

# ACCENT NEUTRALIZATION FOR INTERNATIONAL INTELLIGIBILITY

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## Abstract

English has spread from the inner circle countries like Britain, the United States and Australia to the outer circle countries such as India, Nigeria, South Africa and Singapore and the expanding circle countries, which include Vietnam, China, etc. Because of this spread, English has acquired new formal properties and functional roles. The most prominent property of new varieties of English that immediately catches our attention pertains to variation in accent. Thus when we travel across the globe we hear Indian accent, Chinese accent, Filipino accent, and so on.

We need to consider these diverse accents with reference to provincial, national and international intelligibility. For most non-native speakers of English it is neither necessary nor desirable to acquire British, American or Australian accent. For them provincial and national intelligibility should suffice. They do not need training in accent neutralization. It is people who desire to join call centers, international aviation, and intelligence services that need to undergo such training.

The present keynote address will illustrate unintelligibility caused by deviant accents. The speaker will draw upon his experience of teaching English in Vietnam for three and a half years, in Japan for three years, and his brief encounters with Korean, Chinese, Filipino and a few other varieties of English. He will suggest strategies to neutralize this variance so that the new varieties approximate the native British or American accents; if not fully conform to them. The speaker will make a case for neutralization of non-native regional accents for effective international communication.