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From Salt Lake City to *Streaming Speech*

Last year was a busy year. Richard Cauldwell and Martin Hewings caught the last of the snow in post-Winter-Olympic Salt Lake City by attending TESOL 2002. It was a thrilling cultural and professional experience. We arrived a day early, and stayed a half-day beyond the end of the conference. We visited the home of the Mormon church—Temple Square—and Park City (40 minutes taxi-ride away) one of the Olympic sites. The conference itself was a wonderful chance to hear and meet many American-based colleagues that we had only previously known via email and internet discussion groups. Deciding what to attend is often a problem at conferences as big as TESOL—but usefully, many papers were grouped by topic into ‘Strands’. Attending the *Speech/Pronunciation* strand meant that it was possible to catch most of the papers relating to topics dear to our hearts. Richard had the honour of chairing the round-up session for this strand at the end of the conference. One of the pleas from the strand audience in many of the sessions was ‘Why not use spontaneous speech?’. This was music to Richard’s ears, because he talked about and demonstrated *Streaming Speech: Listening and Pronunciation for Advanced Learners of English*—the latest publication in the Discourse Intonation tradition. This is an electronic publication which uses recordings of spontaneous speech for listening and pronunciation you can read more on page 2. On page 3 you can read more about the variety of circumstances in which Discourse Intonation is being used (Singapore, Hong Kong) and also news of the staff at the University of Birmingham.

In this issue

Lucy Pickering

Streaming Speech

Neide Cesar Cruz

Almut Koester

David Oakey

Martin Warren

Winnie Cheng

Sharon Chu

Christine Goh

Malcolm Coulthard

Favourite Tone units



Lucy Pickering visits Birmingham

Lucy Pickering was one of the many ‘pronunciation’ scholars that attended TESOL 2002 in Salt Lake City. Though she teaches at the University of Alabama, she was born in Britain. After having taught in the UK and Hungary, she moved to the USA where she received her PhD in Applied Linguistics in 1999 from the University of Florida. Her dissertation ‘The Analysis of Prosodic Systems in the Classroom Discourse of NS and NNS Teaching Assistants’ made use of David Brazil’s work. Lucy found that of all the systems of transcribing and explaining prosodic choices, Discourse Intonation provided the most usable system of transcription, and the most insightful metalanguage for commentary on the choices speakers made. The absolutely wonderful thing about Lucy’s work is that she discovered Discourse Intonation, learned its principles, and learned how to apply them in transcription entirely from published books, articles, and recordings. I used to think that to be a good user of Discourse Intonation, you had come to Birmingham and to have studied in the department where it originated. Not so. It is a tribute to the enduring power of David Brazil’s work, that Lucy was able to study it without reference to anyone at Birmingham and to publish such insightful work. It is also a tribute to Lucy’s courage that she chose Discourse Intonation over other, more academically accepted, approaches to further her research. For an outstanding application of Discourse Intonation to a real world problem, we strongly recommend reading ‘The Role of Tone Choice in Improving ITA Communication in the Classroom’ *TESOL Quarterly* 35 (2001): 233–255. This is a prize-winning paper: for it, Lucy was awarded the Malkemes Prize given by the School of Professional Studies at New York University. In her own words ‘That was cool!’

Streaming Speech: Listening and Pronunciation for Advanced Learners of English by Richard Cauldwell



November 2002 saw the publication of the latest contribution to the Discourse Intonation tradition, Richard Cauldwell's *Streaming Speech: Listening and Pronunciation for Advanced Learners of English*. This tradition has seen the publication of Barbara Bradford's *Intonation in Context* (1988) Martin Hewings's *Pronunciation Tasks* (1993), and David Brazil's *Pronunciation for Advanced Learners of English (PALE)* (1994) – all published by Cambridge University Press. *Streaming Speech* (published by **speechinaction**) is a continuation of this tradition in that it uses the concepts of Discourse Intonation – prominence, tone, key, and tone units (renamed as 'speech units'). But although *Streaming Speech* is in this tradition, it is completely different to its predecessors. It is electronic (a Windows CD-ROM), and it makes extensive use of spontaneous speech—it features eight recordings of people who work at the University of Birmingham, in either biographical monologue, conversation, or lecturing.

David Brazil's PALE was ground-breaking in that he had actors produce the recordings before he set to work designing the chapters in detail. He created scripts, or outlines of scripts that would be most likely to elicit the features of speech he was interested in. The actors produced the recordings in the studio, and did a good job. But when it came to producing the tone-units with the target sounds for the pronunciation sections of PALE (pp. 138–147), they had to be re-recorded in the studio – and these became (wording aside) isolated tone-units.

The recordings in *Streaming Speech*, unlike those of PALE, were made without any pre-planning as to any desired features. The important features were identified through detailed analysis and editing after the recordings were made. Every speech unit was tagged, using 'Motormouth' software, for the vowels and consonants in the prominent syllables. It was then possible to select speech units from the original recording which contained the vowels and consonants of English, and to assemble them into groups. In this way, extracts from the original recordings are used as the pronunciation models – no re-recording – no problem with the lack of naturalness. This technique is used in the first eight chapters to give intensive work on the vowels and consonants (and clusters) of English in carefully graded steps. The first three chapters – all female voices – treat the vowels, the next set of three – all male voices – treat the consonants, and chapters 7 & 8 (female + male) treat the clusters. But the great advantage of this approach is revealed in Chapter 9, where the user can choose any one of six voices (three female, and three male) with which to work on their pronunciation.

To the right is a table taken from pronunciation section of the first chapter of *Streaming Speech*. All of the speech units are taken from an unscripted conversation between Richard and Corony Edwards of the Centre for English Language Studies at The University of Birmingham. The symbols in the left hand column are those for the short vowels of English; the central column contains the sample speech units from the original recording, with the target sound shown in the syllable in bold upper-case letters; the right hand column shows the speed of the speech unit in words per minute. Syllables in upper-case are prominent syllables.

The user's task is to: first click on each line and listen to it a number of times (this electronic publication makes extensive use of 'click and hear' technology); second to try to imitate the speech unit so that the target sound is pronounced accurately in its position in the speech unit; third, to record their own version of each speech unit; fourth, compare their own version with the original, and then make an assessment of how well they have done.

As part of the process of analysis and editing, it became possible to measure the speed of speech units, and therefore to identify those parts of a recording that would provide most difficulty for listening. Thus, the speech unit // MADE quite a bit of MONEy // with a speed of 330 words per minute becomes the focus of the listening exercise, and also the focus of work on noticing how words are streamed together in natural speech.

ɪ	019. DRAMA and that kind of THING	282
	023. because i was still LIV ing with	313
e	002. i was VE ry in VO LVED	164
	040. my OWN business as a TEX tile artist	227
æ	008. which i RAN	180
	032. i was a RE AD y by THAT stage	197
ʌ	033. RUN ning	60
	037. MADE quite a bit of MONE y	330
ɒ	021. and I got very in VO LVED in those	194
	055. it was OB viously very PO pular	266
ʊ	063. CU shions and TAB lecloths	143
	094. and ACT ually PU tt ING the things	233

There is much more to *Streaming Speech* than can be described in DIN.

If you are interested in learning more about *Streaming Speech*, you can go to Richard's webpages

<http://www.speechinaction.com>

or better still, try out an online version at

<http://www.fab24.net/examples/streamingspeech.htm>

Neide Cesar Cruz



Neide Cesar Cruz is visiting Birmingham for a year on a Brazilian government scholarship, working with Richard Cauldwell on a study of the intelligibility of the pronunciation of Brazilian Portuguese Learners of English. She is investigating suprasegmental, as well as segmental effects, on intelligibility. She is using the judgements of lay native speakers to test her hypotheses. Early results are promising, and may well challenge received opinion on the effects of prosodic differences on intelligibility.

Almut Koester

After Richard Cauldwell's departure from EISU, Almut Koester is a most apt appointment. She began work in EISU in January 2002, not least in that she has published articles on Discourse Intonation ('The Intonation of agreeing and disagreeing in English and German' in Martin Hewings's *Papers in Discourse Intonation*). She has an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Birmingham, and a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Nottingham investigating spoken office discourse. She has worked as an English language teacher, teacher trainer, and director of studies in Germany, France and the USA. Her research interests include discourse analysis, particularly spoken workplace discourse, corpus linguistics and Business English. She has published a number of articles based on her research, as well as teacher training material for Business English, and has recently co-authored a German adaptation of *Essential Grammar in Use* with Raymond Murphy. She was also a great help to Richard Cauldwell in piloting 'Streaming Speech' with a group of Japanese

David Oakey



David Oakey joined EISU in the autumn of 2001. He began his career as an undercover market researcher in the North of England, but switched to teaching English in 1992 after being thrown out of his 100th supermarket. At Birmingham he teaches lunchtime classes in grammar and speaking, and also runs the MA module in Computer-Assisted Language Learning. His research interest is using computers to investigate formulaic language in academic discourse, and he is also interested in how the internet can be used for teaching English for Academic Purposes. He is also a keen jazz drummer: his group provided the music for Malcolm Coulthard's 60th birthday party (see page 4)

Martin Warren, Winnie Cheng, Sharon Chu use DI in Hong Kong

Winnie Cheng, Martin Warren, and their research associate Sharon Chu of the English Department of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University have sent in this report. The compilation of the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE) began in the mid-1990s with the collection of 50 hours of naturally-occurring English conversations between Hong Kong Chinese and non-Cantonese speakers (mostly native speakers of English). The corpus now comprises four sub-corpora (conversations, academic discourses, business discourses and public discourses) amounting to approximately two million words. In addition to the orthographic transcription of the data, the data is currently being prosodically transcribed to enable them to examine the communicative role of intonation.

They now have enough data prosodically transcribed to begin a preliminary analysis of the use of intonation by the two sets of speakers. According to Brazil (1997) speakers can choose to assert dominance and control in a discourse through the use of certain tones and their recent work has looked at the occurrence of two tones (rise and rise-fall) associated with the assertion of dominance and control across a variety of business discourses. Their preliminary findings suggest that the choice of these tones is at least partly determined by both the text type and the designated roles of the speakers.

Christine Goh

Christine Goh of the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore writes of her experience using Discourse Intonation. English spoken in Malaysia and Singapore has a number of phonological features that are different from British English. These include variations in word stress, rhythm and intonation. Although there have been some attempts at describing intonation of these two varieties of English, I am not aware of much work been done in the area of DI, except that of Martin Hewings's on Malaysian English.

I find Brazil's model to be adequate for identifying the various sub-systems of prominence, tone, key and termination. There are, however, some special considerations to bear in mind when transcribing and interpreting the data: first, whether some details in the data should be simplified; second is the issue of applying the communicative value of the various sub-systems to a variety of English where discourse may not be similarly organised and pragmatic intentions are often realised differently. A short paper on this topic can be accessed Richard Cauldwell's speechinaction webpage.



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Malcolm Coulthard's 60th Birthday

On Saturday 11th January 2003, a major celebration took place at the University of Birmingham to mark Malcolm Coulthard's 60th birthday. There was a whole-day colloquium with seven speakers: Martin Montgomery (on news bulletins); Henry Widdowson (Shakespeare); Kirsten Malmjkaer (nature of language) Peter French (forensic phonetics), Dave Willis (on TEFL), Mike Stubbs (Discourse Analysis) & Mike Hoey (Narrative). There was then a party in the evening. The highlights for me were Henry Widdowson's use of forensic stylistics to prove the Lenox was the third murderer in Macbeth (he wanted to frame Malcolm, but the evidence was too thin), and Martin Montgomery's use David Brazil's tone-unit analysis allied to point up some of the characteristics of different parts of a BBC news item.

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He wasn't happy with you ...Favourite Tone-units no. 2

Students often ask advice about the correct way to say a sentence. Consider 'I read in a newspaper this morning that she wasn't happy with you'. When giving advice, we might have recourse to text book rules and recommend placing prominences in the 'content' words, and dividing the sentence into two tone units, and the placing of tones on the last content word of each, with a so-called 'continuation tone' at the end of the first:

01 // ↗ i READ in a NEWSpaper this MORning// ↘ that he WASn't HAppy with you //

But contextualised language often holds surprises which should make us think twice before answering requests for 'correct way' guidance. Listening to an interview with a Labour Politician on breakfast radio one morning in 1992, I heard the interviewer say this sentence, with onset prominences on the first syllable 'I', and a falling tone on 'YOU':

02 // ↘ I read in a newspaper this morning that he wasn't happy with YOU //

It was said fast: to get an idea of the speed, say the first and last syllables, and count 'one, two, three' in between them:

03 // ↘ I [one two three] YOU //

Do this a few times, and then speak the whole tone unit, making sure that you differentiate between the prominent, and non-prominent syllables—remember, just the first and the last syllables are prominent, and the sixteen syllables in the eleven words 'read in a newspaper this morning that he wasn't happy with' are all non-prominent.

You might think that this is very odd. But it fitted the context of the interview in which it occurred. The larger context was of the general election of 1992 (which the Labour Party, under Neil Kinnock, lost). The local context is that the interviewer ('I') has been asking a senior member of the Labour Party about rumours in the newspapers that Neil Kinnock ('he') wasn't happy with a senior member of the Labour team (not the interviewee). The prior talk has put all the ideas 'newspaper', 'reading', 'this morning', 'not being happy' into play, so that the interviewer does not need to highlight them when he utters this tone unit. But he does focus on the speaker roles 'I' and 'YOU'. He highlights these words to shift the attention to the adversarial element characteristic of many such interviews—the battle between the politician who wants to reassure the listeners that everything is all right in his party, and the interviewer who wants to catch the politician off guard, and get him to say something controversial. Selecting 'I' (= 'not them') personalises the combat, it is no longer between the accusations of absent journalists (them) and an absent politician, but a personalised (if borrowed) present accusation from 'I' against 'YOU', not him, the other politician talked about earlier.