



Title of Project:

An Investigation of the Intelligibility and Comprehensibility of Speakers of Inner-, Outer-, and Expanding-circles of English by Listeners of Similar and Different Backgrounds

Researcher:

Meichan Huang
Texas A&M University – Commerce
meichan.Huang@tamuc.edu



Meichan Huang

Research Supervisor:

Dr. Lucy Pickering
Texas A&M University – Commerce

Project Summary:

This study investigates the role of prosodic features in the assessment of the intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness judgments of speakers of inner-, outer-, and expanding circles of English by listeners of similar and different English backgrounds. The goal of the study is to contribute to the field of international teaching assistant (ITA) and instructor education by providing information regarding the impact of varieties of English as a global language on listeners within a U.S. educational context. Previous studies have reached limited agreement regarding the impact of suprasegmental features on native-nonnative and nonnative-nonnative interactions in higher-education settings (e.g. Isaacs, 2008; Kang, 2010, 2012). In addition, the influence of listeners' linguistic backgrounds on their comprehension of L2 speech remains unclear (Bent & Bradlow, 2003; Munro, Derwing, & Morton, 2006). In this study, 5-minute lecture samples will be recorded from 2 North American, 2 Indian, and 2 Chinese speakers who are either ITAs or instructors at a large regional state university. Extracts from the samples will be rated by three groups of 30 listeners with U.S. English, Indian, and Chinese L1 backgrounds. Quantitative measures of judgments of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness will be taken from the three groups of listeners rating speakers from all backgrounds. These perceptual measures will be correlated with a profile of the suprasegmental features of each of the speech samples in order to investigate the role of prosody on listeners' comprehension of varieties of Englishes in an academic context.