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edited by
EWA WANIEK-KLIMCZAK
IWONA WITCZAK-PLISIECKA
JAN MAJER

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REVIEWER
Linda Shockey

EDITING AND TYPESETTING
Przemysław Ostalski

COVER DESIGN
Barbara Grzejszczak

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Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego
90-131 Łódź, ul. Lindleya 8
www.wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl
e-mail: ksiegarnia@uni.lodz.pl
tel. (42) 665 58 63, faks (42) 665 58 62

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THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TEACHING IN EUROPE SURVEY: SELECTED RESULTS

[1] ***ALICE HENDERSON***[1]
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University of Regensburg[3]
Trinity College Dublin[4]
University of Skopje[5]
University of Łódź[6]
University of Cádiz[7]
Stockholm University[8]
Université de Lausanne[9]

Abstract
This paper provides an overview of the main findings from a European-wide on-line survey of English pronunciation teaching practices. Both quantitative and qualitative data from seven countries (Finland, France, Germany, Macedonia, Poland, Spain and Switzerland) are presented, focusing on teachers' comments about:

- their own pronunciation,
- their training,
- their learners' goals, skills, motivation and aspirations,
- their preferences for certain varieties (and their perception of their students' preferences).

The results of EPTiES reveal interesting phenomena across Europe, despite shortcomings in terms of construction and distribution. For example, most respondents are non-native speakers of English and the majority of them rate their own mastery of English pronunciation favourably. However, most feel they had little or no training in how to teach pronunciation, which begs the question of how teachers are coping with this key

[1] Henderson and Frost are listed first because they did the final editing. Thereafter, authors are listed in alphabetical order of the country whose data they gathered and analysed. The order of the other authors thus reflects neither hierarchy nor significance of individual contributions, as this is a truly collaborative project and article.

aspect of language teaching. In relation to target models, RP remains the variety of English which teachers claim to use, whilst recognizing that General American might be preferred by some students. Differences between countries are explored, especially via replies to open-ended questions, allowing a more nuanced picture to emerge for each country. Other survey research is also referred to, in order to contextualise the analyses and implications for teaching English and for training English teachers.

1. Introduction

English pronunciation teaching has been the subject of several surveys but mainly in English-speaking countries, such as Canada (Foote, Holtby & Derwing, 2011; Breitkreuz, Derwing and Rossiter, 2002), Australia (Macdonald, 2002), and Great Britain (Bradford and Kenworthy, 1991; Burgess and Spencer, 2000). The attitudes towards pronunciation and the teaching practices of EFL teachers in Ireland were examined by D. Murphy (2011). Walker's survey of teachers in Spain (1999), which included some questions about training to teach pronunciation, is a relatively rare example of a study focusing on the issue in another European country. Relevant studies have been carried out recently in Poland, Serbia and Finland but have tended to focus on the learner's perspective.

English pronunciation researchers in Poland have concentrated on two major issues: firstly, the attitudes of the learners towards native speaker models (e.g. Kul, Janicka and Weckwerth 2005, Waniek-Klimczak and Klimczak 2005) and secondly, the degree of success in reaching the models in the learning process (e.g. Gonet, Szpyra-Kozłowska and Święciński 2010, Nowacka 2010). Although the studies adopt a learner rather than a teacher perspective, their results may be relevant for both, as the majority of participants are university students training to become teachers of English. Thus, the fact that university students recognise the relevance of native speaker models (with a strong preference for RP), but do not necessarily believe they will be able to reach the goal of native-like accent (see different views in Kul et al. 2005) may affect their attitudes towards the specification of goals in pronunciation teaching.

Paunivic (2009) presented a similar perspective in the Serbian context. She showed that complex interactions of sociolinguistic constructs were influential in shaping trainees' attitudes and their notion of the EFL teacher. The division between "foreign and incorrect" and "standard and correct" surfaced as most distinctive in the participants' responses, which favoured the latter, especially the British and American varieties, participants dismissing even native speakers as "foreign" if they sounded markedly regional.

In Finland, English pronunciation teaching has not been a frequently researched topic. Some insights into teaching materials and practices in the classroom are offered by Tergujeff (2010a, in print) and by two recent works: Lintunen (2004) and Tergujeff et al. (2011). Both studies include a survey section concentrating on phonetic teaching methods in English pronunciation teaching, but as opposed to the present study, the Finnish surveys were aimed at learners, not teachers.

Therefore, to the best of our knowledge, no study has extensively explored and compared how English pronunciation is taught in several European countries. The English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey **(**EPTiES) seeks to fill this gap.

Teachers from ten European countries created and administered the survey: Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Macedonia, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. The current article explores the survey's results for seven of these countries, focusing on the following issues: teacher training; teachers' views of their own pronunciation; teachers' awareness of their students' goals and skills; teachers' awareness of students' motivation to speak English and of their aspiration to achieve native-like pronunciation.

2. Survey Design & Administration

The survey, designed and administered using the open-source application LimeSurvey, has 57 questions, requesting for example: participant information; teachers' views on the pronunciation-related training they received; information about which varieties and norms are used in the classroom (for receptive & productive work). Certain questions, such as "Please list your teaching qualifications", are formulated to reflect specific national contexts. Likert scale items are used, as well as several *yes - no* questions which are followed by a request for more information. The questions about teacher training are open questions, whereas others permit several answers to be chosen from a list, such as the questions about models and norms[2].

The survey was open from February 2010 until September 2011 and a total of 843 people replied, with 481 completed surveys. Attempts were made to contact teachers at all levels of the private and public sectors by several means, including personal contacts and mailing lists of professional bodies such as teachers' associations (e.g. SUKOL in Finland, TESOL-France, ELTAM in Macedonia, ETAS in Switzerland). Educational institutions and administrative structures were also contacted directly (Finland, France and Germany). Invitations were distributed internationally via the Linguist List and "promotional" bookmarks were handed out at various conferences over a two-year period.

The results presented include only countries for which there were at least 12 completed surveys (Table 1), which unfortunately excludes Ireland (8), the Netherlands (0) and Sweden (1). As may be expected, some questionnaires are incomplete, often with only a few items left unanswered; therefore, the number of respondents for a given question is indicated in tables only when it differs from those in Table 1 below.

Category	N° of respondents per country	N° of records completed
Finland	103	76
France	65	52
Germany	362	270

[2] The latter is a potential weakness of the survey design, as will be shown in the discussion of models/varieties.

Category	N° of respondents per country	N° of records completed
Macedonia	36	13
Poland	20	12
Spain	31	20
Switzerland	18	16
Total	**635**	**459**

Table 1. Participants per country, total n° of respondents/n° of completed surveys

3. Findings: Teachers

This section is divided into two parts. The first provides background information about the respondents in relation to: gender; average age and average number of years teaching; level and type of education; native language; teaching context (public/private, age of learners). The differences among countries will be referred to in the further analyses where they have an important impact (e.g. on the results related to attitudes and norms). The second section looks at teachers' views on the relative importance of English and of pronunciation, as well as teachers' self-assessment of their pronunciation.

Respondents were predominantly female (77%) for 6 of the 7 countries but there are some important differences: 95.1% in Finland, 92.3% in Macedonia, 83% in Switzerland, 75% in France & Poland, and 72.45% in Germany. It is interested to note that in Spain, 65% of those who completed the questionnaire were male. This was somewhat surprising given that language teaching in Spain, particularly at primary and secondary school level, has tended to be female dominated. Although it is true that more men are entering the profession, these figures may not be significant – of the 31 teachers who initially responded to the questionnaire but did not necessarily complete it, 16 were male and 15 were female.

The overall average age is 42.95 years, with averages from Poland and Macedonia well below this. The average age and years of experience is lowest for the Polish respondents: 17/20 were aged 22-26, with 2-3 years of teaching practice. This is significantly lower than the overall survey average of 16.13 years' teaching experience. Respondents in Macedonia show a slightly higher range of age and experience: average age 29 (from 28-50 years) and 8 years' teaching experience (from 3-34 years). The average age in Finland is 44.6 years (24-67 years) with an average of 16 years' teaching experience, with a range of 0 to 44 years. German figures are almost exactly the same in both average and range: average age 44.68 (ranging from 24 to 66) and 15.99 years average experience (1-41 years). Even though France and Switzerland have the same average age (46), the former averaged 21 years' teaching experience as against 15 years in Switzerland. This seems to suggest that in France, respondents are mainly career teachers from the outset, whereas in Switzerland, English teaching is probably not the

participants' first career. Finally, almost half (45%) of Spanish respondents are over the age of 45 with more than 15 years' experience. However, this can largely be explained by the fact that most work in attractive large or medium-size towns and cities. Jobs in popular urban centres tend to be taken by candidates with the most years of service.

In terms of level of education, respondents in only two countries tend to hold specific EFL qualifications: in Switzerland 13/17 described themselves as TEFL-trained[3] with two having PhDs[4]. The majority (94.2%) of Finnish respondents have finished at least an MA degree; in Finland, qualified EFL subject teachers hold an MA degree in English with a teacher training programme/pedagogy as a minor subject in the degree. The young Polish respondents are recent graduates or are still in the process of doing MA courses. All Macedonian respondents hold BA degrees, one an MA degree, and one a CPE certificate. In the case of Spain, all except one of the teachers had a University degree and 25% had an MA or PhD. In France, over half of the respondents have passed the *CAPES* or the *Agrégation* (the French national competitive exams for recruiting teachers) and many other different levels and types of qualifications were listed[5].

Concerning native language, despite the fact that overall 88.21% of respondents describe themselves as non-native speakers of English, there are important differences among the different countries. In Switzerland they were predominantly native English speakers (83%), but in neighbouring France, three-quarters of respondents were non-native speakers. Most participants in Finland were non-native speakers of English (99.0%), as was the case in Germany (95.87%) and Spain (74.19%). In Macedonia and Poland all respondents were non-native English speakers.

Respondents teach predominantly in the public sector (92.2% in Finland, 93.93% in Germany, 80.65% in Spain), except for Macedonia, where 76.92% of respondents teach in the private sector. Polish respondents teach in the public sector, with additional classes taught in private language schools in the evenings or at weekends. Swiss respondents teach mainly adults in both private (61%) and public (39%) sectors. French respondents also teach primarily adults, working in tertiary education (76.9%) and high schools (21.5%). In contrast, Finns are quite evenly distributed across different teaching contexts: i.e. primary (29.1%), lower secondary (31.1%), and upper secondary (27.2%) level; only a few respondents teach in other contexts (vocational school, university, other). Three-quarters of participants in Germany teach 10-18 year olds: (40.50%) at *Gymnasium* (age 10-18), followed by *Realschule* (age 10 to 16, 20.94%), and *Grundschule (age 6-10, 16.25%).* A slightly smaller proportion (13.50%) teaches younger pupils (age 10-15) at *Hauptschule.*

Two items required participants to estimate the relative importance of English and of pronunciation in relation to other language skills; the averages were relatively high (4.66 and 3.77 respectively, with 5 being "extremely important"). In a third item, teachers self-evaluated their pronunciation (4.17, with 5 being native). This section discusses those results and begins to address the issue of the status of English.

Reassuringly, the overall figures for the importance of English are quite high in all countries, as one would anticipate from English teachers. In Finland, the average rating

[3] For example, having a DipTEFL, CELTA, MEd in TESOL.

[4] One in Entomology and the other in English Linguistics.

[5] One cannot take these exams without having completed an undergraduate degree and since 2011, a 2-year Master's programme must be completed before being allowed to teach.

for the importance of English in relation to other languages was very high: 4.65. In their comments, the respondents frequently mentioned the status of English as a global language, and also issues related to the respondents' own language use, e.g. *"I teach English, I read in English, I communicate in English with friends abroad"*. However, one respondent pointed out that *"English is not the only foreign language people should learn"*. This comment relates to recent debates around language policy and education in Finland, where foreign language skills are highly valued and vast resources are invested in language education. In recent years however, pupils have been choosing to study fewer optional languages than before (see for example Kangasvieri *et al.* 2011, Sajavaara *et al.* 2007). The concern is that Finns' language skills may diminish as fewer pupils study German, French and Russian, whereas nearly all study English. The global status of English is surely one reason behind the new tendency of language choices at school, and pupils and parents may think that knowing English, in addition to the official languages Finnish and Swedish, is enough. Moreover, according to a recent survey, English is widely present in the everyday life of younger Finns in particular.

The results from Macedonia point to a similar situation. Respondents from Macedonia allotted high values to the importance of English in relation to other languages (4.69/5 on average). In the open comments for that item, respondents mentioned the economic relevance of English and the communicative relevance of English as a world language. The responses given for item n°61, which explored the importance of English pronunciation in relation to other language skills, echo these notions. Although 19.2% rated the importance of pronunciation as 5 (extremely important), in effect signifying that pronunciation is seen as equally important as other language skills, most of the respondents opted for the lower ratings (52.6% and 26.9% for 4/5 and 3/5 respectively). In their comments, communication clearly takes priority over correct pronunciation: English "*needs to be learnt*" because it is "*the language of global trade*" and "*all information is in English*". Teachers – much to their credit – seem to be aware that communication is *the* goal of learning English for their learners. Pronunciation as a skill then is viewed through the lenses of this aim and is pushed down on the priority list, i.e. English is solely learnt for communicative purposes.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, in Spain practically all informants gave great importance to pronunciation in relation to other language skills (item n°61). That necessity to improve English pronunciation skills is widely accepted and the urgent need for specific teacher training in this area has been advocated for some time (see Donovan 2001; Levey 1999, 2001; Pavon, 2001; Pavon and Rosado, 2003). Analysis of Spanish data reveals that pronunciation remains a problem and informants recognize that insufficient time and resources are spent on it. The reasons most commonly cited for not dedicating more time to it centred on two aspects: first, the difficulty it constitutes for both students and teachers, and secondly, the fact that teachers felt their hands were tied by curricular demands and by the need for schools to obtain results:

> "Spanish students need help with their pronunciation but in the end we have to be realistic… unfortunately the truth is that students must pass a written exam at the end of the year - there is no oral test. So I'm sorry to say oral skills are not the priority".

The results from Germany raise the question of the nativization of English in Europe, as well as the possible categorization of English as an "additional" instead of a foreign language (Hilgendorf, 2007:144). The fact that German respondents rate the overall importance of English as high (4.67) does not come as a surprise. It nicely mirrors the status English has gained in primary and secondary education in the last decades resulting from trends in European and national educational policy– a development which is systematically documented by the German government's federal office for statistical analysis (Statitisches Bundesamt 2003a, 2011a, 2011b).. In schools of general education (*Grundschule, Hauptschule, Realschule, Gesamtschule, Gymnasium*) the percentage of pupils learning English has increased from 69.1% in the school year 2002/2003 to 86.7% in the school year 2010/2011 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2003a, 2011a). A similar increase can be witnessed in vocational schools from 42.1% to 51.7%, respectively (Statistisches Bundesamt 2003b, 2011b). The development in schools of general education goes hand in hand with the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in primary schools in many of the 16 federal states of Germany, who are independent from the federal government in establishing and implementing educational policies. The increase in the number of English learners in the vocational sector seems to be a consequence of the requirements of a globalized workplace. Hilgendorf's (2007:144) suggestion of "a shift in the status of the language from that of a foreign language to that of an additional language" obviously holds for other European countries, as well. But if and to what extent Germany and other European countries find themselves in a process of "ongoing nativization and acculturation of English" (Hilgendorf 2007: 145) remains to be seen once this new generation of pupils (who have started learning English at an earlier age) grows up.

Importance of English	
Finland (n=78)	4.65
France (n=52)	4.48
Germany (n=270)	4.67
Macedonia (n=14)	4.57
Poland (n=14)	4.92
Spain (n=23)	4.75
Switzerland (n=16)	4.63
Average	4.66

Table 2. Average results from item n°60: For you personally, how important is English in relation to other languages? Please rate from 1 to 5, with 1 as "not important at all" and 5 "extremely important".

Importance of pronunciation	
Finland (n=78)	3.90
France (n=52)	4.02
Germany (n=270)	3.72
Macedonia (n=14)	3.14
Poland (n=14)	3.92
Spain (n=23)	4.2
Switzerland (n=16)	3.5
Average	3.77

Table 3. Average results from item n°61: For you personally, how important is pronunciation in relation to other language skills? Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = "the least important" and 5 = "the most important".

Overall, teachers self-evaluated their pronunciation as being quite good (4.17 on a scale from 1-5, with 5 being excellent). However, the question was perhaps misinterpreted: 'Your own pronunciation skills' could conceivably refer to one's knowledge of phonology/phonetics or one's ability to pronounce English. The fact that German respondents rate their own pronunciation skills worse (3.99) than teachers from other European countries (except Poland at 3.92) is matched in the open answers by a high level of awareness that they are not perfect. The following contribution serves as a case in point: "*I am able to avoid the specific German accent, so native speakers often can't tell where I'm from, but they certainly can tell that I am not a native speaker of English*". The Poles' low average probably reflects a relatively critical self-evaluation with respect to their own accent. The respondents are young and lacking in experience, and more importantly they have just graduated from institutions which devote considerable time and effort to making students aware of how much work they still have ahead of them.

Teachers' level of pronunciation, self-assessed	
Finland (n=78)	4.23
France (n=52)	4.33
Germany (n=268)	3.99
Macedonia (n=14)	4.43

Teachers' level of pronunciation, self-assessed	
Poland (n=14)	3.92
Spain (n=22)	4.25
Switzerland (n=16)	4.1
Average	4.17

Table 4. Average results from item n°63: How would you rate your own pronunciation skills? Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = "extremely poor" and 5 = "excellent".

4. Findings: Teacher training

The three questions concerning teacher training were:

- In relation to pronunciation, please rate the teacher training you received from 1 to 5, with 1 as "extremely poor" and 5 as "excellent".
- Please tell us how much training you received specific to teaching pronunciation. Feel free to mention any period of time (hours, months, years, etc.).
- Please explain the content and/or style of the training you received. Feel free to mention types of courses, approaches, etc.

Participants' comments reveal that many if not most appear to be amateurs when it comes to teaching pronunciation. By *amateurs*, we mean not only that the participants clearly love their subject (from the Latin, *amator*), but also that they appear to have received little or no professional training which deals specifically with how to teach pronunciation. It is surprising that whereas the average self-assessment of pronunciation skills was quite high (4.64), the average rating of their training in relation to teaching pronunciation should be so much lower (2.91, where 1 = extremely poor). Moreover, the average might have been even lower, as participants may have confused "phonetics" and "pronunciation", despite the clear formulation of the questions.

When asked about the quality of pronunciation training they had received, only in Finland was the average score above 3 (3.16 on a Likert scale from 1-5, where 5 was "excellent"). One of the most frequent follow-up comments (given by nearly half of the Finnish participants) referred to one or more pronunciation courses or described an equivalent time spent on pronunciation training. Some respondents clearly pointed out that they had been taught pronunciation but not how to teach it. Respondents seldom learnt the skill of pronunciation teaching outside their teacher training (e.g. by studying phonetics separately), nor was pronunciation teaching intertwined with other topics.

In Switzerland the replies about quantity of training varied dramatically, from "*none at all*" (3 respondents), to vague references to training during CELTA courses, to a more specific description of a 16-week course during a Bachelor's programme. The latter did not address the teaching of phonetics, but only "*learning the symbols*". Considering the average age of the teachers and the number of years they have been in service, perhaps it

is not surprising they could not give more precise details about how much pre-service training they had received. Nevertheless, when asked to explain the content or style of the training received, there were some more specific comments such as: "*watched teachers on DVDs*", "*A speaker comes and then in groups we practice their teaching methods.*" Some people claimed to be self-taught: "*Mainly gleaned from workshops and using course books.*" and another "*… CELTA required a written paper on teaching it. The rest has been basically self-taught*." There were also references to specific universities, books, biographies, and authors.

German English teachers also feel that their training was not particularly satisfactory with respect to pronunciation teaching (2.86). They provided a plethora of revealing comments which raise several issues. First, some misunderstood the question in terms of what counts as teacher training and mainly referred to university classes:

- *"one semester of Language Lab exercises, a transcription class (one semester), a lecture on English Pronunciation (one semester) - but I learned most during 10 months as an exchange student in Scotland (by 'doing')"*
- *"I studied at times of the former GDR that is why I didn't get much training and can't express it in hours, etc. But I had an excellent phonetics teacher"*
- *"Phonetics classes at university consisting of transcription and theory (stress, pitch etc.) and practical training to improve our own pronunciation"*

There is also a widespread opinion that having good pronunciation is sufficient for teaching pronunciation, however it may be acquired:

- *"I went to study abroad, one year in Australia. Best pronunciation training ever"*
- *"None at all, but I lived in GB for a year"*
- *"Professors at the university and teacher trainers presumed that if one is able to pronounce correctly, they will somehow be able to make the children pronounce correctly, too"*

Obviously, neither spending time in an English-speaking country nor having good pronunciation oneself guarantee that one can teach pronunciation effectively. And while there may be a lack of quality trainers in certain contexts (*"Very little time was devoted to teaching pronunciation, probably because one of the trainers spoke English with a very heavy German accent")*, in some cases respondents did report on practical techniques they acquired during teacher training. In this, they were similar to many respondents in Switzerland:

- *"during teacher training: working in a language lab, listen and repeat exercises (individual or in groups) with teacher or CD, ways of introducing new words and their pronunciation, ways of controlling the correct pronunciation"*
- *"instructions on how to teach pronunciation to children in our 'Seminar' (teacher training group)"*

In their comments, 19 of the French respondents said they had very little or no training, 19 mentioned only the phonetics classes they received as undergraduates themselves and 9 mentioned training they had received at conferences, etc. which they had attended since becoming teachers. It is possible that there was some confusion between "phonetics" and "pronunciation", as well as between the education received by respondents as undergraduates and in their actual teacher training. However, a more likely explanation is that the paucity of teacher training in pronunciation is so great that for many respondents, the only experience on which they could draw was often their first

year phonetics and phonology lectures. In fact, very few respondents in France had anything positive to say about their teacher training regarding the teaching of pronunciation: "*We had a few classes about the pronunciation of English, intonation etc. but just the theory and no actual demonstration of how to teach them".* However, as one aptly concluded: "*knowing about something is certainly not the same as knowing how to teach it*".

In Poland, few respondents (18.75%) said they had received formal training in teaching pronunciation. In Spain, training was largely limited to one-year university courses, and in one case two years. The quality, content and the practical application of these courses in phonetics varied from university to university. Only 3 respondents had received further training or taken subsequent courses after university, 27.77% of the informants had received no or practically no formal training and a further 22.22% described themselves as self-taught.

Macedonian teachers gave low ratings with regard to their training to teach pronunciation, yet in their comments they highlighted the necessity of receiving good training: "*I believe the teacher should be very well trained in order to be good at teaching pronunciation*". They reported that their first (and sometimes only) explicit instruction in pronunciation was during their undergraduate course in English Phonetics and Phonology: theoretical lectures on segmentals and prosody as well as various types of activities for practicing phonetic symbols and phonemic transcription, English sound formation and categorization, basic phonetic and phonological rules as well as different types of intonation patterns. In several responses teachers referred to being self-taught; additional training which they mentioned was related to English teaching in general and not specifically pronunciation.

Similarly, when respondents from Finland were asked to describe the content and/or style of their training, they listed very traditional pronunciation teaching methods: phonetics and transcription, repetition and drills, discussion exercises, reading aloud, and listening tasks. Training in the language lab was mentioned frequently, and some mentioned a theoretical orientation, or that training had mainly consisted of lectures.

To conclude, limited or no specific training in teaching pronunciation seems to be the norm, but non-native English speaker respondents have usually received training in improving their own pronunciation.

5. Findings: Learners

This section covers teachers' perceptions of their students, and more specifically of their goals, skills, motivations and aspirations. The questions were as follows:

- Rate your awareness of your learners' goals. Please rate from 1 to 5, with 1 as "no awareness" and 5 as "excellent awareness".
- Please rate your awareness of your learners' skills. Please rate from 1 to 5, with 1 as "no awareness" and 5 as "excellent awareness".
- Please rate from 1 to 5 how motivated you feel your learners are to speak English, with 1 as "totally unmotivated" and 5 as "extremely motivated".

- To what extent do you feel your students aspire to have native or near native pronunciation of English? Please rate from 1 to 5, with 1 as "do not aspire to this at all" and 5 as "aspire to this 100%".

Interpretation of the results requires caution. For example, German English teachers have the second lowest awareness of their students' goals (3.36) after France and the lowest awareness of their students' skills (3.61). An interpretation along the lines of reduced interest in the students or a reserved teacher-learner relationship would be an overgeneralization that requires a more representative basis for comparison from the other countries, as well as additional survey data, preferably learner-centred.

It would seem from the results that teachers in France are marginally more aware of their students' skills (3.98 on a scale from 1 to 5) than of their goals (3.77/5). If this is the case, then the reasons are quite possibly cultural. The French academic grading system is based on subtracting marks for errors from a total of 20 marks. In this way, teachers are encouraged to search for weaknesses in their students, rather than for strengths. As for the relative lack of awareness of learners' goals, this may be due to their irrelevance in France's "top-down" society. France operates a national curriculum in secondary schools and also in some tertiary institutions, so teachers are generally not expected to take the needs of the learners into account themselves. Moreover, a certain distance is maintained between teachers and their students, with the *vous* form and *Monsieur* or *Madame* being used to address teachers at both secondary and tertiary levels. Lastly, large class sizes do not help to encourage meaningful interaction between students and their teachers; in universities modern language class sizes may run to 50 or more. It would thus seem logical that teachers in France are less aware of their learners' goals than in other countries – in fact we had expected the average to be even lower.

In Finland the difference between awareness of goals (3.58) and of skills (3.91) was even more marked, but teachers' further comments help to explain this, as well as the fact that many of the Finnish respondents were teaching at primary level(29.1%) or lower secondary (31.1%) in contrast to France, where the learners tend to be adults.Some Finnish respondents referred to their own goals for the learners, e.g. "*I know what their goals should be,"* but others mentioned learners having varied goals. Some teachers working in the primary level seem to be of the opinion that young learners do not have goals. When asked to comment on their awareness of learners' skills, the most frequently mentioned aspect by the Finnish respondents was lack of time or big groups. However, respondents also stated it is the teacher's duty to be aware of the learners' skills and development.

The teachers in Switzerland showed a relatively high awareness of learners' goals (4) and claim to have a slightly lower awareness of learners' skills (3.75). However, they felt that their students were highly motivated to speak English (4.25). This was the highest response to this question and this may reflect the perceived importance of speaking English in Switzerland today (see Dürmüller (2002), especially in higher education.

Teachers' awareness of Learners' goals	
Finland (n=78)	3.58
France (n=52)	3.77
Germany (n=269)	3.36
Macedonia	4
Poland (n=14)	3.57
Spain (n=22)	3.7
Switzerland (n=16)	4
Average	3.71

Table 5. Average results from item n°64: Rate your awareness of your learners' goals. Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = "no awareness" and 5 = "excellent awareness".

Teachers' awareness of Learners' skills	
Finland (n=78)	3.91
France (n=52)	3.98
Germany (n=269)	3.61
Macedonia (n=14)	4.57
Poland (n=14)	4
Spain (n=21)	3.95
Switzerland (n=16)	3.75
Average	3.96

Table 6. Average results from item n°65: Please rate your awareness of your learners' skills. Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = "no awareness" and 5 = "excellent awareness".

The two questions on learners' general motivation to learn English and their aspiration to achieve native-like pronunciation show that, overall, the former is greater than the latter, in teachers' estimations. In Poland, the low aspiration to sound native (2.71) is

understandable as most of the respondents teach children. German teachers' estimations of the students' motivation to speak English (3.53) is the third lowest after Poland and France, while their evaluation of the students' aspiration to sound native-like (2.94) is average.

Even though the Finnish respondents estimate their learners' motivation to be quite high (3.88 on average), the comments reveal very clearly that the learners have varied levels of motivation; some are highly motivated whereas some show little interest. In terms of aspirations, as indicated by teachers' comments, learners in Finland opt for intelligible communication in the target language rather than native-like pronunciation, and here it seems that famous Finns such as motor sport heroes have shown them the example: "*Formula One drivers have proved to Finnish students it's not necessary to pronounce English perfectly to become rich and famous*".

It is not hard to interpret the results for Switzerland, with the highest average for motivation to learn English (4.25) but a lower aspiration to sound native (3.38). It is a country with four national languages, with many Swiss using English to communicate with compatriots who speak a different language from themselves. Several Masters courses are taught in English and many see English as essential for good job prospects, but none of these reasons require native or near native pronunciation of English.

It would appear from the results that French learners are among the least motivated to learn English. Respondents believe that their learners' aspiration to achieve native or near native pronunciation is relatively low (2.9/5)[6]. An explanation may lie in institutional, linguistic and cultural factors. Firstly, many of the French respondents teach partly or exclusively EAP &/or ESP, as learning a foreign language is a national requirement in all disciplines at tertiary level in France; motivation and aspirations are therefore often lower in language classes (Taillefer 2002). Secondly, it must be pointed out that French and English are so very different phonologically (Hirst & Di Cristo 1998; Blum 1999; Vaissière; 2002; Frost 2010), that even the least pragmatic French learners of English know that native-like fluency is a very difficult goal. Thirdly, the French traditionally attribute a relatively high importance to written texts, both when learning their native language and foreign languages (Duchet 1991). This often translates in difficulties acquiring the phonological system of a foreign language later on. And finally, the French tend to equate "fluent" with "perfect"; therefore even communicative competence is a sort of perfection that they might not dare to aspire to. In this way, they may resemble the Spanish respondents, who had the lowest average (2.6) for aspiration to sound native-like.

[6] This would tally with the results to items 60 & 66 on the importance of English in relation to other languages and motivation to speak English respectively, where French averages (though above the median on the 1-5 Likert scale) were the lowest (4.48) and second lowest (3.4) of the seven countries.

Students' motivation to study English	
Finland (n=78)	3.88
France (n=52)	3.4
Germany (n=269)	3.53
Macedonia (n=14)	3.93
Poland (n=14)	3.35
Spain (n=21)	3.65
Switzerland (n=16)	4.25
Average	3.71

Table 7. Average results from item n°66: Please rate from 1 to 5 how motivated you feel your learners are to speak English, where 1 = "totally unmotivated" and 5 = "extremely motivated".

Students' aspiration to achieve native level	
Finland (n=78)	3.17
France (n=52)	2.9
Germany (n=269)	2.94
Macedonia (n=14)	3.43
Poland (n=14)	2.71
Spain (n=21)	2.6
Switzerland (n=16)	3.38
Average	3.02

Table 8. Average results from item n°67: To what extent do you feel your students aspire to have native or near native pronunciation of English? Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 = "do not aspire to this at all" and 5 = "aspire to this 100%".

6. Findings: Models of English

At the end of the survey, four items covered models of English:

- For RECEPTIVE work (listening, reading), which variety(ies) or model(s) of English do you use in your classes? You may choose more than one answer.
- "…" … do your learners generally prefer?
- For PRODUCTIVE work (speaking, writing), which variety(ies) or model(s) of English do you use in your classes? You may choose more than one answer.
- "…" … do your learners generally prefer?

This was not a ranking item and participants could give multiple answers. For example, 94.7% of respondents in Finland chose RP (Received Pronunciation) as the variety they prefer to use for receptive work but this did not exclude them from choosing other varieties, too. Only the data for the three most frequently selected reference accents for reception and for production work will be discussed: RP (Received Pronunciation, GA (General American) and IE ("a type of International English").

Throughout the countries, a clear discrepancy was found between which varieties/models teachers use and which they think their students generally prefer. Received Pronunciation (RP) is used by most teachers (receptive work RP: 91.63%, GA: 70.73%; productive work RP: 84.2%, GA: 53.84%). On the other hand, teachers indicate that General American (GA) is preferred by students, but the difference is less clear-cut (receptive work RP: 64.53%, GA66.69%; productive work RP: 55.24%, GA: 63.35%). A type of "international variety" is also frequently mentioned by respondents for both types of work, and as a variety they use and which their learners prefer.

Poland is the only country where 100% of teachers chose RP as the variety they use for receptive and productive work. Anecdotal evidence shows that, partly because teachers are aware that their learners are exposed to and enjoy GA through films and music, during class they use RP materials. At university level, only Poznan offers a choice of target variety, all the others use RP. Similarly, participants in Spain overwhelmingly chose RP, such that their results are the highest overall (95%, 90% and 85%), except in the variety teachers chose for productive work (75%), where only the French teachers chose RP less (65.38%).

One of the teachers in Switzerland commented thus on RP: "*I don't like the idea of propagating the Queen's English*." This would seem to be a native speaker luxury, as a non-native teacher of English would probably never authorize themselves to say this. On the whole, non-native teachers seem to prefer a clear reference point when teaching English pronunciation and this is logically achieved by favouring one variety over the other. In particular, this simplifies the assessment process. In Macedonia, for instance, teachers favour using RP presumably because they were taught/trained in RP, the reference model they are familiar and comfortable with. However, in the survey it appears that they feel their students prefer General American. If pronunciation is stereotypically thought to be the skill that is least prone to modification, it would be interesting to explore teachers' willingness (and/or ability?) to adapt their pronunciation to the various demands of their learners (and not just in Macedonia). Another interesting observation in the Macedonian data was the preference of so-called "global English" where emphasis was placed on intelligibility as suggested in: "*Global English means global/ non-native pronunciation, and yet intelligible communication*".

The German data reveals that RP[7] is still the variety teachers choose, for both receptive (91.19%) and productive work (91.19%). General American however, is a respectable second, at least in reception (80.08%); the same is true in France (RP: 80.77%, GA: 78.85%). In productive work, GA's status clearly lags behind RP (at 67.82% in Germany and 50% in France), but by comparison with other European countries Germany ranks second after Macedonia (69.23%), the lowest being Spain (35%). Again, teachers in Macedonia may be making a nod toward their perceived students' preference for GA (100%) in productive work.

In contrast to a clear preference for RP among teachers, the teachers' evaluation of the students' preferences seems less clear cut in both Germany and France. The survey suggests that RP and GA are almost equal alternatives for students in Germany, both in receptive (RP: 72.41%, GA: 73.95%) and in productive (RP: 72.03%, GA: 68.97%) work. The situation is arguably similar in France: reception (RP: 61.54%, GA: 57.77%) and production (RP: 51.92%, GA: 44.23%). In addition to other major varieties of English, the label "a type of international English" surprisingly ranks third with German respondents for students' preferences in production and reception, as well as for teachers' in production work. In terms of teachers' receptive work IE was only rated sixth (21.46%), close to Scottish English (24.90%) and Irish English (22.61%) but far behind Australian English (37.93%). This is quite likely to mirror the fact that audio samples of these varieties often accompany EFL textbooks.

In Finland, a substantial proportion of teachers also use other varieties/models, particularly for receptive work. For example using Australian English was nearly as popular as using "a type of international English" which came third most popular after RP and GA. Irish English, Scottish English and Canadian English were all mentioned by more than 20% of the Finnish respondents for receptive work. This is perhaps due to the fact that, as in Germany, EFL textbooks' audio CDs include different native and non-native varieties (Tergujeff 2009, 2010b; Kopperoinen 2011).

In Switzerland, for receptive and productive work teachers favoured RP followed by GA. This corresponded to their perceived preferences for their learners, although one commented: "*I believe learners need a pronunciation model of some description to promote intelligibility but I am not interested in forcing them to acquire a particular accent.*" The perceived preference for RP among learners was stronger in productive (81.25%) than receptive (68.75%). "A type of international" English was the third preferred option.

To conclude, based on the results for items 75 to 78, it is clear that although RP is still the dominant form for both reception and production work in English, GA seems to be making inroads. The increased use of the Internet both in teaching and at home is perhaps an important factor here. From the teachers' point of view, it is easy enough to find audio and video examples of varieties to use in a formal class setting, but perhaps more important is on-line informal learning of English (Sockett, 2011). Web 2.0 technologies such as peer-to-peer file transfer and streaming have led to a previously unthinkable ease of access to media content, such as films and TV series which, given the American cultural hegemony in these domains, has led to European learners of English being exposed increasingly to American rather than British varieties of English.

[7] Many teachers possibly understand RP as being Southern British English, based on their comments.

Therefore, in addition to textbook comparisons and classroom research, surely the influence of such informal influences merits more scrutiny. It is also not clear exactly what IE refers to but, as the third most frequent choice, deserves closer investigation.

	Item n°75 (% of Ts, receptive work)			**Item n°76 (% of Ts, productive work)**		
	RP	**GA**	**IE**	**RP**	**GA**	**IE**
Finland	94.7	76.3	42.1	93.42	63.16	19.74
France	80.77	78.85	44.23	65.38	50	26.92
Germany	91.19	80.08	21.46	91.19	67.82	11.88
Macedonia	92.31	46.15	23.08	76.92	69.23	46.15
Poland	100	75	16.67	100	41.67	8.33
Spain	95	70	30	75	35	10
Switzerland	87.5	68.75	37.5	87.5	50	31.25
Average	**91.63**	**70.73**	**36.26**	**84.2**	**53.84**	**22.04**

Table 9: Results for items n°75 & n°76: Percentage of teachers who chose a variety for receptive & productive work

	Item n°77 (% of Ss, receptive work)			**Item n°78 (% of Ss, productive work)**		
	RP	**GA**	**IE**	**RP**	**GA**	**IE**
Finland	65.8	86.8	15.8	65.8	79	19.7
France	61.54	55.77	34.62	51.92%	44.23	26.92
Germany	72.41	73.95	14.94	72.03	68.97	12.64
Macedonia	30.77	76.92	38.46	15.38	100	30.77
Poland	66.67	66.67	16.77	66.67	50	16.77
Spain	90	40	15	85	45	10

	Item n°77 (% of Ss, receptive work)			Item n°78 (% of Ss, productive work)		
Switzerland	68.75	56.25	31.25	81.25	56.25	31.25
Average	**64.53**	**66.69**	**23.83**	**55.24**	**63.35**	**21.15**

Table 10: Results for items n°77 & n°78: Percentage of teachers who indicated their students' preference for a variety, for receptive & productive work

7. Conclusions

The findings of this study have shed light on a cross-section of current themes in pronunciation teaching across Europe, as well as providing valuable aid for future studies. The three areas we have focussed on in this paper are teacher training, aims and objectives, and models/varieties.

Our findings suggest that teacher training in relation to the teaching of English pronunciation is woefully inadequate, according to the majority of participants. If this is true, Europe today is similar to the United States in the 1990s, where J.M. Murphy (1997) found that less than 50% of MA TESOL programmes had modules devoted to phonology. This lack of training does not match the emphasis placed on English pronunciation in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), where 'Phonological Control' is one of the descriptors in the Language Competence/Linguistic category. Pronunciation is also considered one of the key elements in the speaking component of major international English language proficiency tests such as IELTS, TOEFL and TOEIC. In other words, the apparent lack of teacher training in pronunciation is not representative of the requirements of English language learning, as many highly-regarded assessment procedures specifically refer to phonology.

Another crucial issue concerns the choice of objectives: should one aim for intelligibility and communicative competence and/or native-like pronunciation? The respondents' comments showed that the choice necessarily influences what teachers actually do with learners to achieve those objectives and how they learn to do that. In relation to such pedagogical dilemmas, the issue of informal learning must be addressed (Sockett, 2011): if games and online content provide constant, repetitive exposure to certain accents, what impact does this have on teachers' choices for classroom time?

In terms of varieties, RP is preferred by teachers though they do recognize that GA might be more popular amongst students (except in Switzerland). The term "International English", a popular choice across the seven countries, also deserves clarification: what characterizes it? who uses it in which situations? how should this influence our teaching? and so forth. This issue also raised the importance of locally produced – or at least relevant – materials, as well as addressing the environment outside the classroom in ESL/EFL contexts. In her study of adult ESL in Ireland, D. Murphy (2011) found that while pronunciation was regarded as a valuable element of English language learning, little innovation in teaching practice was observed. Particularly

problematic was the discrepancy between the model of English pronunciation being used by teachers, and the model on which materials were based. Arguably in some teaching contexts there is a parallel mismatch between materials and context when non-native English speakers, who might feel most comfortable teaching RP, are faced with a set of youngsters who, obsessed with American games or TV series, have adopted American accent features.

The survey presented in this paper is a pilot study, and as such, will be improved and expanded on in further work. Certain items will need reworking, and certain themes will need developing. Participation levels were sometimes uneven across the countries, leading to the abandoning of data from Ireland, The Netherlands and Sweden. In discussions it has become clear that in some contexts a paper-based survey might have been more successful. Distribution was uneven within countries, with certain areas being over-represented, e.g. the Francophone areas of Switzerland dominate the Swiss results, and in France there are few participants from secondary schools or the private sector. This means that sometimes it has not been possible to make certain cross-country comparisons as we would not be comparing like with like.

The perspectives for further research are vast. Most importantly, the rest of the data (e.g. concerning teaching conditions, methodology, technology, etc.) will be analysed and follow-up phone interviews will be carried out. It would also be useful to compare the data with learner surveys, shedding light on some of the more ambiguous findings. Above all, we would like to use the experience we have gained from this collaborative project by continuing to explore how varieties of English are chosen, taught and perceived across Europe.

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COMBINING DIFFERENT TYPES OF DATA IN STUDYING ATTITUDES TO ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

MATEUSZ-MILAN STANOJEVIĆ[1]
VIŠNJA KABALIN BORENIĆ[2]
VIŠNJA JOSIPOVIĆ SMOJVER[1]
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb[1]
Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb[2]

Abstract
This paper deals with the attitudes of Croatian speakers to ELF, in particular to its pronunciation. Four methods were combined to reach conclusions about the status of ELF in Croatia: diary study, teacher interviews, a preliminary focus group interview and a survey. Whilst the first three methods revealed that the subjects regularly disfavour 'bad pronunciation', the survey showed that when it actually comes to talking to either native or non-native speakers, the subjects turned out to be tolerant to a slight accent. This clearly suggests a case of what is known as linguistic schizophrenia (B.B. Kachru 1977; Seidlhofer 2001). However, there are notable differences among groups of participants depending on variables such as professional profile, gender, degree of ease and success in learning pronunciation, and national pride. In any case, the combination of these methods proved to be a very good way to deal with the topic. The diary study is a valuable method to look into everyday practices and can feed nicely into survey questions. The preliminary survey highlighted the importance of different groups of participants and the need for groups of questions focusing around different factors. The preliminary focus group interview showed that it is crucial to have a single homogenous group of participants, as well as a trained facilitator. Finally, teacher interviews pointed to the possibility of similar attitudes being held by university teachers and the students they teach, which suggests that attitudes may be perpetuated. Overall, triangulation across methods and participants in the way proposed in the present paper provided a wealth of data, allowing a bottom-up view and a top-down view on the state of ELF in Croatia.

1. Introduction

Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) first appeared as a research-based construct: on a corpus of International English conversations, Jenkins (e.g. Jenkins 2000; Jenkins 2002) postulated the existence of core features (those required for intelligibility) and non-core features (those not required for intelligibility). Intelligibility was defined in terms of non-native speaker interactions (e.g. Jenkins 1998:121). In other words, in an international communication setting, features of English pronunciation such as pre-fortis clipping and aspiration were shown to be crucial in assuring understanding, whereas features such as qualitative vowel reduction or weakening were shown not to be crucial in this respect (Jenkins 2002). At a time when the Inner Circle – Outer Circle debate has

just ended (Kachru 1991; Kachru 1996), and the debate about the ownership of English was still in full swing (Widdowson 1994; Firth and Wagner 1997), this was bound to be a controversial issue (Jenkins 2002:101; Jenkins 2007; Jenkins 2009). What started as a fundamentally applied-linguistics concept which was meant to add "an intelligibility dimension to communicative competence" and promote "accommodation skills" (Jenkins 2002:101) proved to be highly controversial, primarily because of attitudes towards pronunciation.

It is hardly any wonder that attitudes are crucial when pronunciation is at issue. We tend to judge people by their (foreign) accent, as is well known from the famous matched guise research (Lambert 1967). As listeners we tend to prefer historically powerful over historically less powerful groups based on their pronunciation (Lindemann 2005), and we tend to prefer the in-group vs. the out-group (Dailey 2005). Our self-concept as speakers is correlated to our "objective" pronunciation performance (Chuming 2004), suggesting that affective factors underlie pronunciation performance. Different motivations might also be at play: if we learn English because we like how it sounds (results for Croatia from Mihaljević Djigunović 1991; Mihaljević Djigunović 2007), we might want to learn to sound like native speakers. Some people may want to keep their national identity, which might be reflected in their English pronunciation (Stanojević and Josipović Smojver 2011). Others might be simply influenced by their English teachers, who tend to prefer a native-like pronunciation in various ways (Sifakis and Sougari 2005; Jenkins 2006; Drljača Margić and Širola 2009; Stanojević and Josipović Smojver 2011).

Given that attitudes are crucial in ELF, a variety of issues need to be taken into consideration in order to find out about the state of ELF in a country such as Croatia. Firstly, potential differences in attitudes towards ELF among different groups of ELF speakers (e.g. according to age, gender, etc.) should be investigated. Secondly, data about actual pronunciation practices of these ELF speakers should be included to see whether (and to what extent) pronunciation practices and attitudes correspond. Thirdly, we should investigate the attitudes of English teachers towards ELF to see if they correspond to the attitudes of ELF speakers they teach. All this calls for a research model which allows top-down confirmatory investigation and bottom-up exploratory research, as well as using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gain a balanced insight into the issues at hand (cf. e.g. Gorard 2004). In other words, we argue for a model that allows triangulation across groups of participants and methodologies (we suggest the following procedures: language diaries by ELF speakers, teacher interviews, focus group interviews, recordings of ELF speakers, and a questionnaire on attitudes).

In this paper we will provide the rationale behind these procedures and give preliminary results of combining language diaries, focus group interviews, a pilot questionnaire and teacher interviews. We will discuss what they reveal about the state of ELF in Croatia, and how they work together methodologically. The paper starts with a discussion of the ELF situation in Croatia, and the methodological rationale. The third section presents the results, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

2. The ELF situation in Croatia and tools for ELF studies

Croatia has a rich tradition of research into Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), but only a few studies on the status of ELF. TEFL studies (for an overview cf. Vilke 2007) into the attitudes of secondary school learners in Croatia suggest that they are dissatisfied with teacher-centred approaches to teaching (Mihaljević Djigunović 2007:124–125). This coincides with motivation research: secondary school pupils report that they want to learn English so as to communicate with others (Mihaljević Djigunović 1991:195) in various ways, e.g. via the Internet, talking to foreigners, using email (Narančić Kovač and Cindrić 2007:71–72). This may mean that secondary school pupils are indeed willing to be independent users of ELF. The situation with university students in Croatia seems to be a bit more complex – a recent study (Stanojević and Josipović Smojver 2011) has found a clear divide between "liberal" students (ones who do not disfavour a foreign accent when speaking to others, and who do not necessarily want to work on their pronunciation), and more "traditional" ones (who do). Expectedly, the more "traditional" students are primarily English majors (cf. also Drljača Margić and Širola 2009) whereas, for instance, business majors tend to be more liberal (Kabalin Borenić 2011). However, corresponding differences in the attitudes towards ELF were also evident among men and women, participants living in urban or rural environments and participants who assess themselves as more or less proficient pronouncers (Stanojević and Josipović Smojver 2011). Thus, other factors such as identity construction may be at play (cf. Josipović Smojver and Stanojević 2012). In order to find out what these factors might be and how this relates to actual Croglish pronunciation practices in Croatia (cf. Josipović Smojver 2010), we argue for a use of a number of different methods. We propose the use of language diaries, teacher interviews, focus group interviews, a questionnaire and (focus group) recordings. This selection of methodologies enables triangulation in the sense of a qualitative-quantitative mix, top-down and bottom-up view, as well as checking for attitudes and actual practices.

Diary studies are a good starting point, because they are exploratory in nature (Bailey 1991:61), provide access to learner introspections (cf. their use in learner strategy research; Richards 2009:157), and promote reflection (Allwright and Bailey 1991). They are a good choice at the outset of this study, because they will give us access into a range of possible attitudes towards ELF, tapping into an emic perspective that might otherwise be outside our reach as researchers. This should allow us to include the emic perspective when constructing the questionnaire about ELF attitudes.

Focus group interviews are a way to continue the emic perspective and to move away from individual attitudes, because they can tap into group meanings and norms (Bloor et al. 2001:17). They should be conducted with a relatively homogenous group of participants discussing a particular topic so as to help understand it. The discussion should be focused, and led by a skilful moderator (Krueger and Casey 2000:10). The method has been used in market research for some time (Greenbaum 1998), and has been gaining momentum in social research as well (Bloor et al. 2001). It has not been extensively used in studying attitudes of speakers of foreign languages (Ho 2006), or indeed ELF (cf. Gerritsen and Nickerson 2009:188; one exception is Grau 2009). Focus groups are well suited for ELF research, because they are a useful interpretative aid when survey results are available (Bloor et al. 2001:17) and a valuable triangulation tool

(cf. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2007:377). Moreover, focus group interviews are normally recorded, which may be a source of pronunciation data. We envisage a threefold use of focus groups. Firstly, we hope to tap into group attitudes on ELF pronunciation and use, which will help us get clearer insights into the trends visible from the diary studies. Secondly, we will use focus groups to help us understand the results of the ELF questionnaire, as a way of tapping into the emic perspective. Finally, focus group recordings will be a source of objective data about English pronunciation. In order to get a relatively natural setting for speaking English in a relatively monolingual environment such as Croatia, we plan to use two facilitators who do not speak Croatian. Three practical issues that need to be taken into consideration here include sampling, training the facilitators and procedures for analyzing the recorded pronunciations, about which we cannot go into detail here.

The interview is a technique which allows a more in-depth look into individual factors that may come up (as opposed to focus group interviews which investigate group attitudes). It has been used time and again in ELF research with ELF speakers (Erling and Bartlett 2006) and teachers (Jenkins 2005; Jenkins 2007; Jenkins 2009; Trent and Lim 2010). We propose non-structured interviews with teachers of English at universities across Croatia. Some recent survey-based studies in Croatia have found that future teachers of English are not really open to teaching ELF (Drljača Margić and Širola 2009; Josipović Smojver and Stanojević 2012), which is in line with Jenkins' results saying that teachers of English are ambivalent towards ELF (Jenkins 2007). By talking to Croatian teachers of English in academic settings, we hope to gain a deeper insight into these issues and possible reasons behind them. Importantly, however, we will be looking whether teacher attitudes are reflected in the attitudes of ELF speakers.

Finally, we envisage the use of a questionnaire on the attitudes towards ELF, which will give us quantitative results. There are a number of general and practical issues involved in questionnaire use in education research – from the way in which a questionnaire is constructed to its administration (cf. e.g. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2007, 317–348; Dörnyei 2010). In this study, we have decided on using a pilot with a number of closed questions regarding the attitudes to ELF on three groups of participants. The results of the pilot feed into the focus group interviews (where we ask for comments on some of its results), as well as the construction of the final questionnaire (which will again be piloted).

Overall, we believe that this makes for a good mix of methodologies, giving a reasonably comprehensive view of the state of ELF in Croatia. It provides methodological triangulation because: (1) it combines attitude research with actual recordings of ELF; (2) it allows exploration as well as confirmation; (3) it brings together quantitative as well as qualitative data analysis; and (4) it looks into the attitudes of teachers as one of the possible "takes" on what is going on with ELF speakers. In the next section we will present and discuss some of our results in the application of this research architecture.

3. Results

Diary study

The purpose of the diary study was to explore the attitudes of individual ELF speakers towards their English use in everyday situations. The participants were asked to keep a diary for seven days and reflect on the following issues: how they and their conversational partners used English that day, which aspect of their English use might have stood out, why (or why not), and how they felt when using English. The participants were volunteers, who had attended a class on Business English taught by the second author. They were given a book for participating in the study. We sent out 15 invitations, and got back diaries from four participants (three male and one female, all in their early or mid twenties). The low return rate was expected – although the participants were alerted to the possible benefits of using a diary study (e.g. better awareness of their use of English), they were no longer attending classes, and their internal (and external) motivation seems not to have been sufficient. We performed a qualitative analysis of the diary entries.

The results show that English was used as a matter of course in a variety of everyday situations with native and non-native speakers of English. The results were particularly enlightening with regard to: the use of English as a code-switching practice, the use of English with other native and non-native speakers, and their attitudes towards English pronunciation.

The participants used English as part of their everyday Internet conversations (e.g. chat), mostly by code switching from Croatian to English (in the words of one of the participants: "I would use a phrase such as *Hello*, *What's up* or *Bye* from time to time"). All of the participants consider this type of code-switching an everyday practice, which they believe everyone does at their age ("this is an everyday choice – I think in a mixture of English and Croatian, and I frequently think of an English expression first, plus I am certain that my conversational partner will understand me"). This is not strictly speaking an ELF use, but English code switching was noted in different countries, and in a variety or registers (McClure 1998). When it comes to computer-mediated communication, it might be an identity-building practice which affirms group identity and communality (cf. e.g. Androutsopoulos 2004; Leppänen 2007). Perhaps this is reflected in responses such as "I believe that most young people use English when communicating via chat" or "it has become normal to use [English], especially among young people", where participants refer to themselves as "young people" which might be the identity they want to build.

The reported ELF use ranges from online chat with other non-native and native speakers to speaking English with native speakers face-to-face and to formal writing in English. When faced with an "unplanned" face-to-face conversation with a non-native speaker, one of the participants reports that she felt "surprised and taken aback, but later [her] speech became more fluent". The participants who used ELF in online chats and forums do not report such a feeling: "I used English as I do it every day, there was nothing special about it" or "My choice of English was a matter of course, because for many people on the forum English is their native tongue". A reason why they do not report surprise may be due to increased control (you can choose whether you want to

enter a chat or a forum and when) and familiarity with their conversational partners (they referred to them as "friends" and "acquaintances"), making the situation less stressful.

The participants do not seem to give much thought to their own English pronunciation. Three participants constantly report being particularly aware of "grammatical accuracy", "syntax" and "spelling, for instance not being careful with capitalizing when using chat", and a single participant mentions that he paid attention to his pronunciation on two occasions. This is not surprising, keeping in mind that most of their ELF use is written rather than spoken. Still, when reporting on the speech of others, all four participants mention pronunciation. For instance, when talking to a tourist face-to-face, one participant noticed that "he pronounced things wrong, because English wasn't his mother tongue, which made him difficult to understand". When pronunciation is not "incorrect", it remains unnoticed: "I do not pay attention to the accent and grammatical accuracy of my acquaintances, because all of them speak English well, the communication flows without problems, and they pronounce English well". As for particular accents, only British and American English are mentioned, American English being the norm: "British English, ... is not so usual for me; I usually listen to American English" or "I like the sound of American English much better than British English".

The results show that English is used in code-switching and in talking to native and non-native speakers. The participants notice the pronunciation of their conversational partners when they pose communication problems or are different from what they are used to. Methodologically, the data suggest that the final questionnaire should include questions concerning the situations when English is used, and particular English accents. Still, a larger sample of diaries from a variety of participants would be instrumental to generalize the results.

Preliminary survey

The preliminary survey was conducted on a sample of 2498 participants from throughout Croatia, most of who were university students (58.6%), and the remaining were secondary school pupils (25.5%) and employees in a large international company (15.9%). Most of the participants were female (67.9%). They were given an anonymous questionnaire in Croatian, which contained 31 items (16 on a 5-point Likert scale and the remaining offering a selection of several options). Four questions dealt with attitudes to the regional pronunciation of Croatian. Seventeen questions dealt with attitudes to English (beliefs about the importance of fluency, grammar and pronunciation, attitudes towards one's own pronunciation of English when speaking to native and non-native speakers, attitudes towards learning English pronunciation, beliefs about the ease of understanding non-native speakers, and attitudes towards (non-)native teachers of English). The remaining questions dealt with participant data (for details on the questionnaire cf. Stanojević and Josipović Smojver 2011 and Josipović Smojver and Stanojević 2012). The aim of the questionnaire was to explore whether there were any links between the participants' characteristics (e.g. pupil vs. student vs. employee; liberal vs. traditional attitudes towards Croatian; gender; and self-assessed proficiency) and the way one perceives one's own accent, the accent of one's conversational partners and teaching models.

The results show that most participants find pronunciation important (89% agree or strongly agree that "correct pronunciation" is important), and 67% of participants agree

that perfecting English pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker is a worthwhile endeavour, regardless of the time and effort it would take. Still, most believe that some foreign accent is okay when talking to native or non-native speakers of English: most participants would not mind having a strong or slight accent when talking to native speakers (76.1%) or non-native speakers (82.3%). Native speakers are not preferred as teachers of English pronunciation ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.23$), and the pronunciation of non-native conversational partners is not preferred over native conversational partners ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.32$).

As expected, ANOVA showed that there were significant differences between secondary school pupils, university students and company employees on all six questions: the attitude towards perfecting their pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker ($F(2,2480) = 31.94$, $p < .001$), the importance of pronunciation when speaking ($F(2,2353) = 8.76$, $p <. 001$), the acceptability of foreign accent when talking to native speakers ($F(2,2476) = 4.67$, $p = .009$) and non-native speakers ($F(2,2470) = 7.57$, $p < .001$), the belief that native speakers are better teachers of pronunciation than non-native speakers ($F(2,2444) = 15.48$, $p < .001$), and the preference for non-native speakers as conversational partners ($F(2,2485) = 8.81$, $p < .001$). Generally, company employees tend to be on one end of the scale and pupils/students on the other. Scheffe's post-hoc test showed that employees scored significantly lower than pupils and students on wanting to perfect their pronunciation, scored significantly higher on wanting native speaker teachers, scored significantly higher on disfavouring a foreign accent with non-native speakers, and scored significantly higher on preference for non-native speakers as conversational partners. Scheffe showed no differences in disfavouring a foreign accent when talking to native speakers (all groups score rather high on disfavouring a foreign accent). Although all participants agree that correct pronunciation is important, Scheffe's post hoc test showed that secondary school pupils scored significantly lower than university students (with employees in the middle).

Participants who strongly disagreed that ideal Croatian pronunciation should be regionally unmarked (i.e. they have a "liberal" attitude towards Croatian pronunciation), generally had a more liberal attitude towards English pronunciation. ANOVA showed that there were significant differences between groups on four of the six questions: the importance of pronunciation when speaking English ($F(4,2344) = 8.35$, $p < .001$), the acceptability of foreign accent when talking to native ($F(4,2468) = 15.08$, $p < .001$) and non-native speakers ($F(4,2461) = 13.99$, $p < .001$), and the attitude towards perfecting their pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker ($F(4,2470) = 2.73$, $p = .028$). Scheffe's post-hoc test showed that participants with a liberal attitude towards Croatian scored significantly lower than all or most other participants on the importance of English pronunciation and disfavouring one's foreign accent when talking to native or non-native speakers of English. There were no significant differences between groups with regard to preferring native speakers as pronunciation teachers, and preferring non-native conversational partners.

Gender differences were found on five of the six questions. Women scored significantly higher than men on the importance of pronunciation when speaking English ($t(2345) = 4.06$, $p < .001$), the acceptability of foreign accent when talking to native ($t(2469) = 3.53$, $p < .001$) and non-native speakers ($t(2462) = 2.71$, $p = .007$), the attitude towards perfecting their pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker ($t(2472) = 8.71$,

$p < .001$), and preferring non-native conversational partners ($t(2475) = 3.70$, $p < .001$). There were no significant differences between men and women on preferring native teachers.

Finally, ANOVA showed that there were significant differences between participants on all six questions with regard to how they assessed their own pronunciation: the importance of pronunciation when speaking English ($F(4,2337) = 44.09$, $p < .001$), the acceptability of foreign accent when talking to native ($F(4,2460) = 39.48$, $p < .001$) and non-native speakers ($F(4,2454)=28.09$, $p < .001$), the attitude towards perfecting their pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker ($F(4,2464) = 5.12$; $p < .001$), the belief that native speakers are better teachers of pronunciation than non-native speakers ($F(4,2429)=8.23$, $p < .001$), and preferring non-native over native conversational partners ($F(4,2468) = 49.66$, $p < .001$). Scheffe's post-hoc test showed that speakers who rate their pronunciation as poor score significantly lower than all other groups on the importance of a correct pronunciation in English, wanting to perfect their pronunciation, disfavouring a foreign accent when talking to native and non-native speakers, and on wanting a native speaker to teach them pronunciation. Scheffe showed that participants who rated their pronunciation as excellent or very good scored significantly lower on preferring native speakers as conversational partners. Scheffe showed no differences between groups on the attitude towards perfecting one's pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker.

These results suggest that all of the explored parameters – participant profile, attitudes towards Croatian, gender, and self-assessed proficiency may influence the way in which one perceives the importance of English pronunciation, the acceptability of foreign accent when talking to native and non-native speakers and the attitude towards perfecting one's pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker. Significant differences in the attitudes towards native vs. non-native teachers appeared only when learner status was at issue (i.e. among students/pupils vs. employees, and different groups according to self-assessed pronunciation proficiency), but not among groups according to gender or the attitude towards Croatian. Significant differences in the attitudes towards non-native conversational partners were present only between participants who had different attitudes towards English, but not between subjects who had different attitudes to Croatian. This suggests that the attitudes towards ELF may include several components (e.g. one's own actual pronunciation practice vs. teaching and learning pronunciation), and may be related to two different sources of more or less liberal attitudes – those referring to one's own status in the learner-speaker continuum, and those referring to other sociophonetic factors (e.g. gender, attitudes towards one's native language).

Preliminary results of teacher interviews and focus group interviews

In addition to the two studies reported on above, we conducted three interviews with university lecturers of English, and three focus group interviews with business majors attending the Faculty of Economics and Business. They were used to obtain preliminary results and get the feel for the methods at hand.

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted by the third author with university lecturers of English as a Foreign Language, one teaching English teacher majors, one engineering majors, and one business majors. It was a semi-structured interview, dealing with the teachers' beliefs about teaching pronunciation, appropriate models, ELF

pronunciation, and with how they think their students regard pronunciation. The aim of the interview was to see to what extent the attitudes of actual English teachers coincided with the results of the preliminary questionnaire.

There were differences between the three participants depending on where they teach. The participant teaching engineering majors believes that, when international communication is at issue, pronunciation is a "means to an end", which should be taught only when serious misunderstanding might occur. The lecturer teaching business majors believes that pronunciation is important for her students, in the sense that when they communicate with others they might be judged by their pronunciation. The lecturer teaching future teachers of English believes that pronunciation is paramount. All three participants believe that their students hold the same views. When appropriate teaching models are discussed, native models come to the fore, and all three participants explicitly mention British and American English. As one of the participants says, British English has a special status in Croatia, "because it used to be preferred in my education, and my entire teaching career seems to have been revolving around it, but I am well aware of American English as well". All three agree that American English is the model of choice among their students, and that students in general (at least on the declaratory level) prefer native models. Finally, all three participants are keenly aware of the ELF pronunciation as being present to various extents in international communication. They accept it up to a point: when communication needs to be achieved, ELF might be an okay choice, but certainly not "when future teachers of English are concerned" (who should strive towards a native model). All three participants believe that ELF should certainly not be a teaching model. One of them fears that "language might disintegrate" because of this.

The results were somewhat expected – lecturers teaching students of different profiles seem to be in touch with their students' attitudes which followed from the questionnaire (e.g. English majors going for native-like pronunciation, or engineering majors going for understandability). Of course, the issue is whether these attitudes might be perpetuated by the teachers themselves (cf. Stanojević and Josipović Smojver 2011). On the methodological level, it is clear that valuable data can be obtained by using this method, and that, given a larger sample, these data may supplement the data obtained from the students.

Three focus group interviews were conducted with a group of business majors, as a part of another unrelated study by the second author. The participants were asked to comment on two findings: that most business majors prefer to talk to native speakers and that they want to improve their pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker. The results show that the native speaker is seen as an authority figure by the members of the focus groups, in the words of one participant: "I will learn more from a native speaker, the non-native speaker's mistakes might rub off on me". The authority of native speakers (American English is preferred by the students) is no doubt connected with the prestige of native accents: "you might be ashamed of your bad accent, you might be the laughing stock of others [if you speak] Russian English or French English". Or: "People perceive your speech as worse if you have a foreign accent, regardless of correctness or fluency". Thus, imitating a native variety might be a point of pride ("It is a challenge"; "I feel good when I can do it"). Finally, the reasons behind going for native accents might also

be issues of understanding: half of the focus group participants believe that it is easier to understand native speakers.

As we hoped, the results of the focus group interviews provided a detailed account of the reasons behind the answers of the business majors on the questionnaire, and highlighted the need for multiple focus groups for different groups of participants. On a practical level, this first attempt at using a focus group made it clear that better results might be expected if training is provided for the facilitator, and if the focus group is conducted in a more informal atmosphere, which is in accordance with the practical suggestions from the literature (Krueger and Casey 2001). Moreover, it illustrated the possible difficulty of creating a relaxed atmosphere vs. the need to make recordings that are sufficiently high quality to be phonetically analyzed. These issues still remain to be resolved.

4. Discussion, conclusion and outlook

The results concerning the state of ELF in Croatia suggest several things. Firstly, there is a clear case of linguistic schizophrenia (B. B. Kachru 1977; Seidlhofer 2001): one should take time to study "proper" (i.e. native-like) pronunciation (cf. teacher interviews, the survey), and a "bad pronunciation" is always noticeable (diaries, teacher interviews, the survey, the focus group). Still, when it comes to talking to native or non-native speakers, slight accent is okay (the survey). Attaining a native-like accent may be a good reason for particular pride (the focus group). Overall, there are clear differences in the attitudes towards pronunciation between different groups of participants: pupils, students and employees, men and women, better and worse pronouncers and participants with different attitudes towards Croatian (the survey). We need to get different groups of participants to do diaries, take part in focus groups and teacher interviews, which would shed light on these differences. Our focus on business majors showed that they use English as part of their everyday life, that they notice the pronunciation of others (diaries), and that native varieties for them are a source of prestige (the focus group). In a study which looked into the differences among university students with different majors in Croatia (Stanojević and Josipović Smojver 2011), business majors tended to be in the middle of the scale (in between, e.g. students majoring in engineering and English). In the light of this finding, we expect different results from diary studies and focus groups with different participants.

It was rewarding to see that the various methods work well together, and that the proposed triangulation may be a good way to gather extensive data, which will (eventually) correspond to each other in different ways. We learned that the diary study is a valuable method to look into the everyday practices, and that it may feed into questions in the questionnaire concerning the everyday practices (such as internet use, and communication in English). The preliminary survey highlighted the importance of different groups of participants, and constructing groups of questions focusing around different factors. The preliminary focus group interview showed that it is crucial to have a single homogeneous group of participants, as well as a trained facilitator. We must consider and try out the idea of recording the focus group to obtain actual pronunciation data – and confirm the discrepancy between the actual pronunciation and attitudes.

Teacher interviews pointed to the possibility of similar attitudes being held by university teachers and the students they teach, which may indicate that attitudes are perpetuated. Overall, triangulation across methods and participants in the way proposed here provided a wealth of data, allowing a bottom-up view and a top-down view on the state of ELF in Croatia. What remains to be seen is how these data on attitudes towards ELF will relate to actual pronunciation practices.

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QUESTIONNAIRE-BASED PRONUNCIATION STUDIES: ITALIAN, SPANISH AND POLISH STUDENTS' VIEWS ON THEIR ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

MARTA NOWACKA
University of Rzeszów

Abstract
This article is an attempt to review the most recent phonetic literature on the application of questionnaires in phonetic studies. In detail, we review the scope of pronunciation questionnaire-based surveys with respect to Polish and non-Polish students of English. In addition, this paper aims to examine European students' beliefs and attitudes towards their own English pronunciation and is also intended to provide some arguments for or against the use of foreign-accented rather than native models of pronunciation in phonetic instruction.

The data come from three groups of informants, namely: Italian, Spanish and Polish students of English. With respect to foreign, non-Polish respondents, the study was conducted at the University of Salento in Italy and the University in Vigo, Spain within the framework of the Erasmus Teacher Mobility Programme in two consecutive academic years, i.e. 2010/2011 and 2011/2012. As regards Polish respondents, our research involved subjects from six different tertiary schools, i.e. five universities and one college, located in various parts of Poland.

On balance, the results of our study give an insight into the phonetic preferences of adult European advanced students of English with reference to the importance of good native-like pronunciation, the aims of pronunciation study, factors contributing to phonetic progress and their self-study pronunciation learning strategies. Our findings point to the fact that students of English wish to speak with good pronunciation, set a high native-like standard for themselves, report having benefited from their phonetic instruction and exposure to native English and that they work on their pronunciation by means of various, mostly cognitive, strategies.

Rather than casting new light on teaching pronunciation, the outcome of this study is consistent with the findings of other research on foreign students' choice of preferred pronunciation model, which is undeniably native rather than foreign-accented.

1. Introduction: the outline of questionnaire-based studies

A common method of eliciting learners' judgments on various aspects of language teaching and learning is the use of questionnaires. In the phonetic literature a wide array of questionnaires concerning pronunciation can be found. Although it is claimed that they are not reliable, since they present the respondents' subjective opinions and judgments about the situation rather than the bare facts themselves, they are a frequently used assessment tool as they provide valuable feedback to teachers. Anybody willing to

make use of an opinion survey should consult Dörnyei's (2003) and Presser et al.'s (2004) publications about the nature, the merits and the shortcomings of questionnaires. In addition, Dörnyei (2003) discusses their construction and administration and the processing of questionnaire data. Moreover, Presser et al. (2004), apart from covering topics of current research, examine practical interests in questionnaire survey methodology and sampling.

Thus, numerous publications present the results of such surveys of opinions. For the purpose of this analysis we have examined about fifty questionnaire-based pronunciation studies and divided them into two groups, i.e. firstly, the surveys that focus on international informants and then the ones that concern Polish respondents exclusively. The former studies, conducted on the international scene, concentrate on different aspects of pronunciation education, researching, for instance:

- attitudes to pronunciation in EFL[1] (Porter and Garvin 1989);
- attitudes to foreign accent or native-likeness in the L2; pronunciation self-evaluation (Hammond 1990);
- the importance of 'good pronunciation' (Kenworthy 1990);
- phonology in teacher training courses (Bradford and Kenworthy 1991);
- factors affecting pronunciation learning (Edwards 1992 as cited in Barrera Pardo 2004);
- knowledge of English pronunciation, motivation and self-awareness (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996);
- the content of phonology courses in the USA (Murphy 1997);
- motivation in pronunciation (Dalton and Smit 1997);
- students' awareness of the difficulty and importance of English pronunciation; influential factors in the acquisition of pronunciation; attitudes towards English accents (Cenoz and Garcia-Lecumberri 1999);
- teaching intonation among EFL practitioners (Roads, 1999);
- proclaimed and perceived wants and needs among Spanish teachers of English (Walker 1999);
- pronunciation learning styles (Basso 2000);
- the effectiveness of teaching pronunciation to Malaysian TESL students (Rajadurai 2001);
- pronunciation views and practices of reluctant teachers in Australia (MacDonald 2002);
- native speaker norms and International English (Timmis 2002);
- learners' ethnic group affiliation and L2 pronunciation accuracy; native-like nonaccented L2 speech (Gatbonton et al. 2005);
- links between pronunciation teaching, EIL and the sociocultural identity of non-native speakers of English; awareness of EIL-related matters (mutual intelligibility in non-native to non-native communication) (Sifakis and Sougari 2005);

[1] All the abbreviations that are included in this paragraph are explained here: EFL – English as a Foreign Language, L2 – second language, TESL – Teaching English as a Second Language, EIL – English as an International Language, ESP – English for Specific Purposes.

- international students' attitudes towards English pronunciation and the comparison of Euro-English with the Lingua Franca Core (Bryła 2006);
- students' evaluation of learner corpora in L2 prosody research and teaching (Gut 2007);
- perception of foreign accent by native and non-native speakers (Vishnevskaya 2008);
- personality traits (extroversion, empathy etc.) and pronunciation talent in L2 acquisition (Hu and Reiterer 2009);
- musicality and the phonetic language aptitude (Nardo and Reiterer 2010);
- pronunciation preferences for phonological variation among linguistically trained and untrained respondents (Benrabah 2010);
- native and non-native perception of foreign-accented speech (Nowacka 2010);
- students' attitude toward pronunciation: the perceived utility of pronunciation, level of confidence and interest in pronunciation, teachers' views and practices with regard to pronunciation instruction (Yeou 2010);
- English pronunciation teaching practices in European countries/survey (Henderson, in press; Henderson and Frost et al. in press);
- pronunciation identity constructions of learners and speakers among Croatian students (Josipović Smojver and Stanojević, in press);
- the phonetic needs of French EFL students (Nasser-Eddine, 2011);
- students' metacognitive awareness; pronunciation learning strategies (Murphy, in press);
- EFL pronunciation attitudes: standard Croatian, self-assessment of English pronunciation, perceived role in the exchange (Stanojević et al., in press);
- the changing attitudes to accents in professional discourse of learners of ESP (Tyurina and Koltzova, in press);
- French students' familiarity with, and attitudes towards, other foreign accents in English (Scheuer, in press);
- and teaching pronunciation in EFL classes (Luke [nd]) to give some examples of such studies.

Some questionnaires have been administered solely to Polish students of English in order to examine their views on different aspects of phonetic instruction. The most frequently discussed issue concerns the teaching and learning of English phonetics at schools of higher education, i.e. universities and colleges (Waniek-Klimczak 1997; Dziubalska-Kołaczyk et al. 1999; Sobkowiak 2002; Wysocka 2003; Wrembel 2005) as well as at secondary schools (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al. 2002; Wrembel 2002).

Other fields of interest within phonetics comprise:

- students' attitudes to teaching suprasegmental phonetics on the basis of authentic texts (Pospieszyńska and Wolski 2003);
- the role of metacompetence in the acquisition of FL phonology (Wrembel 2003);
- phonetic transcription (Ciszewski 2004);
- students' judgments of the English pronunciation model (Szpyra-Kozłowska 2004);
- the goals of L2 pronunciation instruction; subjects' attitudes to native speaker varieties and their perception of speech with disturbed rhythm (Janicka 2005);

- phonetic learning preferences in relation to field dependence and independence (Baran 2006);
- features which condition success in the acquisition of English phonetics (Gonet 2006);
- the use of the language laboratory in modern pronunciation pedagogy (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al. 2006);
- pronunciation learning strategies with a focus on advanced students (Pawlak 2006, 2008, 2010, in press);
- attitudes to native English accents as models for EFL Pronunciation (Janicka et al. 2008);
- pronunciation self-evaluation (Nowacka 2008);
- target in speech development: the choice of model, accent preferences, the attainment of native-like accent, the role/importance of pronunciation as a subskill in communication (Waniek-Klimczak and Klimczak 2008)
- and attitudes to male and female voices (Szpyra-Kozłowska and Pawlak 2010).

To sum up, a wide array of pronunciation-related topics have been researched with the use of questionnaires. Thanks to the data collected in them, teachers and researchers can formulate some generalizations about, for instance, students' phonetic preferences, which are the centre of attention in this analysis.

2. Experimental design

In this section the aims of the study, the questionnaire design, respondents and questionnaire administration are presented.

The aims

Although, as has been demonstrated in the preceding section, students' views on English pronunciation have been studied in several questionnaires, for the purpose of this analysis we felt it necessary to examine international, i.e. Italian, Spanish and Polish, students' phonetic preferences. We examine and compare four aspects of their pronunciation teaching and learning, namely: the importance of good native-like pronunciation, the aims of pronunciation study, factors contributing to phonetic progress and self-study pronunciation learning strategies.

There is also a secondary aim to this study, namely to provide an argument in the discussion about changing models of pronunciation, e.g. EIL/LFC on the basis of students' preference for or disregard of native standards. This intention was triggered by Remiszewski's (2008) call for such investigations:

> The debate [how to teach pronunciation in the EFL classroom] must embrace the attitudes and beliefs of the learner. Paradoxically, proposals centered around LFC are claimed to be designed for the learner's benefit, but at the same time we still know so little about the learner's actual point of view. This must change, as the data which are already available show that a more thorough analysis of learners' motivations and beliefs can cast some new light on the discussed problem. As for now, the picture is far from complete. (Remiszewski, 2008: 307)

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was designed for the purpose of my PhD in the year 2004.[2] It contained seven questions, both open and closed, which initially the Polish informants were asked to answer. The results concerning the first four questions are reported below and then followed by a discussion of several pertinent issues that emerged from their analysis.

Respondents and questionnaire administration

157 students of English, from three different countries, i.e. Italy, Spain[3] and Poland, took part in this project. The Polish students made up the majority (58%), the remaining 42% was shared by the Italians (24%) and the Spanish (18%).

The data on the Italian respondents were collected at the University of Salento, Lecce, in the south of Italy, in April 2011. The informants were all second year students of the Faculty of Modern Arts (Facolta di Lettere Moderne). Most of these 38 participants were female (35), with a mean age of 20.5. They had been learning English for about 11.5 years and their proclaimed level of advancement in English was on the whole intermediate (87%).

As regards the survey administration in Spain, in October 2011, the questionnaire was conducted with 28 second year students of the University of Vigo, in the north-western part of Spain, in the Faculty of Translation. Females constituted the majority (68%). The students' mean age was 20. Their declared length of studying English was 14 years and they mostly regarded themselves as upper-intermediate (61%) and advanced students (36%). Thus, their level of proficiency was one stage higher than that of the Italians'.

When it comes to the Polish informants, the data were gathered in the year 2004. Unlike previous studies of this kind, our research involved subjects from six different tertiary schools (five universities and one college), located in various parts of Poland in Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań and Sosnowiec and also at the college in Rzeszów.[4] A total of 91 Polish tertiary school students of English, who were randomly selected at the respective centres, participated in the study. They are regarded to be a homogenous group as all of them were final year students of English. University students (62) were in the majority, constituting 68% of the subject population under study, while college subjects (29) were in the minority, i.e. 32%. These informants reflect the student population of English at tertiary schools quite well since female students (70, 77%) outnumbered their male counterparts (21, 23%) as they usually do.

[2] The experiment, which consisted of a written questionnaire and a recording of reading and spontaneous speech, was conducted during the summer term, over a period of two months, from March to April 2004. In this article only some written data are discussed. The analysis of the recording, the students' self-evaluation of their pronunciation, native and non-native ratings of the subjects' phonetics are presented in Nowacka (2008).

[3] The visit within the Erasmus Teacher Mobility Programme.

[4] The experiment was held at the following universities: Jagiellonian University in Kraków (14 respondents), Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (11), The University of Łódź (10), Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (12) and The University of Silesia in Sosnowiec (15) along with one college, the Teacher Training College of Foreign Languages in Rzeszów (29).

To recap, we present the results of the questionnaire conducted with 157 subjects of three nationalities in order to formulate some conclusions on international students' phonetic wants and needs.

3. Results and discussion

This section discusses the results corresponding to each questionnaire statement in the order in which they appeared in the survey.

3.1. Importance of good English pronunciation

At first, the respondents were asked to take a stance on the problem expressed in the following statement "*It is important for me to have good English pronunciation.*" Their task was to gauge its importance on a 5-point scale, i.e. "*strongly agree – agree – undecided – disagree - strongly disagree.*" The notion of 'good' was not defined as it was the informants' task to decide what it meant for them. In this respect the survey has confirmed the obvious, which can be seen in Figure 1.

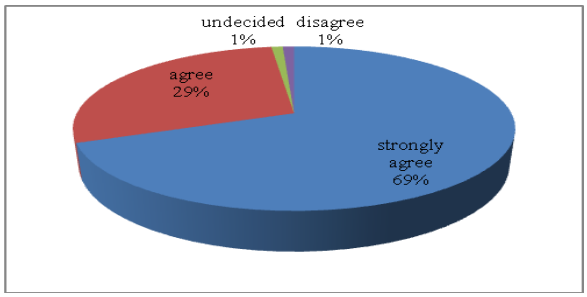

Figure 1: Statement 1: "*It is important for me to have good English pronunciation.*"

Almost all respondents (98%) have positive beliefs regarding the importance of speaking English with good pronunciation. To be more precise, 69% strongly agreed with this statement; the rest (29%) chose a more moderate option by ticking the answer 'I agree' while the remaining 2% chose the 'undecided' and 'disagree' option.

After choosing an answer, the subjects were to give reasons for their choice. To justify their opinion, the informants supplied arguments which can be grouped into three major categories. According to some of them, it is important to have good English pronunciation in order to: sound like a native/near-native speaker, to be clearly understood/to communicate successfully/to avoid misunderstandings as well as to be a good model for students as a teacher, and to clients as an interpreter, in the future.

To conclude this section, it should be stated that in general, a positive picture emerges from this set of responses since nearly all students of English consider it important to speak English with good pronunciation. In general, the reasons for such an opinion are as follows: they wish to sound native-like, want to be clearly understood or

simply feel that good pronunciation should be part and parcel of their professional qualifications.

3.2. Aims of the pronunciation study

The second questionnaire point sought to obtain the respondents' opinions as to the following statement: *Students should aim for native English pronunciation.*[5] Figure 2 shows the obtained results.

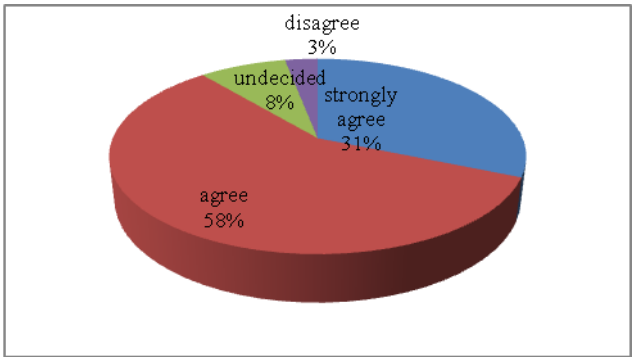

Figure 2: Statement 2: "*Students should aim for native English pronunciation.*"

It is clear that the majority of students (89%) agree with this statement, with 31% opting for 'strongly agree' and 58% for 'agree.' The remaining 8% are undecided as to whether native English should be a goal of pronunciation education, and 3% disagree with such an idea. Thus, in all likelihood we can predict that most of them would aspire to the native or near-native model of pronunciation in their speech.

Additionally, in order to see whether native-like pronunciation rather than EIL is favoured by students, we rephrased the afore-mentioned statement in a different way, i.e. we referred to the informants' choice of pronunciation "*I attempt to speak with native English pronunciation.*"[6] Figure 3 presents the obtained results, which prove that the majority of the students, i.e. 86% of Spanish and 84% of Italians, wish to speak with native pronunciation. No statistically significant differences between the examined nationalities can be found here.

[5] Similarly to question 1, the same 5-option continuum was used to obtain responses.

[6] This statement was tested only with Italian and Spanish subjects.

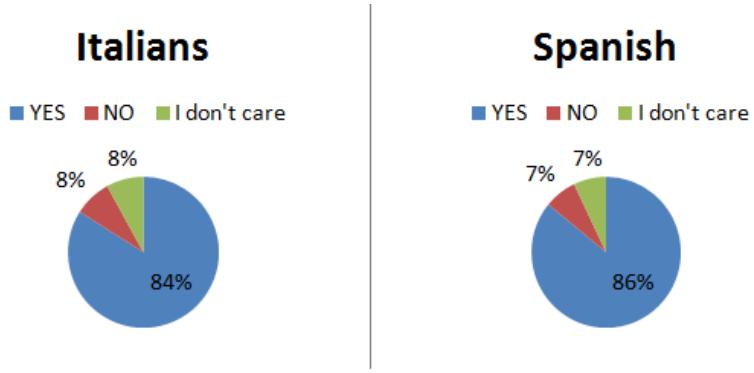

Figure 3: Statement: "*I attempt to speak with native English pronunciation*" tested with Italian and Spanish respondents.

To sum up, it should be noted that the majority of the students in this study maintain that they aim for native English pronunciation. What we have learnt from the respondents' justifications is that they assume that nativelikness should be the target for language specialists and other learners' pronunciation should be intelligible enough to allow them to communicate. We have also noted a few voices stating that native-like pronunciation increases one's chances of finding a good job in the European Union, and one dissenting voice saying that accent-free English speech deprives a foreigner of his/her own identity.

3.3. Factors contributing to phonetic progress

Responses to question 3 were to supply information on the factors which have a major influence on the informants' pronunciation. Figure 4 summarises the results.

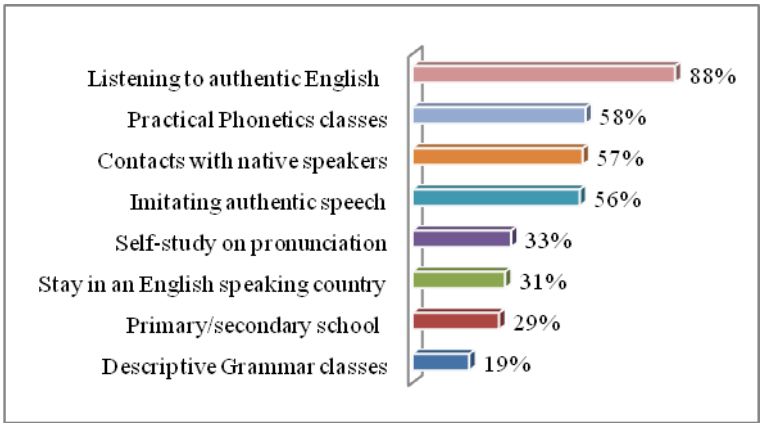

Figure 4. Response to question no. 3: *What factors have contributed to improving your English pronunciation most?*

As can be seen from Figure 4, 'listening to authentic English' (88%) is claimed to be the most beneficial factor which has contributed to improving students' pronunciation most. The ranking of the remaining factors, from the most to the least useful ones is as follows: practical phonetics classes (58%), contacts with native speakers (57%), imitating authentic speech (56%), self-study on pronunciation (33%), stay in an English speaking country (31%), primary/secondary school English teacher's classes (29%) and 'Descriptive Grammar'[7] classes (19%).

3.4. Pronunciation self-study and pronunciation learning strategies (henceforth PLS)

The next questionnaire task, expressed in question 4, *Have you ever worked on improving your pronunciation on your own outside the classes*? was intended to reveal whether or not the respondents have ever made a self-initiated conscious effort at improving their pronunciation outside phonetic training at their tertiary school. The obtained figures are encouraging, with ¾ (76%) of the respondents claiming to have worked on pronunciation on their own, and only ¼ (24%) admitting that they have never done so.

Those who acknowledge self-practice of pronunciation were further asked to reveal how they do it. The respondents report having used a wide variety of self-study techniques since they list as many as 37 different strategies. A lot of these techniques are very similar and might be grouped into more general categories of the traditional 'listen and repeat' type. Most students specify more than one form of self-practice (averaging 1.6). The most popular PLSs mentioned by students are: reading aloud to oneself (9%), listening to and imitating authentic speech (8%), drilling difficult words and utterances, making use of transcription and checking the pronunciation of words in dictionaries.

To classify PLS we found it convenient to follow the taxonomy created by Pawlak (2010), thanks to which cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective strategic devices could be distinguished. It turned out that cognitive strategies were the most frequently applied by our subjects (27 PLSs). According to Pawlak's (2010:195): "(…) the group of cognitive PLS is by far the most elaborate, both with respect to the sheer number of strategic devices and their specificity, which is fully warranted by the fact that it contains actions and thoughts which are directly involved in studying and practising target language pronunciation, thus constituting the core of the whole classification scheme." The cognitive strategies were then followed by 7 metacognitive techniques[8], namely: 'recording oneself', 'practising pronunciation of separate words and sounds', 'recording oneself on a tape and then listening and making corrections', 'self-monitoring', 'listening to pronunciation (paying attention to it while listening to authentic English)', 'recording BBC news and then recording oneself and comparing one's pronunciation with the original', 'writing down a tapescript with a focus on unfamiliar sounds and words'. Among the responses there were also 3 social strategies such as 'talking to a non-native speaker who knows the language and has better pronunciation than me',

[7] By 'Descriptive Grammar classes' I meant the theory of phonetics and phonology.
[8] Some of these 'metacognitive' strategies overlapped to some extent with 'cognitive' ones.

'talking to other students' and 'attending conversation classes with American native speakers'. Not even one respondent pointed to affective strategies which involve such things as rewarding and/or encouraging oneself or the use of relaxation techniques. The above-mentioned findings are consistent with the results of other researchers (cf. Drożdział-Szelest 1997; Petersen 2000 as cited in Pawlak 2010:198; Pawlak 2008, 2010).

Cognitive PLS were the winners. Respondents reported the use of 27 different strategies. These strategies correspond to some extent to the skills of listening, speaking and reading or the skills combined. The respondents' pronunciation techniques based on listening enhanced by other activities are as follows: listening to BBC (on the radio), authentic English (on TV), English songs and films; listening to and reading (BBC English) materials; listening to (English) tapes/BBC World on the radio and repeating after a model/imitating the speaker/authentic speech, as well as watching English language programmes. The skill of speaking and in particular work on correct articulation of English could be what our informants had in mind when they reported: imitating authentic speech (audio books, films etc.)/native speakers; practising along with films; singing songs in English (simultaneously with the singer on the CD); talking to British friends/oneself in English; conversing in English with foreign students while staying abroad; speaking aloud (revision before exams); murmuring to oneself and even drilling particular words/groups of words "which I found difficult"/repeating certain words and phrases/authentic utterances. Some responses point to the subjects' use of different sources of educational materials, e.g. studying pronunciation with books, tapes and phonetic transcription of words; checking pronunciation (of unknown words) in a dictionary and then pronouncing them aloud/working with some pronunciation dictionaries; using original tapes with English pronunciation/practical phonetics textbooks /doing some activities; doing pronunciation exercises on the Internet. One of the respondents mentioned reading aloud (to oneself) and yet another identified staying in an English-speaking country and 'absorbing' the language as one of their pronunciation learning strategies.

This outcome to some extent confirmed the obvious, as Pawlak (2010: 191-192) points to their similar ranking: "… in the group of direct PLS, it is cognitive strategies, such as naturalistic and formal practice or attempts to analyze the sound system that are likely to play the most significant role. (…) [indirect] strategic devices will probably be utilized less frequently than direct ones (…) with learners opting mainly for metacognitive strategies (e.g. planning for a language task or self-evaluation) rather than social (e.g. asking a classmate to correct one's pronunciation) or affective ones (e.g. encouraging oneself to practice new sounds)."[9]

On the whole, subjects have pointed to some time-consuming but beneficial methods like recording oneself followed by a detailed analysis of the outcome and self-correction. They see the importance of pronunciation self-study, realize that formal phonetic classroom training is insufficient, they work on pronunciation on their own, and they report using numerous and varied self-study pronunciation strategies, mostly cognitive ones.

[9] Direct PLSs are the ones that require mental processing of language, while indirect PLSs are those that support learning in general and do not have to involve target language use.

4. Statistical analysis

The application of Pearson's Chi-square Test for Independence has allowed us to measure if the dependencies between the nationality and the examined variables concerning pronunciation are statistically significant.[10]

The results suggest that the respondents' nationality does not affect the first two variables, i.e. "*It is important for me to have good English pronunciation*" ($p>\alpha$, $p=0.55535$) presented in Figure 5 and "*Students should aim at native English pronunciation*" ($p>\alpha$, $p=0.52756$) shown in Figure 6. In other words, the distribution of responses to the above-mentioned statements is similar regardless of students' nationality.

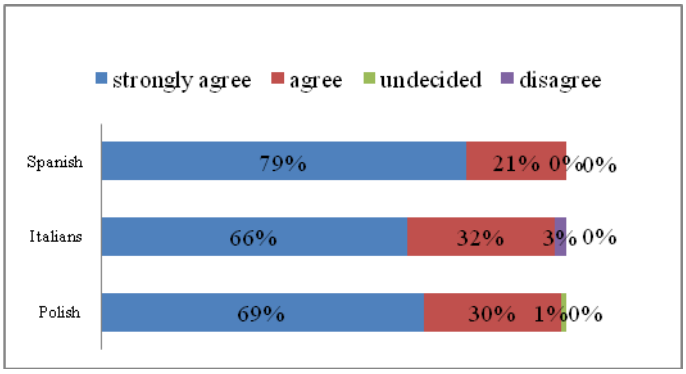

Figure 5. Nationality versus good pronunciation.

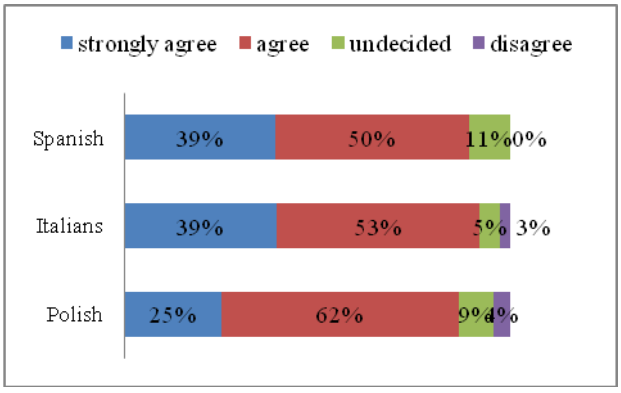

Figure 6. Nationality versus native English pronunciation.

[10] The significance level selected for this study is $\alpha=0.05$. It is assumed that when:
a) $p < 0.05$ there is a statistically significant dependency (marked with*****);
b) $p < 0.01$ there is a highly significant dependency (marked with******);
c) $p < 0.001$ there is a very high significant dependency (marked with*******).

However, as can be seen in Figure 7, the test has proved that there is a dependency between the respondents' nationality and pronunciation self-study ($p<\alpha$, $p=0.01249$). Even if we look at the percentage we can see that the Italian respondents' responses (58% 'yes'; 42% 'no') differ from the ones given by the Spanish (82% 'yes'; 18% 'no') and Polish (81% 'yes'; 19% 'no') subjects.

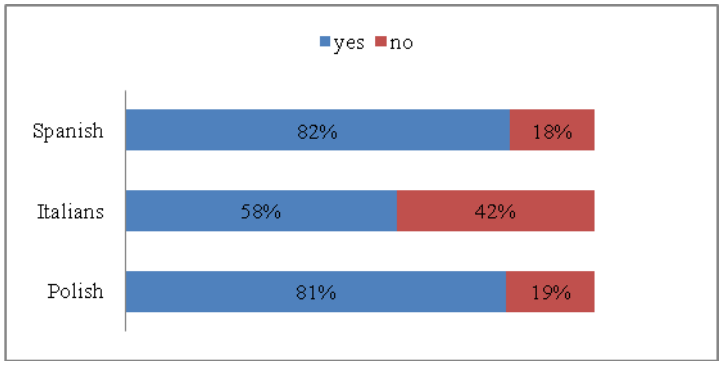

Figure 7. Pronunciation sulf-study.

As regards the dependencies between nationality versus the factors most influencing the respondents' pronunciation we could observe differences in the case of five out of eight factors; namely, stays in an English speaking country ($p=0.02196$*), contacts with native speakers ($p=0.01813$*), practical phonetics classes ($p=0.00000$***), imitating authentic speech ($p=0.00002$***), and primary/secondary school English ($p=0.00000$***).[11] The differences in percentages among the nationalities can be seen in Figure 8.

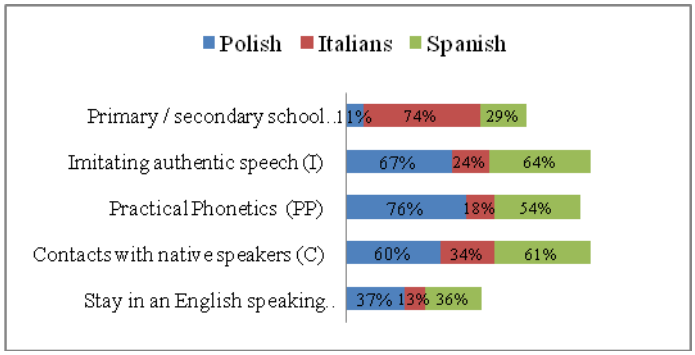

Figure 8. Nationality versus self-study pronunciation strategies.

[11] $p>\alpha$ for the remaining three factors was calculated as follows: self-study on pronunciation ($p=0.40755$), 'Descriptive Grammar' classes ($p=0.29020$) and listening to authentic English ($p=0.05135$).

We have also examined the ranking of these influential factors for individual nationalities. For all the examined nationalities 'listening to authentic English' occupies the top position, then the ranking of factors differs slightly. For instance, the Italian respondents regard 'primary and secondary school education' as the second most beneficial aspect. The Spanish value 'contacts with native speakers' and 'practical phonetics' next while Poles opt for 'practical phonetics,' 'imitating authentic speech' as well as 'contacts with native speakers'.

5. Conclusions

This article was intended to provide a thorough examination of the nature of pronunciation preferences of Italian, Spanish and Polish learners of English. The survey conducted by the present author reveals that most students wish to speak with good English pronunciation and to sound native-like, which agrees with the findings by Porter and Garvin (1989), Waniek-Klimczak (1997), Szpyra-Kozłowska (2004), Bryła (2006), Janicka et al. 2008, and Waniek-Klimczak and Klimczak (2008). The respondents believe it is important to have good pronunciation in English since they want to be clearly understood, serve as a good model for students and be perceived as competent users of English. The majority of informants agree with the statement that students should aim for native English pronunciation. Those who do not support this claim seem to regard intelligibility as the main aim of communication and take into account the needs of people who are not specialists in English.

Students report that their pronunciation has improved most as a result of listening to authentic English, practical phonetics instruction, imitating authentic speech as well as through contacts with native speakers. Waniek-Klimczak's (1997) subjects point to a slightly different order of factors which most influenced their pronunciation. Among them there are watching and listening to authentic English, practical phonetics and listening classes. One of our findings was that the college students favoured practical pronunciation classes over more academically-oriented 'Descriptive Grammar' classes, which is also consistent with Waniek Klimczak's (1997) results. However, in a survey by Dziubalska-Kołaczyk et al. (1999) a greater preference for 'Descriptive Grammar' is evident, although in general the majority of their subjects indicate a strong correlation between theoretical and practical classes and the positive influence of the two on their pronunciation. Furthermore, Cenoz et al. (1999) point to yet another ranking of factors beneficial for their students' phonetics, i.e. residence in an English-speaking country, speaking to natives, specific training through phonetics, listening to radio and TV and ear training.

The majority of our respondents (76%) claim to study pronunciation on their own by means of different, mostly cognitive, strategies. This is a significantly higher percentage than that found by Sobkowiak's (2002) questionnaire, where only half of the experimental group claimed pronunciation self-study. The most frequently mentioned self-study techniques are as follows: reading aloud to themselves, imitating authentic speech from films, audio books and the media, listening to and repeating after a model, drilling particularly difficult words and phrases, learning pronunciation with books and

tapes, working with pronunciation dictionaries as well as listening to and watching English-language programmes.

What agrees with the findings of Drożdział-Szelest (1997), Petersen (2000 as cited in Pawlak 2010) and Pawlak (2006, 2008, 2010) is that most respondents tend to use traditional cognitive strategies such as repetition, and that transcription is also mentioned as a helpful tool in the mastery of pronunciation, which is also confirmed by Sobkowiak (2002). Unlike in Pawlak's (2006) research, the respondents in the present study are aware of the importance of comparing the authentic with the student's own speech. Metacognitive strategies such as self-evaluation and self-monitoring are also said to be employed.

To recapitulate, although this description of students of English is based on limited evidence, it is hoped that it provides a fair and adequate characterization of this group of learners with reference to their phonetic preferences. The results on students' wants and needs with respect to pronunciation point to the fact that learners of English wish to speak with good pronunciation, set a high native-like standard for themselves, report having benefited from their phonetic instruction and exposure to native English and that they work on their pronunciation by means of various, mostly cognitive, strategies.

The outcome of this study can serve as yet another argument for teaching native models of English to students of English (cf. Remiszewski 2008; Scheuer, 2008; Sobkowiak 2008; Szpyra-Kozłowska 2008). It is consistent with Sobkowiak's (2008:139) observation that among European students there is a preference for sounding native-like: "[q]uestionnaire and experimental research clearly shows that to most learners, at least in the European context, correct native(-like) pronunciation is not only a question of communicative pragmatics, but also self-image. And listeners, both native and non-native, evaluate the speaker on the basis of his pronunciation."

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PERCEPTION OF FA BY NON-NATIVE LISTENERS IN A STUDY ABROAD CONTEXT[1]

PILAR AVELLO[1]
JOAN C. MORA[2]
CARMEN PÉREZ-VIDAL[1]
Universitat Pompeu Fabra[1]
Universitat de Barcelona[2]

Abstract
The present study aims at exploring the under-investigated interface between SA and L2 phonological development by assessing the impact of a 3-month SA programme on the pronunciation of a group of 23 Catalan/Spanish learners of English (NNSs) by means of phonetic measures and perceived FA measures. 6 native speakers (NSs) in an exchange programme in Spain provided baseline data for comparison purposes. The participants were recorded performing a reading aloud task before (pre-test) and immediately after (post-test) the SA. Another group of 37 proficient non-native listeners, also bilingual in Catalan/Spanish and trained in English phonetics, assessed the NNSs' speech samples for degree of FA. Phonetic measures consisted of pronunciation accuracy scores computed by counting pronunciation errors (phonemic deletions, insertions and substitutions, and stress misplacement). Measures of perceived FA were obtained with two experiments. In experiment 1, the listeners heard a random presentation of the sentences produced by the NSs and by the NNSs at pre-test and post-test and rated them on a 7-point Likert scale for degree of FA (1 = "native" , 7 = "heavy foreign accent"). In experiment 2, they heard paired pre-test/post-test sentences (i.e. produced by the same NNS at pre-test and post-test) and indicated which of the two sounded more native-like. Then, they stated their judgment confidence level on a 7-point scale (1 = "unsure", 7 = "sure"). Results indicated a slight, non-significant improvement in perceived FA after SA. However, a significant decrease was found in pronunciation accuracy scores after SA. Measures of pronunciation accuracy and FA ratings were also found to be strongly correlated. These findings are discussed in light of the often reported mixed results as regards pronunciation improvement during short-term immersion.

1. Introduction

A large body of research into second language (L2) phonological acquisition has analysed the phenomenon of foreign accent (FA), which is the result of perceived differences between the acoustic-phonetic properties of L2 speech and those characterising native speakers' norms: "Listeners hear foreign accents when they detect

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divergences from English phonetic norms along a wide range of segmental and suprasegmental (i.e., prosodic) dimensions" (Flege 1995:233). Most FA research has explored the perception of accented speech by native listeners, who have been found to assess accentedness reliably regardless of training or experience (Brennan and Brennan 1981, Flege and Fletcher 1992). These studies have usually been conducted in learning contexts of long-term immersion in the L2 community, and in connection with variables that have been identified as influencing perceived degree of FA, most notably age of onset of L2 learning and L2 experience.

Despite the traditional use of native listeners, a few studies have also analysed the perception of accented speech by non-native listeners. For instance, Flege (1988) found that two groups of Chinese non-native listeners were able to judge degree of FA in Chinese-accented English sentences following the same response pattern observed for native listeners, with judgements from the most experienced Chinese group more closely resembling native listeners' judgements. Similarly, in Mackey et al. (2006), proficient Arabic listeners provided FA judgements of Italian-accented speech in English which were strongly correlated with native listeners' judgements. These findings extended those by Flege 1988, as they suggested that non-native listeners are able to reliably assess accentedness in speech samples from L2 learners even in the absence of a shared L1 background between listeners and learners. More studies have supported the finding that listeners with different L1s may share a similar response to accented speech. Munro et al. (2006) found moderate to high correlations in FA scores, as well as in comprehensibility and intelligibility scores, provided by four different groups of native listeners and non-native listeners with varying L1s who assessed English speech samples with different accents. Derwing and Munro (in press) also obtained high correlations between native listeners' ratings of accented English and ratings from a group of proficient non-native listeners with different L1 backgrounds, concluding that both groups of listeners may be equally reliable to assess L2 learners' speech. The results of these studies, therefore, indicate that non-native listeners who are proficient enough in the L2 they are asked to evaluate can provide reliable FA judgements which closely match those of native listeners. However, these few studies analysing the perception of accented speech by non-native listeners are usually conducted also in long-term immersion contexts, rather than in shorter periods of immersion, such as those typical of Study Abroad learning contexts.

Study Abroad (SA) is a second language learning context which can be defined as a combination of language-based and/or content-based classroom instruction together with out-of-class interaction in the native speech community (Freed 1995:5). SA programmes have become very popular, for instance, in Europe and America, due to the common sense and long held assumption that immersion in the L2 community results in substantially enhanced L2 knowledge, as such immersion is assumed to offer plenty of opportunities for interaction with native speakers and exposure to a great amount of quality input. Consequently, SA programmes have been encouraged by language instructors and academic administrators and have come to play an important role in governments' L2 learning policies, as a means to promote multilingualism in response to an increasingly globalised international context (see, e.g., Kinginger 2009 and Llanes 2011 for a review of official figures and language learning policies). An increasing body of research has been subsequently devoted to this learning context, in order to account

for the nature of the study abroad experience and empirically assess its impact on L2 learners' linguistic development (see research overviews in DeKeyser 2007; DuFon and Churchill 2006; Freed 1995). For the most part, research has found evidence for a positive effect of the study abroad experience on learners' L2 development, yet actual linguistic gains appear to be related to individual and context variables, such as contact patterns while abroad, L1 and L2 use, L2 exposure, onset level of proficiency, or length of stay, as well as to aspects of programme design (see Pérez-Vidal and Juan-Garau 2011 for a characterisation of SA). A complex picture results of the interaction of all these factors, with findings sometimes providing inconclusive or conflicting evidence, as the benefits of SA are not always clear for all language skills, or the gains reported may fall short of the high expectations arising out of the above-mentioned widespread belief in the substantial effects of study abroad immersion.

Research has analysed the impact of SA on different linguistic domains, and usually in contrast with formal instruction (FI) in at home (AH) institutions. Results have provided consistent evidence of the beneficial role of SA for lexical improvement (Collentine 2004; Llanes and Muñoz 2009), as well as for writing (Pérez-Vidal and Juan-Garau 2009, 2011). Sociolinguistic skills have been the object of considerable research, with studies examining, for instance, communication strategies (Lafford 1995) or pragmatic competence (Barron 2006), and which have also yielded results supporting the positive effect of SA on these areas. However, mixed results have been found for grammar. Results by Collentine 2004 showed a superiority for AH learners over those who went abroad, whereas the opposite was true in Howard (2005). Most SA research has focused on the development of oral skills, traditionally considered to be the linguistic domain most likely to improve as a result of SA, and research findings in general have supported this view. Some studies have analysed the impact of SA on overall L2 speaking proficiency (Brecht et al. 1995, Segalowitz and Freed 2004), and extensive research has also been carried out to analyse gains in L2 learners' fluency (Freed et al. 2004, Juan-Garau and Pérez-Vidal 2007; Trenchs-Parera 2009, Valls-Ferrer 2011). Nevertheless, studies focusing on specific aspects of phonological development in learners' speech production are scarce.

Studies of phonological development during SA generally focus on the differential effects of SA vs FI on production accuracy, and have yielded mixed results. Díaz-Campos (2004) reported a positive effect of both learning contexts on the production of Spanish plosives in two groups of L1 English students of Spanish, although development towards native-like patterns was found to be stronger in the FI group. Contrarily, Díaz-Campos (2006) observed greater gains in the production of Spanish consonants for the SA group as compared with the FI group. Mora (2008) examined the production of VOT in English voiceless plosives by a group of Spanish/Catalan bilingual learners after a two-term FI period at their home university and after a three-month SA term abroad. He found no effect of FI on VOT duration, whereas an increase was observed after SA, although non-significant. However, in a similar study analysing English vowels, significant improvement in production was found after FI, but not after SA (Pérez-Vidal et al. 2011). Højen (2003) found better perceived foreign accent scores after SA as a function of length (average=7.1 months), but production at the segmental level did not improve significantly. Avello (2011) and Avello et al. (in press) reported minor gains in

perceived FA scores and no significant improvement in segmental production accuracy, respectively.

The present study thus explores the under-investigated impact of SA on L2 learners' phonological development by assessing the impact of a 3-month SA programme on the pronunciation of a group of 23 bilingual Catalan/Spanish learners of English by means of both phonetic measures of pronunciation accuracy and perceived FA measures by non-native listeners. The relationship between both types of measures is also explored. Our objectives are thus the following:

- To explore the effect of SA on L2 learners' phonological development (measured by pronunciation accuracy scores and FA scores).
- To explore the relationship between the phonetic properties of L2 learners' speech (objective measures) and perceived degree of FA (subjective measures).

2. Method

2.1. Participants

2.1.1. Speakers

This study is part of a larger, state-funded project called SALA (Study Abroad and Language Acquisition), which aims at uncovering the effects of a short, 3-month SA period on the linguistic development of university level L2 English learners. Data were collected from a group of non-native speakers (NNSs) studying Translation and Interpreting in Barcelona, Spain (N=23; 20 females and 3 males). Their age ranged from 17 to 21 (M=18.8). At the time of data collection, none of them reported suffering any speech impairment. They all started to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) in AH institutions around the same age (8 years), as established by the curriculum in the Spanish educational system, thus sharing a similar age of onset of L2 learning (AOL). Their acquisition of English took place basically through classroom instruction (i.e., as a FL in their native speech community), sharing also a similar exposure to English of between 700-800 hours.

As part of their Translation and Interpreting degree, these learners had to specialise in two FLs, English being one of them, and the other language being either French or German. They had thus a similar multilingual profile, since they were all early bilinguals in both Spanish and Catalan, studying English and another FL. They all had a compulsory 3-month study abroad term in an English-speaking country at the beginning of their second academic year. The English proficiency level required to take part in this SA programme was equivalent to a B2 (upper-intermediate) in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Speech samples from 6 native speakers (NSs) of English served as baseline data to assess the learners' performance. These NSs were also part of the SALA corpus. None of them reported any speech dysfunction. They were young university students enrolled in an exchange programme in Spain (i.e., they were learners of L2 Spanish), with an age

range similar to that of the NNSs. Both groups of speakers had, therefore, a similar profile, and consequently their data were highly comparable.

2.1.2. Listeners

A group of proficient non-native listeners were recruited as judges (NNJs, *N*=37) to assess the NNSs' degree of FA. Their linguistic profile was similar to that of the NNSs, i.e., they were also bilingual speakers of Spanish and Catalan studying English as a FL. They were taking a degree in English Studies in Barcelona, which involved attending Linguistics and Literature content courses taught in English, and by the time of data collection they had completed two courses on English phonetics and phonology. These courses included a comprehensive description of English segmental and suprasegmental properties, phonetic and phonological transcription, and pronunciation training, as well as training in the use of speech analysis software (Praat). The courses were designed to specifically tap on the problems facing L1 speakers of Spanish/Catalan when learning English. They had, therefore, a proficient level of English, a sound knowledge of English phonetics, and were highly familiar with the accented speech they were asked to judge, as they shared the non-native speakers' L1s. They performed two listening experiments (see 2.3.2. below) and completed a questionnaire tapping on their linguistic profile and their degree of familiarity with different native and non-native English accents. They did these tasks for course credit.

2.2. Speech samples

Speech samples were elicited by means of a reading aloud (RA) task in which the participants read the text *The North Wind and the Sun* (NWS, see Appendix 1). This is a standard, 114-word text of which different versions exist in different languages (e.g. French version: Fougeron and Smith 1999; Spanish version: Martínez-Celdrán et al. 2003; RP British English: Roach 2004), and which has been used to document differences characterising English pronunciation in different dialects or by foreign speakers (see Schneider et al. 2004). The fact that the text was the same for all the subjects facilitated contrasting analyses, as the same vowel and consonantal items appeared in all the speech samples, and in the same contexts. In order to assess the effects of the 3-month SA, data were collected prior to the students' departure (pre-test), and immediately after their return (post-test).

The participants were recorded one at a time. They were instructed to read the text first silently on their own, and then aloud at a normal speaking rate to be recorded. They were told that they would be asked a question about the content of the text, which they were to answer as quickly as possible after reading it aloud. This was done so as to draw the participants' attention to the content, in such a way that they were not aware that the focus of interest was pronunciation, and with the aim of obtaining more natural sounding data. The participants read the text out loud, and immediately after finishing, they were asked the following question: *Was the North Wind stronger than the sun?*, which they answered by stating *yes* or *no*.

Data from the NNSs were recorded in sound-attenuated cabins using analogue tape recording technology, and were subsequently digitised in .wav format at 22,050 Hz, with 16-bit resolution. Data from the NSs were digitally recorded in professional sound-proof cabins, using the Pro Tools digital audio platform. The digital files were saved in .wav format at 44,100 Hz (later down sampled to 22,050 Hz), 16-bit resolution.

A sentence from the RA task was selected (see Appendix 2) which presented several segmental and suprasegmental properties that were likely to result in accented pronunciation for our L2 learners (see pronunciation errors in 2.3.1. below). The selected sentence was extracted from each participant's recordings, and the resulting files were edited and normalised for intensity at 70.0 dB in order to create the stimuli for the listening experiments. Data manipulation was carried out with Praat 5.1 (Boersma and Weenink 2009).

2.3. Data analyses

2.3.1. Pronunciation accuracy scores

The NNSs' production accuracy was assessed by means of a phonetic analysis (Brennan and Brenna 1981, Trofimovich et al. 2009), which was conducted by the first author on the waveform and corresponding spectrogram of each speech sample. Pronunciation errors were identified and accuracy scores were subsequently computed by counting the total number of mispronunciations in each NNS' pre-test and post-test speech samples. These accuracy scores served as objective, phonetic measures of the NNSs' speech production development, and included mispronunciations affecting segmental articulation (deletions, insertions, and phonological substitutions), as well as stress misplacement. Presented below are some examples of such pronunciation errors:

a) Deletions:
   -deletion of [l] in *warm(l)y* (one-segment deletion)
   -deletion of final syllable in *travel(er)* (multiple-segment deletion)
b) Insertions:
   -insertion of an extra vowel [e] in *immediat[e]ly*
   -insertion of a velar consonant at the beginning of *[ŋ]warmly*
c) Substitutions:
   -substitution of bilabial approximant [β] for velar fricative [v] in *traveller*
   -substitution of dental plosive [d] for dental fricative [ð] in *then*
   -substitution of open vowel [a] for close back vowel [ɔ] in *warmly*
   -substitution of dental fricative [ð] for alveolar plosive [d] in *immediately*
   -substitution of velar fricative [x] for glottal fricative [h] in *his*
d) Stress misplacement:
   -stress shift to the penultimate syllable in multisyllabic words: *tra'veller* for *'traveller*, *imme'diately* for *i'mmediately*.

2.3.2. Perceived FA measures

Perceived FA measures consisted of subjective listeners' judgements obtained from the proficient NNJs by means of two listening experiments: a rating task and a paired-comparison task. These experiments provided us with behavioural measures of the perceived degree of FA in the NNSs' pronunciation prior to and immediately after SA. They were self-paced tasks created and run with Praat software (Boersma and Weenink 2009, version 5.1). Both listening experiments were performed during the same session (equivalent to a class activity within the NNJs' course on English phonetics). The rating was conducted first, then the paired-comparison. The whole session lasted around an hour.

a) Experiment 1: Rating
The rating experiment (Munro et al. 2006, Derwing et al. 1998) provided a holistic measurement of perceived FA changes throughout time. The NNJs heard a randomised presentation of the speech samples produced by the NNSs (pre-test and post-test) and the NSs (baseline). Their task was to rate the degree of FA in the oral samples by means of a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 stood for "native" and 7 stood for "heavy foreign accent". They were instructed to make use of the whole scale. Each stimulus was repeated twice for a total of 104 trials per judge (23 NNSs x 2 times x 2 repetitions + 6 NSs x 2 repetitions), making up a total of 3,848 judgements (104 trials x 37 judges). 10 practice trials were presented before the actual experiment in order to familiarise the listeners with the procedure, allowing them also to check the volume level.

b) Experiment 2: Paired-Comparison
It was expected that the paired-comparison experiment would provide a more fine-grained global assessment of the effect of SA on the NNSs' degree of accentedness, since this methodology consists of directly comparing two items produced by the same speaker at two different testing times. Previous research analysing L2 speech production (Riney and Flege 1998, Bradlow et al. 1999, Højen 2003) has reported it as very sensitive to slight changes in pronunciation of the kind that are most likely to occur after a short SA programme.

First, the NNJs had to decide which sentence was more native-like out of two paired sentences (i.e., produced by the same NNS). Then, they stated their confidence level on a 7-point scale (1="unsure" - 7="sure"). For each NNS, there was a pre-test/post-test trial and a post-test/pre-test trial. The order of presentation was counterbalanced across trials, which were randomised. There were 46 trials per judge (2 orders x 23 NNSs), making up a total of 1,702 judgements (46 trials x 37 judges). As was the case with experiment 1, experiment 2 was also preceded by a few practice trials.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Pronunciation accuracy scores

Figure 1 below graphically presents the accuracy scores obtained by the NNSs at pre-test (M = 3.95, SD = 2.75) and at post-test (M = 3.30, SD = 2.65). The number of pronunciation errors ranged from 0 to 9 at both testing times, with considerable inter-subject variability, as indicated by the relatively high standard deviation. A paired-samples t-test revealed significant gains in pronunciation accuracy after SA [$t(22)$ = 2.135, p = .044)], i.e., the NNSs produced significantly fewer pronunciation errors after SA than they did before their departure, the eta squared (η^2 = .17) indicating a large effect size. These results suggest that the 3-month SA had a large positive impact on the NNSs' phonological production accuracy, allowing them to significantly improve their segmental articulation and stress production.

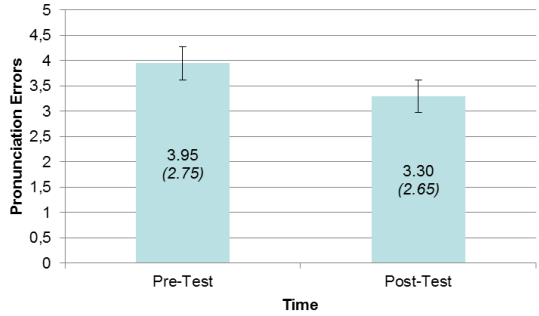

Figure 1: Mean number of pronunciation errors produced by the NNSs before and after SA. *SD* in parentheses.

3.2. Perceived FA scores

3.2.1. Experiment 1: Rating

The NNJs used a 7-point scale to rate the degree of FA in the speech samples presented to them (1="native", 7="heavy foreign accent"). Preliminary reliability analyses were conducted to explore consistency in the NNJs' ratings, and they yielded both high intra-rater and inter-rater coefficients. Regarding intra-rater reliability, a strong correlation was found in the judge-based FA scores assigned at each of the two rating repetitions (r = .855, p < .001), which indicates that each judge's first and second repetition ratings were very similar. Inter-rater reliability was examined by means of an intra-class correlation (ICC) analysis which yielded a high Cronbach's Alpha (.996), indicating a high degree of agreement among the judges.

Figure 2 below illustrates the mean FA ratings assigned by the NNJs to the NNSs (pre-test and post-test) and to the NSs (baseline). As expected, the ratings for the NS group were very close to 1 (M = 1.29, SD = .17), indicating that the NNJs successfully identified the native speakers of English, and rated them accordingly. The NNSs' ratings were considerably outside the range of the NSs' ratings both at pre-test and post-test, and significantly differed from them at the two testing times, as shown by independent-samples t-tests ($p < .001$). There was a slight improvement in the NNSs' FA scores after SA, since the perceived degree of accentedness decreased from pre-test (M = 4.88, SD = 1.28) to post-test (M = 4.68, SD = 1.20). This decrease, however, failed to reach significance [$t(22) = 1.306$, $p > .05$]. These results seem to indicate a positive trend of development towards less accented speech, suggesting that SA might have had some impact on the NNSs' degree of accentedness, although statistically non-significant.

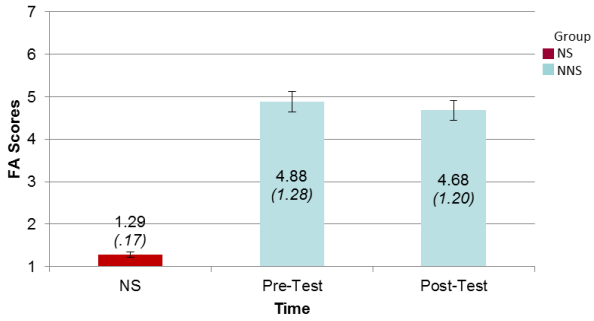

Figure 2: Mean FA ratings (Experiment 1) for NNSs (Pre-Test and Post-Test) and NSs (baseline). *SD* in parentheses.

3.2.2. Experiment 2: Paired-Comparison

The paired-comparison experiment complemented the rating experiment, as it was assumed to yield more fine-grained measures of the global degree of accentedness perceived by the NNJs in the learners' speech samples. The combination of the FA scores obtained with both experiments was thus expected to provide us with the necessary information to better evaluate possible changes in the NNSs' speech production.

In the paired-comparison experiment, the NNJs were asked to directly compare the learners' pre-test and post-test speech samples. The NNJs first had to indicate which of the two versions was better (i.e. more native-like), and then used a 7-point scale to state their degree of confidence (1="unsure" - 7="sure"). The data thus obtained were codified as follows: a negative sign was assigned to the selected confidence scale value when the pre-test version was chosen as better, and a positive sign was assigned when the post-test version was preferred. This resulted in scores ranging between -7 and 7, which were further recoded into values between -6 and 6 (see figure 3 below), with positive values indicating that a majority of post-test samples had been preferred as more native-like, and pointing, therefore, to an improvement in speech production after SA.

The mean global FA scores are presented in figure 3. Individual scores ranged between -2.05 and 4.42, indicating large inter-subject variability. 11 out of the 23 learners obtained positive scores (ranging from .29 to 4.42), although in most cases scores were below 2. The positive group mean (.36), although only slightly above 0, can be interpreted as a slight improvement in the NNSs' degree of accentedness, in a similar way to the results of the rating experiment. There was, therefore, a parallelism between the two listening experiments, in the sense that they both seemed to point to a positive, although small effect of SA on the NNSs' perceived degree of FA. These results also matched the gains observed in the analysis of the pronunciation accuracy scores.

Subject	Mean
arri	-.41 (3.68)
begi	-.33 (2.70)
caam	1.53 (3.64)
clfa	-.81 (3.38)
coar	-.22 (3.52)
crga	1.17 (3.60)
esam	-.74 (3.02)
gape	-2.05 (3.77)
gaur	-.31 (3.33)
giro	2.12 (2.95)
gore	.60 (3.21)
goro	1.01 (3.28)
izga	2.91 (3.34)
jigo	4.42 (1.60)
lele	-1.27 (4.05)
miod	-1.38 (3.72)
moll	3.99 (1.41)
paar	-1.63 (4.08)
pare	-1.50 (2.94)
ques	-1.42 (3.66)
rira	1.35 (3.34)
vamo	.91 (3.78)
vipl	.29 (3.01)
Total	**.36**

Scores:

6 to 1= improvement in pronunciation
-6 to -1= no improvement
0= no change.

Data codification: negative value assigned to confidence scale number for a judgement when Pre-Test was chosen as better; positive value assigned when Post-Test was chosen as better.

Values between -7 and 7, recoded to obtain values between -6 and 6:

-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-6	**-5**	**-4**	**-3**	**-2**	**-1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
No improvement						No change		Improvement					

Figure 3: Individual and group mean FA scores for NNSs (Experiment 2). 11 subjects (highlighted in red) obtained positive scores, signalling improvement after SA. The group mean (.36) was also positive.

Taken together, these findings suggest that increased experience with the L2 in the context of SA was beneficial for the learners' pronunciation development, as measures of pronunciation accuracy and perceived degree of FA both point towards improved performance after SA. Such an improvement can be explained on the basis of the excellent opportunities for oral practice available while abroad, as the learners take advantage of the exposure to varied and authentic L2 input, and may engage themselves in meaningful interactions in real communicative situations which may lead to useful feedback from native speakers. The positive albeit moderate effect of SA on pronunciation found in this study is also in accordance with the results of most SA research, which report significant gains in other linguistic skills such as vocabulary (Collentine 2004), writing (Pérez-Vidal and Juan-Garau 2009) and especially oral fluency (Perez-Vidal and Juan-Garau 2007, Trenchs-Parera 2009; Valls-Ferrer 2011).

Interestingly though, when it comes to phonological development, the scant existing research has not provided consistent evidence supporting a large effect of SA on improved pronunciation, despite the positive outcomes shown in other oral abilities, and the fact that oral production is assumed to be one of the most practiced skills while abroad. Hence, our findings regarding improved accuracy in pronunciation contrast with previous research which has mostly focused on the analysis of a limited number of specific vowel and/or consonantal L2 sounds (Avello et al. in press, Díaz-Campos 2004, Pérez-Vidal et al. 2011), and has failed to show a substantial impact of SA on segmental production. These divergences may be attributable to the differences in the selected object of study. Instead of analysing a limited set of discrete units, the present study has targeted a wider range of phonological features, by looking into various phenomena at the segmental and suprasegmental level, including phonemic deletions, insertions and substitutions, as well as stress implementation, which affect not only discrete units, but also syllable structure.

A slight positive impact of SA was found when analysing perceived degree of accentedness, although in this case the improvement was non-significant and suggested no large effect of SA on this domain. This is very much in line with previous FA research within the context of SA. Højen (2003) found a significant improvement in his participants' FA ratings after SA, but when exploring individual differences, he obtained a positive correlation between foreign accent ratings and length of stay (average 7.1 months); improvement was observed for those learners with longer SA (of up to 11 months), whereas learners with 3 to 4 months of SA did not improve significantly. He concluded that length of stay was an important factor for improvement of perceived FA to take place. Similarly, Avello (2011) also failed to find significant improvement in FA scores for a group of L2 English learners who had spent a 3-month period abroad. These findings may be explained by the fact that listeners seem to rate speech samples for accentedness holistically (Magen 1998), paying attention not only to aspects of segmental production or stress, but also to other suprasegmental or prosodic properties of speech, e.g. rhythm, intonation, pauses, or connected speech phenomena. In this sense, a 3-month programme may be too short for substantial improvement to accrue in these other areas of pronunciation.

3.3. Relationship between accuracy scores and FA ratings

The relationship between the phonetic and FA measures was explored by means of Pearson correlations. A strong correlation was found between the two measures at pre-test (r=.814) and post-test (r=.730), and both correlations were significant at the .01 level (p<.001). This strong correlation points to a relationship between accuracy scores and FA scores, in such a way that the production by the NNSs of fewer pronunciation errors resulted in the perception by the NNJs of a lower degree of accentedness, whereas the larger the number of pronunciation errors, the higher the degree of accentedness perceived. These results are in line with previous research which has established a correlation between perceived accentedness in L2 speech samples and the phonetic characteristics of those speech samples in terms of divergences from native-like pronunciation patterns (Brennan and Brennan 1981, Magen 1998). Despite the fact that

improvement in FA scores did not reach significance, it seems that our non-native listeners were nonetheless able to perceive the decrease in pronunciation errors between pre-test and post-test, i.e., they can be considered as "good judges" who correctly performed their task. On the other hand, given their ability to perceive these differences in pronunciation, and the fact that they were also phonetically trained, it is likely that they also focused on other phonetic-acoustic properties of the speech samples, for instance, at the suprasegmental level mentioned above, which might not have differed substantially after SA, resulting in the differences in significance found for the accuracy scores as compared with the FA ratings.

4. Summary and Conclusions

This study aimed at furthering our understanding of the impact SA may have on L2 learners' pronunciation development. Although the few existing studies in this field suggest that SA does not substantially change learners' pronunciation patterns, our findings indicate that SA may, indeed, result in gains for this specific area, even after a short-term immersion programme of only 3 months.

Phonetic measures of pronunciation accuracy suggested a large impact of short-term SA on production at the level of segmental articulation, as well as at the suprasegmental level of stress implementation, since a significant decrease of pronunciation errors was found in the learners' speech production after SA. However, there was no evidence of a large effect of SA on global FA scores; a positive trend seemed to emerge towards less accented speech, but it was not strong and was far from significant.

Despite the differences observed between the two types of measures regarding strength of the SA impact, phonetic accuracy scores and perceived FA ratings were shown to be strongly correlated. This strong correlation points to a relationship between both types of measures, which is interpreted in terms of the proficient non-native listeners' ability to perceive the phonetic characteristics of the speech samples, namely, the decrease in pronunciation errors between pre-test and post-test, assigning worse FA ratings to speech samples containing a larger number of mispronunciations.

To summarise, it seems that SA offers the kind of input and practice that may be conducive to improvement in pronunciation (as is the case in other linguistic areas, specially of oral performance) for those learners who are able to draw on the contact opportunities and the exposure to massive amount of quality input that characterise this learning context. At least our findings regarding pronunciation accuracy seem to indicate so. But these results should be taken with caution, as the learners' FA scores failed to improve significantly or to even approach native-like scores after SA, notwithstanding the significant decrease in pronunciation errors. This may be an indication that substantial improvement is more likely to accrue at the segmental level and regarding stress, but it is possible that other areas of pronunciation not analysed in our study, such as rhythm or intonation, may not be affected by SA, or may require longer periods of immersion to benefit from the SA experience.

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Appendix I

English version of the *North Wind and the Sun* text used for the Reading Aloud task (from the *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association*, IPA 1999:39), together with the instructions given to the participants.

READING ALOUD TASK
You will be asked a question about the following text.
Read the text twice. First, silently on your own, and then aloud for the examiner to record.
Then, answer the question the examiner will ask you as quickly as possible.

The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which of them was stronger, when a traveller came along wrapped in a warm cloak. They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveller take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other.
Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew, the more closely did the traveller fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt.
Then the Sun shone out warmly, and immediately the traveller took off his cloak. And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.

Appendix II

Sentence used to create the stimuli for the listening experiments together with the corresponding phonetic transcription (standard British English):

Then	the	sun	shone	out	warmly	and	immediately	the	traveller	took	off	his	cloak
ˈðen	ðə	ˈsʌn	ˈʃɒn	aʊt	ˈwɔmli	ən(d)	ɪˈmiːdjətli	ðə	ˈtɻ̊æv(ə)lə	tʊk	ˈɒf	(h)ɪz̩	kl̩əʊk

ENGLISH READ BY JAPANESE PHONETIC CORPUS: AN INTERIM REPORT

TAKEHIKO MAKINO[1]
RIKA AOKI[2]
Chuo University[1]
The University of Tokyo[2]

Abstract
The primary purpose of this paper is to explain the procedure of developing the English Read by Japanese Phonetic Corpus. A series of preliminary studies (Makino 2007, 2008, 2009) made it clear that a phonetically-transcribed computerized corpus of Japanese speakers' English speech was worth making. Because corpus studies on L2 pronunciation have been very rare, we intend to fill this gap. For the corpus building, the 1,902 sentence files in the English Read by Japanese speech database scored for their individual sounds by American English teachers trained in phonetics in Minematsu, et al. (2002b) have been chosen. The files were pre-processed with the Penn Phonetics Lab Forced Aligner to generate Praat TextGrids where target English words and phonemes were forced-aligned to the speech files. Two additional tiers (actual phones and substitutions) were added to those TextGrids, the actual phones were manually transcribed and the other tiers were aligned to that tier. Then the TextGrids were imported to ELAN, which has a much better searching functionality. So far, fewer than 10% of the files have been completed and the corpus-building is still in its initial stage. The secondary purpose of this paper is to report on some findings from the small part of the corpus that has been completed. Although it is still premature to talk of any tendency in the corpus, it is worth noting that we have found evidence of phenomena which are not readily predicted from L1 phonological transfer, such as the spirantization of voiceless plosives, which is not considered normal in the pronunciation of Japanese.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explain the procedures in developing the English Read by Japanese (henceforth ERJ) Phonetic Corpus and to report on some findings from the small part of the corpus that has been completed.

A series of preliminary studies (Makino 2007, 2008, 2009) made it clear that a phonetically-transcribed computerized corpus of Japanese speakers' English speech was worth making. So the first author began building the ERJ Phonetic Corpus by making use of ERJ speech database (Minematsu, et al. 2002a), which he also used in the preliminary studies.

Corpus studies on L2 pronunciation have been very rare (cf. Gut 2009, Meng, et al. 2009). We intend to fill this gap with this study.

2. The ERJ speech database

The ERJ speech database was collected mainly in order to help CALL system development (Minematsu, et al. 2002a). 807 different sentences and 1,009 different word sets were read aloud by 100 male and 100 female speakers in 20 different recording sites in Japan. All of the sites were universities and all the speakers were students in those universities.

Each sentence and each word were read by approximately 12 speakers and 20 speakers respectively of each sex. In total, the ERJ speech database consists of more than 70,000 speech files: 24,744 sentence files and 45,495 word-set files.

2.1 ERJ recording procedure

The following explanation of the recording procedure of the ERJ speech database is based on Minematsu, et al. (2002). Before recording, speakers were asked to practice pronouncing the sentences and words on the given sheets. In the practice, they were permitted to refer to the reading sheets with phonemic and prosodic notation.

The phonemic symbols used in the training sheets are based on those of the TIMIT database and the CMU pronunciation dictionary. The model of the pronunciation is therefore Mainstream American English. The actual symbols used are shown below with their IPA equivalents:

Consonants: P /p/, T /t/, K /k/, B /b/, D /d/, G /ɡ/, CH /tʃ/, JH /dʒ/, F /f/, TH /θ/, S /s/, SH /ʃ/, HH /h/, V /v/, DH /ð/, Z /z/, ZH /ʒ/, M /m/, N /n/, NG /ŋ/, L /l/, R /r/, W /w/, Y /j/
Vowels: IY /i/, IH /ɪ/, EH /ɛ/, EY /eɪ/, AE /æ/, AA /ɑ/, AW /aʊ/, AY /aɪ/, AH /ʌ/, AO /ɔ/, OY /ɔɪ/, OW /oʊ/, UH /ʊ/, UW /u/, ER /ɝ/, AXR /ɚ/, AX /ə/

Each vowel was specified for degrees of stress: “1” for primary, “2” for secondary and “0” for unstressed.

Since the IPA is used for transcribing pronunciations in English dictionaries in Japan, the above set of symbols was unfamiliar to the Japanese subjects. In order to ensure that the speakers understood these symbols correctly, a website was prepared where they could listen to word examples for each phonemic symbol. On that website, they also could listen to sample sentences with prosodic notations (explained below) so that they could understand what those notations meant.

However, the degree to which the speakers made use of the learning materials was entirely up to them; it is possible that some of the speakers were more influenced by spelling rather than phonemic notation.

Examples of sentences in the training sheets are shown below:[1]

S1_0001 This was easy for us.
[DH IH1 S] [W AA1 Z] [IY1 Z IY0] [F AO1 R] [AH1 S]
S1_0002 Is this seesaw safe ?
[IH1 Z] [DH IH1 S] [S IY1 S AO2] [S EY1 F]
S1_0003 Those thieves stole thirty jewels.
[DH OW1 Z] [TH IY1 V Z] [S T OW1 L] [TH ER1 T IY0] [JH UW1 AX0 L Z]

The phonemic notations were removed in the sheets used in the recording sessions, because it was inferred that reading sentences with phonemic notation could induce unnatural pronunciation.

Examples of the sentences with rhythmic specifications are shown below:

S1_0106 Come to tea with John.
/ + - + - @ /
[K AH1 M] [T UW1] [T IY1] [W IH1 DH] [JH AA1 N]
S1_0107 Come to tea with John and Mary.
/ + - @ / - + - @ -/
[K AH1 M] [T UW1] [T IY1] [W IH1 DH] [JH AA1 N] [AE1 N D] [M EH1 R IY0]

"@" stands for nuclear stress, "+" for non-nuclear primary/secondary stress, and "-" for unstressed syllables. Here again, the phonemic notations were removed from the reading sheets for the recording sessions, while the rhythmic specifications were retained.

In the recording sessions, speakers were asked to read aloud sentences and words on the given sheets repeatedly until they were sure that they pronounced them correctly. If they made errors on the same sentences three times, they were allowed to skip them and go on to the next one.

After recordings, each speech file was checked by the technical staff of the recording site. If they found any technical errors in sentences or words, they were recorded again.

Minematsu, et al. (2002a) claims that with this procedure, the pronunciation errors in the database are supposed to have been made purely because of the speakers' lack of skills in English pronunciation and not because of their lack of knowledge about phonological forms of individual words or spelling-to-pronunciation correspondences.

[1] It is evident from these examples that different degrees of "sentence accents" and "weak form" pronunciations of function words were not taken into consideration when preparing the phonemic notation. The same is true for the "rhythm-specified" and "intonation-specified" sentences discussed below. This could have led the speakers to pronounce the sentences using "citation form" for every word.

3. Corpus building procedure

3.1 Selection of speech files

Obviously, it was unpractical to use the whole database for the corpus building because of its sheer size. Fortunately, however, 9,494 speech files have been selected and given pronunciation proficiency scores by American teachers trained in phonetics in another study (Minematsu, et al. 2002b). The selected files are grouped into five sets:

Sentence files scored for their individual sounds: 1,902
Sentence files scored for their rhythm: 952
Sentence files scored for their intonation: 952
Word files scored for their individual sounds: 3,786
Word files scored for their stress pattern: 1,902

In the ERJ Phonetic Corpus, we have chosen to use only the first group, i.e., the 1,902 sentence files scored for their individual sounds for transcription. The reason for this choice is that the other sentence groups were specified for their rhythm or intonation, which could have distorted what Japanese speakers normally do when they read English aloud.

Word sets have not been chosen because we are not interested in the pronunciation of individual words.

3.2 Transcription

To reduce the effort of manual transcription, the files were pre-processed by the Penn Phonetics Lab Forced Aligner (Yuan and Liberman 2008; http://www.ling.upenn.edu/phonetics/p2fa/), which produced forced aligned Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2011) TextGrids for each speech file with two tiers: the "word" tier and "phone" (=phoneme) tier.

The p2fa is designed for Mainstream American English speech, so it was inevitable that the Japanese speakers' speech resulted in transcriptions with numerous errors.

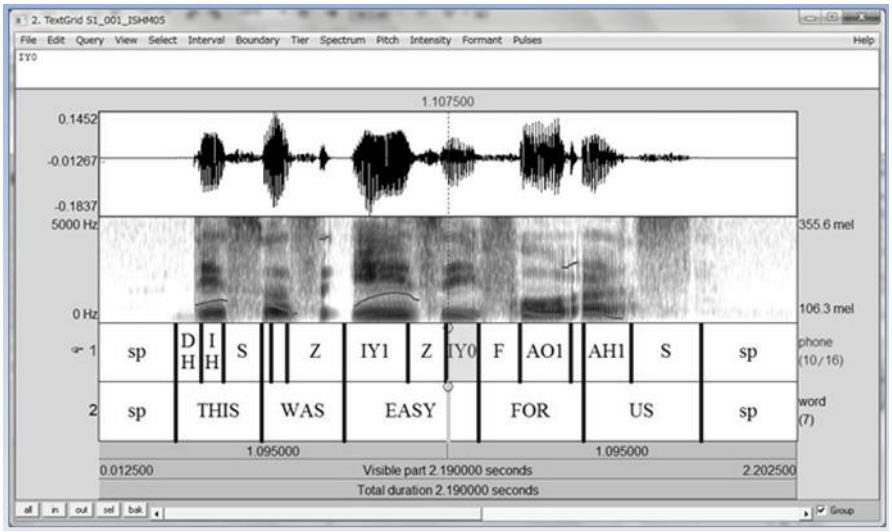

Figure 1: An example of a TextGrid output from the Penn Phonetics Lab Forced Aligner shown on Praat.

Then, using Praat software, two tiers (actual phones > "actual" and substitutions > "subst") were added to the TextGrids and "word" and "phone" tiers were re-interpreted as target words and target phonemes respectively.

The actual phones were manually transcribed, and boundaries of target phones and target words were manually aligned with the actual phones. The second author of this paper was involved at this very important stage.

The substitution tier is the same as the actual phone tier, except that consecutive actual phones were merged into one unit if they corresponded to a single target phoneme. This tier is only necessary for searching purposes; the duration information of each phone is retained in the actual phone tier.

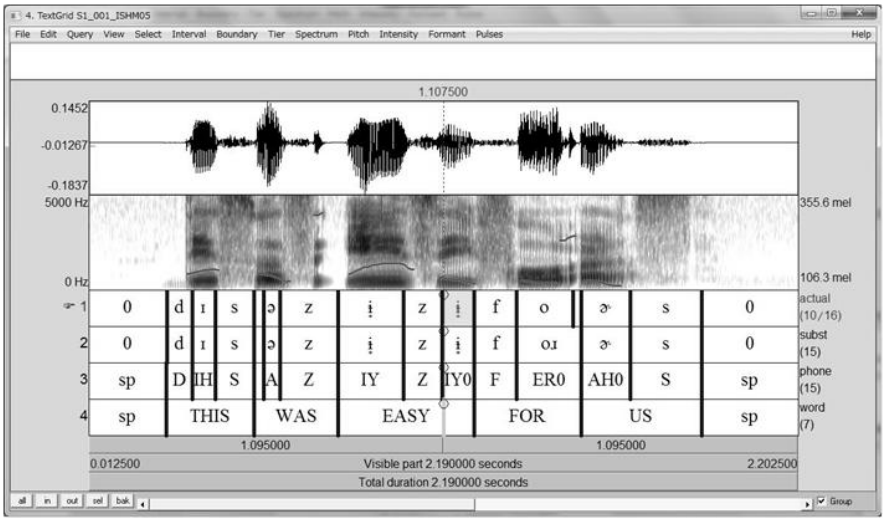

Figure 2: An example of a re-formatted and corrected TextGrid shown on Praat.

The re-formatted and corrected TextGrids were then imported to ELAN software (Sloetjes and Wittenburg 2008; http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan/), which has a much better searching functionality than Praat. The resulting .eaf files and the original .wav files are the complete individual data of the corpus. So far, fewer than 10% of the files have been completed and the corpus-building is still in its initial stage.

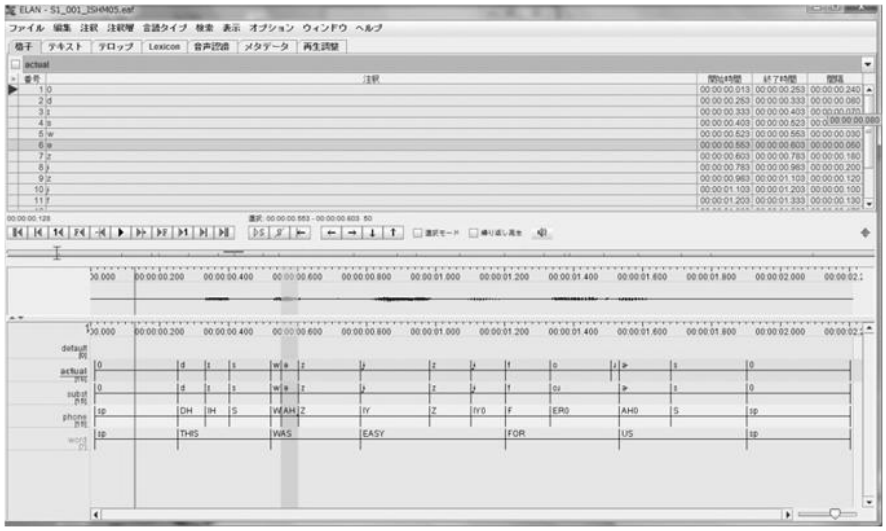

Figure 3: An example of the Corpus data shown on ELAN.

4. Preliminary findings

In this tiny micro-corpus, the following consonantal tendencies, among others, have been found.

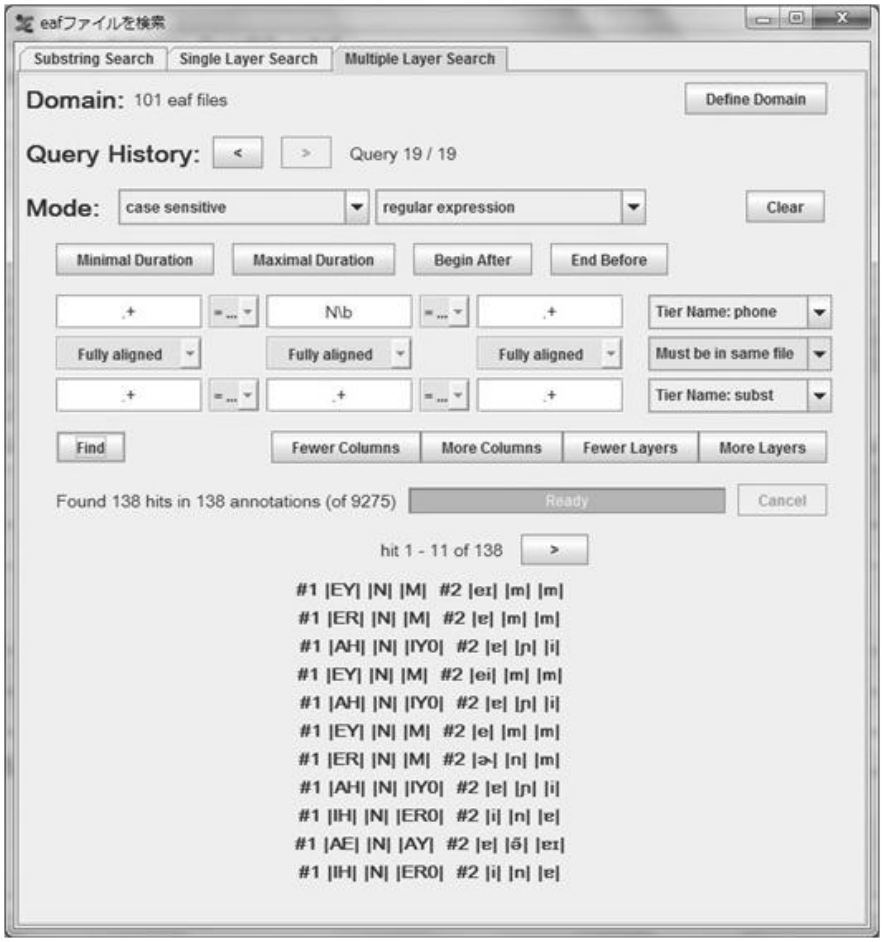

Figure 4: An example of a search result by ELAN.

4.1 Voiced plosives

The voiced plosive phonemes are frequently spirantized (realized as fricatives): 32% for /b/, 15% for /d/ and 8% for /g/. The equivalent phonemes are often (but not obligatorily like, for example, in Spanish) spirantized between vowels in Japanese, so this distribution seems entirely natural. But the situation is quite not so simple. Let's look at the individual cases below.

4.1.1 /b/

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=41)	Contexts	
/b/ --> [b]	56.1	23	0_V	9
			0_[approx]	1
			[nas]_V	4
			[obstr]_V	2
			[obstr]_[approx]	2
			V_V	4
			V_[approx]	1
/b/ --> [β]	26.8	11	V_V	5
			V_[approx]	3
			V_[obstr]	1
			[nas]_V	1
			0_[approx]	1
/b/ --> [bɨ]	2.4	1	V_[approx]	
/b/ --> [bɯ]	2.4	1	[obstr]_[approx]	
/b/ --> [bˀ]	2.4	1	[obstr]_[approx]	
/b/ --> [b̥]	2.4	1	V_[obstr]	
/b/ --> [pˀ]	2.4	1	V_[obstr]	
/b/ --> [v]	2.4	1	0_V	
/b/ --> [ɸ]	2.4	1	V_[obstr]	

Table 1: ERJ realizations of /b/ and their phonetic contexts

In the above table, shaded cells in the "Realization" column represent spirantized realizations, and those in the "Contexts" column represent possible spirantizing conditions. "V" represents target vowels, [approx] approximants (liquids and semivowels), [nas] nasals, and [obstr] obstruents (plosives, fricatives and affricates). "0" represents a pause, so "0_" and "_0" correspond to syllable-initial and syllable final positions respectively.

The spirantizing condition for Japanese voiced plosives is "between vowels," but this does not necessarily result in the spirantization of /b/, as shown in the table. This reflects the fact that spirantization is a variable process in Japanese.

Other possible spirantizing conditions, from a universal phonetic point of view, which do not appear in Japanese but do so in English include syllable-final (or "weak") positions. "V_[obstr]" (after a vowel and before an obstruent) is a possible context where the following obstruent is very likely to be the onset of the following syllable. This is basically an impossible consonantal sequence in Japanese, and the difficulty in pronunciation can also be resolved by other means than spirantization such as vowel insertion, which does not occur in the current data. The devoiced ([b̥]) and unreleased ([pˀ]) realizations seem to be more English-like resolutions in this condition.

4.1.2 /d/

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=54)	Contexts	
/d/ --> [d]	66.7	36	0_V	5
			[nas]_V	6
			[obstr]_V	5
			[nas]_[nas]	1
			[obstr]_V	1
			[nas]_[obstr]	1
			V_[obstr]	2
			V_0	2
			V_V	13
/d/ --> [d̥]	9.3	5	V_0	2
			V_h	1
			[approx]_0	1
			[nas]_[obstr]	1
/d/ --> [tʰ]	5.6	3	0_V	1
			V_V	1
			V_0	1
/d/ --> [ð]	5.6	3	[obstr]_V	1
			V_V	1
			[approx]_V	1
/d/ --> [d̥ʰ]	1.9	1	V_0	
/d/ --> [t]	1.9	1	[nas]_[nas]	
/d/ --> [t`]	1.9	1	V_0	
/d/ --> [z]	1.9	1	V_V	
/d/ --> [ɾ]	1.9	1	V_V	
/d/ --> [ʃ]	1.9	1	[approx]_[obstr]	
/d/ --> [θi]	1.9	1	[approx]_[obstr]	

Table 2: ERJ realizations of /d/ and their phonetic contexts

/d/ is spirantized rather infrequently in Japanese, much less often than the other voiced plosives. This is reflected in the table, where shaded conditions correspond to many cases of non-spirantized realizations.

4.1.3 /g/

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=25)	Contexts	
/g/ --> [g]	80.0	20	0_V	2
			0_[approx]	3
			[nas]_V	2
			[obstr]_V	2
			[obstr]_[approx]	3
			V_V	2
			V_[approx]	2
			[approx]_[approx]	1
			V_[obstr]	3
/g/ --> [gɨ]	4.0	1		V_[obstr]
/g/ --> [g̊]	4.0	1		V_[obstr]
/g/ --> [ŋg]	4.0	1		V_[obstr]
/g/ --> [ɣ]	4.0	1		V_[obstr]
/g/ --> [x]	4.0	1		V_0

Table 3: ERJ realizations of /g/ and their phonetic contexts

Here again, the fricative realizations are infrequent. More cases of non-spirantized [g] appear in spirantizing conditions than fricative realizations.

The /g/ in Japanese can be realized as a velar nasal [ŋ] as well as a [g] or spirantized [ɣ] between vowels, but this variant does not appear in the current data.

4.2 Voiceless plosives

The voiceless plosive phonemes are also sometimes spirantized: 14% for /p/, 7% for /t/ and 6% for /k/. This cannot be the case of L1 transfer because this sort of "weakening" is not considered normal for Japanese speech.

4.2.1 /p/

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=50)	Contexts	
/p/ --> [p]	48.0	24	0_V	2
			[nas]_V	2
			[nas]_[approx]	5
			[obstr]_V	1
			V_[nas]	1
			V_V	9
			V_[approx]	2

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=50)	Contexts	
			V_[obstr]	2
/p/ --> [pʰ]	30.0	15	0_V [nas]_V [obstr]_V V_V V_[obstr] [obstr]_0	4 3 2 2 1 2
/p/ --> [ɸ]	16.0	8	V_[obstr] [approx]_[obstr] V_0 [nas]_[approx] 0_[approx]	2 3 1 1 1
/p/ --> [pɨ]	2	1		V_[obstr]
/p/ --> [pɯ]	2	1		[approx]_0
/p/ --> [pˀ]	2	1		V_[obstr]

Table 4: ERJ realizations of /p/ and their phonetic contexts

Here, we are only concerned with spirantized cases; the phonetic conditions in the non-spirantized cases ([p, pʰ, pˀ]) are too varied, and in any case released [p]s are what is generally found for this sound in Japanese in the phonetics literature.

The fact that a spirantized realization [ɸ] does appear (though infrequently) is in itself notable. It is possible that /p/ is sometimes spirantized in spontaneous Japanese speech under some conditions, but we do not possess the data necessary to confirm this. All the conditions where it appears are spirantizing conditions for voiced plosives. There might be some universal phonetic process at work which can spirantize voiceless plosives in these conditions.

4.2.2 /t/ and /k/

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=112)	Contexts	
/t/ --> [t]	65.2	73	V_V V_[obstr] 0_[approx] [obstr]_V [obstr]_[approx] [nas]_V [nas]_[nas] V_0 0_V [obstr]_[nas] [nas]_[obstr]	28 10 9 9 4 3 3 3 1 1 1

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=112)	Contexts	
/t/ --> [tʰ]	18.8	21	0_V V_0 [obstr]_V V_V V_[approx] [obstr]_[approx] [nas]_0	2 2 5 9 1 1 1
/t/ --> [tˀ]	3.6	4	V_[obstr] V_0 [nas]_[obstr]	2 1 1
/t/ --> [tɨ]	2.7	3	[obstr]_[approx]	
/t/ --> [ts]	1.8	2	V_[obstr]	
/t/ --> [tʲ]	0.9	1	V_[nas]	
/t/ --> [tθ]	0.9	1	V_[nas]	
/t/ --> [d]	0.9	1	[obstr]_[nas]	
/t/ --> [s]	0.9	1	V_[approx]	
/t/ --> [tɯ]	0.9	1	[obstr]_[approx]	
/t/ --> [tʃ]	0.9	1	[obstr]_V	
/t/ --> [θ]	0.9	1	[nas]_[obstr]	
/t/ --> [ð]	0.9	1	V_0	
/t/ --> [ɾ]	0.9	1	V_V	

Table 5: ERJ realizations of /t/ and their phonetic contexts

Again, we are only concerned with spirantized cases. It is to be noted that spirantized realizations are found even in "non-spirantizing" conditions. Much the same can be said of the spirantization of /k/.

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=73)	Contexts	
/k/ --> [k]	53.4	39	V_V V_[obstr] [obstr]_V 0_V V_[approx] [obstr]_[approx] 0_[approx]	16 8 6 2 1 1 1
/k/ --> [kʰ]	37.0	27	V_V 0_V [obstr]_V [approx]_V [nas]_V	11 4 3 2 2

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=73)	Contexts	
			[obstr]_[approx]	1
			V_[approx]	1
			0_[approx]	1
			V_[obstr]	1
			V_0	1
/k/ --> [x]	5.5	4	0_V	1
			V_V	2
			V_0	1
/k/ --> [kɨ]	1.4	1	[obstr]_[approx]	
/k/ --> [kˀ]	1.4	1	V_[obstr]	
/k/ --> [xk]	1.4	1	0_V	

Table 6: ERJ realizations of /k/ and their phonetic contexts

4.3 Voiced (inter)dental fricatives

/ð/ is very frequently mispronounced: only 13.5% were canonical [ð]. The most frequent pronunciation was [d], which accounts for 32.4%, and the next most frequent were [dz] (27%) and [z] (21.6%).

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=37)	Contexts	
/ð/ --> [d]	32.4	12	0_V	7
			[obstr]_V	3
			V_V	2
/ð/ --> [dz]	27.0	10	0_V	4
			V_V	3
			[nas]_V	1
			[approx]_V	1
/ð/ --> [z]	21.6	8	0_V	2
			V_V	2
			[approx]_V	2
			[nas]_V	1
			[obstr]_V	1
/ð/ --> [ð]	13.5	5	V_V	3
			[approx]_V	1
			[obstr]_V	1
/ð/ --> [dʰ]	5.4	2	0_V	1
			[obstr]_V	1

Table 7: ERJ realizations of /ð/ and their phonetic contexts

The different realizations are more or less evenly distributed, and we should not comment about the conditions where they are found with such small data, although plosive realizations [d, dʰ, dz] seem to be preferred in the syllable-initial positions.

4.4 /n/

/n/ was found to be pronounced as some sort of nasalized vowel in more than 30% of the cases. This can be predicted from Japanese phonology, whose moraic nasal /N/ is regularly realized as a nasalized vowel before a vowel, semivowel, sibilant fricative /s/ (which is usually realized either as [s] or [ʃ]) or /h/.

In the table below, [sib] means "sibilant fricative" and specific sounds in their contexts are also transcribed where appropriate.

It is to be noted that nasalized vowel realizations appear even before obstruents in some cases. This again is not predictable from the phonology of Japanese, and cannot be the case of L1 transfer.

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=138)	Contexts	
/n/ --> [n]	45.7	63	V_[stop] V_V V_[approx] V_[obstr] V_[nas] [nas]_V 0_V [obstr]_V V_0 V_[approx]	17 25 4 4 3 2 2 3 2 1
/n/ --> [ə̃]	18.8	26	V_[obstr] V_V V_0	16 7 3
/n/ --> [m]	10.9	15	V_[p, b] V_[m]	10 5
/n/ --> [ĩ]	4.3	6	V_[sib] V_[approx] V_0	2 1 1
/n/ --> [ɲ]	4.3	5	V_[i~ɪ] [obstr]_V	4 1
/n/ --> [õ]	2.2	3	V_V V_0 V_[sib]	1 1 1
/n/ --> [ŋ]	2.2	3	V_/g/ V_0	2 1

Realization	Percentage	Count (n=138)	Contexts	
/n/ --> [ẽ]	2.2	3	V_[stop] V_[sib]	1 2
/n/ --> [n <silence> n]	0.7	1	V_V	
/n/ --> [n̥]	0.7	1	V_[obstr]	
/n/ --> [æ̃]	0.7	1	V_0	
/n/ --> [ɐ̃]	0.7	1	V_V	
/n/ --> [ɯ̃]	0.7	1	V_[approx]	
/n/ --> [n̥n]	0.7	1	[obstr]_V	
/n/ --> [ð]	0.7	1	V_V	
/n/ --> [ʊ̃]	0.7	1	V_0	

Table 8: ERJ realizations of /n/ and their phonetic contexts

5. Remaining problems

5.1 Lack of prosodic notation

The corpus is intended to be a source of all the phonetic characteristics of Japanese speakers' English speech. Therefore, prosodic notation is also necessary.

However, L2 prosody is very difficult to describe. Studies such as Gut (2009) and Li, et al. (2011) use English ToBI (Beckman, et al. 2005) for L2 English, which I believe is a mistake. L2 prosodic system is neither that of L1 nor of the target language, but something of a mixture of the two.

The first author of this paper will be addressing this problem and proposing a notational system of Japanese speakers' English prosody in Makino (forthcoming).

5.2 Inefficiency of manual transcription

Development of spoken corpora lags far behind that of written corpora for obvious reasons; that is, transcribed texts are not readily available, although making such texts can be facilitated by using automatic speech recognition (ASR) technologies.

The development of L2 spoken corpora is even more difficult, because ASR technologies have not been developed for non-native speech. Even more difficult than this is an L2 phonetically-transcribed corpus like what we are doing, because narrow phonetic transcription (independent of any language) is required.

Tsubaki and Kondo (2011) tried using ASR technologies in the development of their Japanese speakers' L2 English corpus, with reasonably good results, but this entailed an enrichment of the dictionary with all the possible pronunciations for each entry that

could be conceived of in terms of contrastive phonetics of the two languages. Unless the size of the dictionary necessary is very small like theirs (the text they used was "The North Wind and the Sun"), I do not think it practical.

6. Further work

We have decided that a different set of files (800 in total) are to be included in ERJ Phonetic Corpus. Those files were selected independently of the study discussed in §3.1 from the ERJ database for another study (Minematsu, et al. 2011), where the recordings were played over the telephone to Americans who were not familiar with Japanese speakers' English. The subjects were asked to repeat the sentences they heard and the responses were written down orthographically.

With this data, we will be able to explore what sort of actual phones tend to be misheard or not understood at all. This can be a basis for the study of intelligibility.

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THE PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH-ACCENTED POLISH – A PILOT STUDY

JOLANTA SZPYRA-KOZŁOWSKA
MAREK RADOMSKI
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin

Abstract
While the perception of Polish-accented English by native-speakers has been studied extensively (e.g Gonet & Pietroń 2004, Scheuer 2003, Szpyra-Kozłowska 2005, in press), an opposite phenomenon, i.e. the perception of English-accented Polish by Poles has not, to our knowledge, been examined so far despite a growing number of Polish-speaking foreigners, including various celebrities, who appear in the Polish media and whose accents are often commented on and even parodied.

In this paper we offer a report on a pilot study in which 60 Polish teenagers, all secondary school learners (aged 15-16) listened to and assessed several samples of foreign-accented Polish in a series of scalar judgement and open question tasks meant to examine Poles' attitudes to English accent(s) in their native language.

More specifically, we aimed at finding answers to the following research questions:

- How accurately can Polish listeners identify foreign accents in Polish?
- How is English-accented Polish, when compared to Polish spoken with a Russian, Spanish, French, Italian, German and Chinese accent, evaluated by Polish listeners in terms of the samples' degree of:
    (a) comprehensibility
    (b) foreign accentedness
    (c) pleasantness?
- What phonetic and phonological features, both segmental and prosodic, are perceived by Polish listeners as characteristic of English-accented Polish?
- Can Polish listeners identify different English accents (American, English English and Scottish) in English-accented Polish?
- Does familiarity with a specific foreign language facilitate the recognition and identification of that accent in foreign-accented Polish?

1. Introduction

While the perception of Polish-accented English by native-speakers has been studied extensively (e.g Gonet & Pietroń 2004, Scheuer 2003, Szpyra-Kozłowska 2005, in press), the perception of foreign-accented Polish by Poles has not, to our knowledge, been examined so far despite a growing number of Polish-speaking foreigners, including various celebrities, who appear in the Polish media and whose accents are often commented on and even parodied. They include, for example, an American model of Polish descent, an Italian dancer, a German actor and comedian, a French chef with Polish roots. Apart from such celebrities, more and more foreigners undertake to learn

Polish: students who study in Poland, businessmen representing their firms, citizens of the former Soviet republics (mostly Ukrainians and Byelorussians) seeking employment in this country and many others. In recent years Polish has, in fact, become a popular language to learn, as shown in the growing number of Polish language schools that have opened in the major Polish cities, such as Warsaw and Cracow.[1] These facts allow us to claim that Poles have found themselves in a fairly new situation of being increasingly exposed to many different versions of foreign-accented Polish. It is therefore interesting to examine how such accents are perceived and evaluated by Polish listeners.

In this paper we offer a report on a study in which 60 Polish teenagers listened to and assessed several samples of foreign-accented Polish in a series of scalar judgement and open question tasks meant to examine Poles' perception of several foreign accents in their native language, including three English accents.

More specifically, we aimed at finding answers to the following research questions:

- How accurately can Polish listeners identify foreign accents in Polish?
- How is English-accented Polish, when compared to Polish spoken with a Russian, Spanish, French, Italian, German and Chinese accent, evaluated by Polish listeners in terms of the samples' degree of:
    (d) comprehensibility
    (e) foreign accentedness
    (f) pleasantness (acceptability)?
- What phonetic and phonological features, both segmental and prosodic, are perceived by Polish listeners as characteristic of English-accented Polish?
- Can Polish listeners identify different English accents (American, English English and Scottish) in English-accented Polish?
- Does familiarity with a specific foreign language facilitate the recognition and identification of that accent in foreign-accented Polish?

It should be pointed out that as the present study is limited in terms of the number and quality of the analysed accent samples as well as in employing only one group of assessors, its results should be regarded as preliminary and subject to future verification.[2]

2. Experimental design

In this section we present the relevant details concerning the design of the experiment we have carried out in order to examine the perception of English-accented Polish. We deal here first with the samples of Polish subject to evaluation and then with the listening and assessment procedure.

[1] It is worth pointing out that many citizens of the British Isles undertake to learn Polish because their jobs require contacts with Polish immigrants.

[2] After the completion of this paper another experiment of a similar design was carried out by the authors in which the same speech samples were evaluated by different participants, i.e. 60 Polish Department students (aged 20-24) of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. The results obtained in both groups are very similar and support the majority of the conclusions drawn in this paper. A fuller discussion of the latter experiment can be found in Szpyra-Kozłowska and Radomski (in press).

2.1. Samples of foreign-accented Polish

For the purposes of the experiment between July and November 2011, 20 foreign speakers of Polish were recorded while performing two tasks: reading a short passage taken from a coursebook in Polish for the beginners[3] and talking with one of the experimenters on some everyday topics. 9 samples were then selected for accent evaluation. The speakers (5 men and 4 women) were citizens of the USA, Scotland, England, Russia, Germany, Italy, France, Spain and China (speaker of Mandarin), all staying temporarily in Poland and learning Polish for a variety of personal and professional reasons and for different periods of time (ranging from several weeks up to three years). Care was taken to select speech samples with a similar, i.e. average degree of foreign-accentedness, that is those ones in which a foreign accent was noticeable or even strong, but which generally did not hinder the intelligibility of utterances.[4] Only samples of reading were used in the experiment since they were more uniform with respect to their degree of accentedness than the recordings of spoken Polish in which numerous grammatical errors made them often incomprehensible. Moreover, as the focus of this study was on pronunciation problems, grammatically correct written passages were more appropriate for diagnostic purposes.[5] Each recording was between 1,5 and 2 minutes long.

2.2. Listeners

Nine samples of foreign-accented Polish were presented to a group of 60 Polish boys and girls, aged 15-16, all attending a junior secondary school (*gymnasium*) in Lublin, where one of the experimenters was an English teacher. All the participants had been learning English for about 5-6 years and, apart from it, also another language, i.e. German, Spanish, Russian or French. These facts indicate that all of them have acquaintance with English pronunciation (usually in its RP version), but are also familiar with the sounds of some other languages, which should facilitate accent assessment.

2.3. Listening and assessment procedure

In November 2011, the participants were informed that they would listen to the recordings of several speech samples of Polish provided by foreign learners of this language and then would be asked to assess them by completing the prepared answer sheets. They did it in two sessions (5 samples were evaluated in the first session and 4 samples in the second one), with a one-week interval between them, during their regular

[3] The texts used in the experiment were adapted from Swan (2005).

[4] We were not always successful in this respect and while extreme cases of exceptionally good and very poor Polish pronunciation were rejected, the experimental samples cannot be claimed to be uniform in terms of their degree of accentedness.

[5] It should be pointed out, however, that there are also drawbacks of employing samples of reading as many foreign speakers' pronunciation is heavily influenced by Polish spelling.

English lessons. Each sample was presented twice and then ample time was given to the students to provide answers. Whenever necessary, additional explanations were provided by the experimenter.

The answer sheets contained 3 scalar judgement tasks concerning the samples' degree of comprehensibility, foreign-accentedness and pleasantness, as well as three open questions in which the subjects were asked to identify the speakers' country of origin, to list their most striking pronunciation features and to describe a given accent in impressionistic terms. Finally, the students supplied information on their age, sex and foreign languages they learnt. Needless to say, the study was anonymous.

3. Results and discussion

The presentation and discussion of the results given below will follow the research questions provided in section 1.

3.1. Foreign accent recognition

In the first question of our study we asked the participants to identify the country of the speakers' origin. They succeeded in completing this task in 37.5% of cases.[6]

Below we present the percentage of the correct answers dividing the nine accents into three groups: those which were (relatively) easy to recognize (above 50% of the correct responses), those which were difficult to identify (20% of correct responses and less) and those which were of medium difficulty (between 20% and 50%).

Accents which were easy to identify (over 50%):

Russian – 86%
Chinese – 56%
American English – 36% (83%)

Thus, the absolute winner was a Russian accent in Polish, or, to generalize, the east Slavic accents, including also Ukrainian and Byelorussian.[7] This result can be attributed not only to very distinct features of this accent, but also to its considerable familiarity to Polish listeners who are often exposed to it in the media, for example in the news reports of Polish-speaking reporters from Kiev or Vilnius, and who can also hear it from (mostly) Ukrainian citizens, particularly numerous in the Lublin region, situated in the east of Poland, close to the Ukrainian border.

The second accent, recognized by 56% of the participants, was Chinese, which is surprising for two reasons. First, the recorded Chinese woman speaks beautiful, fully intelligible Polish, with only a few phonetic departures from the original. Secondly,

[6] In our experiment the identification task was very difficult as the choice was not limited as is frequently the case in other accent studies, where the participants have to choose from several provided options, as in Flege and Fletcher (1992) or Mareuil, Brahimi and Gendrot (2010).

[7] In fact, these three accents sound very similar to the Polish ear and cannot be easily told apart.

Polish learners are not often exposed to this accent. Yet, its phonetic properties were distinct enough to lead to this high result.[8]

Finally, an American English accent in Polish was placed in this group although only 36% of the answers were fully correct. It must be added, however, that 47% participants identified it as 'some kind of English.' This yields 83% of the responses recognizing this accent as produced by a native-speaker of English. As a matter of fact, the American English accent in Polish turned out to be the most English-sounding accent of the three varieties subject to analysis. An explanation of this fact should be sought in the participants' frequent exposure to American English, mainly through films and songs.

Accents which were of medium difficulty to identify (20%-50%)

German – 36%

Only one accent, i.e. German, appeared to be of medium difficulty to identify and was recognized correctly by 36% of the participants only. Two comments are in order. First, this fairly low result might follow from the young age of the subjects. In the case of older Poles the success of identifying this accent might be greater due to massive exposure of the oldest generation to German during World War II, numerous war films popular in Poland until the 80's and a considerably larger number of German learners in Poland in the past than now. Secondly, the pupils who took part in the experiment live in eastern Poland, with relatively few German visitors. It would therefore be interesting to find out whether similar results would be obtained in western regions where the ties with Germany are much stronger.

Accents which were difficult to identify (20% and below):

Italian – 21%
French – 15%
English English – 3,3%
Scottish English – 1,6%
Spanish – 0%

As many as five accents out of nine are placed in the third group as those ones which were particularly difficult to recognize for the listeners. Within this set, the Italian and the French samples were identified correctly by considerably more participants than the remaining three accents, which include English English, Scottish English and Spanish (below 4% of the correct responses). Quite surprisingly, both the English English and Scottish English samples belong here in spite of the fact that all the participants are learners of English and should thus be familiar with typical phonetic properties of this language and at least with those features which are common to the majority of its varieties. Spanish-accented Polish has to be singled out as the accent which failed to be recognized completely, with no correct responses at all (0%).

To sum up this part of our experiment, of the three English accents presented to the listeners, only Polish with American English features was relatively easy to recognize.

A question that arises in connection with the data above is whether accent recognition depends on the degree of the samples' accentedness, as it might be assumed that the more accented someone's speech is, the easier it is to identify the speaker's

[8] It should be added here that we counted as correct those answers according to which the accent under discussion was described as Japanese as in common, though completely incorrect view prevalent in Poland, Chinese and Japanese are regarded as similar languages.

origin. In other words, if more phonetic clues are available to the listener, this should facilitate accent recognition. A comparison of the results provided in this section with those concerning accentedness in section 3.3. shows, however, that this connection is only partial. Thus, while the American and Russian samples were regarded as both strongly accented and easy to identify, the English English recording was considered strongly accented but difficult to recognize. Moreover, the German speaker had, according to the participants, the strongest foreign accent of all, yet its correct identifications amounted to 36% only. On the other hand, there is a high correlation between the samples' low level of accentedness and a small degree of their recognition since the Spanish, French, Italian and Scottish English recordings are found in this category. To sum up, while 'the weaker the accent, the more difficult it is to identify' principle appears to hold true, its opposite does not.

To shed more light on accent perception, it seems also interesting to examine the erroneous judgements in some detail. Below we present the number of countries indicated as the place of the speakers' origin:

German – 26 **American English – 11**
Scottish English – 24 French – 11
English English – 19 Italian – 11
Spanish – 13 Russian – 4
Chinese – 12

Thus, the German-accented and Russian-accented samples are two extremes in this evaluation as in the former case as many as 26 different countries were listed (including such unlikely candidates as Korea, Japan, Canada, Jamaica and Hungary) and in the latter only 4. Polish pronounced with a Scottish-English accent and with an English-English accent also caused considerable differences of opinion while the nationality of the American English speaker was less controversial.

It should also be pointed out that some interesting patterns can be observed in the incorrect evaluations of English-accented Polish. Thus, to 26% of the participants the Scottish sample sounded German and to 23% Czech or Slovak, whereas the English English sample was considered to be uttered by a German speaker by 20% of the subjects and 18% of them viewed it as produced by someone from Africa.[9] This means that while the recognition of theses accents is extremely poor, their Germanic nature is identified by about one fourth of the listeners.

3.2. Accent recognition versus language learning

Another research question concerned the relation between accent recognition and familiarity with the specific foreign languages. According to the experimental data, this correlation is either very weak or nonexistent.

Thus, while all the participants are learners of English, only about 30% of them recognized the three samples produced by English speakers as uttered by a person from

[9] It is interesting to note that in the case of such judgements the name of the whole continent was provided and not of individual countries. This means that Polish participants either assume that there is something like one African accent or simply cannot tell these accents apart.

an English-speaking country. Similarly, of 37 learners of German, only 13 identified this accent correctly. What is more, none of the 10 learners of Spanish provided the correct answer and the French accent was properly recognized only by nine pupils who had never learnt this language.

Only in the case of Russian-accented Polish were these two factors correlated in that all 10 learners of Russian identified the accent correctly, but since a similar decision was made by numerous other participants who do not know this language, this fact can be viewed as accidental.

We feel therefore justified in concluding that exposure to foreign accents and their characteristic phonetic properties play a greater role in accent identification than foreign language learning.

3.3. Evaluation of samples' comprehensibility, foreign-accentedness and pleasantness

Three experimental tasks involved making scalar judgements by the listeners in order to assess the samples degree of comprehensibility, foreign-accentedness and pleasantness.

In the first of them the participants were requested to indicate how difficult it was to understand a given sample by choosing one of the five options ranging from 'very easy to understand' to 'incomprehensible.' The results fall roughly into two types: the samples considered either very difficult or completely incomprehensible by over 45% of the listeners and those ones which were viewed as either very easy or rather easy to understand by over 50% of the subjects. The first category comprises the following:

Accents which were very difficult to understand / incomprehensible

German - - 96%	**English English – 45%**
American English – 55%	**Scottish English – 46%**
Russian – 50%	

As shown above, the German-accented sample was rated as the most incomprehensible by as many as 96% of the respondents as it was indeed the most heavily accented recording. It is striking that all three English-accented samples were also placed in this group in spite of the fact that all the participants learn English, which should facilitate comprehension.

Let us examine now the second group of samples.

Accents which were very easy / rather easy to understand

Chinese – 76%	Spanish – 58%
Italian – 76%	**Scottish English – 53%**
French – 71%	Russian – 50%

The Chinese, Italian and French samples were absolute winners in this category. The Scottish English speaker was judged by 53% of the subjects as rather easy to understand.

Two contradictory evaluations should be pointed out concerning the Russian and Scottish recordings which found themselves in both categories. Thus, a similar number of the subjects maintained that they were easy / rather easy to understand and that they were difficult to comprehend.

The next task required specifying the degree of samples' foreign-accentedness. The participants were provided with five options (from 'slight' to ' very strong foreign accent'). The results are presented below.

Strong / very strong foreign accent:

German – 85%	**English English – 76%**
American English – 85%	Chinese – 40%
Russian – 83%	**Scottish English – 33%**

According to the above figures, the American English and English English samples were regarded as strongly accented by 85% and 76% of the listeners respectively. The judgements were less severe in the case of the Scottish English recording, which was considered strongly accented by 33% of the subjects.

The remaining samples were perceived as pronounced with a very slight or slight foreign accent.

Very slight / slight foreign accent

Spanish – 26%	Italian – 20%
French – 25%	**Scottish English** – 18%

Again, we should note the occurrence of the Scottish recording in both categories, which shows that this particular sample was difficult for the listeners to evaluate.

The third task consisted in deciding how pleasant / unpleasant sounding a given accent was. As in the previous cases, five options were supplied to choose from. The relevant figures are given below.

Rather unpleasant /very unpleasant accents:

German – 71%	**American English – 50%**
Russian – 63%	**English English – 50%**

Both American English and English English accents in Polish were placed in this group with about half of the subjects regarding them as either rather unpleasant or very unpleasant. It is worth pointing out that, apart from Russian, the remaining samples represent Germanic languages, commonly perceived by Poles as harsh sounding.

The most pleasant accents included the following:

Very pleasant / pleasant accents:

French – 55%
Italian – 48%
Spanish – 33%

It is striking that all the three samples found in the category of pleasant sounding accents were provided by speakers of Romance languages, in common Polish opinion regarded as nice and melodious.

The greatest differences of opinion were observed in the case of two accents, i.e. Chinese and Scottish English, with a similar number of respondents judging them as pleasant and unpleasant:

	Pleasant	unpleasant
Chinese	30%	35%
Scottish English	27%	30%

As in the remaining instances, the Scottish recording appears to stand apart from the other ones in triggering contradictory judgements of the listeners.

A closer examination of the above data shows that there is a large degree of correlation between the three aspects of accent perception analysed in this section. Thus,

the French, Italian and Spanish samples were judged easy to understand, only slightly foreign-accented and pleasant sounding. On the other hand, German, Russian, American English and English English samples were assessed as difficult to understand, heavily accented and unpleasant sounding. Only in the case of the Chinese and Scottish English samples were the judgements less uniform; both were perceived as strongly accented but easy to understand and this discrepancy may be the reason why they were evaluated in two extreme ways in terms of their pleasantness.

To sum up, of the three English accents in Polish, the Scottish English recording was more highly evaluated by Polish listeners than the American English and English English samples in terms of its comprehensibility and aesthetic qualities.

The mean results concerning the comprehensibility, accentedness and pleasantness of the experimental samples are presented in the table below. A five point scale (1-5) was used, where the higher the figure, the more severe the participants' judgements.[10]

Speakers' native language	comprehensibility	accentedness	pleasantness
German	4.67	4.39	4.03
Russian	3.43	4.04	3.66
English English	3.32	4.06	3.62
American English	2.88	4.19	3.55
Scottish English	2.46	3.1	3.05
Spanish	2.32	2.73	2.85
Chinese	2.20	3.11	3.03
Italian	2.20	2.79	2.70
French	2.15	3.04	2.57

Table 1. Mean evaluations of the samples' comprehensibility, accentedness and pleasantness

The data in Table 1 confirm our earlier observations concerning a high degree of correlation between the listeners' evaluations of the samples' comprehensibility, accentedness and pleasantness. This is in agreement with the findings of previous research (e.g. Fayer and Krasinski 1987, Munro and Derwing 1995) which indicate that a lower degree of foreign accent is associated with higher intelligibility and lower irritation.[11]

[10] It should be pointed out that there are some differences between the results presented earlier and those in Table 1 due to the already discussed contradictory evaluations of some samples which influence the mean values in the table.

[11] It should be added that in accent evaluations various extralinguistic factors, such as, for example, the listeners' attitude towards various ethnic groups, often play an important role. We address this issue in another experimental study which is now in preparation.

3.4. Perceived phonetic properties of English-accented Polish

The respondents were also requested to enumerate those phonetic properties of the presented foreign accents which they found particularly striking. They did it either by listing some words found in the samples and underlining their mispronounced portions or by making explicit comments on the specific aspects of the speakers' pronunciation, such as, for example, "*he pronounces 'r' in a strange way'* or '*she puts too much emphasis on 'p' and 'k'*.'

All the participants were unanimous in pointing out the most noticeable features of all the accents occurring in our experiment. The first of them concerns the pronunciation of Polish coronals, i.e. the 'soft' realization of the postalveolar obstruents as palatoalveolars. The second problem involves prepalatals, usually pronounced by foreign learners also as palatoalveolars.[12] In other words, Polish listeners often observed in the experimental samples the lack of distinction between postalveolars and prepalatals, rarely found in other languages.

The next common difficulty concerns consonant clusters which abound in Polish in all positions, but are infrequent in other languages. In the case of the English-accented samples the following word-initial clusters were often underlined as pronounced incorrectly[13]: *szczupła* /ʂtʂupwa/ 'slim,' *wcześnie* /ftʂeɕɲe/ 'early,' *przygotowuje* /pʂɨgotovuje/ 'prepares,' *zdolny* /zdolnɨ/ 'talented,' *wstawać* /vstavatɕ/ 'get up,' *śniadanie* /ɕɲadaɲe/, etc.

The respondents noted also some characteristic vowel features, i.e. frequent replacements of the high front centralized vowel, spelt as <y> with its fully front counterpart [i], e.g. *Krystyna > [Kristina]* 'Christine', *medycyna > [medicina]* 'medical science,' as well as problems with the correct pronunciation of the so-called nasal vowels, spelt as <ą> and <ę>, which are realized in several ways depending on the context.[14]

Three additional features frequently appeared in the assessment of the English-accented samples. Many respondents noted aspiration of voiceless plosives claiming that the speakers put too much emphasis or stress on /p/ and /k/, '*spit them out'* or simply *'pronounced them in a funny way*.' Also the English rhotics in all three accents attracted much attention with such comments as '*she pronounces /r/ differently than we do'* (about the American speaker), '*he swallows many r's'* (about the English English speaker) and '*his /r/ is blurred / unclear'* (about the Scottish English speaker). Finally, some listeners observed what they considered an unusual pronunciation of stressed and unstressed vowels; the former were often lengthened, the latter reduced, as in *do domu* 'home' pronounced as [dədo:mu] and *kupili* 'they bought' rendered as [kə'p^{h}ili].

[12] Other realizations of prepalatals, for example, as palatalized dentals / alveolars, were also attested.

[13] The incorrect versions contained either modifications of one or two consonants in a cluster, a deletion of a segment or vowel insertion.

[14] A more detailed description of the perceived phonetic properties of foreign-accented Polish can be found in Szpyra-Kozłowska and Radomski (in press).

Thus, in their evaluations of English-accented Polish, the listeners paid attention almost exclusively to segmental features, particularly those pertaining to consonants and consonant clusters. Prosodic aspects of the experimental samples failed to be noticed by almost all the participants, which contradicts those views (e.g. Jilka 2011) according to which suprasegmental factors, and intonation in particular, are of primary importance in the perception of foreign accent.

3.5. Impressionistic evaluation

In the final task the respondents were asked to provide their own descriptions of the experimental samples' accents which were, obviously, impressionistic in character. The most striking observation we have made concerns a large number of negative terms in comparison with positive evaluations.

Thus, the adjectives that were found in virtually all answer sheets were '*dziwny*' and '*śmieszny*', both of which are ambiguous in Polish as they are in English; the former means both 'strange' and 'difficult to accept, weird,' the latter both 'amusing' and 'ridiculous.' Other frequently used terms include *irytujący* 'irritating,' *denerwujący* 'annoying,' *żałosny* 'pathetic,' *okropny* 'terrible,' *sepleniący* 'lisping,' *nieporadny* 'clumsy,' *niewyraźny* 'unclear,' *nudny* 'boring,' *mówi jakby miał zatkany nos* 'speaks through a stuffed nose,' *mówi jak pijany* 'sounds drunk.'

Positive and neutral terms such as *interesujący* 'interesting,' *miły* 'nice,' *delikatny* 'delicate,' *fajny* 'cool,' *miękki* 'soft,' *egzotyczny* 'exotic,' were rarely employed by the respondents.

This result of our study is further supported by the fact that in the scalar judgement task which involved describing the accents' pleasantness, two extreme options were selected with strikingly different frequency; of 540 evaluations, only in 30 cases was the 'very pleasant' label chosen, while its opposite, i.e. 'very unpleasant' over three times more often (108 times).

The accents which evoked most negative comments of the participants were German, described as *twardy* 'hard', *szorstki* 'harsh,' *toporny* 'coarse' and *barbarzyński* 'barbaric,' but also English English and American English, perceived by many subjects as *plujący* 'spitting,' *sepleniący* 'lisping,' and *niedbały* 'careless,' *niechlujny* 'sloppy.'

The samples which received the most positive descriptions comprise Italian (*śmieszny ale fajny* 'funny but cool,' *interesujący* 'interesting'), Spanish (*egzotyczny* 'exotic,' *ciekawy* 'interesting') and Chinese (*delikatny* 'delicate').

The above facts point to a fairly critical attitude of the participants towards foreign-accented Polish who seem to fail to appreciate the amount of effort required in learning a difficult language like Polish and who are rather harsh in their judgements. This might stem from the fact of their insufficient exposure to foreign versions of Polish and the resulting lack of tolerance towards something that is little known and should therefore be approached with caution. The teenagers' predominantly negative perception of foreign-accented Polish may also be attributed to a tendency typical of that particular age group to express highly critical and frequently extreme and unbalanced opinions. Whether this

intolerance of foreign accents in Polish speech is a more general issue remains to be investigated in the future.[15]

4. Conclusions

The present pilot study on the perception of foreign-accented Polish, and Polish spoken with an English accent in particular, allows us to formulate several tentative conclusions.

1. Of the nine samples employed in our experiment, it was the easiest for the participants to recognize the Russian, American and Chinese accents. The English English and Scottish English samples were identified correctly by a few subjects only.
2. No significant correlation was found between the fact of learning a given foreign language and the ease of its recognition. Only 30% of the participants, all learners of English, were able to identify the English-accented samples as produced by a native-speaker of English.
3. The American English and English English samples were assessed as difficult to understand, heavily accented and unpleasant sounding. The Scottish English accent received more favourable opinions on all three counts.
4. While a non-Polish pronunciation of postalveolar and prepalatal consonants as well as problems with consonant clusters appear to be the most noticeable properties of all foreign accents, those produced by native-speakers of English are additionally perceived as having aspirated plosives, a nontrilled pronunciation of rhotics, as well as lengthened stressed vowels and reduced unstressed vowels.
5. The participants take a critical attitude towards foreign-accented Polish shown, among other things, in their use of many negative evaluative terms, several of which were provided in reference to the English-accented samples, with Scottish English again standing apart as perceived more positively.

As has already been pointed out, further research is needed to find out whether the above conclusions will retain their validity when more samples of foreign-accented Polish and different groups of participants are employed in the experimental procedure.

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[15] The validity of this conclusion finds support in another study by Szpya-Kozłowska and Radomski (in press) in which the same samples were evaluated by Polish Department students, aged 20-24. In this group negative comments on foreign accents were virtually absent, which can be attributed either to greater maturity of the participants or their increased self-control and political correctness. It should be added that positive remarks were also absent and in most cases blank space was left were comments were requested.

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THIS IS TOM = /ZYZYS'TOM/ PRONUNCIATION IN BEGINNERS' EFL TEXTBOOKS THEN AND NOW

WŁODZIMIERZ SOBKOWIAK
IFA UAM

Abstract
The textbook appears to be one of the most fundamental elements of all formal-setting foreign language teaching and learning. Textbooks function in a foreign language classroom in many capacities (Cunningsworth 1995), one of which is the provision of text, used as a model for language practice, including practice of pronunciation. The changing methodological trends in EFL pedagogy over the decades affect EFL textbook pronunciation treatment in a variety of ways. In this paper a simple feasibility study is presented whereby a few beginners' textbooks are compared with respect to their handling of pronunciation in the first unit of the course. Four textbooks come from about ½ century ago, and three are sampled from among those currently available. On the descriptive level, some analysis is offered of the phonetic (and especially phonolapsological) characteristics of the sampled texts, as they changed through time. On the level of application, it is claimed that, while the lexico-grammatical and pedagogical limitations on the content of the first lessons/units in EFL textbooks leave authors little space for phonetic control, a modicum of such control *is* feasible if attention is paid to such variables as pronunciation difficulty and L1 transfer. The Phonetic Difficulty Index (PDI), which is briefly introduced in the paper, can be used to measure and control some of these variables and give the textbook authors and users a useful teaching/learning instrument.

1. Introduction

This is a feasibility study for a much larger potential research project into the treatment of pronunciation in beginners' EFL textbooks. Part of that project would be a diachronic analysis of such textbooks over approximately half a century, to see how pronunciation is introduced to beginning learners, both explicitly and implicitly, in the text, as well as in the multimedia and online materials accompanying the recent generations of EFL textbooks. The focus is not on the specifically phonetic resources, i.e. those whose stated aim it is to teach pronunciation (see Wrembel 2004 for this perspective), but on the standard materials targeting the general population of learners, with no ESP or other bias.

The desirability of a study like this is dramatically underscored by: (i) the relative paucity of research on the handling of pronunciation in EFL textbooks on the one hand, and (ii) the fundamental importance of the textbook as the primary teaching/learning resource in most EFL classrooms around the globe.

Considering the above factors, as well as the enormity of the EFL resource market, both synchronically and diachronically, a thorough analysis of EFL textbook phonetics would be a project of impractically grandiose proportions. In this study I can only take a closer look at some aspects of the whole issue. Consequently, I decided to concentrate on the following:

- the changing methodological trends in FL pedagogy over the last five decades affect EFL textbook pronunciation treatment in a variety of ways,
- the lexico-grammatical and pedagogical limitations on the content of EFL textbooks leave authors little space for phonetic control, but...
- such control of textual material *is* feasible if attention is paid to such variables as pronunciation difficulty and L1 transfer,
- the Phonetic Difficulty Index (PDI) can be used to help measure and control some of these variables and give the textbook authors and users a useful teaching/learning instrument.

Within the limits of this short paper I will try to throw some light on the above issues by taking a comparative look at the treatment of pronunciation in two small samples from EFL textbooks separated by several decades of time. The first sample comes from my own first-time EFL experience, which locates it towards the end of the 1960's. This sample includes such textbooks as: *Nauka angielskiego*, *English for everyone*, *Present day English for foreign students* and *First things first* (see References). I then compare those old textbooks with a random sample of these which can currently be found on bookshop shelves: *Angielski dla samouków*, *Angielski nie gryzie!* and *Korepetycje domowe*[1]. In both cases I only look at the contents of the respective "lesson/unit one" in each of these books, with particular attention paid to how pronunciation is presented and taught.

This methodology allows no pretense of being even close to traditionally conceived scientific-empirical rigour, of course. On the one hand, for example, the old sample would probably constitute about half of all EFL textbooks of use in Poland at that time, Poland being behind the iron curtain, and EFL being discouraged, as opposed to Russian. The market of EFL resources in contemporary Poland is booming, on the other hand, and the socio-political situation is entirely different. From this point of view, then, the two samples are hardly at all comparable. I believe, however, that they can still do their service of yielding interesting preliminary and tentative insights into the issues here treated. In the study proper of EFL textbook phonetics the selected empirical textbook database would obviously need to be substantiated in a more rigorous manner.

2. The importance of the textbook in EFL

That the textbook is of fundamental importance in (formal) EFL teaching and learning, and that it is in the very centre of almost all EFL classrooms around the world, is hardly a controversial claim. Indeed, many teachers and educators, as well as researchers and analysts, have noticed that the status of the textbook may well be too elevated, compared

[1] This sample was actually taken at random from among beginning EFL textbooks available on Empik shelves in November 2011.

to other available resources. This could be because the textbook plays a number of roles at the same time. In his monograph entirely devoted to choosing the coursebook for an EFL course, Cunningsworth lists the following roles:

- "a resource for presentation material (spoken and written)
- a source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction
- a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc
- a syllabus (…)
- a resource for self-directed learning or self-access work
- a support for less experienced teachers (…)" (Cunningsworth op cit:7)

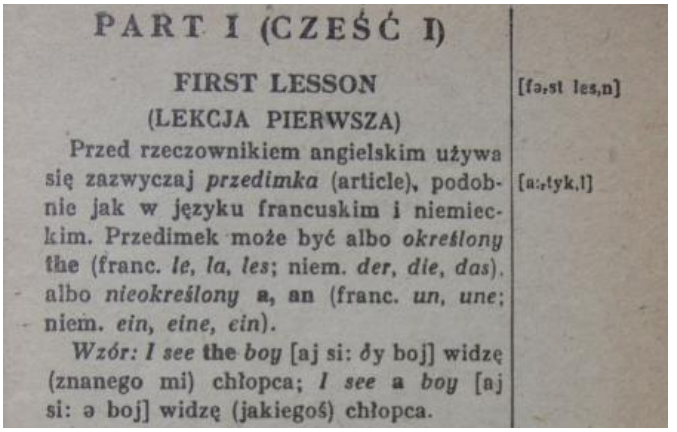
All of these functions can, and normally do, refer to pronunciation work, including the last one listed. However, as happens to be the case, the 'support' a teacher could count on to obtain from a coursebook with respect to his/her work on pronunciation would in most cases be negative. That is to say, few general textbooks offer teachers much by way of methodological help with phonetics. Indeed, as noticed many times in relevant research, explicit and systematic treatment of pronunciation is by and large absent from most EFL coursebooks currently available (Szpyra-Kozłowska et al. 2003, Szymańska-Czaplak 2006). Thus, the teacher is 'supported' by the textbook in his/her belief that pronunciation is best left alone: "Teaching English pronunciation is an area of language teaching that many English teachers avoid"
(http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/Articles/Teaching_Pronunciation.htm).

Another authority on FLT wrote in 1981: "The importance of the textbook cannot be overestimated. It will inevitably determine the major part of the classroom teaching and the students' out-of-class learning" (Rivers 1981:475). A generation later, and in a completely different stage of the development of FLT methodology, we can find surprisingly similar observations: "The heavy reliance on a coursebook in a foreign language classroom is a crucial issue. The fact that the teachers and learners use the coursebook and its supporting materials as their basic aid proves the importance of selecting and evaluating an appropriate coursebook" (İnal 2006:22). İnal's quote immediately brings to mind two important issues. First: the work of "selecting and evaluating" does not stop at the level of the textbook as a whole; once that is selected, the teacher must often select and evaluate the contents of the textbook at hand on various levels and from the point of view of various functionalities. For example, "is the treatment of football vocabulary useful in Unit Six of my textbook, or should I try to find something better?" Second, and in direct relevance to pronunciation: it would be easy enough to select and evaluate material on the basis of how pronunciation is explicitly treated in the given unit/lesson of the course. But how can a teacher evaluate the implicit handling of pronunciation in the textbook? For example, what is the phonetic profile of the text contained in the unit? Which words might be particularly troublesome to learners? Is the phonetic difficulty progression through the coursebook in parallel with the other gradients, such as those of vocabulary or grammar? Textbooks or methodology guides bundled with them would not provide this kind of information for a number of reasons: the overall neglect of EFL pronunciation in most syllabuses, curricula and courses (cf., for example, Baran-Łucarz 2006), the paucity of relevant research guiding the materials developers, or the concomitant lack of software support for phonetic analysis of coursebook text. Later in this contribution Phonetic Difficulty Index (PDI) is used to demonstrate that some phonetic control over text is indeed feasible.

3. EFL textbooks then and now

Let us now have a look at some examples of the treatment of pronunciation in coursebook texts for beginners as it was half a century ago, and as it is now. In order to do this, I will illustrate my discussion with some facsimiles of authentic textbook pages below.

Fifty (and more) years ago coursebook authors did not shy away from explicitly providing phonetic transcription from lesson one. In Figure 1 a snapshot of the very first lines of unit one is shown of a textbook by MacCallum and Thomas Watson, published in Poland in 1946.



PART I (CZEŚĆ I)

FIRST LESSON [fə,st les,n]

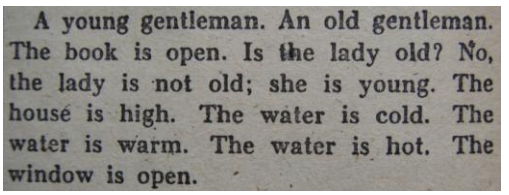
(LEKCJA PIERWSZA)

Przed rzeczownikiem angielskim używa się zazwyczaj *przedimka* (article), podobnie jak w języku francuskim i niemieckim. Przedimek może być albo *określony* the (franc. *le, la, les*; niem. *der, die, das*), albo *nieokreślony* a, an (franc. *un, une*; niem. *ein, eine, ein*). [a:,tyk,l]

Wzór: I see the *boy* [aj si: ðy boj] widzę (znanego mi) chłopca; *I see* a *boy* [aj si: ə boj] widzę (jakiegoś) chłopca.

Figure 1. MacCallum and Watson, 1946

This coursebook was originally published before WW II in London, and shows clear signs of the grammar-translation method, e.g. the grammatical explanation of articles right at the very beginning of the text. On the other hand, however, the simplified phonetic transcription (see Sobkowiak 1997 for an in-depth treatment of L1-sensitive simplification of phonetic transcription) shows the influence of the new, post-war paradigm: that of audiolingualism. The learner is expected to try to speak from the very beginning. Nowadays native-speaker recording would be used instead of transcription, of course, but the principle is the same. The textbook continues with lesson one by providing a text for practice; a part of it is reproduced in Figure 2.



A young gentleman. An old gentleman. The book is open. Is the lady old? No, the lady is not old; she is young. The house is high. The water is cold. The water is warm. The water is hot. The window is open.

Figure 2. MacCallum and Watson, 1946

It is samples of such introductory texts from several textbooks which will be used later in this paper to make up a mini-corpus for the application of the PDI metric. At this point let us only notice a few interesting points without going deeper into the text's phonetic structure. First, back in 1946 the EFL profession had not yet heard of the communicative method, which shows in the quality of the text: the sentences are there entirely as language specimens, rather than to really communicate anything. On the phonetic front notice the high incidence of the definite article, one of the words hardest to pronounce for a Polish EFL learner. Notice that in some cases the article could actually be avoided in this text: "water is cold" is perfectly grammatical, and pragmatically speaking even better than the original sentence (which water is cold, anyway?).

My own early learning of English was almost entirely based on the course of Frank Candlin, published in 1963. It was reprinted many times in Poland; my own 1969 Polish edition is the fourth. Figure 3 shows the very beginning of lesson one and the dialogue appearing later in the lesson.

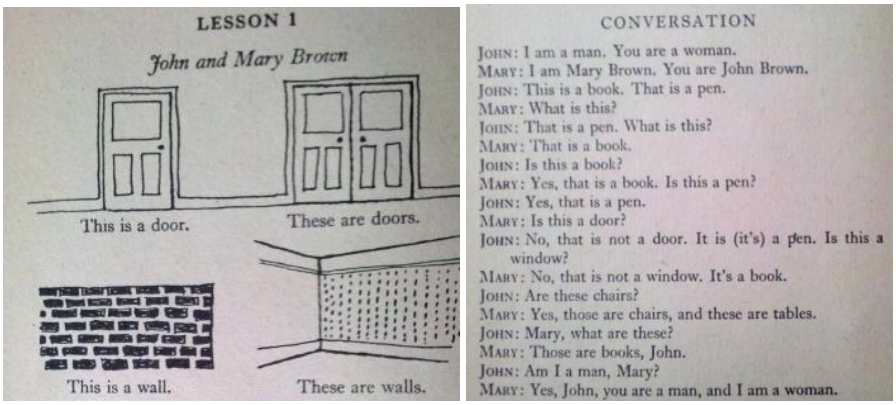


Figure 3. Frank Candlin, 1963

Like in MacCallum and Watson before, notice the heavy reliance on some of the phonetically hardest function words in English: *this, these, that, those*. The didactic intent of this move is clear, of course, but it is equally evident that no phonetic reflection went into the preparation of these introductory texts. The dialogue remains completely wooden, with a pragmatically most infelicitous turn at the very end, doubtless meant to illustrate a grammatical point, but misfiring badly.

It took a few more years for the communicative method to finally hit the mainstream coursebooks. In Poland it was ushered in by the immensely popular course of L.G.Alexander, published for this market in 1973. The opening dialogue in that course happened at a railway station and went like this: "Excúse me! / Yés? / Ís thís yóur hándbag? / Párdon? / Ís thís yóur hándbag? / Yés, it ís / Thánk you véry múch". Notice that: (i) word stress is indicated explicitly (and sometimes somewhat superfluously), (ii) sandhi clusters like those in the middle of "is this" are practically unpronounceable well into intermediate stages of EFL proficiency, even if the phrase is pragmatically very natural and common. While there is a lot of emphasis on spoken practice in Alexander's course, there is little explicit treatment of pronunciation, which word seemed little short

of a four letter word to many communicatively minded methodologists. Alexander's course may well mark this turning point between audio-lingualism and communicativeness in EFL.

Finally, during my grammar school years (1970-1974) I used the then standard school textbook, Smólska and Rusiecki's *English for everyone*, 1965 edition. It was unique among the books discussed so far in that it treated pronunciation seriously. In Figure 4 the beginning of unit one is shown, with (Polish-simplified) phonetic transcription used throughout.

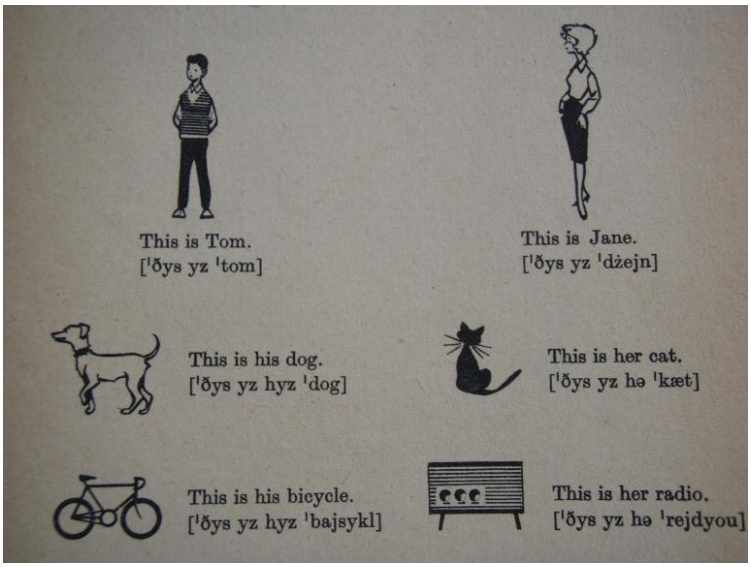
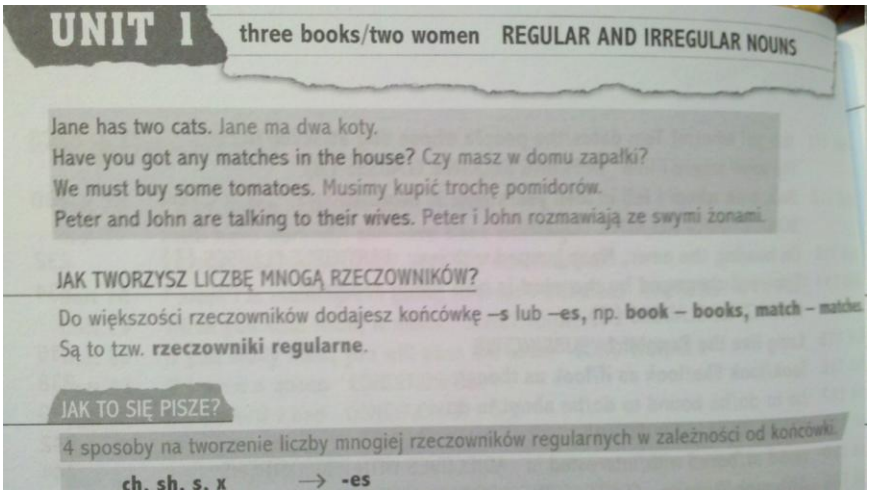


Figure 4. Smólska and Rusiecki, 1965

The customary "this is…" appears here as well, providing a lot of space for error, for example for final devoicing and/or sandhi regressive voice assimilation (typical of Polglish accents in western Poland), as shown in the title of this paper: /zyzys'tom/. In unit one of the course, i.e. one written for complete beginners, we can also find some rather sophisticated discussion of the /æ/ vowel and final devoicing, using phonetic terminology (in Polish), such as: *mouth open, lower jaw, front of the tongue, incisors, tensing, devoicing*.

If we now fast-forward half a century, we will find ourselves in a completely different textbook environment. Not only is there an almost uncountable variety of coursebooks and accompanying multimedia materials with online support, but the EFL teaching/learning paradigms have changed dramatically. In effect, we would be hard pressed to find any explicit treatment of pronunciation in contemporary textbooks at all. This includes phonetic transcription, too, which is maybe regarded as useless in view of the easy availability of spoken resources in the form of recordings and video files. In none of the three textbooks sampled here is there phonetic transcription in the first unit of the course.

As a representative illustrative example let me use Birkenmajer and Mańko, published in 2004. Figure 5 holds the beginning of the first unit.


UNIT 1 three books/two women REGULAR AND IRREGULAR NOUNS

Jane has two cats. Jane ma dwa koty.
Have you got any matches in the house? Czy masz w domu zapałki?
We must buy some tomatoes. Musimy kupić trochę pomidorów.
Peter and John are talking to their wives. Peter i John rozmawiają ze swymi żonami.

JAK TWORZYSZ LICZBĘ MNOGĄ RZECZOWNIKÓW?

Do większości rzeczowników dodajesz końcówkę **–s** lub **–es**, np. **book – books, match – matches**.
Są to tzw. **rzeczowniki regularne**.

JAK TO SIĘ PISZE?

4 sposoby na tworzenie liczby mnogiej rzeczowników regularnych w zależności od końcówki:

ch, sh, s, x → **-es**

Figure 5. Birkenmajer and Mańko, 2004

The notorious "this is…" is gone. The pragmatic quality of the sentences is certainly higher than it used to be ½ century earlier (with the notable exception of Alexander's). Birkenmajer and Mańko are not afraid to attach Polish translations to the target English sentences. Finally, from the point of view of phonetics, it is striking that there is no advice whatsoever about the pronunciation of the two morphophonemic variants of the plural morpheme.

4. PDI analysis of the textbook sample

While the above overview of the EFL textbooks affords some superficial appreciation of a number of phonetic issues, it would be hard to draw some more far-reaching conclusions concerning the profiling of pronunciation on the basis of a scan of introductory pages. This is why I decided, as mentioned above, to compile a mini-corpus of text, collecting all object-text taken from the seven textbooks under consideration here: four 'then' and three 'now' (see References for details). Object-text is here defined as that which is the teaching target, rather than meta-text used for unit organization, providing linguistic advice, introducing exercises, etc. Thus, the records collected in the sample would include the sentences of expository text as well as utterances in dialogues.

There are altogether 77 records in the database, each one tagged with the textbook identifier, phonetically transcribed and PDI-processed. The database can be conceptualized and visualized in a number of ways. Figure 6 shows its view in a simple lister overlay application running under Windows.

BOOK	SENTENCE	TRANS	DIFFS	DIF	WORDS	CALY	J	Z
cal	A young gentleman	@ jVN 'JentIm@n	J hEH JPT3	2,7	3	8	2	0
cal	An old gentleman	@n 5ld 'JentIm@n	J YZ JPT3	2,3	3	7	2	1
cal	The book is open	D@ bUk Iz 'Sp@n	JL * Z J	1	4	4	2	1
cal	Is the lady old	Iz D@ 'l4dI 5ld	Z JL * YZ	1,2	4	5	1	2
cal	No the lady is not old she is young	n5 D@ 'l4dI Iz n0t 5ld Si Iz jVN	* JL * Z 0 YZ S Z hEH	1,2	9	11	1	3
cal	The house is high	D@ h2s Iz h1	JL hU Z jzU	2	4	8	1	1
cal	The water is cold	D@ 'wOt@R Iz k5ld	JL AJ0 Z lYZ	2,2	4	9	2	2
cal	The water is warm	D@ 'wOt@R Iz wOm	JL AJ0 Z 0	1,8	4	7	2	1
cal	The water is hot	D@ 'wOt@R Iz h0t	JL AJ0 Z U0	2	4	8	2	1
cal	The window is open	D@ 'wInd5 Iz 'Sp@n	JL f Z J	1,2	4	5	2	1
smo	This is Tom	DIs Iz t0m	L Z I07	1,7	3	5	0	1
smo	This is Jane	DIs Iz J4n	L Z T7	1,3	3	4	0	1
smo	This is his dog	DIs Iz hIz d0g	L Z UZ Z0	1,5	4	6	0	3
smo	This is her cat	DIs Iz h@ k&t	L Z JU0 I	1,5	4	6	1	1
smo	This is his bicycle	DIs Iz hIz 'b1sIkl	L Z UZ W	1,2	4	5	0	2

Figure 6. A sample of the textbook corpus/database

The highlighted record, *The window is open*, comes from MacCallum and Watson 1946 ('cal'). The fourth column contains the PDI difficulty codes, the DIF column shows the mean word-weighted PDI value of this record, the WORDS column holds the number of words (four), and the CALY column sums up the global PDI value of the record (non-word-weighted; five in this case). Some phonetic difficulties identified by the PDI algorithm are listed in their separate fields: thus, for example, J stands for schwa, and Z stands for a word-final voiced obstruent (prone to erroneous devoicing in Polglish). There are two occurrences of the former and one of the latter in *The window is open*.

The PDI metric and algorithm has been introduced, described and analyzed in-depth in a number of publications by Sobkowiak and Sobkowiak and Ferlacka (see References). The most concise definition is this: "PDI is a global numerical measure of the phonetic difficulty of the given English lexical item for Polish learners. The measure combines (a) the most salient grapho-phonemic difficulties such learners are known to have reading English, i.e. mostly spelling pronunciation, (b) some commonest phonemic L1-interference problems known from the literature and my own teaching experience, finally (c) some of the notorious developmental L2-interference pronunciation errors observed in all learners of English regardless of their L1 background" (Sobkowiak 1999:214). In its current implementation PDI contains 63 points in its checklist. The algorithm can be run over a word list or arbitrary text in ordinary spelling; it first phonetically transcribes the text, and then tags it with identified difficulty points to produce output shown in Figure 6. All type of phonolapsological statistics and analyses can be initiated at this point. PDI has been used to study, among others, the phonolapsological profile of dictionary definitions (Sobkowiak 2006a) and graded readers (Sobkowiak and Ferlacka 2011).

The PDI algorithm has been run on the mini-corpus of coursebook text collected in ways described earlier. Some of the global PDI statistics gleaned from this analysis appear in Table 1. The 'then' column shows data for the four older textbooks, the 'now' column – for the three new ones. With this size sample no statistically significant effects can be obtained, but the observed differences are certainly interesting and promising for potential further research.

	then	now
# records	37	40
# words	135	209
average record length (in words)	3.65	5.22
average PDI value per record	5.62	7.78
average PDI value per word	1.54	1.48
# 'easy' words (with PDI=0)	10	59
average 'easy' words per record	0.27	1.48

Table 1. Some phonolexical statistics: 'then' versus 'now'

It will be seen that, while the number of records (sentences) is roughly equivalent for both sub-samples, the number of words differs: apparently the sentences are now longer than they used to be. This can, of course be observed if Figure 5 is compared with the previous ones: gone are the strangely concise *These are walls* entries in favour of more communicatively felicitous, and longer, sentences. With longer sentences the overall PDI value per sentence must grow as well, of course; it goes from 5.6 to 7.8 between 'then' and 'now'. In plain language this means that there were almost six points of pronouncing difficulty in one sentence in the beginning sections of the 'old' textbooks, but there are almost eight such points in the equivalent sample of contemporary textbooks. In all of my past work with PDI, however, this statistic has been weighted by the number of words in a record, to avoid the counterintuitive claim that a longer sentence is *ipso facto* phonetically harder than a shorter one. If word-weighting is applied to the data at hand, the average PDI value figures for 'then' versus 'now' are not very different, as can be seen in the table[2]. Interestingly, the value seems to have gone down a bit, the effect which is more dramatically observed in the number of 'easy' words per record across the two sub-corpora: this has grown more than five times between then and now. Should this turn out in further research to be a robust effect, it could be evidence that textbook writers do tend to make their resources more phonetically user-friendly than used to be the case half a century ago. This is not to claim that phonolapsological control is wielded directly; rather that some other editorial decisions and choices indirectly affect the phonetic profile of the text. Incidentally, this is also the phenomenon observed in the PDI analysis of pedagogical dictionary definitions and graded readers.

In a larger study of textbook phonolapsology this would be an entry point to a more thorough treatment of the collected corpus text. Space restrictions do not allow this here. But a few more examples can be provided of how PDI can be used not only to analyze textbooks for the benefit of writers and editors, but also to assist teachers and learners in their tasks of evaluation and selection, mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Because the PDI algorithm not only computes the overall PDI value of a word or sentence, but also tags each word or sentence with the specific phonetic difficulty points it contains, as exemplified in Figure 6, it is possible to select wanted material from text with a fair

[2] This value is notably lower, by the way, than the mean word-weighted PDI value counted over the corpora of controlled-vocabulary dictionary definitions (Sobkowiak 2006a) or of simplified graded readers (Sobkowiak and Ferlacka 2011), where mean PDI=1.79.

degree of precision. Thus, not only can one obtain sentences with the highest/lowest PDI value in the sample: *I work with many other teachers men and women* (PDI=16), *Peter and John are talking to their wives* (PDI=21), *I like music* (PDI=0), *My name is Max* (PDI=0.5, word-weighted), but one can also request sentences with a high/low incidence of a given PDI code or code cluster (see Sobkowiak 2006b for so-called PDI codegrams). If word-final (de)voicing is under study or practice, for example, sentences with many instances of PDI(Z) can be located: *This is his dog, I teach many students girls and boys, I work with many other teachers men and women* (all with 3 occurrences). By contrast, if no word-final voiced obstruents are wished for, it is easy to use PDI to come up with: *I teach in a school in Coventry, They are all very intelligent, I like music*.

Similarly precise queries can be easily formulated for all of the 63 PDI codes. Likewise, it is possible to combine queries for specific PDI codes with those for PDI values, e.g.: give me those sentences which are generally phonetically easy, i.e. low PDI, but with a high proportion of words containing a given phonetic difficulty. All of the other existing variables, such as sentence word-length, word spelling, or textual frequency, could be similarly combined into such queries.

5. Conclusions

The underlying theme of this preliminary study is the notion that because textbooks are of such fundamental pedagogical importance in the foreign language classroom, the underlying phonetic and phonolapsological profile of the texts used must have a powerful effect on acquisition of the target language pronunciation. If this hypothesis sounds prima facie somewhat less plausible than if it applied to the grammatical or lexical structure of beginners' coursebooks it might be due to the current state of the art when it comes to EFL pronunciation teaching and research, i.e. the general neglect mentioned at the beginning of this paper. While grammar and vocabulary are under strict editorial control in beginners' textbooks, and hence expected to bring targeted consequences in terms of learning, acquisition, skill and proficiency, pronunciation is seldom, if at all, treated in this way, at least outside of dedicated phonetic coursebooks, which are not normally used with beginners anyway.

If this inference generally makes sense, then, a thorough phonetic study of EFL textbooks becomes a necessity. This can be done in a number of ways, of course, and with a variety of tools. What I have demonstrated in this paper is just one such tool, namely PDI, and one methodology, namely a contrastive chronological look at textbooks 'then' versus 'now'. Quite apart from the phonetic and phonolapsological study of textbooks, it would also be extremely interesting to compare the actual effect of textbooks, one or two (human) generations apart, on the EFL achievement, phonetic and otherwise, of learners belonging to those generations. This, needless to say, would be a project of enormous proportions and complexity.

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