Language Standards and Language Variation in Brunei Darussalam: The understanding of <u>would</u> by native and non-native speakers of English.

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ABSTRACT
An assumption of this paper is that non-standard use of language will be accompanied by non-standard features of understanding. An attempt is made to access the meaning perceptions of learners at different levels of proficiency. The paper reports on what English learners in Brunei think English modal verb forms mean. It focuses specifically on <u>would</u> and discusses its use in Standard British English and in Brunei English. Bruneian perceptions of the meaning of this modal are compared with its use. It is claimed that the non-standard use of <u>would</u> for non-assertiveness in Brunei English can partly be explained by users overfocusing on its non-factivity meaning. The issues of what the target variety may be and the appropriacy of non-standard features in this sociocultural and linguistic context are briefly discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The forms and functions of non-standard varieties of English in South East Asia have been fairly well documented, and partially described. Which variety to use as a standard in schools and universities is an issue of some debate. While one can see differences between the local variety and the external norm as aberrations which ought to be eradicated it is also possible to accept them as features of potential new standards to be celebrated rather than deplored. As an example of the issues involved one may contemplate to what extent simplification of final consonant clusters and non-release of final plosives (Mossop 1996) should be accepted as a 'standard' feature of English in Brunei or to what extent time and resources should be spent trying to make Bruneian English (BNE) users conform more closely to Standard British English (STE) pronunciation.

Decisions on issues such as these are not likely to have the desired outcomes unless they take into account the aspirations of the language users. We need to know what target variety or varieties the users of the language are aiming for. In my own research in Brunei Darussalam, a picture has emerged of English language users with two different and simultaneous targets. Consciously, and in an educational setting, Bruneian university students try to conform to the officially sanctioned variety, STE. In an earlier study, subjects said about a taped conversation that their intention had been to produce 'good English' (Svalberg & Hjh Fatimah 1998:53). This presumably refers to STE as it is the officially sanctioned variety in educational settings. In contrast, another subject mentioned that it was not a good idea for a secondary school student to speak STE to other students: " if you sort of you speak proper English they'll they'll feel that you are showing off." This is echoed in one of the examples of syntactic simplification in BNE supplied by Cane (1996): "I think if I go out and speak like native speakers, I think people will see me as snobbish." This situation and the fact that most of the English interaction in Brunei is likely to be between non-native speakers of English seems to indicate that the English language target outside the classroom is BNE. For the majority, this target can, however, be assumed to be unconscious. In fact, the group just mentioned said that they had not know there was such a thing as a local variety of English until they started university. As they were TESOL students, this presumably meant that their lecturers had made them aware of BNE.

Since BNE has as yet received no official recognition, English teachers in schools are in a situation where they have to condemn features of the English used locally as 'wrong'. While admittedly there are no easy solutions, this situation often seems unsatisfactory, especially as the communicative ability of Bruneian English users in a regional context is often very high (my subjective assessment).

For a number of reasons it is worth considering to what extent STE is appropriate in a Bruneian or regional context. A comparison with STE in relation to the English used by European non-native speakers may clarify what I mean. At a BAAL conference held at Reading University in September 2001, Barbara Seidelhofer illustrated a talk on Global English with an anecdote set in a taverna in Greece. The question raised was whether idiomatically correct but essentially opaque language such as 'on the house' was appropriate in a setting of non-native speakers where a less idiomatic expression such as 'a present' would be more readily understood. Similarly, it was shown in Svalberg (1998a), that the correct STE use of 'will' is not necessarily appropriate in Brunei as it

can be perceived as too assertive. It is often better replaced by 'would', even when it results in an ungrammatical STE sentence (see further below).

The research discussed in this paper is an attempt to enrich the description the non-standard use of would in BNE. The paper deals specifically with the understanding that underlies this use. I will discuss whether there are differences in what native and non-native speakers of English in Brunei perceive would to mean and whether these differences in understanding can explain differences in standard and non-standard use of would. The research was carried out at Universiti Brunei Darussalam under a research grant from this institution.

In an earlier article (Svalberg, 1998.a) I argued, on the basis of a grammaticality judgement test and an analysis of newspaper texts, that the non-standard usage of would is well established. A typical example is the following:

> 1.   That was the old days. Then with regular flights from Miri some years back Mulu Caves saw the trickle becoming a flood. Now with Royal Brunei getting into the act the flood would certainly become a deluge. (example from Svalberg, 1998.a: 336-7)

The extract refers to tourism and is from a local newspaper (The Borneo Bulletin). The study of would in public domain texts from which the example is taken was carried out following a grammaticality judgement test where a majority of the Brunei Malay subjects accepted the following item:

> 2. Students are invited to the ceremony which would be held in the Staff-Student Centre. (Svalberg, 1998.a: 337)

Depending on their level of proficiency in English, between 59% - 61% of the subjects found this sentence acceptable. Proficiency level thus made little difference to its acceptability. This fact and also, as illustrated by the first example, that similar non-standard uses were frequent in certain contexts in public domain texts led me to the conclusion that in BNE would is used to mark non-assertiveness regardless of the time reference of the utterance. It would be appropriate , for example, in an official invitation written by and for Bruneians even when will would be prescribed in STE.

Svalberg (1998.a), just referred to, thus dealt with the non-standard *use* of would. The present article, in contrast, will focus on the *understanding* of would by native and non-native speakers of English. The link between understanding and use will also be explored. It will be argued that BNE speakers differ from STE speakers in what they feel to be salient meanings of would and that their non-standard use of would is partly a reflection of this perception.

To provide some necessary background, brief overviews are first provided of the language situation in Brunei and the use of would in STE. Next is a section on the test, the subjects and the method of analysis followed by a presentation of the test results. When an overall view of the data has been gained, a few individual items are examined in more depth to establish the consistency of the trends seen in the overall account. Finally, the link between meaning perceptions and use of would are explored and conclusions drawn.

THE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN BRUNEI

Brunei Darussalam is a multilingual society where English, without being a native language, plays an important role both in education and more generally as a lingua franca. The official language is Malay and Brunei Malay is the variety which dominates spoken interaction. Standard Malay (Bahasa Melayu) is the variety taught in schools and is also the variety used in other contexts which require formality, for example, in official documents and on television news casts. In a survey carried out by Jones 1989-90 (Jones 1994, also discussed in Jones, Martin & Ozog 1993) 570 participants felt that the most important language of the country was Brunei Malay. English held second place of importance, before Bahasa Melayu. Jones et al (1993) state that English is used extensively in education, law and the media. 40% of broadcast time is in English and daily newspapers are predominantly in English. 69% of respondents in the survey said they used English in daily life and this trend was stronger among younger people. Certain topics such as education and employment were reported to be more often discussed in English. English is, however, also used in the family to some extent, probably including a lot of code switching and mixing (Jones 1994) as well as non-standard grammar. Ozog (1996) also reports that many Bruneians, especially the younger generation, use English occasionally in the family.

In addition to Malay speakers, there is a large Chinese speaking community in Brunei, mainly Hokkien and Hakka (Dunseath, 1996). A number of local languages are also spoken, e.g. Iban and Dusun (Martin & Poedjosoedarmo 1996). Non-Malay speakers in the survey (Jones et al 1993) reported that they often used English for all topics including family and friends.

The foreign work force in Brunei is relatively large; it is not unusual to find, for example, Filipino staff in supermarkets and shops and a considerable proportion of school teachers and university lecturers are foreigners with English as their first language. Most English users in the survey said they used English in supermarkets, even Malay to Malay. Jones et al (1993) speculate that this may be due not only to the foreign workforce but also to the high prestige of supermarkets. Prestige may also be the reason why 33% of those surveyed said they used English to conduct government business, although Malay is the language of government. In the private sector English is, not surprisingly, used even more frequently. Jones et al (1993) report that 75.6 % of language use was said to be English here. Even for those who rarely use English on the job, not having English is an obstacle for career advancement, according to Jones et al (1993).

An interesting question raised by these figures is what variety or lect of English is used when. Jones et al (1993) state that many clerks use basilectal varieties of English even when they have a common L1 and it can be assumed more generally that most of the English used in Brunei have non-STE features. In Svalberg, 1998.a I argued that this local, nativized variety of English (BNE) is still in the process of emerging (1998.a:326, see also Cane, 1993 & 1996 and Mossop 1996) but that certain features of it can already be clearly discerned, e.g. the non-standard use of would mentioned above.

The perceived importance of English is reflected in the education policy. Since 1985, education is bilingual in Malay/English. While the medium of education is initially Malay, children learn English at school from Primary One. From Primary Four the medium switches to English, except in subjects directly related to Malay Language or Culture (Jones, 1996). Though the variety of English officially sanctioned is STE, a lot of code switching and mixing goes on in the classroom especially at lower levels (Martin, 1995). When school leavers enter university, they are usually very fluent in English and have a relatively extensive vocabulary. At the same time their English grammar is, in STE terms, typically very weak. The extract below from a picture composition by a first year university student, is representative of a large proportion of students at entry:

> 3. The man is in his middle age is trying to keep fit as soon as he read a book called keep fit. He was so terrified when knowing he could get ill or other bad symptoms if he is not trying to do something from now on. It seems all these years, he never been bothered by the big belly he has got. Looking at the mirror without a shirt, he now realised what an ugly tummy he has and thought he could make it flat thus, look younger. (sample from Svalberg, 1998. b: 73)

Typically prominent in the sample text are (STE) errors in the use of verb forms, e.g. tense agreement. To determine which non-standard features are genuine errors and which may be features of an emerging BNE we would need more in depth descriptions of local English use. Nevertheless, the extract may serve as an indicator of the level of STE proficiency of university students.

 The conventional terms 'elementary', 'intermediate' and 'advanced' are difficult to apply in the Bruneian context due to the existence of BNE and the frequent imbalance of different linguistic competencies. The sociolinguistic situation means that the level of spoken communicative competence is often far above that of other competencies. It is not unusual to find first year University students at a lower level of grammatical competence (in STE terms) than the writer of the sample above but still well able to put their meanings across in English in everyday situations.

The linguistically complex environment just described also makes it difficult for researchers to know whether the English analyzed is indeed to be regarded as BNE - a variety in its own right - or learners' interlanguage (IL). Kachru (1996:246) is of the view that IL studies have not so far provided 'any interesting insight for our better understanding of the contexts of institutionalized world Englishes'. One might say that this does not apply to BNE as it is not as yet institutionalized. More importantly, however, the IL concept captures the dynamic and evolving nature of the language system of the 'language-user-as-learner'. This is why I have adopted the stance that the speaker's/writer's (hereafter 'speaker's') target should determine the status of the output (Svalberg & Hjh Fatimah, 1998). If it can be assumed that the speaker's aim is to produce STE, the output should be considered to represent interlanguage (IL). In the case of Brunei, where BNE is not yet considered an alternative norm, I would argue that Bruneian school or university students, in an educational setting, can usefully be considered learners of STE and their output IL.

Though useful for the reasons stated and for the present purpose, it has to be admitted that the division (Malay to English) IL on the one hand and BNE on the other is to a large extent artificial. First of all, the speakers themselves show very little awareness of

the difference between STE and BNE (Svalberg & Hjh Fatimah, 1998: 53). This contrasts with Singapore where 'Singlish' is a phenomenon much discussed and a rich source of both humour and pride. Another reason why the IL/BNE division is artificial is that, in addition to L1 transfer, there is likely to be transfer from IL to BNE and from BNE to IL (Svalberg, 1998.a:340). In this study I have therefore not hesitated to move across varieties as I investigate whether the understanding of <u>would</u> in an educational context (the classroom) can explain its use outside it.

WOULD IN STE

Modal verbs, of which <u>would</u> is an example, are so called because they denote modality, i.e. different types of possibility and necessity.

> "Modality is a semantic category describing the speaker's assessment of a proposition in terms of Necessity and Possibility (in their widest sense)." (Svalberg 1991)

This definition of modality owes a lot to modal logic (e.g. McCawley 1981) but whereas logic is concerned with truth values, modality as a linguistic category encodes the world as the speaker perceives it or chooses to represent it. It is therefore essentially subjective (Svalberg 1991) according to the definition by Lyons (1982:102):

> "In so far as we are concerned with language, the term 'subjectivity' refers to the way in which natural languages, in their structure and their normal manner of operation, provide for the locutionary agent's expression of himself and his own attitudes and beliefs."

Modal verbs provide just such a means of expression. This strong subjective element makes modality an important interpersonal linguistic resource, difficult to categorize and describe in precise terms. It also means that we can expect the expression of modality to be affected by the culture in which the language is embedded.

Palmer (1979) classified modality as deontic, dynamic and epistemic. Deontic modality is typically performative expressing the speaker's giving permission, promising, commanding and so on. Epistemic modality expresses the speaker's reflecting on the world in terms of degrees of likelihood. Dynamic modality, finally, is the least prototypical of the modalities. It encodes ability, willingness and advice, among other notions. The same modals are used to realize all three modality types. <u>Will</u> and <u>would</u>, for example, can be used to express willingness, promise and confident assumption and they also have non-modal uses, principally to encode habitual events. This multifunctionality is possible because the meaning arises out of an interplay between the modal itself and its context making modal meanings extremely rich. Here we will limit the discussion to that which is especially relevant to the research results.

One of the functions of <u>would</u> is as the past form of <u>will</u> (Quirk et al., 1985:4.59), as exemplified below:

> 4.a. My grandpa will sit staring out of the window for hours.
> 4.b. My grandpa would sit staring out of the window for hours.
> 5.a. When she grows up she will learn that honesty is not always the best policy.
> 5.b. When she grew up she would learn that honesty was not always the best policy.

Both <u>will</u> and <u>would</u> are used for events at a reference time (exs. (4)) or after a reference time (exs. (5)). By 'reference time' is here meant either present or past (Reichenbach, 1957; Comrie, 1985; Svalberg, 1991; Svalberg & Hjh Fatimah, 1998:29). It is perhaps worth noting that when <u>would</u> is used for an event after the past ('future in the past' (5.b)) it often implies fulfilment of that event (Quirk et al., 1985: 4.48) and not unreality.

Whereas <u>will</u> has present time reference (exs. (a)) and can never be used for the past, <u>would</u> which often has past time reference (exs. (b)) is also frequently used in present time contexts ((7) & (8) below).

6.   He said he <u>would</u> definitely come. (after past)
7.   <u>Would</u> you give me a hand with this? (at or after present)
8.   It <u>would</u> be nice if you could come too. (after present)

Semantically, the different uses of <u>would</u> have a lot in common. Past time (4.b, 5.b), reports (6), politeness/tentativeness (7) (c.f. Quirk et al., 1985:4.63), and also unreality (8) are all distant in some sense from the speaker or what the speaker represents. It may be a temporal distance or a social distance or a distance from reality/fact. A fuller characterization of <u>would</u> is therefore that it is the DISTANT equivalent of <u>will</u> (Svalberg 1991).

This use of a past tense forms to represent other meanings than past time is not particular to English or even to Indo-European languages, but is a common way of dividing up semantic space. Steele (1975) showed that past verb forms were used to denote, for example, politeness in Proto-Uto Aztecan and linked this to a semantic primitive she called 'dissociative', similar to what I have here called 'distance'. This latter term was used by Fleischman (1989) in an article with the revealing title "Temporal distance: a basic linguistic metaphor" and later by Svalberg (1991) to describe the concept underlying a number of uses of formally past verb forms for events in present time, e.g. those exemplified above (see also Svalberg, 1995:81). It should not surprise us, therefore, if non-native speakers of English adopt and even extend the DISTANT meaning of, for example, <u>would</u>.

In (6) above, <u>would</u> can be used instead of <u>will</u> to convey that the speaker takes no responsibility for the truth value of the reported utterance (though there are other interpretations). The politeness example in (7) above is tentative in tone and (8) is a conditional sentence. In all three examples, <u>would</u> denotes logically unreal events in that they have not yet occurred and makes the tone more tentative than if <u>will</u> were to be used.

Although unreality may not be the meaning most salient to native speakers in these examples it is easy to construe contexts with <u>would</u> which clearly denote (a degree of) unreality.

9.   If I won the Lottery I <u>would</u> buy a Porsche.

Highly speculative contexts such as (9), rather than, for example, (8), are frequently used to teach "the second conditional" ("hypothetical past", Quirk et al.:1 4.23) and - since more frequent expressions such as 'would like' are probably learnt

holophrastically - this may be the learners' most conscious encounter with would. We will have occasion to return to this later.

A common use of would which contrasts with conditionals is the expression of certainty, already mentioned. The following are examples of the certainty use with present reference.

> 10.   I would never say such a thing!
> 11.   That would be some kind of sandstone.

The use of would in (10) and (11) can express that, as far as the speaker is concerned, the proposition is a fact. Here it contrasts on a cline of likelihood with other modals (could, might) which, because they are DISTANT, are all more tentative and/or speculative than their DIRECT (non-DISTANT] counterparts (can, may[1], will)

Would thus has a number of different uses but at a very abstract level the possibility meaning "a high degree of likelihood" can be discerned in all of its uses, even the strictly speaking non-epistemic ones. Regular recurrence of events ('habit') and volition, for example, increase the likelihood of an event occurring.

One main restriction on the use of would in STE is that *a DISTANT context* (of the type mentioned above) *should be retrievable by the hearer.* That is to say, in an otherwise felicitous utterance, would is felicitous if it can be understood, for example, to refer to past time or to be part of a 'hypothetical' structure ('unreal' conditional) or reported utterance. Some expressions which may seem to violate this constraint e.g. would like/mind are used for politeness and can thus be said to denote social distance.

It was said above that would is used to mark non-assertiveness in BNE. The politeness use of would in STE also marks non-assertiveness in that it is formally hypothetical where a hypothetical structure is not necessary[2], e.g. I wouldn't mind rather than I don't/won't mind. But BNE allows non-assertive would in many more contexts than STE. Hence it is that the test item discussed above, and repeated here for convenience, is acceptable to BNE speakers but not to native speakers of STE.

> 2. Students are invited to the ceremony which would be held in the Staff-Student Centre.
> (example from Svalberg, 1998.a: 337)

The context of this example (an invitation) makes it clear that the speaker wants to convey the future event as a fact. Would cannot be interpreted as referring to past time or as being part of a conditional structure nor as being part of a report (there is no reporting verb and the first clause has not been backshifted) and it is not part of a politeness expression. Hence, it violates the restriction above and is unacceptable in STE.

This use does, however, denote another kind of social distance for which in the local (Brunei) culture - and possibly in a wider geographic area[3] there is a communicative need. As argued in Svalberg (1998.a), it seems to be considered arrogant to speak too confidently about future events. When people speak Malay they often use the Arabic expression for 'God Willing' in such situations and would seems to have a similar function. This kind of social distance is however not grammaticized in STE.

The test to be discussed below was designed to tap meaning perceptions at the level of meaning-in-use rather than at higher levels of abstraction. The subjects had to match their perceptions to the nearest available meaning options. The results presented below indicate that differences in STE and BNE use is to some extent a result of differences in the saliency of meaning components of <u>would</u> as perceived by STE and BNE speakers.

TEST, METHOD & SUBJECTS

Test & Method

In their first year, all students at Universiti Brunei Darussalam are required to take English Language classes. The meaning test discussed here was administered by the subjects' regular English lecturer in ordinary class time at about the same time as a grammaticality judgement test (discussed in Svalberg 1998a). There was no time limit, but the meaning test took about 35 minutes to do. Some lecturers chose to do both tests in one go while others spread them over two days.

The test covered 16 verb forms[4], each represented twice. It thus consisted of 32 **items**. Each was a sentence or part of a sentence and contained an underlined verb form. The item was immediately followed by a multiple choice matrix with eleven **options**, as shown below:

Fig.1. *A test item*

15. the girls <u>would sleep</u>.

☐ in the PRESENT   ☐ BEFORE another time   ☐ FINISHED   ☐ in the FUTURE   ☐ A FACT

☐ in the PAST   ☐ AFTER another time   ☐ GOING ON   ☐ ANYTIME   ☐ NOT A FACT

☐ I DON'T KNOW

The written instructions, in English and Malay, told the subjects to show what they thought the underlined words meant by ticking a maximum of three options. The options, shown in the figure, were meanings that are known to be expressed by verb forms (Svalberg, 1991). It was necessary to word the options to maximize the likelihood that they would be understood in a uniform way. Thus the term 'distant' for example, had to be rejected and simpler terms and concepts chosen.

Progressive, perfect and simple verb forms, with or without <u>will</u> and <u>would</u>, were distributed over the test so that there was one of each kind in each half of the test. As can be seen, the test items contained a minimum of context[5]. There were six items containing three different verb forms with <u>would</u>:

    12.   the girls <u>would sleep</u> [15]
    13.   Kassim <u>would open</u> the door [32]
    14.   the boys <u>would be arriving</u> [7]
    15.   the student <u>would be writing</u> essays [26]
    16.   the girls <u>would have slept</u> [10]
    17.   Kassim <u>would have opened</u> the door [24]

Similarly, there were six items containing three different verb forms with <u>will:</u>

18.   the girls will arrive [9]
19.   the students will write essays [18]
20.   the boys will be sleeping [29]
21.   Azimah will be opening the door [2]
22.   the girls will have arrived [23]
23.   the students will have written the essays [4]

The numbers in square brackets are the test item numbers, also used in appendix 1 & 2. Responses to the will and would-items are contrasted in later sections and, when appropriate, would is contrasted also with the rest of the test items (see appendix 2 for the complete test).

Subjects

The test subjects were 43 native speakers of English and 106 non-native speakers. The native speakers were second year students at Edith Cowan University in Perth. The non-native speakers were first year students at Universiti Brunei Darussalam, all native speakers of Malay.

The non-native English speakers had previously taken an English entry test. They were ranked on the essay part of this test (a 'picture composition') as it was thought to be a good measure of their overall competence in English. They were then divided into three groups. The discussion will be referring to the 32 top ranking subjects and the 34 bottom ranking subjects and will compare them with the native speakers.

Table 1. *Test subjects*

NS (Control)	NNS: Top Group	NNS: Middle Group	NNS: BottomGroup
43 subjects	32 subjects	40 subjects	34 subjects

NS: Native speakers of English   NNS: Non-native speakers of English

The number of subjects differed for each group, as shown in table 1. To make the figures in the discussion of the data more easily comparable, the number of times a meaning option was chosen by a group was converted into a percentage score. This was done for each item and for each item pair. Since, in most of the tables below, each subject represents about 3% of the group and considering that statistical analyses were not necessary nor appropriate, round figures have been deemed sufficiently precise.

In the analysis of the data, the researcher looked for patterns in each group across the tense-modality-aspect system and for each verb form across meanings. In addition, the meanings ascribed to each verb form were analysed both as an average across the item pair and for each item of the pair separately (see appendix 1 for complete data on would and will). Responding to the test items involved accessing or construing appropriate schemata within which they could be interpreted (Rumelhart 1980). A subject we will return to later is to what extent these schemata were the same for the native speakers of English as for the BNE speakers.

In the following sections, the term **saliency** will be used to describe the measure afforded by the percentage figures. When comparing non-native speaker subjects with native-speakers, it will be said that the former **overfocus** on a particular meaning if it is

more salient to them than to the native speakers. The opposite relationship will be called **underfocusing**. The over- and under- prefixes should not be taken as implying a value judgement. They are purely descriptive of the relationship between the outputs of the two populations where the native speakers represent the 'standard of comparison' and the non-native speakers the 'target of comparison' (see Langacker 1987 for a discussion of comparisons).

TEST RESULTS
The test measures the relative saliency of the most salient meanings for each verb form. In interpreting the figures, it should be noted that on average and calculated over the complete test (32 items) the subjects chose 1.9 options per item (not including *don't know*) rather than the 3 they were allowed. Secondly, the perceptions of the subjects in a group varied somewhat so that the replies of a group were always spread over more than three options. This accounts for the sometimes low figures. Nevertheless, conclusions can be drawn with some confidence if *a pattern of preferences within a group is repeated* over all the items of a particular kind, e.g. all the items containing will and/or if *differences between groups are sustained* over all the items of a kind.

Overall results

The first meanings to be discussed are *past time* and *present time*[6]. The figure below shows what proportion of each group chose either of the two meanings for the items containing a modal plus a complement in the simple, progressive and perfect aspects. The lay out of this figure (fig.2) and the following three is intended to make them as visually meaningful as possible. Each consists of a collection of tables arranged so that forms with will are on the right; forms with would on the left. In each half of the figure, forms with simple and progressive complements (which denote events at or after the reference time) are on the right and forms with perfect complements (which denote events before the reference time) on the left. More detailed tables can be found in appendix 1.

Fig.2. *The Saliency of Past and Present Time*

	would + Perfect		would + Simple		will + Perfect		will + Simple	
	Past	Present	Past	Present	Past	Present	Past	Present
NS	72	1	9	5	22	14	-	5
TG	47	6	25	5	16	19	2	13
BG	31	6	21	6	6	6	6	7

			would + Progr.				will + Progr.	
			Past	Present			Past	Present
NS			4	19			-	13
TG			28	5			-	13
BG			16	12			3	12

NS= native speakers, TG= top group (learners), BG= bottom group (learners)

 The figures in the table represent percent of subjects in each group who chose a particular option. Thus, for example, 72% of the native speakers chose *in the past* for

the items containing <u>would</u> + perfect. Generally, however, the figures are low for the native speakers indicating that in their perception <u>would</u>/<u>will</u> does not primarily express the past/present distinction. It is perhaps interesting to note that among the native speakers *present* is in fact a more frequent choice than *past* for <u>would</u> + progressive. The identification of progressive with present time was also evident in the past progressive items without a modal (not shown here), which 26% of the native speakers felt referred *present time* while 54% associated it with *past*. In figure 2, the relatively high figure for *present time*, despite <u>would</u>, may indicate a schema including a conditional or otherwise 'unreal' context (construed by the subjects) or it may reflect a perception that the progressive refers to an event going on <u>at</u> the time of reference, a sort of 'present in the past'.

 A perfect complement, on the other hand, enhances the 'pastness' of the item - almost 3/4 of the native speakers consider that <u>would</u> + perfect expresses pastness and nearly 1/4 that <u>will</u> + perfect does.

For the non-native speakers, figure 2 shows a tendency to overfocus on the pastness of forms with <u>would</u> and this trend is stronger in the top group than in the bottom group. About 1/4 of the top-group subjects consider <u>would</u> in any constellation to be an exponent of past time. A perfect complement has less impact on the perceptions of the non-native speakers than on the native speakers and least of all on the bottom-group.

Overfocusing by the top-group subjects on the pastness of past tense forms and on the presentness of present tense forms was a general tendency across the whole test, i.e. regardless of whether the items contained a modal verb or not.

There is also some overfocusing on the general time meaning (*anytime)* of the modal items, as shown in fig.3:

Fig.3.*The saliency of General Time*

	would + Perfect	would + Simple	will + Perfect	will + Simple
	Anytime	Anytime	Anytime	Anytime
NS	5	23	4	7
TG	11	28	17	28
BG	16	35	38	38
		would + Progr.		will + Progr.
		Anytime		Anytime
NS		13		4
TG		28		17
BG		38		40

NS= native speakers, TG= top group (learners), BG= bottom group (learners)

Overall few native speakers perceive that <u>will</u>/<u>would</u> express general time though nearly 1/4 feel that the combination <u>would+simple</u> does. The non-native speakers on the other hand consistently overfocus on the general time meaning, and more with decreasing proficiency. For five out of the six forms more than 1/3 of the bottom-group have chosen *anytime.*

In summary, figure 2 and 3 show that to the non-native speakers time reference is a more salient meaning than to the native speakers.

The most popular option for <u>will</u>/<u>would</u> in all the groups is *future,* as shown in the following figure:

Fig.4.*The saliency of Futurity*

	would + Perfect	would + Simple	will + Perfect	will + Simple
	Future	Future	Future	Future
NS	7	59	49	86
TG	22	55	60	92
BG	31	46	63	87
		would + Progr.		will + Progr.
		Future		Future
NS		54		84
TG		52		94
BG		52		75

NS= native speakers, TG= top group (learners), BG= bottom group (learners)

Among the native speakers, the perception that <u>will/would</u> expresses futurity is generally strong. 49% -86% chose *future* for five of the six forms. The exception is, not unexpectedly, <u>would</u>+perfect which has received a considerably lower figure. Again, the perfect complements do not have as strong an impact on non-native speaker perceptions. When it comes to <u>will</u>, the top-group overfocus somewhat on the futurity meaning generally.

The most revealing figures, are those pertaining to the subjects' perception of factivity, as displayed in fig.5:

Fig.5. *The Saliency of Factivity: Fact or Not a Fact*

	would + Perfect		would + Simple		will + Perfect		will + Simple	
	Fact	Not Fact	Fact	Not Fact	Fact	Not Fact	Fact	Not Fact
NS	6	9	21	7	20	5	31	-
TG	5	30	3	27	6	30	13	16
BG	6	16	3	10	4	12	3	10
			would + Progr.				will + Progr.	
			Fact	Not Fact			Fact	Not Fact
NS			15	7			28	6
TG			6	20			17	16
BG			10	9			6	10

NS= native speakers, TG= top group (learners), BG= bottom group (learners)

There is a marked contrast between the native speakers' and the top-group's perceptions. Among the native speakers, between 15% and 31% feel that five out of six modal forms

express *fact* while the figures for *not a fact* are significantly lower. The sixth form, <u>would</u>+perfect, has a higher figure for *not a fact* than for *fact,* but both figures are low.

The top-group, on the other hand, consistently overfocus on non-factivity and generally underfocus on the *fact* meaning. Between 16% and 30% of the top-group feel that the modal forms generally express non-factivity. Fewer of the bottom-group subjects have chosen either factivity option, but the trend is that they also overfocus on non-factivity.

In the test as a whole, apart from if-clauses, test items which did not contain a modal verb consistently elicited much lower figures for *not a fact* (often 0 (zero)) than did those with <u>will</u>/<u>would</u>. It thus seems clear that it was the presence of the modals which prompted subjects to choose *not a fact.* This impression is further strengthened by the fact that for the top-group overfocusing on *not a fact* is evident for each and every one of the 12 modal items (see appendix 1).

The contrasting and fairly strong native speaker perception that the modal forms express factivity probably reflects the use of <u>would</u> to express past recurring events and/or its epistemic use for certainty (e.g. examples 10 and 11 above, and example below). Past recurring events are factive by being past (i.e. having already occurred). Future events and 'possible' events, on the other hand, are logically non-factive by virtue of not having yet occurred or not being known to have occurred. Nevertheless, one often expects such events to be accepted as fact, e.g. <u>the students will write essays</u> if said as a description of next term's scheduled activities. One can also express a strong assumption such as <u>the boys would be arriving now</u> meaning it to be a statement of fact. <u>Would</u> then contrasts with expressions of less certainty such as <u>might</u> and <u>could</u>. It is possible that the STE speakers have taken such a pragmatic perspective of the modals more often than the non-native speakers.

If we see the non-native speaker subjects as learners of STE, it is not surprising that most of them have not acquired these certainty uses of <u>will</u> and <u>would</u>. The learning task is especially complex for <u>would</u> as its status as a marker of DISTANCE has to be internalized.

Individual Items

The reactions to the underlined verb forms in the test items varied somewhat within an item pair (i.e. two items containing the same verb form). Nevertheless, the trends discussed above can be discerned also with reference to each individual item. To illustrate this, I will here discuss the items containing <u>will</u> or <u>would</u> plus a simple complement.

<u>WILL</u> + Simple: The items containing <u>will</u> plus a simple complement were:

> (18)   the students <u>will write</u> essays
> (9)   the girls <u>will arrive</u>

The numbers are the item numbers in the test. Below is a table of the responses to these items. Included in the tables are all the options which ranked among the three most frequently chosen in either of the three groups. The options are listed to the left of the table. The figures for the three highest ranked options in each group are in bold.

Table 2. *Preferred meanings of the future simple (items 18 & 9)*

(18)	NS	TG	BG	(9)	NS	TG	BG
Future	**81**	**94**	**82**		**91**	**91**	**91**
Fact	**28**	13	3		**35**	13	3
After	**23**	**16**	**18**		**16**	**16**	**21**
Going on	19	6	9		**16**	3	6
Anytime	9	**28**	**35**		5	**28**	**41**
Not a Fact	0	**16**	9		0	**16**	**12**
Present	7	9	6		2	**16**	9

A common perception of all three groups is that *future* is a very salient meaning of <u>will</u> but they do not agree on the saliency of *fact/ not a fact* and the trends are the same for both test items. The non-native speakers of English find non-factivity more salient and factivity less salient than the native speakers. While the non-native speakers become more native-like in their perception of the general time meaning of <u>will</u> as they become more proficient, the opposite occurs with non-factivity. Overfocusing on *not a fact* **increases** with higher proficiency.

WOULD + Simple: The two items containing <u>would</u> + a simple complement were the following:

(15) the girls <u>would sleep</u>
(32) Kassim <u>would open</u> the door

The responses to these items, numbered as in the test, are presented in the table below. Again, all the options which ranked among the three most frequently chosen are included and the figures for the three highest ranked options in each group are in bold.

Table 3. *Preferred meanings of WOULD + Simple (items 15 & 32)*

(15)	NS	TG	BG	(32)	NS	TG	BG
Future	**61**	**47**	**44**		**58**	**63**	**47**
Fact	**23**	3	3		**19**	3	3
Anytime	**21**	**25**	**35**		**26**	**31**	**35**
After	**21**	16	12		12	16	12
Going on	9	3	9		12	3	9
Not a Fact	5	**25**	9		9	**28**	12
Past	9	22	**18**		9	**28**	**24**
Before	9	13	**18**		7	13	12

Although the figures for *future* in the first row are lower than in the previous table, there is agreement among the groups that the futurity meaning of <u>would</u> is very salient.

The native speakers do not find non-factivity very salient. In contrast, the top-group overfocuses on *not a fact* and underfocus on *fact*. This perception is more pronounced for the items containing <u>would</u> than for those with <u>will</u>. The top-group are also less native-like than the bottom group in the saliency they ascribe to the *not a fact* meaning of <u>would</u>.

To the native speakers, the general time meaning is much more salient for <u>would</u> than for <u>will</u>. The non-native speakers do not perceive a significant difference between the two modals in this regard.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A closer look at the individual items has revealed that although the reactions to the items in an item pair were not identical, the same trends could be discerned across item pairs. Overfocusing on non-factivity increased with higher proficiency while overfocusing on general time decreased. The top-group subjects instead overfocused slightly more on primary tense (*present* for <u>will</u> and *past* for <u>would</u>).

Data from all six item pairs showed that to the native speakers the <u>will</u>/<u>would</u> distinction is not primarily a tense distinction. In fact, they do not associate <u>will</u>/<u>would</u> very strongly with any other time than *future*. Even the general time option is rarely chosen expect for <u>would</u> with a simple complement. The salience of pastness can be enhanced by a perfect complement, especially in combination with <u>would</u>. Generally, the native speakers do not see <u>would</u> as an exponent of non-factivity but perceive it from a pragmatic perspective as expressing certainty, presumably in contrast with other modals.

There are several interesting differences between the native speakers and the high proficiency non-native speakers but the most important is reality status. The top-group consistently overfocus on *the non-fact* meaning of the modals, especially <u>would</u>. They also underfocus on the *fact* meaning of all the modal forms except <u>would+perf</u>. The pragmatic certainty perspective of the modals evident in the native speaker data seems to be missing.

There is less to say about the least proficient group as the lack of consistency indicates a fair amount of randomness in their choices but it is worth noting that the top-group's perceptions are in some respects less native-like than those of the bottom-group. Overfocusing on the pastness and non-factivity of <u>would</u> are both stronger in the top-group than in the bottom-group.

DISCUSSION: PERCEIVED MEANINGS AND ACTUAL USES OF <u>WOULD</u>

An exhaustive investigation of how the meanings (or set of meaning components) of <u>would</u> are perceived is a much larger undertaking than that reported on here. Instead, a few meanings only were investigated in a way amenable to comparison of verb forms with <u>would</u> and non-modal verb forms. As a result we can say with some confidence, for example, that those subjects who chose non-factivity as a meaning of items with <u>would</u> did so because of the presence of the modal.

The test showed that the pastness meaning of <u>would</u> was more salient to the top-group than to the native speakers. At the same time, the performance of the same top-group subjects on the grammaticality judgement test (see Introduction) indicate that <u>would</u> is not considered *past* in all contexts. Pastness is apparently not perceived as an obligatory meaning component and this is evident also in the tense-independent use of <u>would</u> for non-assertiveness in BNE. The top-group also overfocused on the general

time meaning of <u>would</u>. This is clearly compatible with BNE use which, it will be remembered, often violates STE rules of tense agreement.

The surprisingly high proportion of native speakers who associated both past progressive (without a modal) and <u>would</u>+progressive with *present time* could reflect either a conditional context or a perception that the progressive aspect denotes an event 'at' (rather than 'before' or 'after') the past time of reference, i.e. 'present in the past'. For the learners to share this latter perception, they would have to acquire the notion of a reference time other than the moment of speech (Reichenbach 1957, Comrie 1985, Svalberg 1991). That is to say, they would need to be able to conceive of and grammatically express not only two points in time, *past* and *present*, but also events located before, at and after either of these points. An incomplete command of the reference time concept would thus make it impossible for them to share the native speakers' schema of 'present in the past', as seems to have happened here.

 The strongest indication of why <u>would</u> is suitable as a marker of non-assertiveness in BNE is the non-native speaker subjects' perception that it is non-factive. The table below gives the average percentage of subjects in the native speaker and top-groups who chose a factivity option for items containing <u>would</u>.

Table 4. *Average percentage of subjects who chose a factivity option for items containing* <u>would</u>.

	Fact	Not a Fact
NS	14	8
TG	5	25

The table shows the extent to which the top-group subjects overfocus on the *non-fact* meaning and underfocus on *fact.* That <u>would</u> is a better candidate than <u>will</u> for expressing non-assertiveness is clear as <u>would</u> is perceived as both less factive and more non-factive than <u>will</u>.

It seems likely, then, that several different factors have contributed to the BNE use of <u>would</u>. On the purely linguistic level, we have seen that a non-standard interpretation of tense (without a reference time distinction) is likely to be one and the high saliency of non-factivity another. No doubt the most important factor is a communicative need to express non-assertiveness (Svalberg 1998.a). In so far as this contrasts with the view of assertiveness in the 'inner circle' (Kachru 1985), it brings to mind strategies mentioned by Lowenberg (1985: 11) "to express non-Western identities and to create discourse styles appropriate to the sociolinguistic context of their use".

Finally, one cannot rule out 'transfer of training' (Selinker 1972) as a further contributing factor. The contexts commonly chosen to teach the use of <u>would</u> may have contributed to the oversaliency of non-factivity and thus its compatibility with non-assertiveness. When <u>would</u> is the focus of instruction it is usually either in expressions such as <u>would...like</u> or <u>would...mind</u> which are non-assertive and compatible with present time reference or in highly speculative conditional contexts such as <u>if I won a million pounds I would...</u> which again refer to non-past time. In contrast, the use of

would as an exponent of factive future-in-the past or past habit, or of subjective certainty is rarely emphasized in the classroom.

There is clearly a need for more production data to see how frequent the various uses of would are at different levels of proficiency. It can be predicted, however, on the basis of the meaning perceptions presented above that occurrences of would for certainty and past recurring events would be rare, as is in fact borne out by conversation data discussed in Svalberg & Hjh Fatimah 1998 where, on a set topic, native speakers of English produced 28 occurrences of would, mainly for past recurring events, against none at all in the group of Bruneian undergraduates.

CONCLUSIONS

As previously indicated, there are at least two alternative reactions to the differences found between the groups in this study. If it is accepted that the subjects' target in the test situation was STE as has been argued previously, then non-native speaker differences are deviations from that norm which need to be adjusted in order for the target variety to be fully acquired.

Another perspective is to see the non-native speaker data as characteristic of BNE and to leave it at that. This latter perspective perhaps misjudges the aspirations of English users in Brunei and risks underestimating the perceived need to acquire a range of lects. As I have indicated, the striving to produce STE is not necessarily an external imposition. Pending further investigation, it would seem reasonable to assume that English users in Brunei wish to be able to speak a lect which is, if not identical, at least close to STE *when this is appropriate*. In the Singaporean context, Chew (1995) sees the ability to choose the appropriate lect in a given context as affording 'lectal power'. Though at present there may be a less developed range of lects in BNE than in Singapore English (c.f. Ho et al., 1993), this could change quite rapidly. An acknowledgement of BNE lects and the adoption of an appropriate BNE target instead of 'pure' STE may well become possible as BNE develops. The characteristics of a BNE acrolect, and whether the non-standard use of would should be part of it, would then have to be decided by BNE speakers themselves.

To the non-native speaker subjects in this study, non-factivity was a more salient meaning of would than to the native STE speakers. Taken together with conclusions from Svalberg 1998a, these findings suggest that meaning components compete for saliency and that sociolinguistic factors, among others, may contribute to making certain meanings more or less salient. What schemata language users can access or construe would then depend not only on linguistic input but also, crucially, on the culture in which the language use is embedded.

This paper has discussed the relationship between the perceived meaning and the use of would by native English speakers and Malay speaking English users. It has been claimed that an imperfect grasp of the reference time concept coupled with oversaliency of non-factivity and the communicative need to express non-assertiveness have all contributed to the non-standard use of would in BNE. Looking ahead, the survival of BNE would seems likely as Bruneians are most likely to communicate frequently with non-native speakers of English in Brunei or the wider region and that in this context, its use results in the appropriate social meaning being successfully conveyed (c.f. Preston 1989, discussed in Ellis 1994: 367-9, on 'stability' in language variation).

NOTES

1. According to Collins (1988), in Australian English <u>may</u> is not used epistemically and so is not a counterpart to <u>might</u>.
2. Quirk et al (1985) classify all interrogatives and negatives as non-assertive. What is meant when it is said here that <u>would</u> 'marks non-assertiveness', is that an element of non-assertiveness is added to the basic sentence structure by the use of <u>would</u> rather than other alternative encodings.
3. If one can judge by the Singaporean daily The Straits Times, the use of <u>would</u> has a very similar use in Singapore English as in BNE.
4. The term 'verb form' is here used to refer to both simple and complex forms of the verb. 'Build', 'would build', 'would have built' and 'would have been going to build' are thus three different forms of the verb 'to build'.
5. The decision how much context to provide in the test items was guided by two aims. One was to minimize the influence of learnt labels. On the other hand, the context provided should be general enough to allow a range of readings. Because of the deliberately limited co-text, subjects had to construe or access their own wider contexts, or 'schemata' (Rumelhardt, 1980). Which schema was first triggered by a particular item would depend partly on non-linguistic factors such a personal experience. It was predicted, however, that the number of items and the number of subjects would minimize the influence of such highly idosyncratic construals and that trends would emerge revealing the most salient meanings of the different forms.
6. One weakness of the test design is that the subjects could be predisposed by learnt labels to choose past or present - i.e. if they have learnt that 'would+verb' is a past tense form they might choose *past time* regardless of what they understand the item to mean. It is not possible without further research to know to what extent labelling has taken place. With the exception of *future,* other options than *past* and *present time* should be less vulnerable to labelling. In addition, the native speakers' choice of *present time* for past progressive can clearly not be explained by labelling.

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APPENDIX 1
Responses to test items with <u>will</u> and <u>would</u> per group.

APPENDIX 2
The meaning perceptions test.