[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](#)

[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.

[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,

thanitiswhentherearenospacesinbetween. 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*

<u>Rule 3</u> **–** 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)

<u>Rule 4</u> – With non-stressed words of only one syllable that are not central to the context, compare the sentences – *yes, we <u>can</u>!* to *we can <u>do</u> it!* – the word *<u>can</u>* 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 mu__st ha__ve bee__n a__ very funny dream because it made him lau__gh ou__t loud, and that woke hi__m__ __up__.

[C1442X1339X1655X3044 extract 2](#)

He sat u__p i__n b__ed, stretch__ed his extr__aordinary lo__ng a__rms, and yaw__ned an e__normous yawn.

[C1442X1339X1655X3044 extract 3](#)

Today looks very much li__ke a__ tickling day," he thou__ght 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.

[Recording of the week: echolocating birds](#)

This week's selection comes from Cheryl Tipp, Curator of Wildlife and Environmental Sounds.

Echolocation is a handy tool used by several groups of animals to understand the world around them. The major players are bats and cetaceans, who use the echoes of specialist calls to locate prey and navigate in conditions where visibility is poor, however a few other animals also possess their own biosonar systems.

Oilbirds (*Steatornis caripensis*) are one of only a handful of birds with the ability to echolocate. These nocturnal birds roost in caves across the

tropical forests of northwestern South America and spend a considerable amount of their time in the dark. In conditions where eyesight is irrelevant, individuals use sequences of clicks to build up a 3D image of their surroundings. The rapid fire and variable nature of these sequences is captured in the following [recording](#) made in the Colombian Andes by wildlife sound recordist Ian Todd. Calls from nearby birds can also be heard, especially in the first half of the recording.

[Echolocating oilbirds recorded by Ian Todd in the Colombian Andes on 9 Feb 2009 (BL ref 110359)](#)

An Oilbird in the Asa Wright Nature Centre caves, Trinidad (courtesy of Alastair Rae)

As Ian explained in his accompanying notes, obtaining this recording was by no means a walk in the park.

"*To gain access to the mouth of the cave we had to wade across the fast-flowing upland Rio Alicante, and then clamber up a series of huge boulders. The colony of Oilbirds was localised just within the cave entrance.*"

Hats off to you, sir.

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

[Linguistics at the Library – Episode 1](#)

PhD placements students Andrew Booth and Sarah Rowan write:

Episode 1
The first episode of Linguistics at the Library introduces the British Library's Evolving English Collection, which is a sound archive capturing the diversity of English accents and dialects. Podcast hosts Andrew Booth and Rowan Campbell are working with this archive as part of a PhD placement, and every few weeks will be bringing you a fresh discussion about linguistics and how to identify different accents.

This week's 'What's the feature?' used a clip from:

BBC Voices Recording in Newcastle. BBC, UK, rec. 2005 [digital audio file]. British Library, C1190/32/01. Available: [sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialec…1190X0023XX-0101V0](#)

Interesting links:
The glottal stop in

Glasgow: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2…ogenised-london
The Bristol 'l': blogs.bl.uk/sound-and-vision/20…n-idea-dialect.html
An in-depth look at the Newcastle
accent: www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sou…ase-studies/geordie/

Follow Rowan and Andrew on Twitter on @VoicesofEnglish

[Linguistics at the Library Episode 1](#)

Andrew Booth and Rowan Campbell