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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR AND PHONETICS

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English**

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**ABSTRACTS**

*Edited by*  
Przemysław Ostalski

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The conference is organized by Ewa Waniek-Klimczak, the head of the Department of English Grammar and Phonetics (Chair of English Language and Applied Linguistics), University of Łódź with the department team: Anna Cichosz, Anna Gralińska-Brawata and Przemysław Ostalski.

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**Hungarians' preferences in learning and teaching English pronunciation: British English, American English or a different accent variety?**

Nowadays, teachers and learners of English can select from a wide range of English accents when they teach and learn English, respectively. In my current research I investigate which accent variety English teachers and learners of English prefer in Hungary at present. I would like to interview teachers, teacher trainees and secondary school students to examine whether they favour the British English or the American English accent variety, or possibly a third, a different accent variety. With the help of the study, first, I attempt to observe whether teachers and learners of English are able to identify distinct accent features of the British and of the American English accent varieties. Moreover, I would like to understand what preferences they have in teaching and learning English concerning the accent features, and what the reasons are behind their options.

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## **The phonetic properties of Euro-English in the light of empirical research**

As Seidlhofer (2001: 68) observes, most discussions about Euro-English, *are being carried out on a meta-level*. There is a considerable shortage of empirical data required to describe systematically and codify the properties of this type of English. The present paper aims to provide some insight into pronunciation of Euro-English on the basis of the empirical research conducted by the author on non-native speakers of English. The major aim of the experiment has been to examine speech samples provided by representatives of 10 EU countries in order to select the core features of their accent in English. By determining problematic and non-problematic aspects of English pronunciation for each nation, the author has selected the main phonetic properties of Euro-English.

Furthermore, the data obtained in the empirical study has been confronted with the most recent model of pronunciation for non-native speakers of English, i.e. the Lingua Franca Core. By investigating to which extent the LFC overlaps with the phonetic properties of European English the author attempts to enquire whether the idea of neutral English is feasible in the European context.

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## **Theoretical modelling of word-level isochrony in English**

Despite abundant literature on the subject, the phenomenon of isochrony, which is (*was?*) believed to underlie the rhythmic organization of speech, has neither been proved experimentally nor supported by an adequate phonological model. The traditional binary distinction between ‘stress-timed’ and ‘syllable-timed’ languages, in the light of negative experimental evidence (Roach, 1982), does not seem tenable either. The growing disappointment with ‘immeasurability’ of strict isochrony has led to proposals which describe isochrony as an underlying constraint (or a tendency), which is in the surface realization perturbed by numerous non-acoustic factors (Laver 1994). Alternatively, isochrony was approached from the perceptive perspective (Lehiste 1977).

The experimental quest for isochrony, however, has been flawed by several misconceptions.

(i) ‘Strict’ isochrony, understood as a principle that organizes speech into portions of identical duration, is unattainable due to the fact that languages have different phonotactic complexity, i.e. languages that allow complex syllable onsets, on a par with simple onsets or onsetless syllables, will be naturally non-isochronous.

(ii) if rhythm is related to phonological weight, the traditionally understood syllable constituent must be ruled out from isochronic considerations (onsets are typically weightless and play no role in stress assignment even though they ‘occupy’ some time in an utterance).

(iii) ‘Weak’ isochrony based on the foot constituent, which is defined as a string of syllables (cf. (ii) above) that stretches

from the beginning of a stressed syllable up to the beginning of the next stressed syllable, is unattainable either, due to the fact that that in one language the same foot may be followed by (a) grammatical structures whose components are unstressed, and thus should be adjoined to the preceding foot, or (b) directly by another foot, e.g.

a.  $F_1$  {**Peter has been an i**}  $F_2$  {sochronous}  $F_3$  {speaker}.

b.  $F_1$  {**Peter**.....}  $F_2$  {Baker.....}  $F_3$  {uses...i}  
 $F_4$  {sochrony}.

This observation is confirmed by Hill et al. (1979), who agree that '*English could be strictly isochronous, if the speaker selected semantics, syntax, words and phonetic realization of an utterance appropriately*'. The templatic structure(s) of the foot in a language must be 'arrived at' in an analysis of morphologically simple forms. In other words, not everything that lies between two stresses in an utterance must automatically constitute one foot (cf. Jassem's proposal 1952).

In this paper we will try to present a theoretical model for representing isochrony in British English, which is based on the following assumptions:

- The rhythmic structure of British English must be analysed in relation to the phonological structure of the language.
- Feet constitute head-initial governing domains which consist exclusively of rhymes (rather than syllables) (cf. Wenk and Wioland 1982 or Brakel 1985 who suggested that rhythmic structure of a language is related to vowels rather than syllables).
- Only footed rhymes (or Narrow Rhythmic Units, to use Jassem's terminology) are projected onto the rhythmic plane.
- Objective isochrony, while absent on the melodic level, may be sought on the level of rhymal projection.

Consequently, durational measurements should be based on the ‘extracted’ length of pedified rhymes.

Isochrony, then, is not a phonetic phenomenon but a phonological, and possibly a cognitive one.

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## **Models and targets of English pronunciation in Sweden**

This paper addresses the matter of which models and targets of pronunciation of English might be appropriate for learners in Europe in general and Sweden in particular. There are a number of international and regional candidates for these positions. The choice of model must be informed by matters of linguistic politics as well as pragmatic considerations. The role of the native speaker as model can be questioned and the traditional target of becoming as native-like as possible will be challenged. The distinction between models and targets is crucial here and the move away from the native-like target which is seen in some (but not all) European contexts will be considered in the Swedish context.



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### **The role of speech rate and pausing in target language fluency**

The presentation reports on the results of a study of developmental aspects of fluency in L2 at the upper-intermediate and advanced levels. The study addressed a wider issue of oral proficiency in English and investigated fluency development in conjunction with the problems of linguistic accuracy and complexity. The database for the study was collected systematically over a period of three years through interviews with nine students, who were following a BA course in English philology. The indices of fluency adopted in the study included the rate of speech, frequency of pauses (silent and filled) and the mean length of a pause. Although the measures reflect various aspects of fluency, they are inextricably linked to each other and to the concepts of automaticity and efficiency of speech production processes. The results of analyses conducted by the author illustrate the times of growth and regression on the students' road to fluency.

It is frequently emphasized that fluency is a performance phenomenon and, consequently, is not represented by a particular knowledge component in the language user's competence. However, it draws heavily on a number of linguistic and psychological factors which shape and largely constrain the user's overall proficiency/competence in L2. The presentation will point to those strengths and deficits in the students' lexical and grammatical competence which might have affected their individual paths in fluency development.

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### **Dispelling the myth of word-final obstruent voicing in English. New facts and pedagogical implications**

As is well known, the voicing of the English Word-final obstruents can be defined on phonological and phonetic grounds. The phonological ‘voicing’ of these obstruents is manifested by articulating them with relatively little force, and preserving full (or prolonging) the duration of preceding vowels and sonorants. The study of the phonetic manifestation of voicing, that is, the actual duration of the voiced segment in the constriction, has been given much less attention in literature, and the indications are unclear and differ from author to author. In particular, the descriptions do not specify how frequently devoicing occurs with regard to intra-speaker and inter-speaker variability. Moreover, numerous sources specify the domain of devoicing as the word, and do not take note of the possible conditioning effect of the voicing in the following sounds.

The image of the devoicing process that emerges from such descriptions is either incomplete or, worse, grossly misleading to foreign learners of English, especially those whose native languages favour complete word-final obstruent devoicing. Those learners, including Polish students of English, strive to overcome the much feared negative interference of their native language, and carry it too far, preserving an overlong and over-strong segment of phonation accompanying the constriction. As the result,

their English speech sounds unnatural to the native speaker. Needless to say, much responsibility for this mistaken view of English voicing lies on the teachers.

To ameliorate the situation, an experimental study was carried out with an aim to identify the relative role of the phonological vs. phonetic voicing in the assessment of English sounds by native speakers. It turned out that it is phonological voicing that is mostly responsible for the perception of voicing, while phonetic voicing plays a much less significant role. In addition, an attempt was made at describing the particulars of phonetic voicing. It is shown that its conditioning is best described by referring to the combination of word position and the voicing of the following consonant. These fall into two major classes: phonation-favouring (if the next word starts with a voiced consonant), and phonation-impeding (before a pause or before a voiceless sound).

In conclusion, it is argued that (1) much more care should be given by teachers to practice phonological voicing; (2) that the proper domain of the description of English voicing must contain the combination of word-position and the following context; (3) that complete or partial devoicing in the phonation-favouring contexts occurs much more frequently than previously described.

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### **Unstressed unreduced English vowels in the speech of Polish students a developmental study**

The paper is a continuation of an earlier study in which an attempt has been made to trace the development in the production of unstressed reduced vowels by 60 English Department students at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University of Lublin, Poland. This time the focus is on the other side of the coin, i.e. on the acquisition of unstressed unreduced monophthongs by the same subjects. The authors approach this issue on the basis of an experiment carried out with three groups of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students whose speech samples have been recorded and then analysed with respect to the vowels in question. More specifically, the following goals have been aimed at:

- to examine the phonetic progress in the rendition of unstressed unreduced vowels by 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year students;
- to study the degree of difficulty involved in the production of 10 unstressed monophthongs;
- to examine the influence of the phonological context (location in pre-stress and post-stress position) on the quality of the vowels under investigation;
- to compare the success rate in the production of unstressed reduced and unstressed unreduced vowels by the three experimental groups;
- to draw pedagogical implications for the phonetic training of English Department students.

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### **Rhythmic variability in native accents of English - work in progress**

The distinction between stress-timed and syllable-timed languages has been long present within the area of speech rhythm investigation with English traditionally classified as a stress-timed language. In their evaluation of metrics for the quantification of speech rhythm White and Mattys (2007) have shown evidence of differences in terms of rhythm metrics not only between rhythm classes, but also within classes. The aim of the following project is thus to show whether similar variability is present, and to what degree, within rhythmic patterns of native speakers of English of ten different accents: Belfast (UK), Birmingham (UK), Toronto (Canada), Texas (USA), Kingston (Jamaica), Wrexham (Wales), New York (USA), Brisbane (Australia), Dublin (Ireland), Cape Town (South Africa). The subjects of the study are the contributors to the Speech Accent Archive (<http://accent.gmu.edu/index.php>) who were recorded while reading the already well-known paragraph *Please call Stella* and selected according to age (between 19-38) and sex (male).

For the purpose of this project, three phrases were selected from the reading passage and their duration measured for each speaker separately with the use of Praat software version 5.0.29 (Boersma and Weenink 2008). Then the durations of both stressed and unstressed vowels were measured and shown in relation to the duration of whole phrases to present the timing proportions of vocalic intervals (%V). The calculation of other interval metrics for

the quantification of speech rhythm included standard deviation of vocalic intervals ( $\Delta V$ ) and rate-normalised vocalic interval measure (VarcoV).

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### **They're not hearing what they're listening to: Promoting pre-pronunciation perception**

English language teachers are faced with the difficult choice of which standard(s) of English to focus on in their language classes. We argue that the choice is simplified if the speech signal becomes the focus, as proposed by Field (2003), and that such a signal-based approach can lead to potentially beneficial receptive and productive work.

To support this claim, Shockey's (1990, 2007) experiment into the perception of casual spoken English was replicated. Data was gathered from French university students of English and native English speakers and was analysed in order to reveal:

- 1) Where and how contextual knowledge influences the interpretation of the signal
- 2) How native and non-native segmentation strategies differ

The results show how these natives and non-natives segment differently, highlighting the need to adapt teaching practices. Suggestions are made for improving students' perception of spoken English, by focusing on the perceptual processes rather than top-down, general comprehension approaches. It is argued that such explicit training will improve students' ability to decode the many varieties of spoken English.

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### **The emergence of social varieties in Ghanaian English**

The discussion on the status of English in Ghana has been going on for a long time (Huber 2004), but in recent years there have been first signs that Ghanaian English is undergoing codification (Dako 2003). Huber (2007) argues that GhaE falls between Phase 3 'Nativization' and Phase 4 'Endonormative Stabilization' of Schneider's (2003) five-stage developmental model of World Englishes. Looking at the phonetics/phonology of speakers representing different Ghanaian language backgrounds he tries to establish whether there are processes in Ghanaian English (GhaE) that indicate an emergent community norm different from both the British English input variety and the ethno-linguistic background of the GhaE speakers.

We take up on these findings and ask whether alongside this emerging endocentric norm we find the development of socially conditioned linguistic variation on the phonetic-phonological level. Social variation in outer circle (i.e. institutionalized non-native) varieties of English is under-researched but its appearance may well turn out to be an integral part in a variety's life cycle as envisaged by Schneider (2003). On a theoretical-methodological level, questions to be asked include what the differences are between this new socially determined variation and the variability characteristic of the early phases of outer circle varieties. On a more concrete level, we will ask in what ways sociolinguistic variation in GhaE follows or diverges from that in the former exocentric model, British English,



in terms of variables and variants as well as in terms of the social prestige or stigma that the latter carry. In this paper we will present first results of a recent quantitative study on the possible emergence of socially conditioned phonetic-phonological variation in speakers from the capital Accra. Backed up by data on the speakers' ethnic, regional, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, we will focus on consonantal variables like /t/-glottaling, the realization of the nasal in *-ing*, *th*-stopping, the replacement of final *-th* by /f/ and consonant cluster reductions. We will also consider variables such as postvocalic /r/, the LOT vowel and /t/-flapping as indicators of the recent influence of American English in certain classes. In the area of vowels, we will present more recent results on the intra- and inter-speaker variation in the quality of the STRUT vowel and the different realisations in diphthongs of the MOUTH, FACE, GOAT and PRICE lexical sets.

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## **RP and the Cameroon English accent**

This paper examines the acrolectal variety of L2 English in Cameroon, with a view to identifying its characteristic segmental features. The setting of the research is Cameroon, a Central African country sharing borders with Nigeria, Chad and the Central African Republic. In this country, English and French are joint official languages, with the Anglophone community following the English educational system and the francophone community the French educational system. The focus of the study is on the English of Anglophone speakers. The data which were collected through recordings, are produced by highly educated users of English in Cameroon (teachers, medical doctors, journalists etc), and the reference model used for the analysis is RP English, which is the model adopted for education in the country. The framework of analysis is mainly structural, though insight from the generative approach is occasionally used to explain some generalisations. The findings reveal that the L2 English accent in Cameroon exhibits a dominant feature known as spelling pronunciation. English words tend to be pronounced as their orthography suggests, which causes such word pairs as three/tree, bet/birth, was/worse etc. to be homophonous. Consonant clusters tend to be simplified while vowel lengthening tends not to be observed. As central vowels are hardly realised, peripheral vowels tend to occur more frequently than they do in native accents. This way of speaking, which is being transmitted intergenerationally through education, is so widespread that efforts to change it are doomed to fail.

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## **Yorkshire Accent as an Example of Linguistic Variation**

Questions concerning English as a Global language, its literary standard, varieties of English and their social aspect are discussed in this presentation. The British Isles have a unique linguistic situation for the study of regional and social variation of English.

The study of English language variation becomes significant as English has achieved genuine world status. The place of English in the world is reassessed by both teachers and learners of English. A language like any other complex mechanism is constantly developing and this gives rise to new vocabularies, grammatical forms, ways of speaking and writing, and, naturally, varieties of dialects.

Some time ago foreign learners knew only one form of the English language – that is “Standard English”. However, the English of today is taking new forms in connection with the changing communication needs of people. That is why the knowledge of present day English dialects helps the learners to enlarge their linguistic outlook, makes them understand the English language better, and, what is more important – helps learners in developing their language communication in all spheres of life. It doesn’t mean that learners must speak various dialects of English. All learners should be able to understand both oral and written forms of any variant of it and not to be shocked when hearing it.

Our research is focused on the study of Yorkshire dialect of English on the British Isles. It is connected with

description of linguistic features of the given dialect on every level (phonetic, lexical, grammatical, orphographical). Special attention is given to the intonation of discourse markers in oral Yorkshire speech .

The experiment shows that discourse markers in Yorkshire accent are widely used. The most popular of them are “you know, well, now”, and a special element “like” ( a synonym of “you see” in Standard English).

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## **Tendencies of the Evolution of the Accentual Structure of English Compound Words**

The aim of the research is to describe the evolution of the codified English pronouncing norm and to reveal the main tendencies of its development as well as the factors, which cause this development.

The research has been carried out on the basis of 11 issues of “English Pronouncing Dictionary” by D. Jones beginning from the first edition (1917) to the latest (2006).

The accentual variants of the most frequently used compound words of the English language are the object of the investigation. The total number of the sampling is 750 lexical items, which include compound nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. The diachronical comparative analysis of the accentual structure of these words let us reveal the inventory of the basic accentual models.

The results of the research show that the place of word stress and its degree in English are predetermined by several heterogeneous factors, mainly linguistic: morphological, rhythmic, semantic, the factor of analogy. Each of the factors and its influence on the accentual structure of words belonging to different parts of speech have been analysed separately. And thus predominant accentual models of the main and additional variants of compound nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs have been revealed.

The analysis of the evolution of the accentual variants in the English language reveals the following main **tendencies** in the development of the accentual norm at

present: 1) decrease of accentual variation and stabilization of the accentual norm; 2) democratization of the norm; 3) intensification of the morphological factor; 4) alteration of accentual word structure due to the factor of analogy.

The present research singles out two main ways of accentual variant reduction: 1) decrease of the number of variants in a variant row of a word; 2) exclusion of marked variants out of the literary norm.

Democratization of the norm manifests itself in the standardization and simplification of the accentual structure of a compound word as well as in the decrease of accentual variation.

Simplification of the accentual structure manifests itself in the decrease of the number of the accentual models.

Besides, the analysis of the direction into which the main stress is removed in a compound word has been carried out.

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## **Consonant substitution patterns in Japanese Speakers' English**

This is the sequel to the paper presented this March concerning vowel substitution patterns in Japanese speakers' English. To my knowledge, there has been no systematic observational study on the segmental substitutions in Japanese speakers' English. This is understandable because such a study would have required large-scale databases or corpora of Japanese learners' English pronunciation. But the time is changing and we are beginning to find a number of phonetically-transcribed speech corpora projects and also some good tools for building them such as Phon and ELAN. We still do not find a phonetic corpus of Japanese speakers' English, however, which I have decided to start building.

There are some recorded speech databases of Japanese speakers speaking English which I can transcribe to build a corpus. I have chosen to use English Learners' Speech Database (Minematsu et al. 2002), a collection of recordings made in view of CALL system development consisting of thirteen sets of English sentences, phrases and words read aloud by some two hundred Japanese university students. Total number of recorded utterances is about 70,000. I have only finished transcribing a fraction (namely about one hundred) of the recordings to make a preliminary micro-corpus, on which the above-mentioned paper on vowel substitution was based, as well as the present study on consonant and consonant cluster substitution.

Many of the substitutions observed in the corpus are the ones pointed out in informal observations by generations of phoneticians or “common knowledge”: [s] substituted for /θ/, [b] or [β] substituted for /v/, [r] substituted for prevocalic /l/ and /r/, a vowel inserted in consonant clusters and after word-final consonants, and so on. These roughly seem to reflect the phonological difference between English and Japanese.

However, I found substitutions which could not be accounted for by the phonological differences: spirantization of word-final plosives, deletion of intervocalic consonants, and so on. Although the whole picture of substitution patterns is yet to be drawn, I am sure we can find a number of characteristic patterns which have not been observed in “common knowledge” and contribute to our knowledge of Japanese accented English.

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### **Addressing individual learner needs in the L2 pronunciation classroom: The role of identity and motivation**

The spread of English worldwide and the rise of alternative phonological models such as that of ELF as proposed by Jenkins (e.g. 2000; 2002) have, in recent years, led to an increasing interest in the role of learner identity and how it is reflected in non-native English accents. At the same time, L2 motivation research has recently witnessed a heightened interest in the role played by individual learner identity in the development of L2 motivation (e.g. Dörnyei 2005; Ushioda in press). In this paper I outline the applicability of these developments to EFL pronunciation research, and hypothesize that the language learner's personal motivation is a significant factor in determining, striving towards and achieving personal pronunciation goals.

I present the results of a pilot study carried out to establish the language backgrounds, pronunciation goals and attitudes of a sample of 30 adult EFL learners attending a school of English in Dublin. While the results of this pilot project are only preliminary owing to the relatively low number of respondents, they indicate the potentially significant motivational role played by these learners' personal goals in their pronunciation aims. When asked to choose their own ideal level of English language pronunciation proficiency, a clear majority (N=18) of the respondents expressed a personal preference for the achievement of a native-like accent. These responses varied

greatly, however, when the respondents were asked to choose a corresponding ideal level of pronunciation for English language learners in general; only half (N=9) of those who had chosen to aim for a native-like accent themselves selected the same target for language learners in general. The overall results suggest that this group of learners may have differentiated between the personal goals they set for their own pronunciation learning, and those they believed appropriate for others.

I attribute the disparity indicated by these results to the powerful motivating influence of learners' individual language learning goals, and the significance that the potential target accents have for their personal identities. I propose that the evidence suggests that an appropriate pronunciation pedagogy must take into account such individual learner differences in motivation, and foster reflection on questions of identity and their relation to accent and pronunciation, in order to help learners to achieve their pronunciation goals.

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### **Do Polish and English raters have the same ear for nativelikeness?**

This paper examines selected recent literature (approximately 50 articles) on the issue of native and non-native perception of foreign accented speech with a focus on the rating methods which are implemented in the research. It is a follow-up of a detailed and frequently quoted review into that matter by Piske et al. (2001). Because many valuable studies have been published since the above-mentioned publication we have made an attempt to include them in our up-to date examination.

To be more precise in a review of current literature, firstly, both similarities and differences in the scope of the studies, subjects, their mother tongue and foreign/second languages under investigation, inclusive of the learners' experience in L2/FL are outlined. Secondly, we present elicitation procedures in the form of controlled and uncontrolled tasks. Here, the advantages and disadvantages of each technique are discussed and the necessity to incorporate diversified elicitation methods is stressed. Thirdly, we focus on various evaluation techniques which are incorporated in the studies on foreign-accentedness /nativelikness. In this part we look into holistic and atomistic assessment and then we examine the most commonly applied rating procedure and marking scales. The theoretical discussion concludes with a comprehensive analysis of rater-related issues where we touch upon the following: the applied statistical procedure, the number of raters, whether the raters are native or non-native, their

mother tongue, linguistic experience, i.e. if they are naïve or experienced listeners, and whether they are teachers or not.

Our presentation is intended to consist of two parts: the theoretical background followed by a presentation and discussion of our research on the perception of Polish-accented English by Polish and English teachers and students of English Departments themselves (self-assessment). The empirical study is based on a questionnaire and a recording of free speech and reading, conducted with near graduates at five universities in Poland. The respondents' pronunciation is assessed by three groups of evaluators, English (5) and Polish (3) teachers and students themselves (62). The study by the present author which is discussed further in this article, should provide an answer to the question whether the perception of Polish-accented speech by Polish and English raters is similar or different.

In order to explain how the evaluation procedure was carried out, two cases of individual students (the one with the worst and best mean score for pronunciation) are presented.

Finally, the descriptive judgments of the students' speech prepared by native speakers are demonstrated in order to assess the contribution of individual phonetic features to native-likeness or foreign-accentedness.

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### **The ultimate attainment of English pronunciation by Polish college students - a longitudinal study**

This paper is a report on a longitudinal study of the ultimate phonetic attainment of 41 segmental and suprasegmental features by 25 Polish college students of English conducted over the period of three years of their study at the Teacher Training College. The subjects' pronunciation was studied for the most important aspects of the English vocalic and consonantal system, connected speech and prosody. The main aim of the study was to examine which elements of English phonetics are acquired by the subjects thanks to three year formal phonetic training and which aspects, regardless of the extensive pronunciation practice, remain unchanged. Thus, the comparison of the students' initial and final phonetic proficiency is a focal point of the research. In general, the research findings indicate that 93% of phonetic features have progressed and 7% remained the same. In addition 54% of the pronunciation changes were statistically important for this group and the other 46% turned out to be insignificant. A considerable part of the study deals with a detailed investigation of the development in forty-one phonetic features of English observed during the years 2001 and 2004 (for the purpose of the presentation a small selection of features will be chosen). This analysis has been carried out with a view to examining how the subjects' rendition of individual phonetic features advances. Therefore, the paper should give some insights into the nature of the relationship between the year of study and the phonetic accomplishment in a specific feature.

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**The variability or lexical diffusion? The analysis of the pronunciations of selected items from the CLOTH lexical set in General American.**

This paper examines various pronunciations of words such as: *tomorrow*, *borrow*, *sorrow* found in American accents of English. The vowel used in the environment of [ \_rV] (where LOT and THOUGHT/CLOTH are not merged) may be:

- a) [ɒ] in western New England, where it is qualitatively different from [ɑ] used in other LOT words and [ɔ] used in THOUGHT words.
- b) [ɑ] in eastern New England, where LOT is merged with THOUGHT/CLOTH and has [ɒ] or [ɔ] quality.
- c) [ɑ] along the Atlantic coast (New York and New York influenced accents), following thus the same path as in RP, except that this American equivalent of RP [ɒ] was unrounded in all environments, including [ \_rV].
- d) for the majority of American accents, there is a more or less regular vowel incidence in those words with: [ɑ] in *tomorrow*, *borrow*, *sorrow* and *sorry*, and [ɔ] used elsewhere.

In many accents of western America and Canada, where LOT-THOUGHT/CLOTH merger is completed, only [ɔ] may be found in the environment of a following [r]. Other accents generally use the pattern as in d).

The paper uses the evidence from The TIMIT corpus of read speech that contains broadband recordings of 630 speakers of eight major dialects of American English to determine the type of variation found in the environment of [ \_rV].

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### **Teaching foreign language pronunciation: Issues in research focus and methodology**

As evidenced by the numerous conferences and publications related to this area, recent years have witnessed a considerable growth of interest in empirical investigations exploring various aspects of teaching foreign language pronunciation at different levels of instruction in Poland. Among other things, researchers have focused on such issues as learners' and teachers' beliefs about pronunciation teaching, teachers' classroom practices, the effectiveness of a range of instructional techniques, procedures and educational resources, formative and summative assessment of phonetics, as well as the need for autonomy and learning strategies in dealing with this language subsystem. Whereas some studies of this kind have succeeded in providing valuable insights into pronunciation instruction, others have proven to be much less conclusive and successful, and, most importantly perhaps, there remain a number of areas that have been this far largely neglected by researchers.

The rationale for the present paper stems from the belief that, as is the case with other fields of investigation in SLA, the true contribution, relevance and value of research endeavors in the area of pronunciation instruction is a function of the appropriate identification of the goals pursued and the research methodology applied. Consequently, taking as a point of departure a review of the existing body of research, the presentation serves the dual purpose of identifying most promising directions for future

empirical investigations and spelling out the criteria that such studies should satisfy in order to produce valid and reliable findings, as well as such that are of relevance to practitioners. As regards the former, it will be argued that more emphasis should be placed on learner contributions to the challenge of mastering target language pronunciation and the utility of various techniques and combinations thereof should be verified. When it comes to research design, a case will be made for employing spontaneous speech samples, ensuring the compatibility of treatment and assessment measures with issues under investigation as well as investigating long-term instructional gains. In conclusion, the need for combining the quantitative and qualitative paradigms will be pointed to and practical ways of attaining this goal will be spelled out.



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### **The weak forms of "TO" in the pronunciation of Polish learners of English**

Since weak forms belong to the most difficult aspects of English pronunciation, especially for learners whose L1 does not reduce unstressed vowels, the problem has always been an interesting research subject. This paper focuses on the duration of the preposition/infinitive particle "TO" in the speech of Polish learners. The length of the word was measured in several contexts in a text read by Polish teacher training college students. The subjects, first and second year students, were recorded twice, i.e. in October, at the beginning of their practical phonetics course (2 hours per week) and then in May, close to the conclusion of the academic year. Their performance was compared to the pronunciation of British secondary school students reading the same text. The analysis of the recordings makes it possible to discuss the following issues:

- the differences in duration of the word "TO" pronounced by native speakers of British English and Polish learners in terms of absolute and relative length,
- the weak form duration variability in the pronunciation of both groups,
- changing timing relations in Polish pronunciation in the course of phonetic training during the first and second years of study.

These observations can contribute to the general knowledge of cross-linguistic interference in the process of foreign language acquisition and help teachers of practical phonetics in Poland predict more specific problems which they might face while teaching English pronunciation

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### **Vowel duration as a cue to the voicing contrast of following stops in English: Perception experiments with Polish-English bilinguals**

Vowel duration differences before voiced and voiceless obstruents have been claimed to be a phonetic universal as attested cross-linguistically. English has been consistently reported to heavily rely on this temporal parameter in signaling its final voicing contrast both in production measurements and perception experiments. Polish, on the other hand, appears to be a somewhat exceptional case in this respect since it is known for consistent devoicing of voiced obstruents word-finally. Even though there have been production reports on non-final devoicing in Polish in that it maintains variability in vowel duration before phonologically voiced and voiceless final obstruents, perception experiments have not confirmed the role of vowel duration as a cue to the voicing contrast in Polish. Moreover, production measurements have revealed that Polish-English bilinguals do not match English monolinguals in maintaining sufficient vowel durations in signaling the final voicing contrast.

We manipulated a naturally obtained non-word *theep* /θi:p/ in a PSOLA (the time-domain pitch-synchronous overlap and add) technique and generated 6 stimuli ranging from 142 ms to 292 ms of vowel duration in 30 ms steps. Additionally, we attenuated the release burst of /p/ so that it would be ambiguous to its voicing status. We asked three groups of subjects, native speakers of English, beginner learners of English, and advanced learners of English, to

recognise the final sound in a forced-choice format. The results show that Polish listeners do not match English monolinguals in reading vowel duration as a cue to the following voicing contrast. Comparable results between the two Polish groups additionally indicate that this temporal parameter is not effectively acquired along increasing proficiency in English.

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### **The nature of fortitive processes in political discourse on the example of Barack Obama's speeches**

The purpose of this research is to discover the nature of fortitions in political discourse within the framework of Natural Phonology, a theory which explains phonological representations by means of phonetic processes (Donegan – Stampe 1979). These processes constitute natural responses of human vocal and perceptual systems to the difficulties encountered in the production and perception of speech (Dziubalska – Kołaczyk 2002:25) and they manifest themselves in all types of phonological behavior of language users e.g. in normal performance, child speech, casual speech, emphatic speech etc. (Dziubalska-Kołaczyk 2007: 72). Donegan – Stampe (1979) suggest categorizing processes into three groups: prosodic, lenitions and fortitions, where the final maximize the perceptual characteristics of speech and include aspiration, diphthongization, lengthening and fricativization (Dziubalska – Kołaczyk 2002: 25). In Dressler's terminology (1984) fortitions are called foregrounding processes and they are assigned to emphasize certain features of a segment and make it more salient.

Sociolinguistic theory of speech variation assumes that formal speech situations oblique the speaker to adapt his/her speech to the needs of the hearer i.e. to make his/her pronunciation as clear as possible. Political performances well exemplify the formal style of speaking and politicians who want to sound attractive for the audience are supposed to abandon the "casual" manner of

delivery in favour of more sophisticated and listener-friendly (Bloch 1975) As a result, dissimilatory processes (fortitions) are to be employed (Dressler 1984: 33). Dziubalska-Kolaczyk (2002: 261ff) notices that as formal situations are relatively slow, the degree of attention rises and the discrepancy between the production and the underlying intention diminishes. Again fortitions are expected to apply. Finally, Foulkes (2006) claims that political speech situations often elicit hyper-articulation.

In the experiment I analyzed four speeches delivered by the Democratic nominee Barack Obama between 2004 and 2008. The talks were of similar length (each lasted roughly 20 mins), however, they slightly differed in the level of formality. The objective was to characterise the nature of fortitive processes. The results indicate that the number of fortitions was directly proportional to the level of formality and inversely proportional to the speed of delivery. Next, it was shown that certain foregrounding processes (lengthening and aspiration) were more frequent than the others e.g. fricativisation or diphthongization. Finally, an attempt was made to analyze the distribution and location of fortitions and examine whether the processes occurred accidentally or in a fixed pattern.

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## **Teaching the Auditive Vocabulary of English with the help of Speech Technologies**

My main research concern over the past few years has been the creation of didactic material and the development of some techniques to teach what I have named “auditive vocabulary”. This research has been part of a wider research programme on the teaching, learning and acquisition of lexical competence in English --- ADELEX: <http://www.ugr.es/~inped/>.

By auditive vocabulary I understand that vocabulary stock that is prior to any graphemic or orthographic representation. It is identified, retrieved and understood through our ears only (auditive route). This auditive vocabulary has a mental representation in our brain that is hypothetically similar to a very sophisticated phonetic and phonological transcription. This vocabulary, and its mental representation, play a fundamental role in either first, second or foreign language acquisition, since we do not learn sounds in isolation but words (word patterns, or phrases). Learning to read and write-- literacy-- makes us restructure our mental representation of either sounds and words, and acquire or develop, for the first time, perhaps, what we call phonological awareness.

In this paper I want to expose the different stages and the types of materials devised for the teaching of the auditive vocabulary of English to university students. I have used phonetic and phonological transcription as an interface between the auditive and the visual route of access to vocabulary. I want to emphasize that from the experimental point of view we have also used these

materials as part of the teaching materials of ADELEX, a virtual subject taught at the *Campus Virtual de la Universidad de Granada*. Among other tools of analysis and synthesis of speech I have used Speech Tools (SIL) for the capture, analysis, phonetic and phonological annotation of the sound files that I have collected to build a spoken English database that has been exploited by our students as a learning resource.



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## **Which WAY do Scottish monophthongs GO? Phonemically and sociolinguistically conditioned vowel variation in Scottish English**

In Scottish English, the vowel phonemes described by the lexical sets FACE and GOAT are still realised conservatively as monophthongs, and the literature usually labels them as /e/ and /o/, respectively (Abercrombie 1979:81; Wells 1982:400; Giegerich 1992:55; McClure 1994:82; Jones 2002:25; Stuart-Smith 2004:59). However, most authors interested in accent variation admit that diphthongal forms occur and that there is a potential conflict between factors pulling in opposite directions: on the one hand, the emulation of Southern English pronunciation by speakers belonging to the Scottish middle-classes is proposed by many to be the motivating force behind the more diphthongal realisations (Giegerich 1992:57; Jones 2002:55). On the other hand, it is pointed out that monophthongal values for /e/ and /o/ are salient identity markers of Scottish speakers of English (Giegerich 1992:57; McClure 1994:82; Jones 2002:25) and are therefore not likely to undergo a long-term change. Unfortunately, there are virtually no data available to shed light on the phenomenon, a situation which this paper aims to remedy.

The results of a formant analysis of approximately 1400 tokens of /e/ and /o/ elicited from Scottish speakers of English will be presented. Statistical testing is applied to allow statements about cross-register variation, age and gender differences, and effects that are due to the phonological context of the vowel. It will emerge that /e/ and /o/ are not categorically monophthongal or diphthongal but display a

range of intermediate values between the two poles. These differences can be quantified: based on the frequency measurements of formants 1 and 2, the trajectory length of the diphthongal gesture within the vowel space can be calculated. These values are then tested for potential correlations with sociolinguistic factors (age, gender, register) and phonological contexts reported to have an impact on diphthongisation (e.g. Cruttenden 2001:129;135). Applying co-variance analysis, the relative significance of each potential factor is weighed and a clearer picture of the processes affecting /e/ and /o/ emerges, which not only sheds light on the actual extent of variation, but imposes some (preliminary) order on the very complex interplay of factors that influence this interesting phenomenon.

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### **Non-nativized pronunciation features of loanwords: the case of nasal vowels**

The periods of cultural contact between the speakers of English and other languages have left their permanent record in the lexicon. Numerous loanwords have entered English (L1) as core or cultural borrowings for a number of reasons and at their own pace.

It would be an overgeneralization to state that all loanwords undergo an equally thorough process of phonological adaptation. The pronunciation of nativized borrowings may be viewed as the result of a repair process which ensures their agreement with most constraints of L1, as maintained by the Theory of Constraints and Repair Strategies (TCRS). Alongside those, however, there exist less conventionalized non-nativized loanwords, whose foreign phonetic features (known as non-adaptations or imports) are tolerated by the recipient language. Non-nativized borrowings are believed to comply with fewer constraints and are found in the periphery domains of L1 phonology.

The treatment received by nasal vowels which have no close equivalents in the English language is an example of such phonological tolerance. The present paper examines segmental and suprasegmental properties of French borrowings containing nasal vocalic segments. The occurrences of nasal vowels in the corpus of Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary (Jones 2003) have been registered resulting in a stock of 380 lexical items, 271 of which display nasal (or nasalized) vowels in their first

recommended pronunciation variant. The author argues that apart from vowel nasality such lexical items have retained other non-native characteristics.

The paper reviews three possible scenarios of vowel nasality adaptation described by phonological research: the loss of the feature resulting in unpacking, the retention of nasality involving nasalization of English vowels which substitute for their French nasal counterparts, and less frequent cases of zero assimilation of French segments.

The paper focuses on the second scenario and examines the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the CEPD list. While the choice of English vowel qualities reflects the principle of phonetic approximation, it is assumed that the length of the vowel segments under analysis may have been imported from French (L2). Two arguments are raised in favour of non-nativized quantity: the stress patterns of loanwords containing long nasal (or nasalized) vowels, and the behaviour of such segments in unstressed English syllables.

There is sufficient evidence to conclude that loanwords containing nasal vowels display a number of segmental and suprasegmental features that have remained unassimilated over a longer period of their circulation in the English language. It is argued that such non-native features are gradually entering the peripheral layers of L1 phonology and the grammar of English native speakers.

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### **Foreign accent and levels of analysis: interference between English and Croatian**

This paper studies the role of various levels of phonological analysis in the creation of foreign accent. It offers a comparison between English and Croatian, which differ considerably in terms of phonological typology. The author looks at the relative significance of differences creating the impression of foreign accent.

Not all differences between the two systems, the mother-tongue and the foreign language need necessarily cause features of foreign accent. As a rule, interference will happen if the feature of the foreign language is marked and the feature of the mother-tongue is unmarked. Although it is always instructive to point to any differences between the two languages concerned, irrespective of the predictable direction of interference, the author focuses primarily on those differences which go in the direction of English. The examples referred to throughout the paper show that they are indeed huge.

The phonological differences between the two languages are looked at on two basic levels: segmental and suprasegmental. At the segmental level, the consonantal and vocalic systems are compared. As for the suprasegmental level, three aspects of prosodic differences are discussed: rhythm, the reduction of unstressed vowels, and intonational differences.

Within the consonantal system, two types of differences are observed: those concerning the phonemic inventories and phonetic differences. In connection with

vowels, special attention is paid to the greater degree of complexity of the English vocalic system, due to the existence of the subsystem of diphthongs, as well as the typological complexity of the English system of monophthongs. These differences naturally result in striking vocalic features of foreign accent in the pronunciation of English.

As concerns rhythm, the two languages are notably typologically different: English is an extreme case of a language with stress-based rhythm, while Croatian rhythm is syllable-based. This difference is inseparable from yet another important phenomenon: the lack of the vowel reduction rule in Croatian. For native speakers of languages lacking an analogous phonological rule, this turns out to be the most striking give-away of a foreign accent in English. The two languages also differ completely in terms of intonation: English is an intonational language and Croatian is a pitch-accent language, which implies notable intonation features of foreign accent in both directions.

Pointing to such differences at all levels provides useful insights into the phonological nature of individual languages, as well as foreign accent in general. Ultimately, this can lead to the improvement of pronunciation of foreign languages.

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## **SLEFL pronunciation, or: on teaching and learning EFL pronunciation in *Second Life***

*Second Life* ([www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com)) is among the fastest developing Multi-User Virtual Environments (MUVEs), i.e. quasi-3d online worlds populated by 'avatars' controlled by 'residents' logging in from all over the globe. The 14 million SL residents (as of June 2008) go in-world to engage in most of the same behaviours they do in RL (Real Life): romance, sex, business, shopping, construction, sight-seeing, education, research, etc. There is a thriving community of educators active in SL, some of them teachers of foreign languages. Some EFL schools, organizations and teachers have been in-world for two and more years (i.e. for about half the world's existence). Few of them, however, specifically target EFL pronunciation. This is partly due to the global anti-phonetic bias of RL EFL teaching, which carries over to SL, as well as to the relatively new introduction of voice communication in-world (July 2007). And yet, pronunciation is equally, if not more, important to SL (E)FL learners as it is in RL.

In this first-ever public conference presentation specifically addressing the issues of EFL pronunciation in *Second Life* I will first briefly introduce the by-now widely recognized educational potential of MUVEs, then focus more narrowly on the teaching and learning of English as the SL's uncontested lingua franca, to finally go into more depth about the many issues arising in acquiring EFL pronunciation in SL. These include, first of all, those

which are known from RL, but show interesting new aspects due to the character and functionalities of *Second Life*, such as: the choice of teaching target (accent? LFC? learner needs?), teaching/learning methods and techniques, teacher/learner roles, teaching aids, classroom management, testing, and the like. There are also new SL-related issues in the area of (EFL) pronunciation which create completely new affordances and challenges to teachers and learners, such as: voice-chat versus text-chat, object-embedded sound, audio user interface, lip-synching, media streaming, authentic voice communication, 3d phonetic simulations, and many others.

My presentation will feature a hands-on demo of voice functionalities of *Second Life*, a short tour of some EFL-related places in-world and an interview with an EFL teacher conducting most of his business in SL. Apart from the *Second Life* website itself and SL blog pages (<http://blog.secondlife.com/>), interested parties can sign up on the very active SL educators discussion list (<https://lists.secondlife.com/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/educators>) or follow the links from my own website: [http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~swlodek/Second\\_Life.html](http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~swlodek/Second_Life.html). Among the latter, [http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~swlodek/First\\_lesson\\_in\\_SL.pdf](http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/~swlodek/First_lesson_in_SL.pdf) is an intensely personal reminiscence of my own first teaching attempt in SL, enhanced with audio-enabled 'speaking' objects.



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### **A sociophonetic study into the perception of Polish male and female voices**

As human voice is an important carrier of information about the speaker that can have a powerful impact on the listener, in recent years research on voice perception has aroused considerable interest and appreciation in such diverse areas as politics, mass media, advertising, commerce and public relations. Different voice parameters may be claimed to affect its perception including the speaker's and the listener's gender. This paper presents the results of an experiment in which 60 Poles (30 men and 30 women) listened to 14 samples of male (7) and female (7) voices, then described each of them in impressionistic terms and evaluated it on a scale ranging from 'very pleasant' to 'very unpleasant.' This has been done in order to obtain answers to the following general and more specific questions:

- Can nonspecialists describe other people's voice (impressionistically)? Do these descriptions vary considerably or show much similarity?
- Are there any significant differences in the perception and evaluation of human voices depending on:
  - (a) the speaker's sex
  - (b) the listener's sex?
- What male and female voices are considered pleasant and unpleasant? How much are these judgements based on gender stereotypes and gender expectations?

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### **Supra-segmental Phonological Features of Japanese EFL Speakers: From the perspective of Intelligibility**

**Aim:** This paper presents findings from an acoustic study of the supra-segmental phonological features of Japanese EFL speakers' English and English native speakers', with specific focus upon the criteria of intelligibility of these two varieties.

**Background:** In her discussion of Lingua Franca Cores (LFC), or phonological features necessary for EFL communication, Jenkins (2000) argues that most miscommunication is caused by segmental mispronunciation, not by supra-segmental features (except the misplacement of nuclear stress). In their study of the phonological cores for Japanese EFL speakers, however, Tsuzuki & Nakamura (to appear) maintain that intelligibility is crucially affected not only by segmental features such as /l/ and /r/ distinction and the appropriate production of English plosives but also by supra-segmentals such as stress placement upon compound words and phrases. Moreover, they suggest that the vowel length substitution, which may be caused by the transfer of L1 (Japanese) features such as mora-timed rhythm, decreases intelligibility. Note that mora-timed rhythm is a supra-segmental feature. Our study aims to identify the differing criteria of intelligibility for Japanese EFL speakers' English and native speakers' through digital acoustic analysis of the phonological "cores" for these two varieties.

Hence, we shall conduct a study in accordance with the following procedures.

**Participants and Method:** Fifteen EFL students (science major graduate students) are asked to read out five different sentences as carefully as if reading a paper at an academic conference. The subjects already have experience of academic presentations in English and need a higher level of proficiency in English, even though Japan is clearly an EFL environment. The sentences used contain the supra-segmental phonological items which proved to affect intelligibility in the previous study (e.g., compound words). In total, 75 sentences are recorded. For comparison, three native speakers of English are also asked to read out the same sentences as Japanese students read out. The recordings of Japanese influenced English and English spoken by native speakers are digitally analyzed with an acoustic analysis software (SUGI Speech Analyzer).

**Results and Discussion:** The acoustic analysis we had done so far revealed that Japanese speakers' English show mora-timing as well as non or wrong word stress, compound stress or phrasal stress. We shall confirm the suggested results in our full-scale study and shall examine exactly what supra-segmental phonological features of Japanese speakers hindering communication are.

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**“I hear tomayto, you hear tomahto”: the different perceptions of non-native speech by British, Irish and North American respondents**

While there is ample evidence that foreign accents are subject to stereotyping by native speakers, it is perhaps less widely known that learners of a foreign language also have certain prejudices about the way their speech is evaluated by native speakers of that language. A recent web survey carried out by the present writer showed that a majority of Dutch informants believe that English native speakers from Britain and Ireland are the most severe judges of their Dutch-accented pronunciation of English; only a small minority consider North Americans to be less lenient — irrespective of whether these students had received any training in phonetics. Such perceptions do not in fact tally with the way in which Dutch accents in English are actually assessed by different groups of native speakers. An Internet experiment conducted by the author demonstrated that it is in fact the speakers of USA and Canadian English who evaluate most severely the Dutch pronunciation errors they detect in the stimuli presented to them. Conversely, British, Irish and Antipodean judges report more errors than North Americans, but classify fewer of these as “serious”. Such differences may well reflect structurally varying attitudes to Dutch-accented English; while North American listeners are likely to perceive errors as “serious only where noticeable”, the other groups appear to view them as “noticeable but not serious”. Clearly, certain groups may be more inclined than others to volunteer negative evaluations of accented speech. Such a lower tolerance on the part of North Americans of foreign-accented

speech has already been claimed by scholars as diverse as Prator (1968: 25), Milroy (1994: 179) and Jenkins (2000: 198).

In addition, it was also found that the cross-Atlantic communities also prioritised individual pronunciation errors differently; the low priority given to lack of aspiration in initial fortis plosives as compared with the significance attached to dental stopping in all contexts was characteristic only of North Americans judgements. Such priorities cannot be predicted merely from the features that distinguish British from American English. For instance, the stronger resistance on the part of North American judges to L-vocalisation and fortis-lenis neutralisation may well be attributed to the local stigmatisation of such features.

Most research into the evaluation of foreign accents by native speakers (with the notable exception of Johansson 1975) has tended to concentrate on the views of individual speech communities, rather than providing any comparisons between groups. Nevertheless, non-native learners of English would benefit from an awareness of how their accents are perceived in different native-speaker communities worldwide.

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### **Stress patterns of English phrasal verbs and Russian learners**

Phrasal verbs can be especially challenging for Russian learners in stressing within an utterance. It concerns the placement and distribution of stress on the verb, the particle, and the other words in the sentence. The majority of the phrasal verbs are two-part verbs (*make off*) and are stressed like this: (1) phrasal verbs with one stress have the main stress on the verb, and no stress on the particle; (2) phrasal verbs with two stresses have the primary stress on the particle and a secondary stress on the verb. The speaker may choose to stress the particle in order to convey a particular meaning (e.g. an emphasis, or contrast). Phrasal verbs can be 'separable': that is, the verb and the particle can be separated, with the object of the verb coming between them (*turn it on*). Separable phrasal verbs can be used in three possible ways, and this effects where the stress falls: (1) when the object is *a pronoun*, it must come *between* the verb and the particle and the primary stress is *on the particle*; (2) when the object is *a noun* it also comes *between* the verb and the particle, and the stress will usually be *on the noun* rather than on the particle; (3) when the object is a noun coming *after* the verb and the particle, then it will be stressed and the stress on the particle may be lost. There are also three-part phrasal verbs – with an extra preposition after the particle (*make up for*). These are stressed in the same way as phrasal verbs with two stresses, so the verb carries a secondary stress and the first particle carries the main stress; the third word is unstressed. However, if the word following the pronoun is a noun, the speaker might

choose to stress it, and then the particle could either reduce or retain its stress, without significant difference in meaning.

The stress variation factor in two-part and three-part phrasal verbs (regularly occurring in English conversational style) often causes uncertainty on the part of Russian learners. The wrongly stressed phrasal verbs result in the wrong distribution of sentence stress within an utterance and the loss of English rhythm. These suprasegmental deviations from the English norm can bring a change in meaning and cause misunderstanding in the communication process.

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### **“Oirish” accents on stage and screen**

When required to perform with an accent in a film, TV show or play, actors often seek the assistance of a dialect coach to train them for their role. When such coaches are not available, performers are forced to resort to other forms of assistance, such as the use of guidebooks designed to teach them how to assume the required pronunciation. Unfortunately, such books are often less than accurate in their descriptions of accents and are thus responsible for perpetuating the inauthentic, stereotypical accents to which audiences are regularly exposed.

Taking Irish accents as its focus, this paper aims to take a closer look at a number of these actors’ manuals. By comparing the information given in them with the linguistic research on Irish English by scholars such as Hickey (2004), Wells (1996), Trudgill and Hannah (1994), the paper will highlight exactly how, and to what extent, these books add to the image of the “Stage Irishman” in disseminating what has become known as the “Oirish” accent.

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### **Rhythm and style – work in progress report**

Linguistic rhythm has been long defined in terms of a regular recurrence of units such as syllables, feet or morae, forming the basis of rhythm-based typology. Although absolute isochrony has not been found in production (e.g. Roach 1982), the distinction between stress and syllable-timed languages has been used as a point of reference for the analysis of different languages (e.g. Ramus et al. 1999, Grabe and Low 2002) or varieties of languages (e.g. Singapore vs. British English, Low et al. 2000). The results show that the use of a variety of rhythm metrics, such as interval measures and pairwise variability indices, makes it possible to maintain the rhythm class hypothesis for such languages as English vs. Spanish, but not Polish – an ‘intermediate’ language. Taking these findings as the starting point, the research project aiming at investigating rhythmic organization in English, Polish and ‘Polglish’ has been formulated. The project focuses on stylistic conditioning of rhythm within each language variety, investigating interval measures in text vs. dialogue vs. spontaneous speech style for the three language varieties. This paper is based on a case study analysis, providing initial support for the relationship between the variables of style, language proficiency and fluency and the rhythmic organization of language.

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**“The effect of ego-permeability on ultimate attainment in L2 pronunciation: selected observations”**

This presentation focuses on the effect of ego-permeability and on native-like production of selected phonetic variables in English spoken by native speakers of Polish. As an element of acculturation, ego-permeability has been studied as one of individual affective factors facilitating the acquisition of second language sound system, believed to be particularly sensitive to the individual way of defining the linguistic ‘self’ of the speaker. The relationship between the level of ego-permeability as related to self-reported language experience of Polish-English bilinguals is treated as a starting point for further discussion of the relevance of acculturation factors for ultimate attainment in a non-immigrant context.

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### **The perception of a foreign accent in the acquisition of English as a third language**

The present paper addresses the issue of variability in non-native accents of English by investigating the concept of a foreign accent in the acquisition of English as a third language. Third language phonological acquisition (TLA) is a relatively unexplored research area that goes beyond Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by acknowledging the complexity of cross-linguistic influence while learning more than one foreign language, which has become a commonplace in today's multilingual world.

The study focuses on the phenomenon of a 'foreign language effect' or L2 status, i.e. the impact of previously learnt foreign language(s), rather than only the mother tongue, on the phonetic performance in a third language (cf. Meisel 1983, Cenoz 2001, Hammarberg 2001, Hammarberg & Hammarberg 2005). The paper aims to provide further evidence for the claim that L2 outweighs the transfer from L1 at the initial stage of L3 acquisition leading to L2-accented speech, however, this interference diminishes with the increase of L3 proficiency and gradual approximation to the target norms.

This contribution constitutes a part of an on-going study based on a small corpus of non-native English speech incorporating 240 recordings of 60 Polish native speakers with German as L2 and English as L3. The experimental design of the research includes foreign accent judgements performed by a group of expert listeners who were asked to rate selected speech samples for an overall degree of perceived foreign accent on a 6-point scale and to identify the

native language of the speakers. An attempt is made to correlate the accent judgement ratings with the results of the auditory and acoustic analyses of the respective samples of L3 English performed by the present author and to point to some phonetic/phonological features that contribute to the perceptual impression of a foreign accent. Furthermore, the quantitative data analysis is supplemented by qualitative data from language biographies that were collected from the participants.

Finally, the paper discusses different factors that could have contributed to the interplay of L1 and L2 interference in the phonetic performance of L3 English including typological distance, L2 proficiency, recency of L2 use, special L2 status in TLA, learners' motivation and metalinguistic awareness.

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