

The interlanguage phonology of Brunei English

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This paper covers some of the phonological processes common in the interlanguage (IL) of Brunei English, together with a discussion of the respective influences of the native language (NL) and universals. As Contrastive Analysis would predict, the English IL of Bruneians has many features which can be traced directly to the NL. At the same time, most researchers these days would accept that the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) no longer provides a satisfactory explanation as to why certain features in the target language (TL) are found to be more difficult than others and that universals have a role to play. Much of the recent research into IL phonology has attempted to identify both the nature of universal constraints and the extent to which they interact with NL transfer. An attempt will be made here to identify transfer and developmental factors affecting the IL phonology of Brunei English and also to identify persistent features. This paper will show that while transfer can account for the major trends of the phonology of Brunei English, appeal must also be made to universal considerations to account for the relative strengths of these trends.

1. Background

In the context of Southeast Asia, there are very strong historical and cultural ties between the three English speaking countries; Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei. All three have undergone a similar colonial past and all three have an ethnic mix which is predominantly Malay and Chinese (though in differing proportions). This ethnic and historical similarity, together with present economic and cultural ties, has led to phonological systems which are close relations. (Singapore TV is available in the southern Malaysian states, while Malaysian TV can be viewed in Brunei and Brunei TV in parts of East Malaysia.) In fact, virtually all of the features of Malaysian and Singaporean English, identified by Platt & Weber (1980) and Platt, Weber & Ho (1983), are to be found also in Brunei. Nevertheless, it might be pointed out that there are also influences in Brunei quite different from the other two countries. Due to the unique economic situation in Brunei and the need for expatriate labour, there is a variety of ethnic or linguistic backgrounds among the workforce (e.g., Malay, Chinese, Filipino, Thai, Tamil, Hindi, English, Australian). As Ozog (1990) points out, these diverse backgrounds and their associated Englishes (e.g., Filipino English and Indian English) may be assumed to play some role in forming the phonology of Brunei English. Another difference between Brunei, Singapore, or Malaysian English lies in the high proportion of the local workforce that is sent overseas

for training (although this trend is now decreasing since the establishment of a local university). Returning Bruneians, especially those who have sat "A" Levels and attended university in the United Kingdom, have often progressed extremely far along the basilect/acrolect continuum. As a result they provide an input to the phonological system which is proportionately greater than is the case in either Singapore or Malaysia.

2. Theoretical Considerations

In contrast to activity in other domains of language (especially morphology), research into IL phonology, until comparatively recently, has tended, as Ioup and Weinberger have remarked (1987:xi), to be either ignored or trivialized. This is the area of language where CA has traditionally been seen to have the most validity, possibly due to the motor-based nature of speech production and the natural ability people have to identify the first language (L1) source of a "foreign" accent. While admitting the very powerful role of L1 transfer, research (e.g., Brière 1966, Johansson 1973) has shown that not all deviant sounds can be predicted by CA. Factors such as the data gathering method (Nemser 1971), the sociolinguistic context (W.Dickerson 1977, Schmidt 1977, Beebe 1980), the linguistic context (L.Dickerson 1974, W.Dickerson 1976), equivalence classification (Flege & Hillenbrand 1984, Flege 1987) have all been found to affect the learner's output. A.James (1988:149) also suggests that phonological chunking can take place with phrases being produced as wholes and displaying an accuracy level in advance of other phonological structures produced by the learner. Thus, taking these factors into account, it is not surprising that traditional CA, as C.James (1980:183-4) points out, both predicts IL forms that do not occur and, at the same time, does not predict some forms that do occur.

Since the advent of Universal Grammar (UG), the focus of phonological research has been into universal tendencies and the extent to which they might interact with NL transfer. Central to this research is a concept of markedness as a scale of universal difficulty with the more unmarked or core elements being intrinsically easier than the more marked or peripheral elements. Eckman (1977) presents a theory which attempts to explain why it is that some TL forms are more difficult, through being more marked, than others. This he calls the Marked Differential Hypothesis (MDH), whereby the NL and the TL can be compared according to the following criterion:

Markedness A phenomenon A in some language is more marked than B if the presence of A in a language implies the presence of B; but the presence of B does *not* imply the presence of A.

Eckman explores several areas where he claims phonological markedness can be identified. His 1981 paper proposes that there is a universal rule of Terminal Devoicing (TD) which is independent of both the NL and the TL. Since all languages allow voiceless obstruents but not all allow voiced obstruents the former are unmarked and the latter are marked. This is an implicational relationship where the presence of the latter implies the presence of the former. With respect to position, some languages (e.g., Korean) allow no voice contrast, some allow the contrast only in initial position (e.g., Corsican), some have it in initial and medial positions (e.g., German) and finally some have it in initial, medial and terminal positions (e.g., English). Thus, the presence of a medial voice contrast implies the presence of an initial contrast and the presence of a terminal contrast implies both medial and initial contrasts. Eckman uses these implicational relationships to explain why German speakers have difficulty with final voiced obstruents in English. Here the move is from a less marked position to a more marked position. On the other hand, English speakers of French do not find it difficult to articulate initial [ʒ]. Although this sound does not exist in initial position in English, it does exist in the more marked medial and terminal positions. As a result it causes no problems, as the move is from a marked position to a relatively unmarked position.

Eckman (1981) considers the situation when final obstruents are not allowed at all in the NL (e.g., Mandarin). Here he finds a schwa paragoge to be common (e.g., [tægə] for *tag* and [hi zə] for *he's*) and proposes a rule of Schwa Paragoge which comes into effect when there is a NL constraint against obstruents occurring in word final position. Thus, as well as universal tendencies, the MDH must take into account the specific characteristics of both the NL and the TL.

Eckman (1987) applies the MDH to the reduction of word final consonant clusters to explain what at first sight seems like unsystematic shortening among Cantonese, Japanese and Korean speakers. He proposes an optional Consonant Cluster Reduction (CCR) rule, in which more marked features imply the presence of less marked features. The CCR rule claims that:

1. Final three consonant clusters imply the presence of two consonant clusters and final two consonant clusters imply the presence of single consonants. In each case the longer sequence is more marked.
2. Final stop-stop clusters imply the presence of, and are more marked than, fricative-stop clusters.
3. Final fricative-fricative clusters imply the presence of, and are more marked than, both fricative-stop and stop fricative clusters.

Taking these markedness conditions into account, Eckman is able to explain why certain reductions are more likely than others.

In contrast to Eckman's approach, described by A. James (1988:23) as "ad hoc", Trof (1987) proposes an alternative explanation for universal difficulty based on sonority within the context of the syllable. Each syllable has a peak or sonority, usually located on a vowel, and the degree of sonority declines as the peripheral segments of the syllable are approached. Thus there is a hierarchical order of sonority spreading down from the vowel peak at the centre to glides, then sonorants (first liquids and then nasals) and finally obstruents (first fricatives and then plosives). The hypothesis is that the most sonorous segments are the most easily acquired while those that are the least sonorous are the most resistant to acquisition. It is claimed that sonority is a phonological-phonetic parameter which can account for forms that cannot be explained by either the constraints of the NL or the TL. Trof found that in the German IL of Spanish speakers, the more sonorant a final target consonant was, the more likely it was to be realized in the IL.

With respect to onset clusters in a second language, Broselow (1987) proposes a vowel epenthesis rule as a way of dealing with syllable structures which would not be permissible in the NL. In the English of Egyptian speakers, words like *slide* and *floor* are realized as [silaid] and [filoor]. However, not all onset clusters conform to the structure of the sonority hierarchy. While the clusters in *slide* and *floor* do, the cluster in *stick* does not (fricative followed by stop). In fact the s-stop cluster is the only onset cluster, according to Broselow, to violate the sonority hierarchy and she follows Selkirk (1984) to argue in favour of the s-stop functioning at the level of a single segment. In this way she explains how her Egyptian speakers, rather than epenthesizing, prefix a vowel in words such as *study* or *ski* (realized as [istədil] and [iskil]). Although Broselow does not discuss final

clusters, here too the sonority hierarchy is violated by stop-s clusters, either within the root (e.g., *six*) or crossing morpheme boundaries (e.g., *cups*, *that's*). It could be argued, therefore, that final stop-s clusters also function phonologically as a single segment.

From the above review of markedness in IL phonology the following comments can be made about the English of native Malay speakers.

1. Since Malay does not allow a terminal voice contrast for final fricatives, the Marked Differential Hypothesis would predict this to be an area of particular difficulty for Malay speakers of English.
2. Although Malay allows final stops, these are not released and therefore the introduction of a schwa paragoge might seem a logical way of differentiating between words such as *dog* and *dock*.
3. As Malay does not allow final consonant clusters, the Consonant Cluster Reduction rule would predict first that clusters be reduced, secondly that stop-stop clusters be more prone to reduction than fricative-stop clusters, and thirdly that fricative-fricative clusters be more prone to reduction than both fricative-stop and stop-fricative clusters.
4. The Sonority Hierarchy would predict generally, that the less segments are sonorous, the more learners should experience difficulty. Vowel epenthesis in onset clusters might be predicted since written Malay generally does not allow onset clusters (an exception being the word "Brunei") although the first vowels in words like *perempuan* and *selalu* are dropped in conversational speech. Syllables which violate the hierarchy with the initial s-stop sequence may not undergo significant modification (being treated as single segmental units). Final stop-s clusters also violate the hierarchy and may be subject to less reduction than clusters obeying it.

3. Data and Methodology

First of all, it must be stressed that this paper can only be regarded as a preliminary study. The data were collected from three very different sources: school students reading word lists, university students interacting communicatively and newsreaders on television. Furthermore since the equipment to make high quality recordings was not available, any conclusions must be regarded as tentative. The criterion used to determine phonological

status was quite simply native speaker judgements by members of the English Department at UBD as to whether the speech sounded standard or non-standard.

The main source of data came from an analysis of the speech of trainee teachers at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) who were involved in peer teaching sessions as part of their training. This is the speech of English medium educated students who had studied at school as far as Form 6 and had taken, though not usually passed, the Cambridge "A" Level examinations. They were enrolled at UBD on a Certificate in Education course to train as primary teachers. For purposes of comparison and in an attempt to give some idea of the range of Brunei English, two other sources were also used. The first was data collected by two fourth year students in the BA TESL degree programme for their research projects (Nor Aziah 1991, Noraini 1991). These projects consisted of an analysis of the vowel and consonant systems of lower secondary school students. The other source was an analysis of the speech of Bruneian newscasters. Thus three distinct lects were chosen for this study; the lower mesolectal speech of school students, the upper mesolectal/lower acrolectal speech of university students and the acrolectal speech of newscasters.

While in all three cases subjects were used whose L1 is Malay, there were considerable differences between the data sources. The secondary school data were gathered from audio-taped sessions where the subjects were asked to read word lists aloud. While the lists were devised to cover a range of articulatory features, there are important phonological differences between the reading of isolated words and normal speech (e.g. elision and stress patterns). The university data were collected from video-taped recordings of 13 trainee teachers conducting peer teaching sessions. The tapes were then transcribed. Where audible, both "teacher" and "student" speech was analyzed, though specific articulatory forms could not be targeted since this was a recording of communicative interaction between speakers and not open to manipulation in any way by the researcher. The fact that examples of the more difficult articulatory sequences were extremely infrequent here may either reflect their rarity in this domain of language use or a strategy of avoidance on the part of the speakers. Furthermore, this particular domain (classroom language) is limited to specific discourse types such as questions, directives and explanations. This in turn limits the variety of syntactic forms and consequently

their associated phonological features (e.g. consonant clusters involving past tense morphemes). The TV data were gathered from taping and transcribing three Bruneian newscasters whose L1 is Malay. The subjects here were reading sequences of connected discourse at considerable speed. Although certain features (e.g. elision), which were lacking in the first source of data, were in evidence here, the stress patterns are obviously different from those of interactive speech. This domain of speech employs one discourse type, the report, and as a result syntactic forms and associated phonological features are limited (e.g. consonant clusters involving the present copula and auxiliary verbs).

While there are obvious methodological problems comparing three such disparate speech types, it may be assumed that the secondary school data represents a basilectal variety of Bruneian English, while the university data, based as it is on trainee primary school teachers, represents an upper mesolectal to lower acrolectal variety. The English of the newscasters may be assumed to represent a high acrolectal variety, especially in view of the extreme formality of context. Furthermore, research (e.g. Dickerson 1977) has shown that there is a strong correlation between task formality and accuracy.

4. Analysis

In the data taken for this analysis there were no recorded instances of schwa parogoge and the only instances of vowel epenthesis occurred with the initial cluster [ʃr] as in *shriek* and *shred* and final cluster [lm] as in *whelm*. These were in evidence only in the school data. Therefore it might be concluded that universal tendencies both towards an open CV syllable structure and vowel epenthesis are not major features of this interlanguage, being precluded by both positive transfer, for syllable structure and initial clusters, and the rule of cluster reduction for final clusters. Both cluster reduction and terminal devoicing, though, are very much in evidence and will be discussed below. Some distinctive features of the vowel system will also be covered.

4.1 Consonant Cluster Modification

Probably the most striking tendency, and one which manifests itself across the three data types, is final cluster modification, which involves cluster reduction and consonant substitution. Disregarding the conjunction *and* and clusters occurring before consonants, which are both also subject to native speaker

reduction, final cluster modification is at 80% in the school data, about 45% in the UBD data and at 38% in the TV data. Thus it is clearly, a major feature of Brunei English. It is also clear that this modification decreases as the acrolect is approached.

At the school level, although reduction was the dominant modification strategy, substitution was also significant. As might be expected since Malay does not allow final voiced consonants, these were generally devoiced (e.g., *z*->*s*). However other substitutions took place as well. As well as some idiosyncratic substitutions it was noted that stops were affricated (e.g., [dʒ] for [gz] as in *wags* and *jugs*). Fricative-fricative clusters were replaced by stop-fricative clusters (e.g., [gs] for [fs] in *laughs* and *coughs* and [ts] for [θs] in *paths* and *births*). Finally stop-stop clusters were replaced by stop-fricative clusters (e.g., [ps] for [pt] in *hopped* and *leapt*). If we compare these substitutions with the list provided in Eckman (1977), it is clear that the moves here are from more marked clusters to less marked clusters.

At the UBD level, the more complicated clusters, which were tested at the school level, tended to be either avoided or were precluded by the discourse mode. Cluster reduction, however, was very common and is hardly surprising since Malay does not have final consonant clusters.

When the reduced consonant clusters are examined, it becomes clear that the clusters that are consistently reduced are those with a final stop. Examples here are *first*, *hand*, *just*, *left*, *think*, *ask*, *count*, *fault* from the UBD data and *held*, *point*, *resident*, *equipment*, *protest*, *rump*, *camp*, *world* from the TV data. While this reduction is a major feature of the UBD data, it is virtually the only non-standard feature of the TV data. This reduction is consistent with Eckman's rule of CCR and also with the sonority hierarchy proposed by Tropic. As stops are the least sonorous of segments, they are the most marked and consequently likely to cause the most difficulty. Even taking native speaker elision into account, this is one of the most distinctive features of Bruneian English.

Some very common final clusters with a final stop, however, are rarely deleted in the UBD data. These clusters, although final in the word, are in the middle of common highly automatic expressions and as such are fully pronounced. Examples here are

thank you, stand up, want you. The final stop in *thank* here (never reduced) can be compared with the same stop in *think*, which is often reduced in the data. Possibly resyllabification is taking place here as the final stop is transferred to the vowel or glide of the following word. Another possibility may be chunking or the existence of automatized routines. A. James (1988:149) refers to this phenomenon of chunking as follows:

These "wholes" often manifest in their form a degree of phonetic (and phonological) TL accuracy well in advance of that typical of other phonological structures produced by the learner.

In the cases where the final cluster does not consist of consonant+stop, the picture is much more variable. In the UBD data final lateral+fricative clusters (as in *shelf, twelve* and *else*) and nasal+fricative clusters (as in *pronounce, science, balance, sentence, difference*) are sometimes reduced and sometimes not. In the TV data these clusters are generally not reduced. These final clusters are reduced less than those with a final stop and this is a fact which can be explained by markedness. In Tropic's hierarchy stops are the least sonorous of segments and therefore are the most marked. Fricatives are more sonorous and therefore less marked.

Interestingly however, final clusters which violate the sonority hierarchy by having a stop+fricative sequence tend not to be reduced or if they are both the stop and the fricative disappear. In the UBD data *six* was sometimes pronounced fully and sometimes reduced to [sɪʔ]. *Chicken pox* was also reduced to *chicken* [pɒʔ]. The stop+fricative+stop sequence in *next* was consistently reduced to a stop+fricative [neks]. These reductions did not take place, except for normal elision, in the TV data. From the few available examples it seems there is a reluctance to break this type of cluster, one which violates the sonority hierarchy in a similar fashion to those discussed by Broselow (1987). Although Broselow discussed the anomalous case of initial fricative+stop clusters, it would seem that the same holds for the equally exceptional final stop+fricative sequence. Rather than reduce this cluster, Bruneian speakers of English either maintain it or drop it completely to an unreleased glottal stop.

However, the vast majority of final stop+fricative clusters involves grammatical morphemes in the contracted copula and the plural. The fricative [s] in these clusters obviously differs in that it

bears meaning. As far as the copula is concerned, the [s] is hardly ever dropped in the data, even when followed by a consonant. Examples here are *what's this*, *it's for*, *that's right*. The [s] in the plural was also seldom dropped in words like *weeks*, *cards*, *lots*, though there was a tendency for it to disappear, together with the stop, in more unusual lexical items such as *chopsticks* and *elephants*. The plural in nasal+fricative clusters (e.g., *things*, *drawings*, *items*) and lateral+fricative clusters (e.g., *animals*, *reptiles*, *symbols*) was also maintained. Here, although these clusters fit into the sonority hierarchy it would seem that the semantic power of the morpheme precludes any reduction. One modification did take place however, and that was with the fricative+fricative cluster in *months*. It was modified to the stop+fricative cluster of [mants]. This supports Eckmann's comments about the marked nature of such a sequence.

When we consider initial clusters, Bruneian speakers of English experience few problems. Malay allows initial clusters, and although there might be a tendency to insert a vowel into loan words, this did not happen in the data. The initial clusters in words like *school*, *class*, *square* were never broken. One modification, however, that did take place was the modification of [θr] to [tr], which is hardly surprising since the fricative [θ] does not exist in Malay. This occurs in the words *three* and *throat*. In the school data this modification was recorded in 88% of the cases, in the UBD data in 71% of the cases but not at all in the TV data.

4.2 The voicing contrast and single consonants

In the school and UBD data there was a very clear tendency to devoice final the fricatives [z] and [v] which would be normally voiced in English but there were no instances of a normally voiceless consonant being voiced. Examples here of devoicing were: *these*, *please*, *close(v)*, *use*, *have*. English, as Eckmann (1981) points out, is a language with voicing contrasts in initial, medial and final positions. Malay on the other hand allows voicing contrasts in initial and medial positions only. Since no languages, according to Eckmann, allow a medial voice contrast if they do not allow an initial voice contrast and a terminal contrast if they do not have a medial contrast, the MDH can be invoked to claim that English is more marked than Malay in this respect. Thus the MDH would predict that the IL of Malay speakers should show evidence of devoicing in syllable final position which is indeed is the case. It can be suggested, then, that the Terminal Devoicing

rule proposed by Eckmann is in operation here. This feature is common in the school and UBD data but not in the acrolectal TV IL. Thus, while TD is common at the lower end of the basilect-acrolect continuum it seems to be susceptible to modification towards TL norms as the acrolect is approached.

With initial consonants there were two tendencies. First, the initial voiced fricative [ð], as in *this, these, the that*, was not devoiced but rather modified to [d], right across the data. The voiceless fricative [θ], as in *thing, thirteen, throat* similarly showed a tendency, but a weaker one, to be modified to [t]. These modifications can be seen as NL transfer since neither of these fricatives exist in Malay. On the sonority hierarchy, fricatives are less marked than stops so NL transfer can be seen here to override the power of markedness. However what the data also shows is that [ð] is modified right across the data while [θ] changes only in the school speech and then only occasionally. While both are fricatives and occupy the same position on the hierarchy as presented by Tropic, it would seem plausible to suggest that the voiced fricative is more sonorous than the voiceless fricative. If so, then sonority could account for the relative persistence of the voiced form.

Devoicing is, however, only readily discernible with fricatives since final stops, both voiced and voiceless, tend to be glottalized and unreleased, as is common in Malay. As a result the voicing distinction is lost. Final [k] is unreleased throughout the data. Examples here are *sick, book, stomach, dog* (final [g]) from the UBD data and *Pacific, week, basic* from the TV data. This also happens in words where [k] is followed by a deleted stop (e.g. *district, attract, reject, effect*). Final [t] and [d] are also unreleased though not as consistently as final [k]. This is found mostly in content words such as *goat, straight, throat, period, God, good* from the UBD data and *eight, digit* from the TV data. However the final stop in function words such as *it, that* is usually articulated when it occurs medially in a phrase and is followed by a vowel. In contrast the final [k] is dropped even in the middle of a phonological word as in *stomach ache*.

4.3 Vowels and stress

Due to the fluid nature of vowel sounds, especially in rapid speech, it is both difficult and somewhat subjective, with the means available to identify precise quantities of specific

phonemes. Nevertheless some clear tendencies do emerge from the school and UBD data. In the TV data, on the other hand, non-standard vowel pronunciation is rare, mainly occurring in conjunction with non-standard stress patterns in particular lexical items (e.g. *frigate* /ˈfrɪgət/ pronounced as /ˈfrɪˈgeɪt/.)

In the school data, vowel substitution and shortening were common while in the UBD data there was some substitution and shortening and also vowel lengthening, especially when a final syllable (usually unstressed in English) is given prominence.

Malay does not have the front vowel [æ] as in English *cat* and as might be expected, this vowel sound caused problems, generally being substituted by the front vowel [e]. Thus *cat*, *slap* and *grab* sounded like *cet*, *slep* and *greb*. However this confusion was not so clearcut in the UBD recordings. The [æ] vowel at times sounded standard, at times about half way between the [æ] and the [e] and at times is closer to the [e]. It is not normal, of course, for people to interact in *ship/sheep* type situations and so that even when there is a vowel shift we tend not to hear it if there is no possibility of confusion. In the data, words like *understand* and *hand* did not sound like *understend* or *hend*.

As Malay does not have long vowels there is a tendency for shortening to take place in Brunei English. This was widespread in both the school and UBD data. Words like *choose*, *shoes* and *room* were all pronounced with a shortened [u:]. Similarly the long [ɜ:] in *thirteen* and *working* was also shortened. In one instance the shortened *working* is indistinguishable from a shortened form of *walking*, the vowel sound of which [ɔ:] is also shortened. However the long [i:] as in *please* is not shortened in the data, with one common exception. The word *these*, [ði:z] generally appears in the data as [dis]. The shift of the consonants together with the shortening of the vowel combine to produce a sound which sounds somewhere between *this* and *these*. Perhaps this is a strategy similar to that of the English speaking learner of French who produces a sound somewhere between *le* and *la* when unsure of gender.

Diphthongs are also a problem for Malay L1 speakers, as they are for many learners of English. The school data identifies three diphthongs [eə] as in *care*, [eɪ] as in *pay*, and [əʊ] as in *show*

which undergo shortening. In the UBD data the diphthong in *square*, *chair* and *hair* was also consistently shortened. The [əʊ] diphthong is usually shortened when followed by a final consonant as in *home*, *coat*, *smoke*, *goat* but it is not shortened in some common words like *know* and *okay*. The diphthong [eɪ] appears relatively frequently and is generally not shortened. This is especially the case with common words like *today*, *okay* and *name* where the diphthong is not followed by a stop. In words such as *shape*, *tasting* and *straight* it is shortened to [e].

While NL transfer can be seen to account for a general tendency to shorten vowel sounds in the English IL of Bruneian Malay speakers, it would seem that some sounds are more prone to this shortening than others. Although there has not been much research in this area, it may well be possible to suggest a universal order of difficulty or markedness for vowel sounds.

Frequently, in the UBD data, vowel sounds are stressed and lengthened or, at times, transformed from a schwa into a full vowel in words of more than one syllable. NL influence can be seen here as syllables are usually stressed more or less equally in Malay. English, on the other hand, has what is known as a stress timed rhythm (Platt & Weber 1980), in which unstressed syllables are usually shorter than stressed syllables. Examples of this lengthening are the final syllables in *lastly* [i] and *table* [ə]. Here normally unstressed short syllables are stressed as they are lengthened. Long vowels too, at times become lengthened and a schwa is inserted. This occurs in words like *board* [ɔ:], *steel* [i:] and *group* [u:]. Diphthongs, normally shortened, can too be lengthened into what sounds almost like two syllables. Examples here are *late*, *eight*, *brain* [ei] and *coat*, *no* [əʊ]. Triphthongs, too, at times can sound as if they are broken into two syllables. Examples are *here* [ɪə] and *flower*, *our*, *hour* [əʊə]. This last modification was also present in the TV data.

This lengthening phenomenon may arise for several reasons. First there is a tendency to give equal stress across two syllable words such as *table*, *mammal* and *lastly*. This distorts the final unstressed vowel sound. Secondly the lengthening may be seen as a strategy to cope with the difficulty of diphthongs, triphthongs and long vowels. Instead of being shortened the vowel is lengthened and given some stress so that it is almost recognizable as a separate sound. Finally, this phenomenon may simply depend

on the amount of emphasis the speaker is willing to attribute to the lexical item. An example here is the word *coat*, which appears both shortened and lengthened. Some items would appear to be stressed deliberately for emphasis (e.g. *no* and *lastly*), but with others it remains to be seen whether the increased stress is due to a desire for emphasis or articulation difficulties.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion it is claimed that transfer and universal factors combine to constrain the interlanguage phonology of Bruneian English. However this relationship is complex and other factors such as grammatical environment and chunking are also relevant. The features most resistant to modification towards the TL norm would seem to be those which are both predicted by contrastive analysis and have been identified as being relatively marked (e.g., final consonant cluster reduction and terminal devoicing). However the extent to which modifications of these features can be attributed to universal causes is probably impossible to determine, as when the L1 is less marked than the L2, modifications towards less marked positions are also modifications in the direction of the L1. However it must be reiterated that this study is only a preliminary investigation into the interlanguage phonology of Brunei English and research within a more rigorous methodological framework is now necessary in order to confirm or reject these tentative findings.

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