

TAIWAN TWO

Speaker is female, born in 1984. At the time of recording she was an aspiring actor and model in New York City, and also gave private lessons in Mandarin. She completed high school in Taiwan, and a program at an acting academy in New York City.

Speaker was born and raised in Jhongli, Taiwan, and moved to New York City almost two years before this recording was made. Her first languages were Mandarin and Taiwanese. She also speaks some Japanese. She began learning English “officially” at age 8 and studied “on-and-off” since then. Her English teachers were Vietnamese, American, and Taiwanese. Pronunciation was taught using the KK system (KK stands for Kenyon and Knott. The KK system is widely used in China and Taiwan for English training). Since arriving in New York, she had received Edith Skinner-based speech training at her acting academy, before coming to me for training in non-regional American speech. She did not consider her speech in English to be typical of Taiwanese speakers, but was unable to demonstrate or otherwise explain what she meant by a typical Taiwanese accent.

TRANSCRIPTION OF UNSCRIPTED SPEECH:

Yes, I love reading. More in Chinese, more in Chinese, but, um, in English it depends on what subject. Because sometimes, uh, if it's literature, the words they use, is a little bit hard for me, because they don't use [*laughing*] normal words, if you'll allow me to say that! Um, yes, but, uh, basically, um ... the normal English book is okay. I—I—I—I can enjoy that *now*. I mean like, uh, I just read *Eat, Pray, Love*, do you know the book? [*sotto voce*] Okay, it's a really, really good book, okay. [*laughs*] I just ... mm-hm! Yes.

FEATURES OF SPEAKER'S ACCENT:

Frequent use of high rising intonation in closed statements (*High Rising Terminal (HRT)*, aka *up-speak*, *up-talk*, or, in the USA, *valley-talk*), so that many of her declarative sentences sound like questions. This occurs when she is not sure she is expressing herself clearly, or correctly in English. The pattern is probably reinforced by speech she has heard in the US, either in acquaintances or on television.

Frequent substitution of unvoiced consonants for voiced ones: *here's* [hɪəz], *was* [wʌs], *gave* [geɪf]; *disease* [dɪ'si:s], *made* [meɪt], *words* [wɜ:ts], *hard* [hɑ:t], *is* [ɪs].

Simplification of consonant clusters: *practice* ['præɪs], *efforts* ['efət], *treatment* ['tri:təmən], *it's* [ɪs], *just* [dʒʌs].

Deletion of final consonants, sometimes with slight nasalization of vowel: *when* [whɛ̃]; *and* [æ̃]; *it would* [ɪ wʊd]; *implied* [ɪm'plɑɪ], *might* [maɪ], *it was* [ɪ wʌz].

Rhoticity variable; *mirror* ['mɪrə]. (Not heard on recording: Occasional insertion of rhoticity where uncalled for; *author* ['ɔəθə].)

One substitution of [ʃ] for [tʃ]: *which* becomes *wish* [wɪʃ].

Vowel tensing (raising) in *-ing*: *morning* ['mɔːrnɪŋ], rather than ['mɔːrnɪŋ].

Confusion between nasals [n] and [ŋ] (and, more rarely, [m]); *can* [keŋ], *began* [bi'geŋ], *confirmed* “*comfirmed*”; also a tendency to continue [ŋ] longer than most native speakers do, especially relative to vowel duration.

Not surprisingly, speaker is more at home in unscripted speech than when reading aloud. Although her English comprehension is fairly good, negotiating the vagaries of English spelling aloud was a challenge. Some of the words she stumbled on in “Comma Gets a Cure,” such as *veterinary* and *ether*, were unknown to her. Others would have provided less difficulty for her in conversation; she had heard them, but not encountered them in writing before. Still other inaccuracies, such as reading *kept* as *keep*, *unsanitary* as *unnecessary*, are probably attributable to haste.

Speaker frequently uses American English fillers (*um, uh, mm-hm, okay, yes*) and discourse markers (*like, basically*) in unscripted speech. She also uses fillers when reading text—and, although you cannot hear it in this recording, in conversation, after nearly every utterance by her conversation partner. Such frequent “feedback” is disconcerting for Westerners, but for the speaker it fulfills a cultural purpose. In Taiwan, conversational fillers are used (though not by everyone) as a courtesy, to indicate that the listener is paying attention and understanding; not to use them might be considered rude. (This phenomenon is a signal cultural attribute in Japan, where it is called *Aizuchi*; speaker may have developed the tendency because Japanese popular culture was very influential in Taiwan.)

Running time: 04.01

SAMPLE RECORDED JUNE 12, 2008. SPEECH TRANSCRIBED, AND NOTES WRITTEN, BY AMY STOLLER ON JULY 28–30, 2008.