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Cultural Differences in Designing Speech Interfaces for Former British Colonies in Asia

How should we design speech applications for different cultural contexts?

Where on earth are we? (3 zones)

- Australia and New Zealand: more casual in everyday manners in many contexts, yet more British in accent and more formal in speech than North America.
- English speaking Asia and the Pacific including Singapore and Hong Kong: key cultural difference relates to issues of 'respect' and 'saving face'.
- North America: May fall between the other two zones with respect to business etiquette.

Relevant standards

- Australian Standard
 - Interactive voice response systems user interface – speech recognition (AS 5061: 2007) – draft
 - This is a companion to published Australian/NZ touchtone standard AS/NZ 4263:2003
- US gethuman guidelines
 - Aim is for the gethuman guidelines to become a standard

English is not always English

- Imported words
- Morphed words
- Jinglish

Pronunciation and phrase differences

- The letter Z: Zed versus Ze
- Aluminium versus aloominum
- Uranus versus urannis
- From the start, versus from the 'get go'
- Finished versus 'done'
- Six (Aust) versus sex (NZ)
- Mobile versus 'cell'

The Issue of “Face” in Asia

- Social boundaries
- Respect – personal and social hierarchy
- Age – Respect for elders
- Gender – caring female, instructional male
- The “face” issue will define the persona selected.

Persona

- The personality or persona of the speech application must be chosen to reflect the cultural context.
- The following table provides guidance on which characteristics of a persona are most likely to be important to Australia/NZ, Asia and North America.



	Australia & NZ	Asia	North America
Efficient	Yes		Yes
Professional	Yes		Yes
Serious, not jokey	Yes	Yes	
Warm	Yes		Yes
Respectful		Yes	
Business-like	Yes	Yes	Yes

Voice Biometrics

- In Asia, but not only in Asia:
 - Web transactions may produce issues of trust
 - Human telephone operators unknown to customers may not be trusted
 - There may be more trust in automated recognition



Tips for Working in Asia

- Essential to have established relationships prior to selling the benefits of speech applications.
- Spend time developing relationships
- Build on existing solutions, for example, areas where touchtone applications have been successfully deployed.
- Human resources are traditionally cheaper.
- Understand that the business philosophy will be to make money not save money.

Designing for Demographics

- In Asia, compared with Western countries, older people (Gen X and older) may be more comfortable with face-to-face interactions (see following table for demographic categories).
- Younger people in Asia (Gen Y and Gen Z) may be more accepting than USA of mobile technologies which are seen as fashion and status symbols.
- Gen V (virtual) primarily use portable devices – which involve no data entry. One third primary students in Japan do not know how to use computer keyboards.

Generational differences

Pre 'boomers'	61+
Boomers	47-60
Gen X	32-46
Gen Y	17-31
Gen Z	Under 17



Finally!

- A new voice system
- Designed by me!
- With an Aussie accent
- It will be popular world wide!