

ITALY ELEVEN

Speaker is male, born in 1971. At the time of recording he worked as the director of a foreign division (US) of an Italian fashion house. He has a diploma in business management, and studied law at university but did not complete his degree.

He was born in Biella, in the Piedmont region of Italy, and raised there, but also at a Swiss boarding school from age eight. His first language is Italian. He also speaks French and Spanish, and a little bit of Japanese and Putongwa (Mandarin). He learned English informally (from other students) at ages 8–14 while at boarding school, then studied English formally starting at age 15 in Italy, with Italian teachers. Other places he has lived include Edinburgh (one year); Cambridge, England (one year); London (one year); Madrid (three years); Urbino (over one year); Rome (over one year); and Hong Kong (nearly three years). At the time of recording, he had lived in New York City (Manhattan, then Brooklyn) for about three and a half years.

Speaker has expressed a strong personal preference for Southeastern English pronunciation over American (on aesthetic grounds), but some aspects of his speech are still influenced by the English he learned from American schoolmates at his boarding school, and the varieties of English he has heard daily since moving to the US.

TRANSCRIPTION OF UNSCRIPTED SPEECH:

[*Where in the world would you most like to live?*]

Madrid. For sure. Yeah. Madrid. Spain. In general. Ummm, there are places that I visited where I would go and live for long time ... funny enough, that might be Istanbul, in Turkey, because it's right in the middle of the world. So you can go everywhere from there. Um, I would probably *live* ... in Italy, if I would not need to work. So if I would be a millionaire, or a writer, um where you can really work wherever you want, and not needing anyone there, and not needing to really fit in the society, at that point, I would live in Italy, otherwise there's no point to live in Italy at all, because it's *far* too complic[ated] a country. To live in. Absolutely. Therefore, I would definitely live in Spain, *although* I was reading right now that Spain is going to hit the twelve or thirteen percent of, of unemployment rate, and that's oh just horrendous. So that's the other place where I would *live*, but again, to get a job that pays a good amount of money, and allows you to have a decent life, you need place where there is money. And Italy and Spain don't seem those places.

FEATURES OF SPEAKER'S ACCENT:

Italian syllable stress is usually on the penultimate syllable, occasionally on the ultimate syllable, in which case the stressed vowel is marked with an acute accent. This stress pattern occasionally takes over speaker's English: *lunatic* > lu'nætɪk; *Istanbul* > ɪ'stʌnbəl. Apart from such obvious stress errors, the underlying rhythm of Italian shines through his unscripted speech, in the particular length he gives to stressed words and syllables; likewise the melody, which differs just enough from a typical English or American melody to be noticeable. The effect is intensified by his tendency to drop small words and short syllables altogether.

Final consonant clusters often simplified; final D often dropped; final T often glottaled.

Italian lacks [ɪ], having only [i]. Speaker frequently uses this Italian vowel (sometimes lowered slightly [ɪ̞]), in English words calling for [ɪ] or [i]: *Kit* [kɪ̞t] (almost *keet*), *practice* [ˈpræktɪs]; *animal* [æni̞məl], *see it* [si̞:t], *live* [lɪ̞v].

Speaker lacks awareness of English vowel length rules. So in addition to substituting [i, ɪ̞] for [ɪ], he can, for example, pronounce the verbs *live* and *leave* variously as [lɪ̞v, lɪ̞·v, lɪ̞:v]. This is very noticeable in his unscripted speech: *there are places that I visited where I would go and live for long time* (“... where I would go and leave for a long time”); *I would probably live ... in Italy; at that point, I would live in Italy*. Other examples include: *fleece jacket* > *flea's jacket*; *course* > *cause*. This also contributes to the overall difference in his intonation pattern from that of most native anglophone speakers.

Difficulty with vowel length, and with reduced vowels for unstressed syllables, occasionally results in stress being applied to an incorrect syllable in a word: *veterinary*; *official*. Stress may also be applied un-idiomatically to a word in a phrase: *her first morning*; *when she got there*.

Italian lacks [æ], and speaker occasionally lowers [æ] to [a]: or raises it slightly toward [ɛ]: *happy*.

Speaker's English is essentially non-rhotic, owing to his preference for British English. Occasionally he slips and includes r-coloration: *Madrid*. For *sure*; *right in the middle of the world*.

T and D are dentalized [t̪, d̪].

Unvoiced and voiced TH [θ, ð] frequently (not always) pronounced as dental stops [t̪, d̪].

Italian lacks a native H sound [h], and while speaker's grasp of English rules for H is usually secure, he makes occasional errors: dropped H in *huge*, in first word of *her efforts*, intruded H in second word [ə 'hɛfɔts]. The intruded H is not uncommon in Italian speakers of English, when two similar vowels end one word and begin the next. (Native anglophones would either glide or use a glottal attack on the initial vowel of the second word.) In *She ate a bowl of porridge*, note speaker's self-correction of *hate* to *ate*.

Owing to the vagaries of English spelling, speaker makes some errors when reading aloud that he would almost certainly not make were he to use the same words in conversation. *Bowl* > *bowel*, *wiped* > *weeped*, Italianized *futile*. He judges the stresses incorrectly in *veterinary*, perhaps to make it chime with more familiar words such as *secretary*, *necessary*: [və 'tɛɹɪ , nɛɹɪ].

Speaker's grammar is often nonstandard; he has difficulty with the conditional tense (*if I would be a millionaire; if I would not need to work*), and uses various other non-standard constructions such as *don't seems those places*.

Other notes: [z] in *goose*, *diagnosis*; *official* ['ɒfɪʃl̩]; unvoiced TH [θ] in *although*; intruded schwa at end of *place*; percentile [pə 'sɛntl̩].

Running time: 04.14.41

SAMPLE RECORDED DECEMBER 13, 2008. SPEECH TRANSCRIBED, AND NOTES WRITTEN, BY AMY STOLLER ON NOVEMBER 16, 2009 and JANUARY 28, 2010.