

ACCENTS 2007

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ABSTRACTS

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Hungarian students' language attitudes towards speakers of regional American English accent varieties

Since the beginning of attitude research, the majority of studies investigating people's attitudes towards the different American English accents has focused on native English speakers' attitudes. Nevertheless, some research has attempted to examine non-native speakers' reactions to various American English accent varieties. Among others, Eisenstein and Verdi (1985) investigated whether non-native speakers of English could perceive differences among social accent varieties of American English, and they found that the respondents were able to recognize the variation even in the early stages of their English acquisition. Furthermore, Alford and Strother (1990) compared and contrasted native and non-native speakers' attitudes towards various regional accent varieties of American English. The findings of this study revealed that the hearers, regardless of whether they were native or non-native speakers of English, evaluated broader accents less favorably. Indeed, language attitude studies investigate not only people's attitudes towards different accent varieties, but they are also concerned with how people evaluate the speakers of the accents in question, that is, they examine what kind of characteristic traits are assigned to the speakers of the different accent varieties.

In my conference presentation, first, I would like to display how Hungarian students differentiate between southern and non-southern American English accent varieties. Moreover, I would like to present what attitudes Hungarian students have towards the speakers of selected regional American English accents. The subjects of my research are Hungarian students who were studying English at the University of Szeged at the time of the data collection procedure. Their task was to listen to tapes of the same passage read by native American English speakers and to judge the speakers along nine character traits. All in all, the respondents' evaluations confirm the outcome of preceding language attitude studies and demonstrate that Hungarian students are able to perceive differences in regional accents of U.S. English. What is more, the results show that the broader the accent is, the less favorably its speakers are judged by the Hungarian students.

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Looking for the ‘real’ native speaker: The perception of native and non-native English accents by non-native speakers of English

The voiceless dental fricative sound /θ/ is not part of the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) as developed by Jenkins (2000; 2005), and thus, it is not considered crucial for intelligibility. However, variation in this sound is used as a social marker, e.g. when non-native speakers (NNS) of English are caricatured or when stereotypes are addressed as with the popular quotation ‘don’t mention *z*e war’ by John Cleese (in the British comedy-series ‘Fawlty Towers’).

Although consonants are important in establishing accents, previous research on speech perception mostly involved vowel variation (e.g. Kingston 2003). Only few studies focused on consonants (e.g. Flege 1995; Magen 1998). Furthermore, most studies were based on ratings by native speakers (NS) of English. However, NS and NNS accents need to be judged by NS and NNS alike to account for the function of English as a Lingua Franca and the fact that more and more people engage in cross-cultural communication not necessarily involving a NS of English.

In this paper, I argue that judgements of accents are related to the listener’s social and cultural identity and that studies in the phonetic-sociolinguistics interface can contribute revealing insights into the mechanisms of accent perception and acquisition. I will report two studies, both of which are based on perception tasks and aimed at finding out whether variation in specific accent features effects the perceived ‘foreignness’ of English spoken by NS and NNS of English. In both studies accents were rated on a 7-point scale by NNS and NS of English.

In the first study, participants rated whether German and Greek NNS accents and Southern English, General American and Caribbean NS accents of English sounded more or less native-like. All of these accents had several levels of variation in the crucial sound /θ/; this variation was artificially implemented by reading tasks in which /θ/ was substituted with similar sounds. The results, quite surprisingly, show a misconception of the notion ‘native speaker’ by NNS and NS alike. All participants rated one of the NS accents (the Caribbean accent) as least NS like of all accents, ranked behind the Greek and German NNS accents, while Southern English was rated most native-like. This suggests that both NS and NNS have an idealised view of English NS. Furthermore, variation in the non-LFC sound /θ/ did not influence the nativeness judgements significantly, although participants reported that they noticed this kind of variation in all accents.

A follow-up study used ‘levels of accentedness’, i.e. NNS accents of English with stronger and weaker L1 influence. This study revealed that participants do not distinguish between these levels of accentedness when it comes to judging whether accents sound more or less NS-like although they reported that they noticed weaker and stronger accents. The results of both studies suggest that nativeness judgements of accents are not just influenced by phonetic detail but are rather perceived holistic. I argue that both studies indicate that sociolinguistic factors such as attitudes and stereotypes towards accents might have influenced the ratings more than phonetic variation.

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English in NATO - NATO English

Among numerous factors that have contributed to the spread of English in Europe the expansion of the European Union and the NATO are of major importance. Joining the NATO by Poland was a significant stimulus for the Polish military to enhance their command of the English language. In my paper I will carry out an overview of the phonetic component of the textbooks used for teaching English to the military. The aim of this will be to analyse to what extent pronunciation is relevant in the didactic process, what methods and techniques are employed and which accent is chosen. In order to get more reliable data and to expand the scope of my research I will also investigate the aforementioned issues via interviews with teachers as well as with Polish soldiers learning English in the army. My paper will also try to answer the question whether a new variety of English in Europe, namely NATO English, has already emerged.

Tomasz Ciszewski, Institute of English, University of Gdańsk

The STEM – SUFFIX conflict? The sources of variability of stress patterns

One of the most striking features of the English stress system is that it allows the existence of variants stress patterns for one lexical item, especially when it is morphologically complex, e.g. *applicable* [ə'plɪkəbəl; 'æplɪkəbəl], *sonorous* ['sɒn'ərəs; sə'nɒ:rəs] or *acclimate* ['æklɪmeɪt; ə'klaɪmət]. The present paper analyses the potential sources of stress pattern variability in forms containing the suffix *-ate*.

The assumption that underlies the analysis is that the existence of variant stress patterns in *-ate* forms may reflect an interplay between metrical principles whose latent 'competition' is revealed once an appropriate metrical context appears. Although it seems to belong to the traditional OT machinery, the principles-in-conflict situation has also been present in Metrical Stress Theory (Burzio, 1994) and independently acknowledged by Government Phonology (Cyran, 2003). The inconsistent accentual behaviour of certain *-ate* formations, in our view, results from the tension between the stress preservation of the stem (left edge) and the word prosody dominance principle (Ciszewski, 2005), which aligns the main stress with the right edge of the word.

This paper confronts these assumptions with an extensive database of *-ate* forms, making explicit references to weight-sensitivity, feet structure and their internal licensing relations. In general, the discussion is in line with the spirit of Metrical Phonology (Halle and Vergnaud 1987, Hayes 1995), where the phenomenon of stress is viewed as a kind of relation that stressable elements (rhymes) contract with each other in the process of parsing a string of rhymes into feet. The parsing process is controlled by a set of principles and checked by language-specific parameters.

As observed by Fudge (1984) or Plag (2003) the formations with *-ate* are not a homogeneous group. They include verbal formations (usually based on bound or truncated stems), nominal and adjectival formations, as well as nominal formations denoting chemical terms. The crucial metrical (and, subsequently, melodic) differences boil down to two options; (i) the suffix contains either a heavy rhyme (diphthong) and carries final secondary stress or (ii) the suffix rhyme dominates a melodically depleted vowel (schwa) and bears no stress. However, as the discussion will show, the division line is not sharp. While all *-ate* verbs are always pronounced with a diphthong, there exist variants for a certain group of nouns and adjectives which contain a full vowel and not a schwa. Additionally, cross-dialectal differences, e.g. between Received Pronunciation and General American, may be observed.

In conclusion:

- Variants stress patterns and the melodic composition of various *-ate* formations are not motivated by the status of the stem (bound vs. free)
- Suffixes in general, and *-ate* in particular, are not idiosyncratically auto-stressed, pre-stressed 1 or pre-stressed 2. Generally, each suffix has its own metrical structure which may integrate differently with different metrical structures of stems.
- Stress preservation may be in conflict with other principles.
- Metrical well-formedness of the output cannot be violated by suffixation.
- Variant stress patterns occur when the metrical material can be parsed into more than one well-formed metrical structure. Stress patterns that satisfy more metrical principles are preferred.

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Acoustic variability in the production of English vowels by native and non-native speakers

The differences between native and non-native speakers of a language are difficult to pin down. Yet native speakers can detect non-native accents extremely quickly (from 30ms of speech in one study). One aspect of non-nativeness has been found to be variability at many levels of language e.g. morphology and syntax. Earlier work has, however, shown, for example, that non-native speakers of English may be more regular or less regular than native speakers in their phonetic timing patterns. This study investigates intra-speaker variability in the acoustic vowel quality of phonologically high front and high back vowels of English produced by native and non-native speakers. The notion that non-native speech is more variable than native speech is tested using elicited speech in various contexts produced by several groups of speakers. One group is teenage native Swedish speakers who were recorded reading English texts and wordlists on two occasions separated by 31 months. Another group is assorted native speakers of English reading the same material.

The study examines the effect of time, and an assumed associated increasing proficiency in English on variability of non-native vowel quality. The variability in the vowel quality of the individual Swedish speakers in Swedish is compared to their vowel quality variability in English. The native speakers of English form a control group and their vowel quality variability is compared with that of the English vowels produced by the Swedish speakers.

Iwona Czyżak; Sławomir Stasiak, Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska

“English Pronunciation Clinic – the case of low phonetic achievers”

The authors of the paper test empirically a hypothesis that low phonetic proficiency of many foreign learners of English stems mainly from the failure of group teaching to address the needs and abilities of individual students. We present here part of a project, termed English Pronunciation Clinic, which deals with particularly difficult cases of low phonetic achievers. First the problems of each ‘patient’ are individually diagnosed, then a custom-made treatment is prescribed and carried out in a series of tutorials and, finally, the results of the applied therapy are carefully examined.

The experimental part contains a report on seven case studies involving three teacher training college students and four secondary school pupils with extremely poor English pronunciation who have undergone a specially designed phonetic training. We demonstrate that within the experimental period all the subjects made a rapid phonetic progress and managed to improve their English pronunciation noticeably and, in some instances, radically, which suggests that phonetically ‘hopeless cases’ are not always as hopeless as they appear to be.

Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kolaczyk, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Predicting phonotactic difficulty in second language acquisition

In this study, 53 subjects, aged 11-13 years, native speakers of 15 various languages (of the Austronesian and Sino-Tibetan family, as well as Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese) were recorded reading 83 times an English carrier sentence *I haven't seen a xxx before!* each time containing a different bisyllabic nonce word. Each word contained just one double or triple consonant cluster; all positions (initial, medial and final) and representative combinations were covered. It was hypothesised that a degree of difficulty in pronouncing those words would correlate with the complexity of a given consonantal cluster, as measured by the NAD Principle (cf. Dziubalska-Kolaczyk 2002, 2003, Dressler & Dziubalska-Kolaczyk 2007, in press, Dziubalska-Kolaczyk & Krynicki 2007, Bertinetto et al. 2007). The latter factor was expected to be a universal criterion, underlying the performance of all subjects, and surpassing other relevant factors, such as the structure of the subjects' mother tongue, their experience with English or their other capacities and motivations. Preferred clusters are expected to be easier and less susceptible to reductions and assimilations than the dispreferred ones.

Net Auditory Distance (NAD) constitutes the sum of distances in manner (MOA), place (POA) and voice (Lx) between neighbouring consonants. For instance, in order to counteract the universal preference for a CV structure (cf., e.g. Maddieson 2006), i.e. to avoid cluster simplification, NAD between the consonants in a CCV sequence needs to be greater than a competing distance to a vowel. Cohesion of clusters is thus a resultant of distance ratios dependant upon position in a word. Consequently, word initially the greater the distance between C1 and C2 (i.e., the more phonetic contrast it involves) over the C2-to-V distance, the more cohesive the cluster. This is the essence of the universal NAD Principle which leads to predictions about language-specific phonotactics, its acquisition and change. Specifically, it also allows to predict and explain the order of difficulty in the acquisition of second language phonotactics which appears to be universally valid and as such calls for similar remedies across languages.

Wiktor Gonet, Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska; Radosław Święciński

Clashes with ashes

One of the most notorious problems facing Polish learners of English is the pronunciation of the low front vowel, known as ash, which occurs, for instance, in *man*, *cat*, *attack*. As this segment is absent in Polish, it is commonly replaced by Polish speakers with what is considered its closest equivalents, i.e. by the vowels [e] or [a]. This is evidenced by numerous borrowings from English in which the original ash is realized in Polish either as [e], as in *czempion* (*champion*), *dżecz* (*jazz*), *kemping* (*camping*), or as [a], as in *gadżet* (*gadget*), *bandžo* (*banjo*), *jankees* (*Yankee*).

The present paper attempts to examine whether there are any regularities behind Polish substitutions of English ashes that could be generalized into pedagogically useful suggestions. Towards this purpose, the authors analyse 60 speech samples, recorded by first year students of the English Department of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, and their realizations of the vowel in question in various phonological and lexical contexts.

Anna Gralińska-Brawata, University of Łódź

Speech as a marker of social identity – Geordie English

Constructing one's identity is intricately linked to language choices that speakers make, consciously or not, in order to build a self-image of themselves. The range of choices that they have at their disposal includes both standard and non-standard or dialectal features, and their selection vary depending on what group a speaker wants to identify with and belong to, as well as on the level of formality of the context in which an utterance takes place. The claim presented here shall be aided by the consideration of identity, attitudes and stereotypes that accompany Geordie English variety spoken in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Tyneside area, supported by the phonetic analyses of the speech of two born Geordies (Alan Shearer and Sting) conducted as part of my MA thesis research.

What forms the basis for prejudice and stereotypes, in case of Geordie dialect, is Newcastle's remoteness (the point of reference being London) in geographical, linguistic, as well as cultural terms of which both northerners and southerners have been fully aware ever since the Norman conquest. A general stereotype has it that, although their accent has always been associated with 'friendliness', the Tynesiders, perhaps not overtly, are perceived as uneducated, often unemployed loafers in the rough and tough god-forsaken Northeast. More recently, Geordie accent is beginning to be viewed in a more positive light, which is reflected in a number of surveys conducted in recent years. The positive social evaluation that it meets contributes to its growing acceptance and becoming devoid of stigma. At the same time, this traditional pronunciation has not ceased to be a token of regional identity of which Geordies are so proud, and even the fact that it is stereotypical only reinforces it as a marker of this identity. Linguistically, Geordie English, as well as Northern English in general, seems to be a true echo of Old English, or Anglo-Saxon English, especially with regard to pronunciation. Many Geordie words like *dede*, *coo*, *clout*, *hoos*, *wrang*, *strang* and *lang* are proved to be the original Anglo-Saxon pronunciations for *dead*, *cow*, *clout*, *house*, *wrong*, *strong* and *long*. It has been estimated that distinctive Geordie and Northumbrian vocabulary items originate in more than 80% from Old English variety. By comparison, the figure in standard English is believed to be less than 30%.

Dialect's distinct vowel system, vocabulary and complex grammar patterns shall be presented in relation to the qualitative and quantitative phonetic analyses of the speech of Alan Shearer, a former football player and Sting, a world-famous musician.

Two diverse ways of pronunciation prove the speaker's different attitudes to the common regional origins and stand for two divergent tendencies in the way the accent is used and perceived. Alan Shearer seems to emphasize his 'geordieness' and strong affiliation with Newcastle and its inhabitants by means of employing features characteristic of the accent. The analysis of Sting's pronunciation confirms the assumption that he has generally been successful in ridding himself of the traces of Geordie accent and thus throwing off his Geordie identity.

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Short course focus on intelligibility: What type of progress is possible?

This paper will present the analysis of a series of recordings of learner English, comparing spontaneous speech with prepared speech for ten individuals. Features such as speech rate, pausing, intonation, word and nuclear stress will be examined; those which are used “correctly” in the spontaneous speech after the optimal performance conditions of the read-aloud, prepared speech will be seen as successfully “integrated” or “learned”. Self-monitoring or self-correction of a mistake related to these features in spontaneous speech will be considered as indicating at least partial integration of the feature, to the extent that the learner is aware of their mistake and tries to remedy it.

All of the individuals were adults at French universities but they were not all native speakers of French (one native speaker of Bulgarian, one of Japanese, one of Greek); some were final year university students studying for a Sociology degree and others were teachers in the applied linguistics department. They attended a course whose goal was to improve the intelligibility of their spoken English in order to facilitate international communication with both native and non-native speakers. The course led up to the recorded presentation of a text in which the grammar and vocabulary had been corrected by the course teacher. Before being recorded, the text was rehearsed with special attention to those features identified in the literature as contributing to intelligibility: speech segmentation, word and nuclear stress (Field, 2005; Hahn, 2004; Murphy and Kandil, 2004) and certain segmentals (Jenkins, 2000, 2002). The implications for future teaching and research will be considered, including the need to address the issue of functional load in both ESL and EIL contexts.

Mariko Honda, University of Reading

The Role of Prosody in Japanese: the use of pitch information in spoken word recognition by L1 and L2 speakers

This study investigated how L1 and L2 speakers produce Japanese pitch accent. It investigated the acoustic realization of Japanese pitch accent as produced by our four subject groups: native speakers of Japanese with and without pitch accent in their variety, and students learning Japanese with and without pitch accent in their L1. Our L1 subjects included 17 speakers (from Tokyo) of the standard accent with lexical pitch, as well as 17 speakers of an accent without lexical pitch (from Ibaraki). The L2 subjects included 41 students of Japanese as a foreign language: 17 L1 speakers of English (from Oxford) without lexical pitch in their L1 and 24 L1 speakers of Norwegian (from Oslo) with lexical tone in their L1, and thus a different/similar suprasegmental basis.

Subjects were asked to read aloud two Japanese word pairs, which consisted of the same sound segment sequences but with differing lexical accent positions. Their speech was recorded and examined using an auditory interpretation method by three standard Japanese speakers, including two trained phoneticians, who judged which accent type (either High-Low or Low-High) the subjects applied on each word. In addition, to observe the slope of the rising or falling F0 contour (the pitch movement from high to low or from low to high over the first and the second mora), the ratio of fundamental frequency between the first vowel and the second vowel was measured using a speech analyser. Additionally, a laboratory-based listening test, a word discrimination task using the same minimal pair words, was given to determine how L1 influenced word recognition; the link between subjects' performance in accent production and perception was tested.

It was hypothesised that 1) the pitch produced by L1 Japanese speakers would be statistically more accurate and consistent and would produce a clearer contour than L2 Japanese speakers. It was also predicted that the L1 pitch accent group would show higher accuracy and consistency compared to the L1 non-pitch accent group and that there would be a statistical difference in degree of performance in producing pitch movement by the two L2 speaker groups, one with a L1 pitch accent background (Norwegian) and the other with a L1 non-pitch accent background (English). Another hypothesis was that 2) speakers' accuracy, consistency and degree (quality) of pitch production would predict their success in pitch perception. Further explorations of the factors involved were carried out by looking at individual differences within the groups.

Magnus Huber, Institut für Anglistik, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, Germany

Emerging norms: variability and focussing in the birth of ESL standard accents – the case of English in Ghana

The continued contact of English with indigenous languages in "anglophone" West Africa has resulted in considerable L1 influence and internal variation in West African English (WafE). These divergences from the historical input variety British English (BrE) are seen as nothing more than errors by many local linguists and language teachers, who are concerned about falling standards, while others treat such differences as signs of indigenization.

Ghana presents no exception here: the discussion on the status of English in this West African country has been going on since before independence 50 years ago (see Huber 2004: 863-864), although recent years have witnessed the first signs of codification of Ghanaian English (GhaE; e.g. Dako 2003). In Schneider's (2003) five-stage developmental model of World Englishes, GhaE falls somewhere between Phase 3 'Nativization' and Phase 4 'Endonormative Stabilization', which is "marked by the gradual adoption and acceptance of an indigenous linguistic norm, supported by a new, locally rooted linguistic self-confidence" (p. 249).

This paper concentrates on the phonology of GhaE, an area where speakers generally tolerate more deviances from BrE than in morphosyntax, and where endonormative stabilization is arguably most advanced. Focussing on speakers representing different Ghanaian language backgrounds, this quantitative phonetic-phonological study will analyze intra- and inter-speaker variability with respect to features such as the quality and distribution of the strut vowel or Akan Advanced Tongue Root vowel harmony. In the area of consonants, the replacement of the RP postalveolar fricatives, affrication of <th> to [tθ, dð] or substitution by dental plosives, t-glottaling, realization of <wh> as [hw], and the phonetic quality of /r/ are of potential interest. The aim of this analysis is to discover whether there are phonetic and phonological processes in GhaE that indicate an emergent community norm in that

1. they are adopted even by those speakers of GhaE whose African language phonologies would in fact allow forms closer to the BrE input or which would require to treat it differently,
2. they cannot be attributed to African language influence but represent separate developments that set GhaE off from its historical input variety BrE.

To answer if such linguistic focussing (Le Page 1968) occurs in the GhaE speech community, the GhaE phonology of individual speakers will be compared with the phonology of their respective L1. The establishment of such community norms is important from a theoretical point of view, demonstrating that GhaE is developing towards an autonomous and stable system.

Adrian Leemann, Bern University

Vowel Quality of Swiss EFL Speakers

The purpose of this study in second language acquisition (SLA) is threefold. Primarily, it explores the differences in vowel quality between the English vowels produced by 20 Swiss German (SG) speakers and the vowel quality of both Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA). Language internal as well as language external factors occupy a crucial role in determining a foreign accent; thus, one component of this study is devoted to their assessment. This study further offers a critical approach towards standardized sociolinguistic and particularly acoustic phonetic procedures. 20 native SG subjects were prompted to read word lists containing selected English and SG vowels in /hVd/ constructions three times. They further filled out questionnaires that provide information as to their demographic characteristics, language background and attitudes towards British English and American English. With PRAAT, F1 and F2 values of the vowels were measured at the formants' most stable phase. A time period of 50 ms was measured at the vowel nucleus which is visualized by the LPC traces on the spectrograms. The obtained Swiss English (SE) formant values were compared to formant values of RP and GA by means of paired-samples t-tests in SPSS. Repeated measures ANOVAs test variation among the three attempts of articulating the words. Independent t-tests as well as ANOVAs were applied in order to test the SE mean values for external variables gained from the questionnaire. This research design raises several issues. First, these issues are addressed from a general sociolinguistic perspective, followed by the respective implications for the present study. The critical approach section explores the lack of authenticity in language which is recorded under near-laboratory-like conditions, the comparison of formant values to a precarious concept such as Standard English, language variation and its inhibiting implications on sociophonetic second language research, as well as serious methodological difficulties in acoustic phonetic measurement. The implications of these characteristics advocate taking the findings of the present study, as well as the results of empirical studies in sociophonetics and sociolinguistics, with a pinch of salt. The results of the data analyses suggest that the Swiss tend to pronounce English vowels more towards RP than towards GA, particularly in terms of the vowels' F2 values. Equality of means tests showed tendencies that L1 interference occurs principally in the SE vowels *i:*, *ɑ:* and *ʌ*, as the subjects' SE vowels' F1s and F2s are closer to the F1s and F2s of their SG counterparts than they are to RP or GA. Further statistical tests show potential correlations between the SE mean values and external factors such as age, SG dialect, attitudes towards British or American English, etc. Often, however, these tendencies are statistically insignificant, which is probably due to the small sample of only 20 subjects. Finally, it is suggested that instrumental vowel analyses could be implemented more frequently in foreign language classrooms in Switzerland, because they, as scholarship suggests, supply practical aid in accent reduction, in case a foreign accent is deemed undesirable.

David Levey, Universidad de Cádiz

The changing face of Gibraltarian English

Gibraltar is a small British colony located on the Iberian Peninsular connected to Spain by a narrow isthmus. It measures just 6km² and has a population of 30,000. Although it's strategic position and political controversy has attracted considerable academic interest, its fascinating linguistic situation has largely been overlooked.

Although English has been the official language since it fell into British hands in 1704, largely due to geographical proximity, Spanish and *Yanito* (an English- Spanish codes-switching variant) have traditionally been the most widespread forms of expression in Gibraltar.

Having given a general overview of the linguistic situation in Gibraltar, both past and present, we examine how recent socio-political changes have affected language use in Gibraltar and helped to create an environment ripe for language change.

Based on empirical research, this paper gauges the extent to which Spanish transfer is still present in Gibraltarian English, as well as determining whether the speech of young Gibraltarians is following similar trends to those found in Britain.

Our findings reveal that as language preference shifts away from Spanish and further towards English, non-standard phonetic variants are beginning to emerge in the speech of young Gibraltarians. The recent appearance of non-standard or semi-standard variants such as T-glottalling in the speech of young Gibraltarians is particularly revealing, particularly given the fact that glottal does not form part of the Spanish phonetic inventory.

Anna Marczak, PWSZ Płock

Production of English stressed beats : the case of Polish speakers

Inspired by J. Archibald's (1999) and E. Waniek-Klimczak's (2002) experiments conducted on Polish speakers of English I have decided to do a survey with the same lexical stratum analyzing particularly types of Polish subjects' errors and strategies appeared in their English stress production.

It would seem that the more proficient learner in L2 the better he/she is in the production and/or perception of word stress. However, J. Archibald (1998) in his studies has not recognized any indications in this respect. Boyle's (1987) contradiction to such a common assumption also suggests that the stress perception and/or production is found not to correlate with proficiency in other aspects of L2. Therefore, it might be assumed that otherwise quite proficient learners may still encounter problems with stress assignment.

In my case study I address the following questions:

- How correctly can Polish learners of a typologically different language locate primary word stress in English?
- What strategies do Polish learners of English use to assign stress to particular words in their production?
- What are the most frequent error patterns produced by subjects?

Results of a controlled sentence-reading list with testing English stress assignment indicate some conclusions pertaining certain strategies used by L2 learners for stress location. Among varieties of stress location strategies employed by subjects, the most frequent ones appeared in the production are namely, from non-target-like patterns over potential L1 transfer to target-like L2 stress.

Other strategies noticed in the study of L2 stress performance can refer to a re-formulation of the nucleus status that subjects assume they should make it heavier. Hence, quite a regular strategy in the L2 production of CVC stressed beats being realized very frequently as CVVC ones, could be named as a 'compensatory lengthening' strategy. The compensatory lengthening strategy might refer to L2 learners' knowledge on English stress placement since in the subjects' strategy usage, a quantity generalization precedes other phonological and phonetic analysis.

The other phonological data is investigated and presented in the paper, this is namely: Principles and Parameters approach by Dresher, B. & Kaye, J. (1990) to the acquisition of L2 stress assignment. Metrical analysis of the obtained data indicates that typological differences between the two languages encounter problems with the absence of the P5 (quantity parameter) application in Polish subjects' stress assignment. Thus, instead performing CVVC they produce CVC patterns (e.g. arena, Manitoba, Minnesota, interpret, observe, appear) and inversely, in places where the P5 does not have to be implied, the subjects present a stressed beat CVCC as CVVCC (e.g. convince, venison, javelin, agenda, collapse, matador). We might name this kind of L2 stress strategy as an inter-language behavior strategy. The other words of the stratum in focus might be observed as more familiar and less familiar to subjects, and hence, could be analyzed in terms of two strategies employed by L2 speakers: familiarization and non-familiarization strategies.

Phonetic realization of English stressed beats in the study can be assumed to be difficult for Polish speakers when considering stress parameters required to accommodate properties like P5, which might impede the ability to acquire L2 stress. The phonetic difficulty as E. Waniek-Klimczak (2005;120) claims, consists in the degree of durational and spectral changes connected with the stressed/unstressed opposition.

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Marta Nowacka, University of Rzeszów

How far is ‘Hanover’ from ‘hangover’?” misperceptions of Polish ear: the study of English consonants in university and college students of English

The study examines the perception of English consonants in listening comprehension and sound discrimination tasks in university and college students of English (181). It has been carried out with a view to establishing which consonantal contrasts, out of 9 included in the research, are problematic for recognition by Polish students. The consonantal distinctions which constitute the core of the research are as follows: alveolar versus velar nasals (n vs. ŋ, fortis versus lenis alveolar fricatives and plosives (s vs. z', t vs. d) as well as contrasts concerning interdental fricatives in the oppositions such as voiceless θ contrasted with f, s and t respectively, and voiced ð juxtaposed with v, z and d.

The results include the correlations between the listening comprehension and consonant discrimination tests and suggest the hierarchy of difficulty of 9 consonantal contrasts, 18 individual consonants and 60 contexts of the 18 consonants whether word-initially, medially, finally and in clusters.

In addition, the informants' success is under investigation to see if the training in receptive skills was effective. The results for university and college participants, representatives of three consecutive years of study, including October freshmen, are juxtaposed in search of the best experimental group. An attempt is also made to check if there are any significant similarities and/or differences in the findings referring to these respondents.

This study should make it clear what to focus on during practice on students' perception of English consonants and what sequence this training should follow. Thus, on the basis of the results it seems that it would be most useful to concentrate first, on consonantal contrasts with the dental fricatives such as ð versus v, ð versus d, and θ versus f, and then to move to a nasal opposition of n and ŋ as the other distinctions are fairly easy.

It can be further inferred that in a perception task in which previously mentioned minimal pairs are involved the respondents often choose an option with an unfamiliar sound which does not exist in Polish though a sound similar to Polish, but with a different place of articulation, e.g. d or n, or even a sound which is the same as in Polish, e.g. /f/ or /v/ is expected.

An examination of specific consonantal contexts shows which word-position of a particular sound deserves particular attention during practice. Little convergence, however, has been noticed between listening comprehension and sound discrimination parts in this respect since only three contexts exhibit similarities.

Unfortunately, with reference to students' success, the outcome concerning both listening comprehension and sound discrimination does not support the claim that phonetic training strengthens the learners' ability to distinguish between the L2 consonants. Although it is true that the success rate was directly proportional to the length of study, hence better language advancement, the differences between the tested groups turned out insignificant and might be attributable to chance alone.

What remains an unanswered intriguing question, which might be investigated in the future, is how the subjects' lexical familiarity with the tested items and word frequencies affected his/her perceptual recognition.

Janina Ozga, Uniwersytet Jagielloński

The intonation of yes/no questions: am I missing something?

In this paper I want to look again at that old chestnut with a view to finding out from my colleagues whether the question of the “meaning” of the fall /rise on general questions has finally been settled to the satisfaction of teachers of phonetics, who have to give their students rough and ready answers. The complacency with which I greeted such papers as Thompson (1995), which corroborated my intuitions about the fall being associated with conduciveness and the rise with “real” questions, was undermined by Brazil (1994), claiming the exact reverse. I have since simply presented my students with both proposals, told them which I considered to be the correct one, and encouraged them to find out for themselves how this complementary distribution (if it is that) really works by studying the contexts in which native speakers use the two contours. However, some new research may have helped tip the scales either way and I am hopelessly behind the times. While the problem is distinctly non-core, advanced students should be given the best available information even on peripheral issues and I look forward to feedback from Accents conference participants.

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Michał B. Paradowski, Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw

Patrician twit or laissez-faire ELFish?

A valid question that presents itself in ELT is: which of the sociolinguistic varieties should we choose as the most relevant to the learner's needs? RP, the 'upper-class twit' which used to be regarded as the most authoritative, yet on the most optimistic accounts is today spoken by no more than 20% of the British population? When a phonetic analysis of Queen Elisabeth II's speech has revealed that her pronunciation has been slowly, imperceptibly moving from upper class accent to the more common 'standard' (PAP report, Dec 5 2006), and the BBC displays a palette of regional dialects? Standard American, considering the fact that it is the U.S. that now boasts more native English speakers than the rest of the world combined? Or maybe something else? Teachers are increasingly challenged to select the most appropriate variety for different circumstances.

At the same time, under the Continuum Model of the glossography of English in the world, historical primacy is admittedly ceded to the 'core' varieties, but 'peripheral' or 'outer' variants are seen as spiralling out in a continuum (Smith 1981; Kachru 1988; Phillipson 1992), with some having already achieved the status of autonomous egalitarian varieties. The N/NS distinction becomes irrelevant, as everyone is a NS of his/her particular dialect and a non-native of all the others – the same speaker can be perceived as native in some parts of the Anglosphere and as foreign in others.

The question: "Whose language should be taught?" does not restrict itself to the native varieties only. The majority of communication and exchange taking place in English today does *not* involve monolingual native speakers of this language, but multilingual *non*-native users, making them the norm rather than an exception to the rule. The answer will then not be 'the only legitimate language' you hear in American chat shows and action series or British soaps and comedies, but a range of *assimilated* varieties, with a sufficient 'common core' for interpersonal communication but not infrequently quite distinct from its forefather. Thus, for instance in the realm of pronunciation, the learners' attention had better be directed at the *relevant* distinctions, while ignoring variability that is not crucial to effective communication, and which will not return satisfactory benefits for the cost investment.

Yet, while the majority of learners may find that their communication with so-called NSs (if it has ever been present there in the first place) does not extend beyond the classroom, they are still being taught varieties that are more appropriate to conversation among native speakers in Brighton or Baltimore (Jenkins 2004; Matsuda 2003:719). Who, then, is to be the arbiter of what is right and wrong? The question, is, do we want to teach ENL as the foreign language, or would a more legitimate learning goal be a *lingua franca*, a medium of international communication (and, perhaps, survival communication with NSs as well, where necessary, e.g. during travel), approaching communication between non-natives in its own right (*vide* e.g. Meierkord & Knapp 2002)? A NS model quickly loses in relevance, and the new evolving hybrid lingoes will increasingly look to continental Europe or Asia for their norms of correctness and appropriateness rather than grounding them in UK or U.S. uses.

In addition, as NSs themselves speak with accents that diverge from the 'standard'—many dialects of North American English do not have the [ɔ:] vowel (*cf.* the

cot-caught merger), do not distinguish unstressed [ɪ] from schwa (pronouncing *roses* and *Rosa's* alike) or /t/ and /d/ in unstressed syllables (*latter* vs. *ladder* both articulated with the alveolar flap), while Cockney merges the interdentalals /θ/ and /ð/ with /f/ and /v/, and Ebonics /ð/ with dental /d/—one might wonder if the enormous time, effort and resources expended on polishing these sounds are justified and why the FL learner should be required to master those distinctions.

Within ELF, of primary importance is intelligibility, requiring a focus on problems contributing to communicative breakdown rather than on native-like accuracy or a specific variety of the language (Jenkins 2000) – a native-speaker accent may seem way too remote from that of our learners' prospective interlocutors. This is also why teaching ELF—unlike traditional EFL—means not only slimming the syllabus down, but should also include a focus on pragmatic strategies necessary in intercultural communication (Graddol 2006:87), since failing to understand cultural differences may lead to problems in international relations, business, and even travel (PhysOrg 2005).

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Mirosław Pawlak, UAM Kalisz

Another look at the use of pronunciation learning strategies: An advanced learner's perspective

Despite considerable advances in the field of research into language learning strategies, very little attention has so far been given to the strategic devices that students at different levels of proficiency use to enhance their learning of pronunciation. Although pronunciation teaching experts (e.g. Goodwin 2001; Seidlhofer 2001) stress the value of these strategies, they typically confine themselves to providing a few examples thereof and making references to leading publications devoted to language learning strategies in general. In addition, there is very little empirical evidence concerning the use of pronunciation learning strategies, their effectiveness or the impact of strategies-based instruction in this area. Although some insights into this issue come from the so-called 'good language learner' studies (Naiman et al. 1978), there is only a handful of empirical investigations dealing specifically with what learners do to make the learning of target language pronunciation faster, more effective and enjoyable (e.g. Peterson 2000; Bukowski 2004; Pawlak 2006). For this reason, there is clearly a pressing need to investigate the area of pronunciation learning strategies, with the aim of exploring their use by different types of learners, drawing up a taxonomy of such devices, appraising their utility in different contexts and situations, and determining the extent to which their application leads to improvement in learning and teaching foreign language phonology.

The study reported in this paper mainly aimed to contribute to the first of the goals mentioned above by investigating the use of pronunciation learning strategies by advanced learners of English. The subjects were ninety first-year students in the English Department who filled out a questionnaire concerning their views on learning and teaching pronunciation as well as the things they do in class or in their own time to master this language subsystem. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the responses showed that the students tend to mostly rely on various types of cognitive strategies for this purpose, with affective, metacognitive or social strategies being only very infrequently drawn upon. In addition, it turned out that they show a preference for traditional cognitive strategies such as different types of practice and repetition, and few of them resort to more complex or innovative devices of this kind. These results will serve as a basis for proposing a number of tentative suggestions as to how students in English departments can be trained in effective use of pronunciation learning strategies. An attempt will also be made to outline a research program, the aim of which would be to come up with an up-to-date taxonomy of such strategic devices, assess their utility and explore the effects of training advanced learners in their use.

Andrzej Porzuczek, Uniwersytet Śląski

Stress-dependent syllable duration variability in Polish learner's and native British English pronunciation

The fascinating problems of stress and time relations in spoken language have recently become a fast developing area of study thanks to new, more and more accessible research technology. This kind of prosodic characteristics of advanced Polish learner's English pronunciation also forms the main interest of the present paper. A typical Polish accent bears numerous traits attributable to L1 interference in both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of speech. A large number of suprasegmental differences between the two languages reflect the characteristic divergence between stress-timed and syllable-timed languages. One of the most conspicuous issues is the phenomenon of vowel reduction in English. Polish learners, accustomed to syllable-timed rhythm, usually fail to employ a native-like manner of reducing unstressed syllables in their English pronunciation. This problem is a manifestation of a more general issue. A lot of English teachers would agree that the effect of stress on the duration of syllables is much weaker than in the pronunciation of native English speakers. The aim of the research presented in the paper was to verify this observation. The subjects of the empirical study, a group of first year teacher training college students, were asked to read aloud a text in English. Then the duration of selected fragments of the passage was measured and compared with corresponding samples of native British English speakers' performance. The focus of the study was placed on the duration of stressed and unstressed parts of tested sentences, and the relations between them were calculated in the native and non-native pronunciation. Another problem was length diversity of one type of vowel appearing in various sentence positions and the study was to verify the hypothesis that vowel length in the English pronunciation of Poles is generally less variable than in native English speech. Consequently, attempts were also made to establish the length proportions between tense and lax vowels in similar contexts in order to evaluate the learners' efficiency of English tense/lax vowel differentiation. Additionally, the duration of particular syllables and phrases as well as pauses in longer sentences was shown in relation to the duration of whole utterances to present the timing proportions in the context of reading speed. Finally, the results were confronted with an identical study on the same group of Polish learners after seven months of studies including training in practical phonetics, which might suggest a number of conclusions concerning the tendencies and scale of changes in the development of advanced Polish learner's English pronunciation.

Arkadiusz Rojczyk, Uniwersytet Śląski

The influence of L2 English on L1 Polish. Priming experiments on vowel duration and delayed plosion among Polish advanced learners of English

The paper reports two experiments on priming vowel duration and delayed plosion among Polish advanced learners of English thus obtaining L2-L1 influence in precisely controlled experimental conditions.

Vowel duration differences before voiced and voiceless obstruents have been claimed to be a phonetic universal as attested cross-linguistically (Delattre 1962, Chen 1970, Mack 1982, Laufer 1992). Polish appears to be a somewhat exceptional case in this respect since it is known for consistent devoicing of voiced obstruents word-finally. It is not surprising therefore that the data concerning durational differences of vowels in Polish are not conclusive. Slowiaczek and Dinnsen (1985), and Jassem and Richter (1989) report that the duration value difference preceding voiced and voiceless obstruents operates in Polish despite the fact that it neutralizes voicing contrast word-finally. Keating (1980: 179), on the other hand, concluded that “the data for Polish clearly show that vowel duration does not vary systematically according to the voicing of the following consonant.”

In the first session we asked 16 advanced learners of English to produce the Polish minimal pairs *mak* – *mag* and *pot* – *pod*. According to the principle of final obstruent devoicing in Polish, both words should have the same phonetic realization, however the subjects were asked to stress the difference between the stimuli. In the next session the subjects were presented with English minimal pairs *mack* – *mag* and *port* – *poured*, and after 30 milliseconds with Polish stimuli *mak* – *mag* and *pot* – *pod*. Praat software package 4.4.33 (Boersma 2001) was used to record and analyse the collected material. Vowel duration was measured from the spectrogram display and waveform, from the beginning of the first vocalic period corresponding to the clear formant structure, including formant transition (Waniek-Klimczak 2005, Raphael et al. 1980, Peterson and Lehiste 1960). The proportional measurements show that vowel duration differences before a voiced and voiceless plosive in English primed the vowel length in Polish..

In a similar vein, we attempted to prime delayed plosion in two-consonant clusters in Polish. Even though phonetic descriptions of Polish claim that homorganic stop clusters are unreleased, a recent study by Rojczyk (in press) demonstrated a high release rate of one-place stop clusters in Polish. On the contrary, English consistently delays the plosion of the first stop in homorganic clusters (Westbury 1977, reported in Repp and Williams 1985, Repp 1982, Raphael and Dorman 1980). In the same experimental design as for vowel duration, we primed delayed plosion in Polish among Polish advanced learners of English by presenting English stimuli followed by Polish stimuli with 30-millisecond latency.

The data from the two experiments lead to the conclusion that activation of L2 phonetics may lead to a momentary temporal and articulatory reorganization of L1 phonetics.

Linda Shockey, University of Reading

Understanding Casual English Pronunciation: Poles vs Others

My research on perception of casual speech has shown that subjects with a first language other than English are significantly worse than those who speak English natively in interpreting the pronunciation “shortcuts” taken by proficient speakers of English. Most of my research on specific language groups has focused on speakers of languages with relatively simple syllable structures, especially in the coda (Chinese, Greek). My hypothesis is that speakers of Polish, who are used to dealing perceptually with more complex consonant sequences (and, presumably with shortcuts which are taken in Polish, though I have found no literature on this) will be more alert to such reductions and will show earlier understanding of gated English conversational utterances than the other groups I have looked at. This paper reports on a pilot study to test this hypothesis.

Irina Sklema-Litwin, Szczecin University

Unreduced vowels and non-primary stress in British and American English

The present paper addresses the phenomenon of failed vowel reductions in English and reviews the prominence status of syllables harbouring unreduced vowels. The latter are chiefly associated with non-primary stress levels. The author argues that the presence of a full vowel quality logically implies the absence of vowel reduction but not necessarily the presence of stress.

In low-prominence and low-duration contexts English vowels undergo qualitative and quantitative changes in the process of vowel reduction which follows the characteristic path of stress-timed languages and is best described as a prominence-reducing type (Crosswhite 2001). In view of a symbiotic relationship that has always been presumed to exist between stress and vowel reduction processes, the occurrence of *unreduced* vowels in non-prominent syllables has generally been regarded by the phonological theory as exceptional and requiring additional explanations. The present paper supports the assumption that vowel reduction in English is less dependent on stress than it has been traditionally believed and adds to the scope of evidence an observation of segmental differences in unstressed syllables of two major dialects of English. An introductory review of such items as listed in Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (Wells 2000) has been attempted with a special focus on alternative reduced and unreduced pronunciations in British and American English, e.g. (BE preferred pronunciation followed by AE, stressed syllable underlined) *abjure* / ə, æ /, *commerce* / ɜː, ə /, *vegetative* / ə, eɪ /, *lexicon* / ə, ɔː /, *opulence* / ʊ, ə /. Stress-divergent words had to be excluded to ensure that alternative pronunciations surface in syllables of the same prominence profile, in which the study by Thomas Berg (1999) has been most helpful. The paper provides examples of virtually all vowels registered in the phonemic system of English and occurring as unreduced in both British and American varieties to illustrate the claim that any full vowel quality can occur in unstressed syllables in contrast with reduced syllables allowing a very limited range of weak vowels unable to provide for lexical stress (Ladefoged 1982, Burzio 1994). A much shorter but far from negligible inventory of vowels with alternative reduced and unreduced pronunciations serves to pose a practical question: what is it that may render such syllables at least partially stressed to some users and reduced to others?

Failed vowel reductions in general and their dialectal and idiolectal variation in particular turn our attention to the scope of stress assignment rules. The paper briefly revises the treatment both British and American stress theoreticians have given to non-primary levels of stress as it is in such contexts that unreduced unstressed vowels are likely to occur. The prominence status of such syllables appears rather ambiguous, which is reflected in the inconsistent notation of non-primary stress levels in phonological literature and the most authoritative pronunciation dictionaries.

Włodzimierz Sobkowiak, A. Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

British and American accents in LDOCE CD-ROM pronunciation search

Ten areas of segmental phonetic difference between British English (RP) and American English (GenAm) accents are identified from the relevant article in Wikipedia. The Longman Dictionary of Current English (LDOCE on CD-ROM) pronunciation search is used to try to retrieve word lists meeting the differential criteria. In most cases the queries fail for a number of reasons: errors in phonetic transcription, grapho-phonemic problems in IPA coding of phonemic contrasts, lack of search distinction between the two accentual variants, limitations in phonetic access paths. Most weaknesses of e-LDOCE are typical of all EFL e-dictionaries offering phonetic access. Until they are corrected such tools are ineffective in assisting finely-tuned phonetic searches, such as those described in this paper.

Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska, M. Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland

English pronunciation pedagogy in Poland - achievements, failures and future prospects

The paper has 'the state of the art' character and attempts to present a brief overview of recent research into the teaching of English pronunciation to Polish learners. The author identifies the major areas of investigation in this field within the last decade focusing on those issues which have successfully been approached by researchers as well as those ones which have failed to be addressed altogether or have been dealt with inadequately. The analysis of the achievements and failures of English phonodidactics in Poland is additionally aided by the opinions of several outstanding pronunciation specialists who have kindly agreed to supply them for the purposes of this presentation. Its final part centres around the future prospects of the discipline and points to the areas which deserve special attention from both theoreticians and practitioners in the field of teaching English pronunciation to Poles.

Rias van den Doel, Utrecht Institute of Linguistics, the Netherlands

The Blind Spots of Jenkins's Lingua Franca

Speculation about the predominance of non-native over native communication in English has helped suggest the need for a special non-native variety of English, dubbed English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) by Jenkins (2000, 2006, 2007) and her followers. As has been noted before (see Dziubalska-Kolaczyk & Przedlacka 2005), this model has certain paradoxical features. While its supporters claim that it is based on non-native interaction, ELF also implicitly prescribes to non-natives how this interaction should take place. Moreover, the model purports to disregard the concerns of native speakers; however, it is, as Jenkins (2000: 131) herself admits, “grounded” in native-speaker varieties. (It is evidently difficult to define intelligibility in terms of the widely variant standards of L2 speech while avoiding reference to L1 English.) Finally, despite the non-native emphasis, it is ironical that some of ELF's most vociferous supporters have been native speakers, who may well be imposing their idea of a suitable non-native model on unwilling learners.

There is a long-standing tradition, at least in Britain, of attempts to define a simplified form of English for the benefit of non-native learners, and an equally persistent tradition of non-natives rejecting such charitable approaches. Given the sociolinguistic dominance of native-speaker English, this is hardly surprising. Non-natives tend to object to being refused access to a variety of English that can be employed not only with non-native speakers but also with natives. A recent study (Van den Doel 2006), which involved a large-scale survey (545 native-speaker judges drawn from all over the English-speaking world), showed that if students of English followed Jenkins's recommendations to the letter, their resultant pronunciation could lead to seriously reduced intelligibility and acceptability. This indicates that, if learners wish to communicate with both native and non-native speakers, the model proposed by Jenkins will not adequately serve their needs.

This paper will discuss and expand upon these findings, suggesting that (1) as far as pronunciation is concerned, while intelligibility is obviously of prime significance for native-speakers, they also regard acceptability as a major concern; (2) *pace* Jenkins, non-native speakers should not emulate native localised regional forms if these are stigmatised in the accents concerned; (3) while there are striking discrepancies between Jenkins's recommendations and most native speaker assessments – as would perhaps be expected – there are some interesting similarities between Jenkins's pronunciation priorities and those assigned by the British respondents. These results indicate limitations and possibly a British bias in Jenkins's current position, and suggest that a truly international English pronunciation model should not be based on local or parochial concerns, be these native or non-native, but takes a broader view of communication covering the needs of all speakers, both L1 and L2.

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Foreign Accent: Phonetic And Communication Hazards

Now that English has become “a global language” and by this standing as “a lingua franca” has given rise to a number of “Englishes” (Crystal 1997), there are two conversely opposed and, at the same time, inseparable trends in the English language development of to-day: the pull towards the standard pattern and the push towards the modes of language variety. The pronunciation norm constantly changes under the influence of the speech variation factors but it remains to be an ideal abstraction pattern which serves as an indispensable model in the teaching pronunciation practice.

The communicative effect of an individual’s accent upon a native speaker can be either positive or negative. The quality of speech supplied by the label “foreign accent” can be regarded as one of the cases of speech variation determined by the influence of the mother tongue and revealed through the deviation from the «pattern» which is, in our case, the pronunciation norm of English. The present study is focused upon pronunciation error variables in English speech of Russian learners (the situation of artificial / classroom bilingualism).

Our chief concern in the present research is the analysis of prosodic variables of accented speech as opposed to standard native speech suprasegmental characteristics. The data has been collected from both natural settings and controlled experiments. The study of interference effects resulting from the overlap of the two prosodic systems (the primary language prosodic pattern and the target language prosodic pattern) presents a lot of data showing a certain prosodic model of accented speech containing both the universal and the specific features of the foreign learner’s error performance. There is a definite pattern of Russian accent in English intonation marking the overall melodic contour of an utterance, peaks of prominence distribution, rhythmical arrangement, temporal variables, quantitative and qualitative character of pausation and timbre speech characteristics.

Differences between accents spoken by different groups of people (with different language backgrounds) may be systematic, structural, selectional and realizational (Laver 1994). They are possessed by a majority of this or that accent group. An accent can be regarded as a marked variation of speech constituting a unified entity and betraying the non-native origin of the speaker (in the case of a bi-lingual contact) which can be detected both in the segmental and the suprasegmental characteristics of oral speech.

The most significant problem arising from the situation of artificial bilingualism is that a non-native speaker is very much self-conscious when he finds himself facing the natural linguistic situation. All second language learners recognize that one important factor limiting their practice of the target language with native speakers is the sense that others will misjudge them. Such an “inferiority complex” hinders communication and should be “cured”. The non-native speaker’s pronunciation standard properly chosen and well trained will surely enhance the chances of being rightly understood and adequately treated in the English speaking community.

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Ali G Lingo: Segmental Analysis

Ali G (Alistair Leslie Graham) is an English rapper, DJ, and talk-show host – as well as a fictional gang member of the „West Staines Massiv” – who has recently risen to considerable fame. This stems both from the popularity of his programme, *Da Ali G Show*, and his appearances in the videoclips alongside the pop-stars Madonna and Shaggy. Particularly interesting is Ali G’s way of speaking, which combines elements typical of speakers from southern England with heavily emphasised African-Caribbean and Black American street influences. Despite some degree of exaggeration and idiosyncrasy, both in his speech and general behaviour, Ali G manages to be come across as „authentic” and having „street cred”.

In my talk, I will mention the syntactic and lexical aspects of Ali G lingo only marginally, focussing on the phonological layer of his way of speaking. More specifically, I will offer basic segmental analysis of characteristic features of Ali G’s speech. I will diagnose the most conspicuous deviations from RP (assuming Received Pronunciation as a yardstick purely for convenience reasons), and suggest their origin, geographical versus social, as well as point to possible connotations. I will also examine the systematicity of the sound substitutions.

My presentation will feature numerous excerpts from *Da Ali G Show*, notably the interviews with the linguist Noam Chomsky, the writer Andy Rooney, White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater, and others. The dialogues might contain occasional sexual undertones or swearwords.

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Sources of acoustic variability in non-native English

Numerous studies have shown that non-native speech shows the pattern of variability not unlike that expected in the native language production; it has been shown that non-native speakers differ in their speech not only in relation to such stable variables as ethnicity, age and gender, but also the dynamic ones, including topic, style, situation or the characteristics of the interlocutor. As non-native speech has been claimed to comprise elements of the target language, the source language and language universals, the effect of phonetic universals can be predicted. Moreover, as the nature of language input plays a crucial role in speech acquisition, variability can be expected to be related to individual lexical items, whose frequency and phonetic shape in the input may decide about the degree of native-like production. The present paper investigates sources of variability in non-native speech by discussing the values of selected acoustic parameters for different groups of speakers. The socio-psychological and stylistic factors are briefly discussed, and then the effect of phonetic universals and word frequency are investigated at greater depth. The aim of the article is to overview the possible sources of variability and discuss them from the point of view of their applicability to foreign language phonetic instruction. The main claim concerns the usefulness of the approach optimizing the effect of universal phonetics and word frequency in language teaching. The motivation is strictly practical: while changing the socio-psychological setting for foreign language learning may verge on impossible, the selection of lexical items in the input for pronunciation teaching seems a relatively plausible application of variability studies.

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Accent attitudes in an EFL context: The role of distance from the model accent

This paper presents the results of one in a series of surveys studying accent attitudes in Polish learners of English.

Previous research into accent attitudes in learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) has mainly compared attitudes to different native accents (e.g. Ladegaard 1998, Jarvella et al. 2001), or to mainstream standard native vs. marked non-native accents (e.g. Flege 1988). In a majority of cases, standard native accents were preferred to both non-standard native and non-native accents; some preference effect for L2 English from speakers sharing the judges' L1 was also found (e.g. Bent and Bradlow 2003). Notably, "covert prestige" effects usually seen in native judges (i.e. good ratings in certain dimensions being given to non-standard native accents) were largely absent.

The objectives of the present study were: (1) to investigate attitudes in judges presented with non-native accents concurrently with non-standard native accents; (2) to verify their correlation with traditionally-defined "nativeness"; (3) to verify their correlation with phonetic distance from the reference accent.

Reading passage samples of native Australian, New Zealand and South African English were played to a panel of Polish judges, along with samples of L2 English from speakers of Polish, Afrikaans, Thai and Mandarin Chinese. The judges – students of "English philology" at a Polish university after an advanced two-year pronunciation course using a standard British English model – were to assess the nativeness and attractiveness of the samples. Importantly, the samples varied with respect to the number of salient features differentiating them from the model: (1) there were no samples of standard native accents; (2) two of the non-native samples were close to the model; (3) the native accent samples contained salient features differentiating them from the model; (4) the remaining non-native samples also contained salient non-standard features.

The resulting Likert-scale scores were subjected to cluster analysis, and the mean scores were compared. The two non-native accents closest to the model scored highest both on the "nativeness" and "attractiveness" dimensions. The "strong" native accents occupied the "middle ground", clustering together. The "strong" non-native ones received the lowest ratings.

A phonetic distance measure in the form of "Levenshtein distances", as used in dialectometry research (cf. e.g. Heeringa 2004), was also computed, and subjected to clustering analysis. The clustering was generally similar to that obtained from the judgement scores, and correlated well with them. Importantly, the correlation between traditionally-defined "nativeness" and both the scores and distance from the model accent was weaker.

As could be expected, accent attitudes in an EFL context seem to be influenced by the choice of model accent. Covert prestige effects are absent, presumably due to limited exposure to non-mainstream accents, lacking social stereotyping, and the affective investment involved in trying to approximate the model. "Deviation" from the model is generally judged negatively, with traditionally-defined "nativeness" playing only a limited role. Consequences for EFL pronunciation teaching, in particular for the selection of materials and instructors, can be wide-ranging.

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Peak Alignment In L2 Intonation

The paper presents the findings of the research into the acquisition of L2 intonation. Peak alignment is considered to be one of the aspects of the intonational system which contributes to the perceptible foreign accent in the speech of L2 learners. The analysis is based on the performance of Polish adult learners of English, whose speech was subsequently contrasted with the performance of a native speaker of British English. The Polish learners were divided into two groups according to their level of proficiency in the foreign language: an FCE-level group and the advanced-level one. The findings were analysed within the framework of Natural Phonology (e.g. Donegan and Stampe 1979).

Peak alignment is one of the aspects of L2 intonation which is exceedingly difficult to acquire. According to the tenets of Natural Phonology, the learner's failure to attain native-like pronunciation can be attributed to the difficulties not only with production but also perception: since differences in peak alignment are a matter of milliseconds, they are not salient enough to perceive and, subsequently, to learn. Polish peak alignment differs from the English one in timing. In Polish the peak is located early within the syllable, while in English the peak is reached within the stressed syllable, towards its right edge (Grabe 1998).

To examine the degree to which English peak alignment had been acquired, the spectrum, pitch and, occasionally, intensity were extracted from the recorded speech material with the use of the program *PR4AT*. Then the researcher specified the vowel of the nuclear syllable where the peak was indicated by the highest value of the *f₀* track, intensity, the formants in the spectrum, and the strongest variation in air pressure depicted by the amplitude of the analysed intonational phrase.

A t-test for independent samples which was employed to compare the speech of the two groups of respondents revealed that the mean peak timing differed significantly, which could imply that the more advanced group developed a "merged" intonational system. However, the timing of peak alignment in all learners remained considerably shorter than the timing in the performance of the native speaker of English. Therefore, the greater success of the advanced learners may be attributed to their successful acquisition of other aspect of L2 phonology, such as the length of the vowel carrying a pitch accent, the influence of the consonants preceding the vowel and the influence of discourse structure on peak alignment, e.g. the beginning or end of a topic (cf. Wichmann 2000). The findings may prove useful to teachers of English, as native-like accent can be achieved even if peak alignment remains like in L1. Improving, e.g. the pronunciation of long vowels and rhythm may, to some extent, compensate for the peak timing.