Understanding accents at TU Delft: Draft

German

German is spoken by about 95 million people worldwide, and is the official language of Germany, Austria and parts of Switzerland. English and German both belong to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Because they are so closely related, they share many features. Furthermore, the English language is pervasive in German media and popular culture. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Germans learn English quickly and easily. However, there are a number of aspects of German that commonly interfere with the correct production of English. These are listed below.

Phonology: The sounds of English and German are similar, as are stress and intonation patterns. However, the /th/ sound as in words like the, and thing does not exist in German, and many speakers have problems producing such words correctly. German words beginning with a /w/ are pronounced with a /v/. This explains the mispronunciation of English words we or wine as ve and vine.

Grammar - Verb/Tense: There is a significant lack of correspondence between the tenses used in English to convey a particular meaning and those used in German. For example, German does not have a continuous tense form, so it is common to hear sentences such as I can't come now; I eat my dinner or conversely He is riding his bike to school every day.

Another example of the lack of correspondence is the use of the present simple in German where English uses the future with will. This leads to mistakes such as: I tell him when I see him.

A further common problem for Germans is choosing the correct tense to talk about the past. Typically spoken German uses the present perfect to talk about past events: “Dann habe ich ein Bier getrunken”. The same tense is used in English produces the incorrect: Then I have drunk a beer.

German has three features of word order than do not exist in English: Firstly, the main verb must be the second element in the independent clause. This often requires an inversion of subject and verb. For example: “Manchmal komme ich mit dem Bus in die Schule.” (Sometimes I come to school by bus.) Secondly, the past participle must always be the last element in the independent clause. Example: “Ich habe ihn nicht gesehen.” (I have not seen him.). Thirdly, the main verb must be the last element in the dependent clause. For example: Sie fragte mich, ob ich den Film schon gesehen hätte.. (She asked me if I had already seen the film.

1. Pronounce all “W’s” as “V’s”
Example: war, was

2. Pronounce “th” as either “z” or “s”
Example: this, another, those
3. Use “f” in place of “v”
   Example: very

4. “sp” becomes “shp” and “st” becomes “sht”
   Example: spin -> shpin, stop -> shtop

Source: [www.instructables.com/id/How-To-Type-and-Talk-With-a-German-Accent/](http://www.instructables.com/id/How-To-Type-and-Talk-With-a-German-Accent/)
[esl.fis.edu/grammar/langdiff/german.htm](http://esl.fis.edu/grammar/langdiff/german.htm)
Italian

- The vowels stand distinctly as one sound
- Stress the second-to-last syllable of a word
- Consonant-final English words with a strong vocalic offset, especially in isolated words, e.g. dog
- The double consonants are made extra long
- The “th” is blended. Many Italians have some difficulty in pronouncing the English "th", and so pronounce it as either "t" (as in "Think"), or "d" (as in "The"), respectively.
- Since /t/ and /d/ are typically pronounced as dental stops anyway, words like there and dare can become homophones.
- Tendency to pronounce words as they are spelled
- Drop the “h” from the beginning of the word
- "Eh" used as a filler
- Non-verbal communication
Some people have problems with the sounds /θ/ and /ð/, as in "three" and "they". "Three" becomes "sree" and "they" becomes "zay". You have to try to put the tip of your tongue between your teeth. Many Chinese don’t have correct pronunciation, simply because they don’t put the tongue between their teeth.

Tongue twister: **These three brothers threw their things.**

Most of Chinese cannot pronounce /l/ very well, because they don’t have /l/ in last syllable in Chinese language. So 'little' becomes 'litto', 'all' becomes 'or'. To raise the end of your tongue to touch the place where your front teeth meet your gums.

Tongue twister: **All the little girls called me into the hall.**

And another problem for Chinese speaker of English is about a long vowel, like the difference between fool and full. Another example is b-e-e-n and bin, b-i-n. One is long /i:/sound, been, and the other is short /i/ sound, bin.

Tongue twister: **That fool put the beans into the full bin.**

For words with "L" sound (like "play, girl"), they make the "L" sound as light as possible. For example, turn "play" into "pay". Same as the "R" sound.

They read the paragraph in a very flat voice tone.

Source:
Indian

Three is an on-line story saying that once there was a technology engineering who had good command of English. Before he had an on-line meeting with an Indian, he had to set the computer IP first. As everyone knows, the computer IP is no more than 12 words. However, after 30 minutes of communication, they still couldn’t figure out the IP and connect their computers. You may just take it as a story, but it does reveal how important it is to understand different English accents. If we can understand different English accents more easily, then we are on one step forward toward highly effective multicultural team work. Below, we are going to give few tips to understand Indian accents.

Indian has strong accents, fast speed, and not good at rhythm, which means they just don’t good at to make a pause in the right time. This is one factor for understanding Indian accents.

There is one point of their English pronunciation, that is they would simplify the pronunciation of th into t. And their pronunciation of t is very close to d. Then, there comes an old joke. When they say “I am thiry”, it sounds just like “I am dirty”. Things turned out to be that just simply because they mistake the pronunciation of t and d.

Besides, it is quite often for Indian in classical English. Below we give some examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please let us know.</td>
<td>Please intimate….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will be informed shortly.</td>
<td>You will be intimated shortly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The India has larger population than in British. There was a joke from a famous British writer, Malcolm Muggeridge, who is dead already. He said that the last Englishman would be an Indian.

Another feature of Indian English is that Indian likes to speak in present progressive tens. For example: I am understanding it. Or, She is know the answer.

Besides, Indian likes the positive terms. Like when they as someone’s name, they would say, “Your good name, please?” And when they ask the age, they would say, “What is your good number?” or “When is your happy birthday?”

There is one more amazing point relevant to the verb. Native English speaker would say “turn on the air conditioner. / Switch off the air conditioner.” For Indian, they may say open the air conditioner and close the air conditioner.

Then here comes a practice to understand Indian English. You can catch the tips by just practicing saying the sentences for several times.

WA DIM=What time
I D LIG DO CHANGE DE GALA=I’d like to change the color
Last, here comes the key points how they change the English pronunciation:
P → B
T → D
K → G
R → L
AI → I (Client cli/ai/ent becomes cli/i/ent.)

Reference:
Website of Business weekly, 2011-08-19