

# Recording of the Week: The Listening Project Symphony

*Paul Wilson, Curator Radio Broadcast writes:*

This week's selection celebrates World Radio Day 2018 (13th February) and is an example of the art of radio at its best: blending creativity with actuality to illuminate aspects of our life and times and, in this instance, one of the moral dilemmas of our day. It's an excerpt from the *Listening Project Symphony*, a beautiful composition by Gary Carpenter for the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, first broadcast live from Manchester in December 2012. The piece incorporates extracts from some of the intimate and often surprising conversations which have emerged from The Listening Project, a collaboration between the BBC and the British Library in which family members or friends are invited to share their stories, private thoughts and feelings with an unseen radio audience.



The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra at Salford Quays, 2012. Photo courtesy of the BBC

In this extract we briefly hear voices from three separate conversations, each poignant or moving in its own way even in this edited form. The third – part of a conversation between a young British Muslim woman of Indian/Pakistani descent and her India-born mother – will hold a particular resonance for some. The daughter begins by gauging her mother's response to a hypothetical question about marriage: how would you feel if I were to marry a man of a different religion? She then takes the hypothetical situation a step further – how would you feel if my partner were another woman?

[The Listening Project Symphony \(excerpt\)](#)

The complete *Listening Project Symphony* can be heard on the BBC iPlayer [here](#) and the Listening Project's BBC homepage is [here](#). The complete collection of unedited Listening Project conversations can be explored at the British Library's [Sounds website](#).

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Afshan (left) and her mother Flavia, with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra at Salford Quays (composite image courtesy of the BBC)

In this extract we briefly hear voices from three separate conversations, each poignant or moving in its own way even in this edited form. The third – part of a conversation between a young British Muslim woman of Indian/Pakistani descent and her India-born mother – will hold a particular resonance for some. Afshan, the daughter, begins by gauging her mother Flavia's response to a hypothetical question: how would you feel if I were to marry a man of a different religion? Only then does she take the hypothetical situation a step further – how would you feel if my partner were another woman?

[Excerpt from the Listening Project Symphony BBC Radio 4 29 Dec 2012](#)

The complete *Listening Project Symphony* can be heard on the BBC iPlayer [here](#) and the Listening Project's BBC homepage is [here](#).

Afshan and Flavia's conversation can be heard in full [here](#), while the complete collection of unedited Listening Project conversations can be explored at the British Library's [Sounds website](#).

Follow [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

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## [Linguistics at the Library – Episode 2](#)

PhD placement students, Andrew Booth and Rowan Campbell, write:

In the second episode of Linguistics at the Library, Andrew and Rowan discuss some of the differences between regional accents and 'RP' (Received Pronunciation), and why people might feel that they have to change the way they speak to work in certain jobs. Using clips from the British Library's [Evolving English](#) Collection, we look at the concepts of stigma and prestige, and how social factors can influence the way we perceive accents.

Tweet us your questions! @VoicesofEnglish

This week's 'What's the feature?' used a clip from: *BBC Voices Recording in Driffield*. BBC, UK, rec. 2004 [digital audio file]. British Library, C1190/16/02. Available:  
<http://sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialects/BBC-Voices/021M-C1190X0016XX-0201V0>

Interesting links:

Have you experienced discrimination due to your accent? Submit your story to the Accentism Project: <http://accentism.org/>

Peter Trudgill's piece on modern RP:  
<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/estuary/trudgill.htm>

Social Mobility Commission report:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/less-affluent-kids-are-locked-out-of-investment-banking-jobs>

Prejudice against English teachers with Northern accents:  
<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/research-exposes-prejudice-over-teachers-with-northern-accents/>

Overt and covert prestige:  
<https://linguistics.knoji.com/language-and-socioeconomic-status-overt-vs-covert-prestige/>

[Linguistics at the Library Episode 2](#)

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## Recording of the week: Dongo lamellophone and fireside chatting

*This week's selection comes from Isobel Clouter, Curator of World & Traditional Music.*

Here is an intimate [recording](#) made by one of our long time field recordists John Brearley. Travelling with his own violin to encourage a two-way flow of ideas, as suggested by anthropologist Alan Barnard, John Brearley sought out players of musical instruments and people who could perform healing dances and songs throughout Botswana, with positive results. John amassed a large and varied collection of music and interviews which illustrate the relationships he formed with the musicians that he recorded. The sound of the dongo (lamellophone) is but one part of a beautiful recording of the musician G/ashe G/ishe and his family chatting by the fireside.

[Dongo \(lamellophone\) and fireside chatting \(BL reference C65/60\)](#)



## Dongo (lamellophone) of G/ashe G/ishe

John Brearley continues to record in Botswana. His collection is an ongoing work that began with his first trip to Botswana in July 1982 to investigate and record traditional music, and to observe to what extent the influence of radio and recorded music had interrupted the use of traditional instruments. In particular he wanted to hear the music of the Basarwa. (The countries in southern Africa use different names to refer to Bushmen populations. In Botswana the term employed most often is Basarwa). Over 1000 recordings from John Brearley's collection can be explored on [British Library Sounds](#).

Follow [@BL\\_WorldTrad](#) and [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

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## Mr Tickle in Connected Speech

PhD placement student Andrew Booth writes:

At the *Evolving English* exhibition at the British Library (2010-11), we asked visitors to submit recordings of their voices in specially designed telephone booths. Around 15,000 speakers took part, and the outcome is the [Evolving English VoiceBank](#) and [WordBank](#) – a collection of accents and dialect words from over the UK, and all around the world. Using the recordings can help linguists or language learners and language teachers in a variety of ways.

Connected speech is an umbrella term, which is used to describe the different processes of change words experience when spoken in natural and uninterrupted speech. It is easier to read a sentence with the words spaced evenly, than it is when there are no spaces in between. In speech we do not have the luxury of set boundaries, and when natural speech occurs, some sounds are lost or changed to enable speed and fluency. The rhythmic organisation of English can cause letters to be inserted, changed or deleted. Here are some examples –

- 'ten minutes' said quickly in the middle of a sentence may become /teminits/
- 'in bed' in the middle of the sentence 'sat up in bed' could become /imbed/
- 'to a' may become /towa/ in the sentence 'came to a school'
- 'raw egg' may become /ro:r eg/ when said quickly
- 'must have' isn't usually /must hav/, but pronounced /mustuv/

Teaching connected speech to learners of English can be an immensely complicated procedure if you are determined to spell out the rules and terminology that unveil the secrets to connected speech. Within connected speech we have the terminology of **progressive assimilation** which covers the first two examples above and **linking** or **intrusive** /r/ or /w/ explains the

second two and **weak forms** which can explain the final one. Any or all of the terms are enough to put an English language learner (or anybody) off learning languages forever. However, by showing the features of connected speech the fluency and understanding of English can be improved rapidly.

As a rule, when teaching English, I will stay as far away from the terms above as possible. They only deter learners and do not help when pupils are already learning in a language that isn't their mother tongue. However, I will not skirt the subject and have found a few rules that may help my teaching. Examples of a few of these are below:

**Rule 1** – When a word ends in a consonant and the next begins with a vowel, the consonant may move to the other word or straddle between the two words: *fast asleep* sounds like *fas•tasleep* or *back upstairs* sounds like *back □ upstairs*

**Rule 2** – If the consonant at the end of one word is the same as the start of another, the end consonant is not finished and merges with the beginning of the following word- *thought □ to himself*, *less □ strict*

**Rule 3** – If a word ends in a single /n/ and the next begins with a /b/, /m/ or /p/ – the /n/ disappears and becomes a /m/ (see examples above)

**Rule 4** – With non-stressed words of only one syllable that are not central to the context, compare the sentences – *yes, we can!* to *we can do it!* – the word can is much stronger in the first than the second

The examples above may seem to be imperceptible to a native speaker of English, they may even seem impossible when you try and say them in isolation. However, after listening to *Mr Tickle* time after time, I found that we really are chained to the conventions of connected speech, even though we do not know them.

Listen to the first minute and a half of the following excerpts from *Mr Tickle* read by native English speakers; see if you notice any of the rules in these sentences: (The first voice is someone from the South East of England, the second is from Manchester and the third is a Spanish speaker)

[C1442X1339X1655X3044 extract 1](#)

***He was** having a dream. It **must have been a** very funny dream because it made him **laugh out** loud, and that woke him up.*

[C1442X1339X1655X3044 extract 2](#)

*He sat up **in bed**, stretched **his extraordinary long arms**, and yawned **an enormous yawn**.*

[C1442X1339X1655X3044 extract 3](#)

*Today looks very much like **a tickling day**," he **thought to himself**.*

Note that the Manchester speaker is also using connecting speech for /g/ in

words ending *ng*. This could be another blog post in itself!

If we compare the same passage to a speaker whose first language generally does not use these connected speech features, you may be able to hear a difference. The Spanish speaker in the extracts above puts the same emphasis and length on each syllable:

In English we love to assimilate and compress words together or even delete letters from their original place when we speak naturally. There are many more examples of connected speech in the excerpt above that I have not included. Awareness of some of these features can help a learner not only to sound like a native speaker but also help them to understand these weird and interesting variations of our speech.