we can see the challenges one may face when listening to naturally occurring conversation.

McCarthy and O'Keefe state that while there have been advances in recording technology and conversations of a naturally occurring fashion, dialogues that have been designed to be used in the classroom are largely scripted (2004, p. 29). McCarthy and O'Keefe go on to state that the concept of utilizing dialogues of a scripted nature has, however, been challenged over the past two decades by researchers such as Burns (2001), Burns, Joyce and Gollin (2001) and Carter (1998). They state that Burns from 2001 has taken note that dialogues of a scripted nature "rarely reflect the unpredictability and dynamism of conversation" or the structures or features of spoken discourse of a naturally derived nature. Burns goes on to state that students who engage with spoken language that is of a solely scripted nature have less opportunity to develop their linguistic databases so that they will be better prepared for interactions of an unpredictable nature beyond the classroom (2004, p. 29).
The review of this literature has revealed a sound level of cohesiveness that is extant in the fields and subfields of prosody in the sense that these sources have been shown to be entirely cohesively supportive of one another. With that said, further research needs to be done to assess the current place of English in terms of accent and intelligibility in the world of teaching or learning English as a second or foreign language.

Methods

From the 17 individuals that were interviewed for this project, eleven of the interviewees were non-native English speakers. Participants came from the countries of Australia (2), Colombia (5), El Salvador (1), Hong Kong (1), Japan (1), Mexico (1), Slovenia (1), South Africa (1), the United States (3) and Yemen (1). Participants were either active university students (15) or had just recently graduated from a university (2). For the non-native speakers, English proficiency ranged from a considerably low level of proficiency to near-native proficiency.

All interviews, which were conducted individually, occurred over either Facebook video calling or Skype (6), locally in person (1) or most commonly in person while abroad in Slovenia (10) in the summer of 2017. The single locally-in-person-recording occurred at the participant's house located in a quiet neighborhood. The interviews in Slovenia occurred either at a hostel participants were staying at or in classrooms at a nearby university in the capital city of Ljubljana. It is duly noted that all of the names that follow are pseudonyms.
The recording of the speakers from Los Angeles is comprised of two female cousins in their thirties who are having a ‘lively’ discussion of recent current events in their lives. Likewise, the recording of the speakers from Boston is comprised of a family of ten speakers who are engaged in a relaxing backyard discussion that centers on a house being renovated that belongs to one of the participating family members. The audio recording samples are from the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English. Both accent recording examples are considered to be normalized. That is, the features heard in both exemplify the standard varieties of these two accents. After listening to each recording, participants were asked a variety of questions pertaining to what they just heard. Questions varied but generally followed a consistent pattern: if they could summarize the recording for me and how easy the recording was to understand.

Participants were subsequently asked to let me know which words were challenging or particularly difficult to understand and why. This was accomplished by giving the respondents the opportunity to playback the recording for them in its entirety. When the respondent found a word or phrase that was difficult, one of us would pause the recording and work to isolate the specific aspect of what they heard to be challenging. It should be noted that the non-native speakers who were less proficient in English would often choose to initially listen to the 2.5 minute recordings at 100% playback speed but then opt to listen to them again at 96% or 93% playback speeds during this second round of playback.
After playback was completed and my round of questions asked about the speakers from Los Angeles, the same process would occur with the speakers from Boston. These interviews lasted for an average of 31 minutes and 37.5 seconds. Upon completing the last interview, the process to transcribe each interview using a foot pedal and transcription software began. I will analyze this transcribed data by looking at specific and individual responses of eight non-native speakers and three native speakers of English through the context of the perceptions of prosody between these two groups. This will be done in terms of the recordings sounding blended, merged or continuous for the non-native speakers and native speakers alike. Interview excerpts of the spectrogram analyses that follow may be seen as appendices starting on page 61.

Findings

Without listeners having a sound grasp of what the interrelated features of prosody encompass, the struggle to grasp what is being heard will be enduring. As we have previously seen, prosody, as defined by Veenendaal is the “melodic speech pattern that modifies the meaning of utterances; prosody is not what is said but how it is said” (2014, p. 521)." With the previously discussed “cuisine” analogy in mind, the second clause of the preceding sentence in Veenendaal et al. (2014) is critical to understanding prosody at its most basic, fundamental level: prosody is not a matter of “what” is said but “how” it is said.
Broken down as a subset of communicative features, prosody includes, but is not limited to, the elements of "register, pace, space, volume and stress" (Saunders, 2017). It is through these broken down elements that the even more prosodically-related focuses of blending, merging and continuity are extant. The following findings are separated into four categories under the two main subsets of native and non-native speakers. The first comprises two native speakers who had prosodic difficulty with specific vocabulary in the intelligibility of the Los Angeles-based speakers. The second comprises one native speaker who had prosodic difficulty with intelligibility from a single phrase of the Bostonian-based speakers.

The third and largest section comprises non-native speakers who had prosodic difficulty with speakers from Los Angeles. The fourth and final category comprises three native Spanish speakers who found a single lexical item of vocabulary to be challenging from having listened to the Boston recording. Within these four categories I will analyze a number of prosodically-related issues. Examples include connected speech, linking, deletion, and stress. It should be noted that the reasoning of including and analyzing the responses given by the native speakers is that they are essentially a control. That is to say, doing so gives native speaker performance something to measure up to when analyzing the responses given by the non-native speakers. It is to that end these issues will be analyzed and addressed through the lens and context of making
naturally occurring speech more intelligible for learners of English as a Second or Foreign Language.

Four instances of prosodic issues were found between the three native speakers while 21 instances were found between the eight non-native speakers. Due to considerations of space, not all of the responses given from the non-native speakers will be reviewed and analyzed. In the first category, which comprises native speakers who found elements of the Los Angeles recording to be prosodically difficult, we have Emma and Larry. Emma is a university-age student, comes from an Hispanic background, and has native-level proficiency in English. Larry is also a university-age student, comes from an Hispanic background, and is natively proficient in English. Emma had difficulty in understanding “Jawahar” in the following line of text:

Speaker 1: No, she works [1for1] Jawahar…

Speaker 2: [1(THROAT) (THROAT)1]
Emma thought she had heard "dual harbor" for “Jawahar” but upon reviewing the transcript she realized that what she heard was not “dual harbor” but was in fact “Jawahar”. She then states, “What's J@a@wa@har@? I think that's a nonsense word.” She subsequently listens to a replay of this segment of the recording and accepts that the speaker does in fact state, “Jawahar”. When asked why she heard something else the second time the segment was played she states, “Once seeing it written and then hearing it then it, then it was like oh yeah, she did say that.” She likewise had difficulty with “Spargo” in the following line of text:
“(H) Plus they didn't like each other. (H) Spar- -- Well Spargo was older…”

In this instance, she thought she had heard “Spark” for “Spar” or “Spargo” from the speaker even though the /k/ sound was not articulated by the speaker. While Emma attributes background noise and the “rambling” nature of the speakers to her having some general difficulty with understanding the recording, we can see how her grasp of these words was affected by bottom-up and top-down processing. Due to the fact that “Jawahar” and “Spargo” may be considered
uncommon vocabulary in English, we can see how Emma was initially challenged in the decoding of the speech while at the same time she used her background knowledge in English to fill the void in her mind by interpreting these words as “dual harbor” and “Spark”.

This leaves Larry, who had difficulty in understanding “protective stuff” in the following text:

“[@@]@@ @@[2@@@2] [2All2] this [3protective stuff3] going on.”

Figure 8. [2All2] this [3protective stuff3] going on.”
Larry thought that he had heard “pretending” in place of the correctly pronounced word “protective”. As can be exemplified in the Praat spectrogram screenshot, he was challenged by the segmentation of the vocabulary by the speaker wherein “this protective stuff” was pronounced. The difficulty encountered was not due to any one particular issue but a multitude of them. Essentially, Larry had difficulty with linking due to the laughter, microphone interference, overlap and overall fast rate of speech by the speakers. Linking is defined as “the connecting of the final sound of one word or syllable to the initial sound of the next” (Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M., 2014, p. 165). Larry indicated in his interview that proper segmentation was unable to occur due to these compounding issues and he was unable to link “protective” and “stuff” together with the surrounding speech in an intelligible fashion.

Next, we have a native English-speaking listener of the Boston accent who found two instances of vocabulary from this accent to be challenging. This listener found the words “talking” and “coffee” to be difficult to understand:

“I was talking to Jimmy. ... Yesterday.”

“He was in... at the coffee shop.”
Upon analyzing the spectrogram, we can see that the pitch levels are quite high for both "talking", which has an average pitch level of 121.15 Hz, and "coffee", which has an average pitch of 154.25 Hz. This speaker in particular, Flynn, hails from Australia so the suggestion was made by him that the difficulty in the intelligibility of these two words likely stems from the Boston accent being different than what he is used to hearing back home. Perhaps the high levels of pitch, compounded by the distinctive nature of the Bostonian accent used by the female speaker, resulted in limited intelligibility of these two words. Flynn likely did not realize it but his response deals with what is known as accentedness,
which, as cited by Celce-Murcia et al. (2014, p. 32), is defined as "a listener's perception of how different a speaker's accent is from that of the L1 community" (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 385).

Through this lens and the interviewee's own acknowledgement, we can see that the interviewee appears to have had difficulty with the intelligibility of the words "talking" and "coffee" largely due to his unfamiliarity with the Boston accent. Essentially, the interviewee seems to have found the words in question to be unintelligible due to factors such as accentedness, pitch and an overall challenge of adjusting and becoming acclimated in listening to the Boston accent.

I will now transition into the responses given by the non-native speakers of English. Similar to Emma, Noemi had difficulty with the intelligibility of Jawahar in the following line of text:

“... (SWALLOW) (TSK) (H) Cathy and Jawahar don't understand how to mix their friends at all.”
Noemi came to live in the Los Angeles area from El Salvador when she was three years old. She interpreted "Jawahar" to be "Jorwil" in the preceding line of text. This ties in and relates to the issue of where stress falls or otherwise lands in spoken words. As Celce-Murcia et al. states, "listeners depend on the stressed syllables in the incoming stream of speech rather than the unstressed syllables to help them process meaning" and that when "lexical stress is misplaced, important cues that help the listener decode meaning are missing […] communication breakdown may occur" (2014, p. 185). As can be seen in the spectrogram, stress is placed by the speaker as JAWahAR while the interviewee
pronounces “Jorwil” as “JORwiL”. Even though the word that was pronounced was inaccurate, the interviewee attempted to repeat what she thought she had heard using the correct intonation stress pattern.

Heidi lives in Colombia and had difficulty understanding “He’d keep ‘em away” from the audio recording:

Figure 11. “He’d keep ‘em away.”

Heidi was challenged by this phrase through the lens of blending due to the contraction “‘em” for “them”. Blending, or “blends” are defined by Celce-Murcia et al. as “contracted spoken forms that do not have a conventional written form”
and occurs in all “naturally occurring talk” and in English that is authentically spoken (2014, p. 165). It can be readily seen that Heidi, whose first and native language is Spanish, was challenged by this naturally occurring form of casually spoken English due to her unfamiliarity with, as she says, such forms of “slang” contractions.

This ties into Zulma, who was found to have prosodic difficulty with the following line of speech from the Los Angeles speakers:

“I said, if I say I’m showing up I show up”
Zulma is from Yemen but is studying at an English-speaking university in Malaysia. In referring to the preceding sentence, Zulma states, “This was like, too fast. I didn’t realize that she was saying this.” Due to the rate of speech, the speaker spoke too fast for Zulma to successfully segmentalize what was being said. She would later go on to state that she became “frustrated” and “didn’t get” what was being talked about which led to her not wanting to “bother to understand the rest” of the audio. Such a response from a non-native speaker of English is fairly common. As Celce-Murcia et al. observes, ESL/EFL “learners may not have had much exposure to native-speaker speech” (2014, p. 175) and that, in citing Ur (1987), states the “clearly pronounced or overarticulated speech that is often characteristic” of “ESL and EFL listening materials” […] “leads learners to develop their listening and speaking skills based on false premises.”

Here we can see that Zulma quite likely learned English in an overtly formal or proper fashion which has led to being so frustrated at listening to naturally occurring discourse. As cited by Celce-Murcia et al. (2014, p. 175), Ur states that, “Students who do not receive instruction or exposure to authentic discourse are going to have a very rude awakening when [they try] to understand native speech in natural communicative situations” (1987, p. 10). Such challenges with casually-spoken discourse serve well to raise awareness of the overwhelming desire of non-native English speakers to have more engagement with authentically occurring, natural conversations.
This brings us to Celia, who is from Hong Kong. Two words in particular that she had difficulty with are “Australian” and “hint” in the following two lines:

“.. X Just like a little t-, um, **Australian** sheep dog. ... Running around.”

“(H) I walk in, and the first **hint** that there’s -- % this is gonna be something a little bit unusual…”

Figure 13. “Just like a little t-, um, **Australian** sheep dog. The first hint that there’s…”
Similar to the responses given by other speakers, Celia stated that her intelligibility was hindered by “a bit of accent” which “affects the clarity”, as well as the rate of speech in the first sentence about the Australian sheep dog. She goes on to state that “it’s the accent combining with the speed” and that “the accent affected the pronunciation” in the second one. As cited by Celce-Murcia et al. (2014, p. 375) and attributing to Rost (1990), “faster speech means less processing time for listeners, but more importantly, the speech itself sounds different” and “as speech rate increases, the many assimilations, reductions, and other adjustments in connected speech […] also increase, making the listening task just that much harder.”

We can see how the playback speed of the audio stream rendered her unable to fully grasp the noted words as she had such a limited time from which to process what she was hearing. In fact, it was not until the playback speed was reduced to 96% that the challenging word in question became intelligible to the speaker in question. This helps to highlight the fact that listeners will not always have the luxury of having authentic conversational speech slowed down when such conversations occur in real-time situations. One may argue, as Celce-Murcia et al. does, that ESL and EFL learners should be compelled to listen to and practice with quickly occurring and “spontaneous speech” while at the same time utilizing bottom-up processing so as to become better acclimated in listening to speech that is both stressed and unstressed (2014, p. 375).
This leads us to Yoko, who is from Japan and is studying at university in the United Kingdom. Yoko, perhaps likely due to her limited proficiency in English, gave some of the most candid and flavorful responses in her interview with me. While many of her responses deal with aspects that have already been addressed from the other interviewees, a core aspect of the prosodic challenges she faced in listening to the audio recordings deals with phonological deletion, reduction, and segmental word boundaries. It should be noted that due to her limited proficiency in English, the playbacks of the audio recording started off at 96% playback speed but were subsequently reduced to 93%. Now take for example the following line of text, wherein the speaker states:

“…something a little bit unusual…”
Figure 14. “…something a little bit unusual…”

The interviewee stated “Something a little bit usual?” in response to this line thereby omitting the consonant /n/ from “unusual”. An instance of phonological deletion occurred in this example wherein the affix “un” was segmentally omitted from “un” in “unusual”.

Deletion is defined as sounds disappearing or otherwise not being “clearly articulated in certain contexts” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2014, p. 172). Through this lens, the “un” sound was likely omitted from being heard due to the speaker placing the stress and rising intonation on USUAL. Being a non-native speaker of limited English proficiency, the “un” sound was no doubt easily unheard and
missed by the interviewee. Another example of phonological deletion from this interviewee pertains to hearing "rom" and "ram" when referencing computers in the following example:

“She's like talking about ROM, and .. RAM, and, .. [you know…”

Figure 15. “She's like talking about ROM, and .. RAM, and, .. [you know…”

The interviewee’s response to hearing this was: "Mm? Ro, ra @@ (Hx)"

We can see that the speaker omits the bilabial nasal /m/ sound and that she follows with (nervous) laughter and subsequently exhales. As was seen with "unusual" in the preceding example, phonological stress was placed on the "ro"
and "ra" sounds of "rom" and "ram". Considering the nervous laughter from the interviewee, it would seem to be readily apparent that she was nervous due to her unfamiliarity with the words "rom" and "ram". This, compounded with her not hearing the /m/ sound, led to apparent confusion in the interviewee attempting to explain what she heard.

Another interesting example from this interviewee deals with “paddlers” in:

“But a lot of those other paddlers are idiots.”

Figure 16. “But a lot of those other paddlers are idiots.”
To the interviewee, “paddlers” sounded like “pairs”. This not only relates to stress, which has already been discussed, being misplaced on "paddlers", but on segmental word boundaries as well. Celce-Murcia et al. states that "one of the major decoding problems at the phrasal level is the task of segmenting the stream of speech into syllables and words" (2014, p. 382). In this instance the interviewee heard "pairs" in place of "paddlers" as she was unable to decode "paddlers" between "other" and "are" from listening to the audio stream.

This leads to the conclusion that, even at 93% playback speed, the playback of the audio was too fast for the listener. One may soundly deduce that the interviewee received inadequate practice and engagement in listening to authentic conversational English while she learned the language from her instructors. The final explication from this category deals with Yoko and two speakers from Colombia for the following line of text with “Spar” and “Spargo”:

“(H) Spar- -- Well Spargo was older...”
Yoko’s response to this line of audio is “Hm?” Spar, Spar?”. The next speaker, Gonzalo, gives a similar response of “The first one is like a Spar.” The third speaker, Emilio, hears “par”. Emilio’s response exemplifies the unusual issue of dual phonological deletion occurring wherein the voiceless alveolar sibilant /s/ sound is omitted from the affix while the vowel sound /o/ is deleted from the suffix. The reason for these interviewees not hearing the full name of “Spargo” may be seen by the fact that the speaker places stress on “Spar” instead of the /g/ and suffix /o/ sounds.
The last category wherein prosodic issues were found by non-native speakers deals with the Boston accent. The intelligibility of “decibels”, which was the only piece of Bostonian-related vocabulary that was found to be prosodically challenging by non-native speakers, was raised by three of the interviewees. The contextual example from which decibels was used can be seen in:

"(H) ... but it's a matter of, ... point two decibels."

Figure 18. “But it's a matter of, ... point two deciples (decibels)."

Two of the interviewees are Noemi and Heidi, who have already been introduced, and Maya. Maya, like Heidi, hails from Colombia. Noemi
questions that she heard “decimals or decibels” and agrees that “decibels” is an uncommonly used word. Maya thinks she heard “decimals” and was challenged by the incorrectly pronounced “deciples” because it is a word that she is not, as she says, “related with”. Heidi has difficulty understanding what “decibels” is to begin with and isn’t sure if she heard “decipels” or “decibels”. She was also challenged by hearing the word and trying to keep up with the context surrounding its use.

Here we have three speakers of similar backgrounds who have difficulty with one word. Upon listening to the Bostonian speaker reciting “decibels”, it is clear that the speaker erroneously states “decibels” as “decipels”. Strangely, the speaker pronounces the bilabial /b/ sound as a bilabial /p/ sound. Even more strangely, and perhaps more interestingly, the three speakers who took issue with the hearing of “decibels” are native Spanish speakers. An answer as to why this may be the case could lie in the fact that Spanish is a syllable-timed language while English is one that is stress-timed.

In basic terms, syllable-timed languages "have fairly regular stress on each syllable" while in stress-timed languages, "syllables are grouped into metrical feet" wherein "these stressed syllables tend to occur at regular intervals, causing English to have a regular rhythmic beat" (Celce-Murcia et al., 2014, p. 208). To stress-timed speakers, the auditory stress is placed on the "dec" in the mispronounced "decipels". However, with these three
Spanish speakers, they seem to have placed the stress on the "pels" part of the word. This led to their either being able to detect the confusing /p/ sound or to be thrown off by what they heard in its entirety. The majority of the other speakers, by contrast, either did not notice this phonological difference or they simply did not mention that they were perplexed by it. With this in mind, we can see how coming from a syllable-timed language background may prove to be advantageous in being able to hear words that are either poorly pronounced by native speakers or who have similar Bostonian-based accents.

Pedagogical Implications and Discussion

We have seen the numerous and challenging facets of what native and non-native speakers alike experienced when listening to the audio clips from the Los Angeles and Bostonian-based speakers. Listening to authentic and spontaneous speech is one thing but comprehending it is another. This is especially true when one listens to or engages with speakers from the generally fast-talking region of Los Angeles. As Celce-Murcia et al. can attest to, becoming proficient and adept at being able to prosodically decipher casually-spoken discourse takes time, patience, practice and skill (2014, p. 390). Without having the “internalized knowledge about English” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2014, p. 390) in terms of aspects such as segmentation, linking, stress and intonation,
learners are likely to be left behind, confused or frustrated when it comes to encountering or being engaged in rapid, spontaneous or natural speech.

ESL and EFL instruction needs to draw a balance between learning the proper formalities of English, such as learning the distinction between properly using “your” and “you’re”. At the same time, such instruction needs to give learners the aptitude and mindset to be better prepared to handle and experience casually spoken or otherwise naturally occurring discourse from or among native speakers. With that said, there is no one single activity or strategy that can possibly cover the aforementioned issues of prosody in their totality; one must consider the pedagogical aspects holistically. However, activities on Appendix B have been offered that can be incorporated by ESL and EFL instructors alike so that students may improve their listening comprehension skills. In the first activity, students may practice dialoguing sentences while learning how to differentiate between lowering and rising intonation. In the second, students may familiarize themselves with connected speech and learn to comprehend vocabulary even after audible deletion may occur. My hope in offering these activities is that students may improve their prosodic intelligibility of English, especially of the Los Angeles and Bostonian-based accents when they are heard or used in informal conversation.
Concluding Statements

A total of 17 native and non-native speakers were interviewed for this project. Upon conducting these interviews, it was found that second language learners have a strong desire to learn English in a more naturally occurring fashion. The argument and conclusion was subsequently made that the teaching, practice and engagement of informal conversation from native speakers is lacking and deeply inadequate in ESL and EFL classrooms.

This paper has sought to increase the intelligibility of the Boston and Los Angeles-based accents when they are used in informal conversations. This has been accomplished through analyzing a variety of issues that were found to be prosodically challenging by both native and non-native speakers alike. Such findings included prosodic issues of segmentation, linking, accentedness, bottom-up and top-down processing, word boundaries, stress, blending and issues dealing with languages being syllable-timed and stress-timed. The analysis of these prosodic issues led to the presenting of suggested pedagogical activities to help make such natural conversations more intelligible for non-native speakers who come from a variety of geographic and cultural backgrounds and who have varied levels of proficiency in English.
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL CERTIFICATION
IRB #: IRB-FY2017-104
Title: L2 Learners and the Intelligibility of Bostonian and Californian Accents
Creation Date: 2-7-2017
End Date: 2-28-2018
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Caroline Vickers
Review Board: CSUSB Main IRB
Sponsor:

Study History

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Key Study Contacts

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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Caroline Vickers</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th><a href="mailto:cvickers@csusb.edu">cvickers@csusb.edu</a></th>
</tr>
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<td>Member</td>
<td>Caroline Vickers</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Co-Principal Investigator</td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cvickers@csusb.edu">cvickers@csusb.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Caroline Vickers</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Primary Contact</td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cvickers@csusb.edu">cvickers@csusb.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>Caroline Vickers</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Investigator</td>
<td>Contact</td>
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APPENDIX B

SUGGESTED PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES
Activity 1:

Listen to your instructor recite the following dialogue sentences. Mark the correct intonation pattern for each one and discuss them with your peers.

1. Hi there! My name is Becka.
2. Which way is Pico Boulevard?
3. It’s three blocks south to your left.
4. Thank you so much!

Possible intonation pattern that could be used.

1. Hi there! My name is Becka.
2. Which way is Pico Boulevard?
3. It’s three blocks south to your left.
4. Thank you so much!
Activity 2: Connected Speech (Deletion)

The class will learn about and practice the deletion "of word-final /t/ or /d/ in clusters of two at a word boundary when the following word begins with a consonant other than /h, y, w, r/": 1. East side 2. blind man 3. wild boar 4. old boyfriend (Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M., 2014, p. 172).

The students will then practice reciting these words with their instructor before being encouraged to develop some deletion examples to write down of their own (such as the dental consonant /d/ sound in "supposed to").

It is noted that while these activities were developed by myself, elements of their creation were inspired by the 2014 publication entitled 'Teaching Pronunciation: A Course Book and Reference Guide' by Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin.
APPENDIX C

SPECTROGRAM INTERVIEW EXCERPTS
Pair of interviewees explicated on pages 16-17

Maya- "their decibel level"

(R= interviewer; L= Maya)

R: Um, (1.7) let's see here uh, which words, uh, were challenging or particularly difficult to understand, um, from this recording?
L: (1.8) (H) Umm, (H) when they were talking about the person touch they- for me it was difficult to understand the decimals [R: Mhm] because it's like a word I'm not related with. (H) So it's uh, like, kind of tricky because I don't have that, like, that close of a relationship with those kind of words [R: Mhm] like, related to numbers or those stuff (H) so it was (1.3), like,
<T=21:00>
L: difficult- these one. The "decimals" and um, when the third man spoke, because he has (H) I mean he speaks faster [R: Mhm] so I couldn't get like, the main idea [R: Okay] of what he was saying.
R: Oh. Um, so, really it was uh, more so the vocabulary that was challenging in some regards to understand (H) than the accent, right?
L: Yeah.

Noemi- “their decibel level”

(LUCY= 1st speaker; R= interviewer; G= Noemi)

LUCY:.. (H) %I- – I was talking to Jimmy.
... Yesterday. He was in, ... at the coffee shop.
(H) And he said, he's been f- .. fielding calls all week from neighbors.
... Who would love to @have their house done,
(H) ... but it's a matter of, ... point two decibels.
G: I don't know what point two decibels is. (1.8) Decimals or decibels?
((OVERLAPS WITH PLAYBACK OF RECORDING))
R: Decibels.
G: I don't know what that is. ((PLAYBACK STOPS))
R: Uh, it's like-
G: Oh yeah, decibel level @
R: Yeah, it's like- it's like audio, like, volume.
G: Oh, okay.
<T=20:00>
R: So, like right now we have- you can measure it if we had the
G: Uh huh.
R: right, like, hardware. You can measure like, how loud we're talking right now.
G: Mhm.
R: And, (1.3) um, so if you go to like a concert or something [G: Yeah, I know what it is.] # the decibel level would be well over 100.
G: Yeah. I know.
[…]
R: Mhm. (1.0) Okay. Um, which words were challenging or particularly difficult to understand?
G: The ones that I asked you about.
R: Yeah?
G: Yeah. (1.1) Cuz it was the subject.
R: The subject matter?
G: Mhm.
R: Okay. (1.0) Um...
G: Even though I heard that word before I just, yeah. [R: Mhm] I had to, like.
R: Decibels, yeah.
G: Yeah, I remember.
R: Yeah, well it's kind of like an uncommon (1.0) kind of word to use in English, you know?
G: Mhm.
R: Decibel. I mean, how often when we're
g: Mhm.
R: talking about decibel levels, right?
G: Mhm.
R: Um...
G: @@
R: Soo, but, so- so that was more like in terms of vocabulary and not necessarily... you- you were [G: Mhm] able to hear the word.
G: Exactly.

Emilio- "jerk" from “…and he knew that this guy was a jerk.” Page 17-18

(R= interviewer; C= Emilio)

R: Yeah, so is it (1.4) um, the, the rate of which their speaking that makes it difficult or just the
R: (1.4) accent makes it difficult. What, what makes it kind of difficult for you- for you to
R: understand that? (2.0) That word.
C: I think- I think it's that way she used the vowel. It was like "jerk",
R: Hmm.
C: "jerk". But I don't know. I'm used to this word
R: Yeah.
C: That see, "jerk", "jerk".
R: Hmm.
C: I think it sounds like, it sounds like "jerk"
R: Yeah. Alright, um, (1.8) hmm. Yeah, so it's, it could- it could be the vowel (1.3) 281 um, (1.0) that
R: you know, the "e"
C: I feel like it's the vowel.
R: Mmm. Um, so, in terms of the vowel would you say it's um, just the way it's R: pronounced that makes it difficult?
<T=12:01>
C: (2.5) Yeah.
R: Hmm. (2.3) Okay. Um, (1.5) well that's, that's cool. That's interesting,
R: um, (H) see, for part of the project here is to try figure out (1.7) you know,
R: what these, these women- they're from Los Angeles trying to figure out
R: you know, what makes it difficult for you to understand a particular word. Um,
R: (1.9) so, (1.5) uh, that's very interesting. Um, and it sounds like you know,
R: just the way uh, do, uh well here's, here's a question. Do you think it has to
R: do with (1.3) um, just like, the speed. The rate of which they're talking that
R: makes it difficult?
C: ((DOG BARKING)) The what?
R: Just- just the rate of speed of their speech? The rate of their speech?
C: (1.5) Mmm maybe, maybe yeah, it also makes- makes it difficult.
<T=13:00>
R: Mhmm. Hmm. Okay.
C: They speak very fast.
R: Yeah.
C: And I think uh, like a very strong accent.
R: Mmm. So, so the accent is strong um, for you.
C: Yeah.

Zulma- “I said if I say I'm showing up, I show up.” Page 19

(R= interviewer; M= Zulma)

M: Yeah. (H) “I said, if I say I'm showing up I show up". This was like, too fast. I
didn't realize that she was saying this.
R: Mhm.
M: Yeah.
R: Okay. So it was the speed [M: mhm] of the speech, for, for the- for those
now.
R: Mhm. Okay. Um, (1.8) so…
[…]
R: Yeah. So, so the, uh, “I, I didn’t think you were coming.” Uh, Alina. “I said if they say I’m not sh- if they say I’m showing up, I show up.” [M: Mm] (H) So that, that part is just (H) too fast?  
M: It got mixed up, yeah.  
R: Yeah. Do, do you feel the words kind of like, blended together?  
M: Yeah. Because, uh, I- k, the. (H) It’s like the, it was mixed. Like, one second by the other. It wasn’t like they were talking con- [R: Mhm] constantly. (H) Uh, so I got confused and I didn’t understand it.

Emma- “No, she works [1for1] Jawahar…” Page 35-36

(ALINA= 1st speaker; Lenore= 2nd speaker; R= interviewer; A= Emma)

ALINA: No, she works [1for1] Jawahar,  
LENORE: [1(THROAT) (THROAT)1]  
ALINA: but,  
LENORE: [(Hx)]  
ALINA: [(Hx)] you know (Hx),  
A: She works for who?  
LENORE: <@ What does this mean @>.  
R: Uh.  
A: She works for "dual harbor"?  
R: Umm.  
(5.00)  
A: (H) And that’s what I mean too, like she’s, she's talking about a dog and a man  
A: that the dog didn't like ((PAPERS RUFFLE)) and then she’s talking about a she  
A: like, who, how did that get there?  
(1.0)  
A: Can I look at the transcript? @@ @  
R: Umm, yeah, I don't have a problem with that. ((PAPERS SHUFFLE)) ###  
pinpoint (2.0)  
R: where it is.  
<T=9:00>  
[...]  
A: See, I thought it was "dual harbor" and this transcript says Jawahar.  
R: Mhmm. That's very interesting, um.  
A: What's J@a@wa@har@? I think that's a nonsense word.  
R: Uhh.  
A: (H)  
LENORE: [(H)] Is [2she work2]ing,  
ALINA: [2You can't2].  
LENORE: or [3doing anything3].
ALINA: [3(Hx) No, she works for Jawahar.
LENORE: [4(THROAT) (THROAT)]
ALINA: but,
LENORE: [(Hx)]
ALINA: [(Hx)] you know (Hx),
A: Oh, yeah. She does say Jawahar.
R: So, like, you know, like, the first, second time you heard it though you thought
R: it was um, who?
A: I thought it sounded like "dual harbor". Like, that's a workplace. She said she
A: works for "Dual Harbor". And then when I read Jo- Jawahar I was like, oh,
A: she didn't say that but then when you just played it again right now,
R: Mhmm.
A: like it did sound like she said Jawahar-Joawhar
<T=10:00>
R: Okay. Umm. So the you know, the first or second time played it you know, you
kind of
R: heard something else other than what you thought it was like, like do you
know why,
R: why that was?
A: Once seeing it written and then hearing it then it, then it was like oh yeah, she
did say that.
A: But it was seeing the word
R: Mhmm.
A: Because even if I wouldn't have seen it I still wouldn't have known what she
was saying. I would have been like I don't know what she's saying.
R: Interesting, interesting. Wow, so, so, seeing it transcripted, it can help a lot
with 294 that.
A: It helped, yeah.

Emma- “(H) Plus they didn't like each other. (H) Spar- -- Well Spargo was
older…” Page 36-37

(ALINA= 1st speaker; R= interviewer; A= Emma)

ALINA: (H) Spar- -- Well Spargo was older, ... you know,
and he was real bright, and he knew that this guy was a jerk.
ALINA: ... If we went to parties,
A: See right there, like, did she say spark? Is Spark the name of the dog?
A: (H) Is she saying "Spark"?
R: Spark, um, that's a good question.
<T=6:00>
R: Spark. (CHECKS THROUGH PAPERS) Oh. Uh, that's not Spark. It is Spargo.
A: Okay, see now, that's
R: Spargo.
A: There you go right there.
R: Yeah.
A: It's like what are you saying? @@@
R: Yeah.
A: I thought it was Spark.
R: Spark. So you thought it was Spark. Um, we can play it back a little bit
R: and then we could maybe try and see why you think it was Spark.
A: Okay.
ALINA: I knew that was gonna happen. (H) Plus they didn't like each other.
(H) Spar- -- Well Spargo was older,
A: Yeah, cuz you can't really... you can't really hear her say the "o".
R: Mhmm.
A: She was like Spark, Sparkle. You know, like she couldn...
R: Yeah. So would you, would you say it's kind of like an incomplete. Is ###
incomplete?
A: It sounds incomplete.
R: Sounds incomplete. Yeah, okay. Uh, very interesting. Um, very very
interesting.
A: @@@

Larry- “[@@]@@ @@[2@@2]


(ALINA= 1st speaker; LENORE= 2nd speaker; R= interviewer; C= Larry)

ALINA: [2All2] this [3protective stuff3] going on.
C: All this pretending? Like, something's going on?
R: Mmm.
C: (7.0) Here. Let me try it again. ((WATCH BEEPS))
ALINA: Just like a little t-, um, Australian sheep dog.
... Running around... <VOX rar rar rar rar rar [rar VOX].
LENORE: [@@]@@ @@[2@@2]
ALINA: [2All2] this [3protective stuff3] going on.
C: Always...
R: All this protective stuff going on.
C: Okay.
R: There was interference a little bit.
C: Yeah.
R: So, ((PAPER SHUFFLES)) what from that made it difficult? Just the
background noise?

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C: Yeah, there was it seemed like a ruffling, rustling, ruffling sound.

Flynn- “I was talking to Jimmy. ... Yesterday.”

“He was in... at the coffee shop.” Pages 39-40

(R= interviewer; H= Flynn)

R: Alright. Ummm, let's see. Um, in terms of the accent- how, how was the accent?
H: Umm
R: In terms of #
H: still quite difficult, I guess. Like how she said talking and coffee (H) at the start. I immediately picked that up. I was like, I would- #
H: it's very different how they say (H) like, like "talking" and "coffee".
R: Mhm.
H: So I thought, I was like, ah, okay, I get it now. I get it- get, get like, but I still understood
R: Mhm.
H: (H) cuz her, sent- like the way she structured her sentence
R: Mhm.
H: (H) that's how I still sort of- so, I think the accent (1.5) even though <T=26:00>
H: it was probably just as hard as the L A accent, I think it's the way she actually spoke. H: Made it easier to understand.

Noemi- “... (SWALLOW) (TSK) (H) Cathy and Jawahar don't understand how to mix their friends at all.” Page 40-42

(R= interviewer; G= Noemi)

G: So I didn't understand the noise. I don't know, it's "Jorwil" # #
R: Oh.
G: I'm assuming it was a person and then
R: Uh.
G: the company? Some other name?
R: Yeah.
G: So I don't understand those.
R: Oh.
G: The names of the companies (1.0) but
R: Okay.
G: (H) I don't see that as like, a word. More of like, just names that I've
R: Mhm.
G: never heard of.

Heidi- “He’d keep ‘em away” Pages 42-43

(R= interviewer; L= Heidi)

L: Ehh, it was, (1.3) I don't remember exactly if she says take away or keep
away,
R: Mhm.
L: for example,
<T=14:00>
L: (2.6) but # I am sure it's were away. It's a phrase of that but I am not quite sure
if it's take away or keep away, she says.
[…]
R: Yeah. Yeah, that's- that's a good observation cuz um, in this, in this part that
you're-
that you're referring to (H) um, you know, there are interruptions (H) and he says,
R: or she says, excuse me, um, she says, "he keep 'em away". Like "em".
L: Mhm.
R: Almost like.
L: Ah, yeah.
R: Yeah. "So he’d keep 'em away". So almost, almost like a slang, (H) um.
L: Yeah.

Zulma- “I said, if I say I'm showing up I show up” Pages 43-44

(R= interviewer; M= Zulma)

M: Yeah. (H) “I said, if I say I’m showing up I show up”. This was like, too fast. I
didn’t realize that she was saying this.
R: Mhm.
M: Yeah.
R: Okay. So it was the speed [M: mhm] of the speech, for, for the- for those
now.
R: Mhm. Okay. Um, (1.8) so…
[…]
R: Yeah. So, so the, uh, “I, I didn’t think you were coming.” Uh, Alina. “I said if
they say I’m not sh- if they say I’m showing up, I show up.” [M: Mm] (H) So that,
that part is just (H) too fast?
M: It got mixed up, yeah.
R: Yeah. Do, do you feel the words kind of like, blended together?
M: Yeah. Because, uh, I- k, the. (H) It’s like the, it was mixed. Like, one second by the other. It wasn’t like they were talking con- [R: Mhm] constantly. (H) Uh, so I got confused and I didn’t understand it.

Celia- “.. X Just like a little t-, um, Australian sheep dog. ... Running around.”

“(H) I walk in, and the first hint that there’s -- % this is gonna be something a little bit unusual…” Pages 44-47

(R= interviewer; H= Celia)

H: But I missed the Australian part.
R: The Australian part?
H: Yeah. And the word confuses me.
R: Mhm.
H: Yeah.
R: Oh, and in general or (1.0) just from this recording?
H: From this recording. From how- how she said it.
R: Oh, okay. So uh, real quick. Uh, do- do you feel it’s the accent that maybe made it difficult or?
H: Yeah, it’s a bit difficult because she was talking quite fast. Yeah. # ((OVERLAP))
R: So the speed and then uh,
H: Yeah.
R: but her, so her accent, you know, she’s from Los Angeles
<T=8:00>
H: Yeah.
R: Do you feel that played a part (1.2) in?
H: Um, yeah I guess so. A bit of accent and that affects the clarity.
R: Yeah, yeah. Okay.
H: Yeah.
R: So, it’s just- just that combined with kind of the rate of speed?
H: Yeah.
[…]
R: Cool. Um, so just, just to go back real quick uh, you said that “hint”.
H: Yeah.
R: Um, what- what kind of
<T=18:00>
R: made that difficult uh, do- do you think to um,
H: Um, uh, her pronunciation of the word makes it difficult.
R: Mhmm.
H: Yeah.
R: Okay, um, so pro- so the pronunciation?
H: Pronunciation and the speed of the sentence.
R: Yeah, so, she was kind of talking a little bit too fast?
H: Yeah.
R: # think? And, (1.0) um, in terms of pronunciation, (1.0) um, (3.5) so, uh say, say I want a hint for that
R: or I want a hint for the problem (H) um, (2.0) so, # was it, was it more like her- her kind of accent combined with the speed or?
H: (H) Yeah, it's the accent combining with the speed. Yeah. The accent affected the pronunciation (H)
R: Yeah.
H: and she was talking quite fast. Yeah.

Yoko- “…something a little bit unusual…” Pages 46-47

(ALINA= 1st speaker; R= interviewer; S= Yoko)

ALINA: in, and the first hint that there's – % this is gonna be something a little bit unusual, is there's all these helium balloons? [PLAYBACK STOPS]
S: Some # #?
R: Um, (1.3) yeah. So, uh, she's saying that (1.1) uh, “something a little bit unusual”.
S: Something a little bit usual?
R: Unusual, yeah. So, uncommon.

Yoko- “She's like talking about ROM, and .. RAM, and, .. [you know…”

Pages 46-49

(ALINA= 1st speaker; LENORE= 2nd speaker; R= interviewer; S= Yoko)

LENORE: [you space out] on it.
She's like talking about RO=M, and .. RA=M, and, .. [you know,
ALINA: [(SNORE) (SNORE)]= [PLAYBACK STOPS]
S: Mm? Ro, ra @@ (Hx)
R: Okay, (0.8) Um, (1.2) ((SHUFFLES PAPERS)) yeah. (1.0) So, (1.0) um, she's talking about rom. Like computer rom?
S: Yeah.
R: Computer ram.
S: Mhm. ((LOUD ANNOYING INTERFERENCE BEGINS))
<T=11:00>
R: (8.5) Okay.
S: Huh.
R: Uh, we’ll close the door after she leaves. But, um, yeah. So, she’s talking about (1.0) like, computer ram, right?
S: Mhm.
R: And computer roms. (0.6) Are you familiar with that at all?
S: (2.7) Mm. Computer ram?
R: Yeah, computer ram.
S: A ram?
R: Yeah, computer ram. Um, (1.2) you know, ((INCONSIDERATE INDIVIDUAL SLAMS SOMETHING)) you know computers (1.0) uh, with memory?
S: Uh.
R: That’s kind of like the speed. So, so, it’s probably just the vocabulary [S: Mmm] that’s unusual, I would guess. We don’t even use those terms
R: very much anymore.
S: Mhmm.

Yoko- “But a lot of those other paddlers are idiots.”

(ALINA= 1st speaker; R= interviewer; S= Yoko)

ALINA: Cause she’s really interesting. .. But a lot of those other paddlers are idiots.
S: Pairs?
R: Oh yeah, so Paddlers. Um, (1.2) uh, that refers I think last name.
S: Ohhh.
R: The last name of uh, like a family name. (1.5) So, like, (0.8) you know like the
R: Andersons are going to a party tonight?
S: Uh huh.
R: It’s a kind of formal, (1.1) kind of, (1.6) old way to address (0.4)
<T=13:00>
R: like a party, you know? (1.0) Uh, so, so Paddlers refers to.
S: Mmm.
R: Uh, is there anything else from that (0.7) like, kind of sentence that was difficult?
S: Mmmmm. (H) Sentences okay but uh, I can’t understand that maybe now
R: Mhm.
S: or yeah, the name.
R: Mhm.
S: Yeah.
R: So it’s mostly Paddlers.
S: Pad...
R: Paddlers, yeah.
S: Padders.
R: Paddlers, yeah. Let me uh @. ((SHUFFLES PAPERS))
R: (11.5) Uh, just one second. ((CONTINUES SHUFFLING PAPERS))
R: (13.3) Here we go. ((SHUFFLES PAPERS)) (5.0) So, so right here.
<T=14:00>
(3.7) So, Paddlers.
S: Padders.
R: Yeah.
S: Mmm. I don’t know this word.
R: Yeah, well I think it’s just like a family name.
S: Mhmm.
R: So, very unusual (1.0) uh, kind of uncommon name, you know?
S: Okay.
R: Uh, so I think that’s why it’s- I didn’t really understand it at first
S: Mhmm.
R: when I first heard this recording, you know? Um, so that’s kind of what that
refers to. (1.5) Um, (1.2) Paddlers. Uh @.
S: Hmm mm.
R: So I know that’s confusing, yeah.
S: Okay.

Group of three interviewees explicated on pages 50-51

Yoko- “(H) Spar- -- Well Spargo was older...”

(ALINA= 1st speaker; R= interviewer; S= Yoko)

ALINA: I knew that was gonna happen. (H) Plus they didn’t like each other.
(H) Spar-- -- Well Spargo was older,
... you know, and he was real bright... [PLAYBACK STOPS]
S: Hm? Spar, Spar?
R: Spar, yeah, um, (1.5) so (Hx).
S: @@@
R: That’s a very good question because I get-- I get asked about that a lot. (1.0)
R: Um, ((PAPERS SHUFFLING))
R: so, "Spar" versus "Spargo". (0.5) It's the name of a person.
S: Ohhh. Okay.
R: So, it's difficult to (Hx)- to understand.

Gonzalo- “(H) Spar- -- Well Spargo was older...”

(M= Gonzalo)
M: Uh, so yes, I think it was uh, a little bit hard to understand but I guess I did a good
M: job. There were like, two words that I not sure if I got well. (H) The first one is
M: like a M: Spar. I am, I'm assuming that it's the name of or the nickname of a
M: person. (H) Uh,
M: because that term
M: was linked with uh, personal pronoun. (H) So I, I would say that it was a
M: nickname.

Emilio- “(H) Spar- -- Well Spargo was older...”

(ALINA= 1st speaker; R= interviewer; C= Emilio)

ALINA: (5.0) Like each other.
(H) Spar- -- Well Spargo was older, ... you know,
and he was real bright, and he knew that this guy was a jerk.
218 <T=9:00>
C: (2.3) How when she says this is, this "par" was older
R: Mhmm. (2.0) Yeah.
C: What is "par"?
R: Umm, (2.5) uhh, oh, "Spargo". So Spargo...
C: Spargo?
R: Yes, S-P-A-R-G-O. So Sp-
C: What is that?
R: Uh, that's just the name, the name of the person.
C: That's Spargo?
R: Yeah, that's kind of an unusual name.

Group of three interviewees explicated on pages 51-53

Noemi- "(H) ... but it's a matter of, ... point two decibels."

(LUCY= 2nd speaker; R= interviewer; G= Noemi)

LUCY:... (H) %I- -- I was talking to Jimmy.
... Yesterday. He was in, ... at the coffee shop.
(H) And he said, he's been f- .. fielding calls all week from neighbors.
... Who would love to @have their house done,
(H) ... but it's a matter of, ... point two decibels. ... The people, ... dir- ... directly,
...
G: I don't know what point two decibels is. (1.8) Decimals or decibels?
(((OVERLAPS WITH PLAYBACK OF RECORDING))
R: Decibels.
G: I don't know what that is. ((PLAYBACK STOPS))
R: Uh, it's like-
G: Oh yeah, decibel level @
R: Yeah, it's like- it's like audio, like, volume.
G: Oh, okay.

Heidi- "(H) ... but it's a matter of, ... point two decibels."

(R= interviewer; L= Heidi)

L: (H) Umm, uh, the um,
<T=33:00>
L: the one that really caught my attention was (H) decibels. I think she said it at the very beginning of the recording.
R: Mhm.
L: (H) Decibels I think is the word. I'm not sure what it is. And I'm- I'm not, I'm not even sure if it's the word (H) uh, from pronounce it- pronounce, pronouncing it very well.
L: Or if [R: Yeah] it, or if I really misunderstood
R: Mhm.
L: (H) the, the form of the word. That was the, the most (H) like the one that I really eh, kept in mind.
R: Mhm.
L: Uhhm, them ((AUDIO BREAKS UP))- there was. Let me think. No, I think that's the one that I really would like to, (1.0) to know and what is, what is it. What-what it means because um?
R: Oh, okay.
L: It was not very clear for me.
R: Yeah, so, you heard the word the decibel, right? Um, but you're more so not familiar with the definition of it, is- or what it means. Is that right?
<T=34:00>
L: Oh yeah, but I'm- I really don't know if I'm, if I didn't get- if I get it well if I get it correctly. If I got it correctly.
R: Mhm. (H) Yeah, uh...
L: But I sounds- it sounded for me more like decib- (H)
R: Mhm.
L: decipels- decibels.
R: Mm. Okay. Uh, yeah, she- she does say uh, decibels. Um,
L: Mhm.
R: So that is correct. Um, (1.9) so you know de- decibels refers to um, like the, like the- almost like the volume, you know like the- the loudness of uh, of a sound
(H) um, so, um, from this recording um, it was mostly- so you know what decibels are, right? (H)
R: Um... but
L: (H) Oh, yeah. I- I think, I (H) have like, the correct (1.3) em, (1.6) like the correct idea.
R: Yeah, definitely. (H) Um, so wa- was it also kind of like, actually- actually
<T=35:00>
R: hearing the word that was uh, challenging?
L: Yes. Mhm. Umm, em, and of course trying to keep up- trying to put it into context- into context.
R: Mhm.
L: And trying to imagine what the situation could be about.

Maya- "(H) ... but it's a matter of, ... point two decibels."

(R= interviewer; L= Maya)

R: for- at least to me. Uh, so it's very- very interesting. (1.6) Um, (1.7) let's see here uh, which words, uh, were challenging or particularly difficult to understand, um, from this recording?
L: (1.8) (H) Umm, (H) when they were talking about the person touch they- for me it was difficult to understand the decimals
R: Mhm.
L: because it's like a word I'm not related with. (H) So it's uh, like, kind of tricky because I don't have that, like, that close of a relationship with those kind of words
R: Mhm.
L: like, related to numbers or those stuff (H) so it was (1.3), like,
<T=21:00>
L: difficult- these one. The "decimals" and um, when the third man spoke, because he has (H) I mean he speaks faster
R: Mhm.
L: so I couldn't get like, the main idea
R: Okay.
L: of what he was saying.
R: Oh. Um, so, really it was uh, more so the vocabulary that was challenging in some regards to understand (H) than the accent, right?
L: Yeah.
REFERENCES


