

## **ACOUSTICS2008/359**

### **Sound structure and function of English as a global language**

Ann Bradlow

Northwestern University, Department of Linguistics, 2016 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60208, USA

Many English conversations across the globe today involve non-native speakers. To understand the sound structure of English in a global context, we asked native and non-native listeners to rate the similarity of various languages (n=17) to English. In general, the native and non-native listeners' distance-from-English ratings were positively correlated; but, the non-natives tended to rank languages as more distant from English than the natives. Native and non-native listeners then rated the accents of native and non-native speakers. Again, the native and non-native listener ratings were positively correlated, but the non-native listeners generally rated both native and non-native speakers as more foreign-accented than did the native listeners. Together, these data suggest that both native and non-native English generally sound less "marked" to native listeners than to non-native listeners. As a means of understanding how English functions as a global language, we examined communicative efficiency in task-oriented dialogues between various combinations of natives and non-natives. All pairs successfully completed the task; yet, when one or more non-native talkers were involved, the task took about twice as long to complete as when both were native talkers. Together, these studies help characterize the structure and function of English as a twenty-first century lingua franca.