

It's All in Teachers' Hands': The English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey from a Polish Perspective

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Abstract This paper aims to overview the main findings from a European-wide on-line survey of English pronunciation teaching practices (English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey—EPTiES) for Polish and European respondents. The European context provided by the EPTiES is used as the background for the discussion of pronunciation teaching priorities and practices in Poland as seen through the teachers' eyes. The data from Polish respondents are summarised for major characteristics and compared to the answers from other respondents from around Europe and the results reported in earlier studies conducted in Poland. The focus is on teachers, their views and practices in pronunciation teaching, the training they received, their attitudes towards pronunciation teaching and, finally, their beliefs concerning their learners' aims and preferences in pronunciation learning. The aim is to explore the specificity of the Polish context for English pronunciation teaching in Europe, with similarities and differences highlighted and discussed in the course of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The ultimate goal is to show that only by investigating the attitudes and practices of language teachers can we hope to improve the quality of pronunciation teaching; as it is all in teachers' hands, their training, attitudes and beliefs are crucial. And it is the training that requires most attention, as Polish teachers of English are well educated in their own pronunciation, but not in pronunciation teaching, which is virtually absent from teacher training they received.

1 Introduction

Pronunciation has long enjoyed a special, if a somewhat dubious status in the English teaching practice: on the one hand, it has been recognised as an important aspect of spoken language, obviously, one might want to add, but on the other

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hand all doubts concerning the choice of the model and the identity issues have made it only a potentially important language aspect, largely ignored in the teaching practice. Without going back to long-forgotten days with the focus on accuracy, overt prestige and the need to sound as native-like as possible, one needs to realise that a clear preference for communication, with the aim for pronunciation teaching specified as ‘comfortable intelligibility’ (Kenworthy 1987) ruins the idea of treating pronunciation as an element of a system parallel to the grammar of the language. While it has been possible to keep the myth of a standard, ideal grammar for learners of English around the world, it has not been possible to do so with pronunciation. Faced with variability, learners need to choose the model they want to imitate; later on, however, they are either told or realise on their own that their native accents in English are equally good (as long as they can communicate and do not have other linguistic or social needs). This complex context makes pronunciation teaching a particularly difficult task. It is no wonder then that teachers and researchers want to learn more about the needs and attitudes of their learners.

In the Polish context, questionnaire studies conducted among university students were the first to explore the attitudes and needs of learners with reference to the choice of the target variety, the role of the model accent and the aims in pronunciation learning (Waniek-Klimczak 2002; Sobkowiak 2002; Janicka et al. 2005; Waniek-Klimczak and Klimczak 2005). Interestingly, although the majority of these studies were conducted among English majors (with Waniek-Klimczak and Klimczak 2005 comparing English and non-English majors), native-like pronunciation was mentioned as a clear priority only in Janicka et al. (2005). Other studies suggest that although pronunciation is believed to be important, it is its use for communication, fluency and confidence in speech that have been most often mentioned as major aims in pronunciation learning. While the aims of pronunciation instruction and the attitudes of English majors towards their own pronunciation practice may be of interest, it is the effect of their training and the instruction regarding pronunciation teaching they received in the teaching-training programmes that seems of a particular interest from the perspective of teacher practice and potential modification of teacher training programmes. Consequently, rather than concentrating on the aims and personal preferences of the future teachers, the study presented here concentrates on the experience, attitudes and practices of fully qualified teachers, whose views and education may have a decisive impact on the way in which they treat pronunciation in their teaching.

The project whose results are summarised here originated in the course of discussions held during the conferences organised under the Accents heading in Łódź, Poland (2007–2009) and became a reality during the first English Pronunciation Issue and Practices conference organised in Chambéry, France, in 2009. A group of researchers who met during those conferences and discussed pronunciation teaching decided that they wanted to learn more about the actual practice of what tends to be discussed on the basis of theoretical assumptions or before-mentioned studies of indirect relevance to the teaching practice. The discussions led to the formulations of key questions put into an on-line questionnaire

designed in its final form by Alice Henderson of the Université de Savoie in Chambéry. Interestingly, the project was put to life without any external funding (i.e. outside the universities where conferences were held, the University of Łódź and the Université de Savoie), proving that when there is will there is a way—our shared interest and passions seemed enough to get started so that we could get evidence on which to build in the future. The results of the survey first available online and then complemented by written questionnaires were presented during further conferences (Accents 2010 and 2011 in Łódź, the 4th Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching in Vancouver in 2012). The respective publications can be found in Henderson (2012), Henderson et al. (2012), Kirkova-Naskova et al. (2013).

The present paper reports on major findings from the on-line and paper version of the survey results for Poland vis-à-vis the summarised results for Europe, with the main focus put on the training teachers received in the course of their studies, their account of how they teach pronunciation and what they believe to be useful and/or important in deciding on teaching practices. Moreover, teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the importance and aims for pronunciation teaching are briefly examined.

2 The English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey (EPTiES) Introduced

The English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey is a collaborative project with partners in ten European countries.¹ It comprises 78 open and closed questions grouped into 9 categories:

- Participant Information
- Outside the Classroom
- Pronunciation Teaching Methods
- Teaching Materials
- Evaluation of Pronunciation
- Teacher Training
- Views/Attitudes
- Teaching Context
- Model/Norm

The survey was available online through the Université de Savoie in 2010–2011. In this period, 843 participants answered the survey, out of which

¹ The following researchers collaborated in the project: Elina Tergujeff, University of Jyväskylä, Alice Henderson and Dan Frost, Université de Savoie, Alexander Kautzsch, University of Regensburg, Deirdre Murphy, Trinity College Dublin, Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova, University of Skopje, Ewa Waniek-Klimczak, University of Łódź, David Levey, University of Cádiz, Una Cunningham, University of Stockholm, Lesly Curnick, Rias van den Doel, University of Utrecht.

481 completed the survey, The participants represented 31 countries, with the majority representing fairly experienced teachers of English (the average above 15 years of teaching experience), mostly females (63 % of all respondents), at the average age of 43. The fact that only about half of respondents finished completing the survey prompted a follow-up data collection method with the use of a written version of the questionnaire (in Switzerland and Poland).

The information about the survey was spread during teacher conferences, information leaflets were distributed through the school and personal contacts. In the case of Poland, teachers were also encouraged to complete the survey through direct contact and through teacher trainers. The methods proved not to be effective: there are only 12 completed responses out of 20 attempts (with 14 respondents answering most of the questions). The written version which was distributed in the schools in the Łódź area² yielded 17 responses; as the on-line version was abandoned by respondents at different points in the survey, the data presented below are based on 37 respondents, with the missing answers included as 'no response'.³ For the purpose of the analysis to follow, the on-line and written questionnaire data have been summarized as coming from one sample; while such an approach does not satisfy methodological requirements of comparable data collection procedure, the exploratory character of the analysis aiming at searching for tendencies and directions for further studies seems to justify this decision.

The respondent information for both the on-line and written versions follows similar patterns, with the mean age of 27 (with standard deviation (SD) of 8, minimum 21, maximum 58) vs. 37 (SD 9, minimum 23, maximum 54), 75 % of females in both groups. All respondents are native speakers of Polish, with BA or MA in English studies (15 BA–5 MA degrees, many teachers working towards their MA in the on-line group vs. 3 BA–17 MA in the written version). They teach mostly teenagers (12–18 year olds) in both state and private schools (75 and 59 % respectively); their teaching experience ranges from 1 to 32 years (with the mean values 5.25 (SD 6.5) and 14.35 (6.8) respectively. Not surprisingly, it is the second group, i.e. the written survey respondents who are more homogeneous—they were recruited in the schools where they work (hence there are only 3 novice teachers in this group).

In spite of a relatively small sample from Poland and a vastly varied sample in the EPTiES, the data obtained in the survey provide interesting observations with respect to the teaching of English pronunciation across Europe. Given a state-of-the-art approach of the survey, it seems legitimate to argue that the very fact that not only did relatively few teachers decide to start the survey, but also relatively few of them completed it suggests that pronunciation teaching remains an unexplored area for teachers of English. Thus, the exploratory analysis proposed here will concentrate on this very issue, i.e. teachers' attitudes and preparation for teaching pronunciation as well their opinions regarding the learners' needs.

² My gratitude for help in data collection goes to Anna Jarosz.

³ The same procedure is used in the general EPTiES responses quoted in the paper. i.e. the data are based on all responses available for a given question.

3 The EPTiES Data

The presentation of the data in this section is based on on-line and written questionnaire results; in correspondence to the EPTiES organization, the following aspects are considered: participant information, pronunciation teaching methods, teacher training, views and attitudes.

3.1 Participant Information

The EPTiES participants represent 31 countries, with the largest proportion of responses from Germany (363), Finland (103) and France (65). The average age and teaching experience vary, with an average EPTiES respondent older and more experienced than the respondent from Poland (see Table 1). The group of teachers who responded to the survey in Poland does not include any native speaker of English—in fact only about 9 % of European respondents to the survey are native speakers of that language.

With respect to the context for teaching, as many as 62 % of Polish respondents (compared to 12 % for Europe) declare teaching in private schools, the result which reflects the reality of the Polish foreign language educational system, with a widespread system of private evening schools; consequently, while the question “Do you teach in the private sector” may be interpreted in terms of the major employment place in the European context, in Poland it needs to be interpreted in terms of a mixed, public and private sector experience. This complex experience of teaching in more than one educational institution, with the regular teaching post and evening classes, further affects the teaching context: Polish teachers say they teach different age groups, children, teenagers and adults.

3.2 Pronunciation Teaching Methods

The pronunciation teaching methods section of the EPTiES concentrated on teaching to recognize and/or to write phonetic symbols, the percentage of time devoted to pronunciation teaching and the desired amount of time the teacher

Table 1 Participant information on the basis of the EPTiES online and written questionnaire data

	Polish respondents (N = 37)	EPTiES respondents (N = 843)
Age (average)	33	52 (mean) 43 (median)
Gender—female	76 %	62 %
Native speaker of english	0	9 %
Years teaching english	11.3	15
Private sector	67.5 %	12.34 %

would like to have for this purpose. The questions had a close and an open format, asking respondents to comment on their answers.

The first two questions asked: Do you teach learners to RECOGNIZE phonetic symbols?/Do you teach your learners how to WRITE phonetic symbols? The results (see Table 2) point to a general preference for teaching to recognize rather than write phonetic symbols, the tendency shared by Polish teachers with their European colleagues. In fact, the proportion of positive answers in both categories is much higher for Polish teachers, with 81 % of declaring teaching at least some symbols in recognition (compared to 60 % in the whole EPTiES sample) and 36 vs. 24 % positive with respect to teaching writing all or some symbols. The negative answers are again similar across all teachers, with the Polish data suggesting a slightly smaller proportion of not using the phonetic symbols at all.

As already mentioned, in both of the above mentioned cases, closed questions were followed by open ones, asking to explain the reasons for choosing a given option. In the case of the Polish group, the most typical explanation for not teaching to read or write the phonetic symbols was the age of the learners or the difficulty level, as in the following comments:

[714] *learners I teach are usually kids aged 7–12, so I believe they are too young to teach them phonetic symbols* [575] *too difficult for them*

One of the respondents to the written questionnaire commented

[w7] *I'm going to teach my learners to recognize phonetic symbols in the future, it depends on the textbooks—if they introduce phonetic symbols I'll introduce them.*

While the [w7] comment is not very frequent, it seems interesting from the point of view of the teachers' dependence on published materials—an important trend in the Polish data (for this part of the questionnaire see Waniek-Klimczak (2013).

Positive responses to the recognition of all or some of the symbols stress the connection between phonetic symbols and learning new vocabulary, especially with the help of dictionaries, e.g.

[717] *s useful when it comes to learning vocabulary by using the dictionary*

Table 2 Answers to the questions about the use of phonetic symbols in teaching, absolute number and proportion for each category

	Polish respondents (N = 37)		EPTiES respondents (N = 843)	
	Recognize (%)	Write (%)	Recognize (%)	Write (%)
I teach learners to ... phonetic symbols				
Yes	18 (49)	9 (24)	315 (37)	57 (7)
Some	12 (32)	27 (27)	197 (23)	142 (17)
No	3 (9)	14 (37)	98 (12)	410 (47)
Not completed	4 (10)	4 (10)	233 (28)	234(27)

[727] *if you don't teach them such things, they have no idea how to pronounce words properly and besides, once they get acquainted with phonetic transcriptions, they know how to read words that are in a dictionary.*

The recognition of phonetic symbols increases learners' independence, helps in working with dictionaries and—the least-often mentioned motivation—it helps the learners to work on their pronunciation. One teacher summarizes this position providing three reasons for teaching learners how to recognize the symbols:

- [w16] (1) *I want them to be independent learners/users of English*
 (2) *I believe it's necessary for effective communication*
 (3) *it's fun.*

The same respondent goes on to explain why she teaches learners how to write phonetic symbols:

- [w16](1) *so they can practice pronunciation at home*
 (2) *it's motivating for the students*
 (3) *they find it interesting and important.*

In connection with vocabulary learning, another respondent says

[w15] *They should know them [phonetic symbols] to pronounce vocabulary in the correct way.*

The above views are not shared by the majority of respondents, who tend to express their doubts about the usefulness of the skill, stressing the lack of time for anything that is not really important for the students.

Interestingly, a vast majority of Polish teachers (76 %) declare using up to 25 % of their weekly teaching time to pronunciation (the lowest proportion in the questionnaire after 0), and most of them say they would like to devote more time, as it is not enough. The same trend can be observed in the general EPTiES data, with 57 % of respondents claiming they spend up to 25 % teaching pronunciation (with 3 % not teaching it at all, as compared to a 0 response in the Polish group), but only 42 % saying that is how much they would like to teach it (and 1 % insisting they would not want to teach pronunciation at all). The fact that it is up to 50 % that teachers both in the EPTiES and in the Polish sample declare in their 'would you like' option seems intriguing. In fact it is difficult to imagine as much as 25 % of teaching time being spent on pronunciation teaching in a regular language classroom, not to mention going up to 50 %. While the verification and looking for explanation for the respondent choices is beyond the scope of this paper, it is certainly an interesting point to consider while drawing conclusions from the data.

3.3 Teacher Training

Questions exploring teacher training in relation to how to teach pronunciation proved to be difficult, if not unclear for Polish respondents. There were three questions in this part of the survey:

- In relation to pronunciation, please rate the teacher training you received from 1 to 5.
- Please tell us how much training you received specific to teaching pronunciation.
- Please explain the content and/or style of the training you received.

The results show that while the respondents rate the training at the average of 3.25, the result cannot be interpreted without knowing whether what they meant was the actual training in their pronunciation or pronunciation teaching. It is the answers to the second question that bring surprising results: out of 37 participants, only two say that they did receive training in how to teach pronunciation. Thus, the majority of Polish respondents explain that they had from 1 to 2 years of phonetics classes in the course of their studies, with the content and style on practice in individual sound contrasts, phonetic transcription, drills, controlled tasks, reading, some free production, discussions on difficult sounds, etc. The university training in pronunciation itself tends to be well-evaluated, and several respondents add that pronunciation was mentioned in their teacher training. Moreover, some of the respondents say they attended additional workshops and worked on their own in the field. As the answers to the second question in this group reveal an almost total lack of specific pronunciation teaching instruction within teacher training, the first question must have been understood differently by different respondents, who may have rated it as extremely poor for the fact that they did not receive it; still others clearly rated their training very high on the basis of the phonetic training they received in their own pronunciation during language studies. Consequently, neither the rating nor the content/style refer to pronunciation as an element of teacher training—for all respondents pronunciation training means going through at least one year of phonetics instruction.

As all the respondents declare holding a BA or MA degree in English, the answers to the second and third question make it possible to get some insights into the phonetic training offered at Polish universities and colleges. When asked to say how much training they received, the majority of respondents express doubts—they say:

[340] *Pronunciation teaching was not part of my teacher training.*

[434] *2 years + self study.*

[713] *I've attended a one-year course in English phonetics during my first year of English studies. Generally I'm interested in phonetics and phonology, my BA and MA thesis are concerned with these topics so I suppose reading books and articles about phonetics and phonology could be considered a sort of training as well.*

[730] *It was mentioned during my MA studies which specialization was methodology, but not so much. Only 3 or 4 lectures were devoted to the issue of teaching pronunciation.*

Naturally, as the responses come from teachers who decided to complete the survey on teaching English pronunciation, their declared interest in this aspect of language teaching is in no way surprising. While this may make the responses not strongly representative for all the English teachers in Poland (so many of whom

did not answer the survey calls), it is interesting to explore what actual training experience these pronunciation-interested teachers had. With respect to the content/style of the training, the following comment seems to sum up what most respondents with no specific pronunciation teacher training say:

[718] *University course. We used different books (e.g. 'Ship or sheep?'). We listened to the correct pronunciation of problematic words provided by native speakers and we tried to imitate it. We used headphones and special equipment in the lab. We also wrote tests (phonetic symbols) and we were recorded at the beginning and at the end of the course—then, our progress was measured and evaluated.*

The two respondents who do mention having specific training in how to teach provide an account of an ideal course in pronunciation teaching—notice that the first comment comes from the respondent who says she had only 3 or 4 lectures devoted to this topic).

[730] *The content was more or less: When to teach pronunciation? Is it good to teach phonetic transcription? When to teach phonetic transcription? Ways of teaching and improving students' pronunciation skills (on the basis of different exercises and activities), How to combine pronunciation activities with other such as speaking etc. within a lesson?*
 [837] *The course began with stressing the importance of pronunciation teaching. I was familiarized with the difficulties that Polish students may encounter stemming from their native tongue. We discussed methods and techniques as well as new approaches to teaching pronunciation.*

When compared to the situation in Europe, Polish teachers seem to have received pronunciation instruction similar to that offered in many other countries, e.g. at universities in Macedonia, where pronunciation is given considerable attention and practice within English Studies—in both cases, the teacher training component, added to general English studies, does not include a separate training on how to teach pronunciation. Participants from different countries mention pronunciation teaching instruction as an element of their general teacher training program or a specific class/additional training, or they say they had no training in how to teach pronunciation, but did go through practical phonetics in their language studies (Kirkova-Naskova et al. 2013). Kirkova-Naskova et al. illustrate their discussion with the following comments:

[857 Finland] *My teacher training was an all-round course with different aspects of teaching combined into a programme which included teaching pronunciation.*
 [450 Germany] *A training-day with a native speaker; the content was to train pronunciation and classroom methods*
 [826 France] *Lab classes: work on minimal pairs/repetitions/work on intonation.*
 [356 Spain] *Training in phonology and phonetics with consequent transcription of sounds and utterances.*

The lack of instruction on how to teach pronunciation can be expected to correspond to the belief that pronunciation teaching is difficult. It is this and related questions in the views and attitudes section of the survey that are explored below.

3.4 Views and Attitudes

The section exploring the views and attitudes of the teachers with respect to their own work and their students' attitudes complements the previous sections by looking for a possible causal relationship between teacher training, the readiness to teach pronunciation and the teaching methods used in class. The questions discussed here are the following:

- For you personally, how important is pronunciation in relation to other language skills? Please rate from 1 to 5, with 1 as 'the least important' and 5 as 'the most important'.
- For you personally, how easy is it to teach English pronunciation? Please rate from 1 to 5, with 1 as 'extremely difficult' and 5 as 'extremely easy'.
- Please rate from 1 to 5 how motivated you feel your learners are to speak English (1 = totally unmotivated, 5 = extremely motivated).
- To what extent do you feel your students aspire to have native or near-native pronunciation? (1 = do not aspire at all, 5 = aspire to this 100 %).

The belief as to the importance of pronunciation seems to be a logical prerequisite for the readiness to teach pronunciation, devoting relatively much time for this skill. Indeed, the data in Table 3 indicate, that pronunciation is believed to be fairly important, more so for Polish teachers than the EPTiES average. This result should not be surprising given the earlier discussed greater readiness among Polish teachers to increase the time devoted to pronunciation instruction and more frequent usage of phonetic symbols. However, given the fact that a vast majority of the Polish teachers declare not having had any training in how to teach pronunciation, the very task could be expected to be viewed as difficult. This prediction proves to be correct: the proportion of teachers claiming pronunciation is difficult to teach for them is larger in the Polish sample than the EPTiES (Table 3), with no teachers believing it to be easy, and 70 % choosing 2 or 3 on the 1–5 decreasing scale of difficulty. Thus, although important, pronunciation is difficult to teach.

Table 3 Answers from EPTiES (N = 843) and the Polish respondents (N = 37)

		How important is pronunciation? 1 = not at all, 5 = the most important				How easy is it to teach English pronunciation? 1 = extremely difficult, 5 = extremely easy			
		EPTiES		Poland		EPTiES		Poland	
1	2	0.24 %	0	0	17	2 %	0	0	
2	25	3 %	0	0	76	9 %	7	19 %	
3	152	18 %	10	27 %	258	31 %	19	51 %	
4	226	27 %	14	38 %	116	14 %	5	14 %	
5	97	12 %	7	19 %	35	4 %	0	0	
N	341	40 %	6	16 %	341	40 %	6	16 %	

The comments put by respondents in the written versions provide a partial explanation for the difficulty: respondents blame the size of the groups, the students' difficulty in repeating the correct pronunciation, intonation or rhythm, but also their lack of motivation caused by the exam format:

[w9] *Students don't understand the importance of an accent, so they don't pay attention to pronunciation.*

[w4] *[native-like pronunciation] is not needed to communicate or to pass exams.*

When asked about their students' motivation to speak English and their readiness to aspire towards native or near-native pronunciation in English, Polish teachers choose answers very close to the EPTiES average, with a relatively high level of motivation in their learners to speak English and a lower level of aspiring towards native-like pronunciation (see Table 4).

The relative lack of interest in native-like accents can be expected to tie up with the answers to the last part of the survey, where teachers were asked about their own and their students' preferences for different accent of English for receptive and productive work (Table 5). Here however, a total lack of interest ('no preference') is one of the least frequent responses, matched only by some type of International English (the concept not clearly defined either in the survey or the literature). Moreover, the comparison of the teachers' declared preferences with those they believe to be true for their students brings interesting results, with slight differences in the choice of the model, but a very slight increase in the 'no preference' answer. In fact, Polish teachers seem particularly strongly attached to the traditional Received Pronunciation (RP) model of standard British English (however, it needs to be noticed that the use of the 'RP' concept in the survey did provoke several negative comments as old-fashioned), more so in productive than receptive work, and more so than they believe their students to be—but even for their students, they claim RP is preferred or almost equal to General American (GA).

The preferences declared by Polish teachers do not differ much from the ones typical for the EPTiES respondents (Table 6). With RP chosen as a priority by the teachers, who believe their choice may not be shared by some of their students, it is the same pattern, RP in the lead, followed by GA, with the difference greater in productive than receptive work, and a slight advantage of GA in receptive work of

Table 4 Answers from EPTiES (N = 843) and the Polish respondents (N = 37)

	How motivated are your learners to speak English?				Do you feel they aspire to native or near-native like pronunciation?			
	EPTiES		Poland		EPTiES		Poland	
1	5	0.6 %	0	0	26	3 %	3	8 %
2	36	4 %	4	11 %	114	14 %	8	22 %
3	173	21 %	14	38 %	210	25 %	9	24 %
4	216	26 %	11	30 %	132	16 %	10	27 %
5	69	8 %	2	5 %	17	2 %	2	3 %
N	344	41 %	6	16 %	344	41 %	6	16 %

Table 5 Frequency with which respondents from Poland pointed to a given variety—it was possible to choose more than one

	Teachers' preference		Learners' preference (teachers' view)	
	Receptive	Productive	Receptive	Productive
RP	29	29	20	20
Gen. American	23	16	21	17
Other varieties	10	0	5	1
International English	4	1	6	6
No preference	4	2	4	5

the students. The difference between the Polish respondents and their European colleagues seems to be more in the exposure and practice of other varieties of English, both in teacher and learner preference category.

The results of the final part of the survey suggest a discrepancy between the teachers' preference for a traditional model of RP or GA, a relatively low interest in other varieties of English, and a declared lack of interest in the learners to aspire towards native-like pronunciation. Given teachers' beliefs as to their students' needs and attitudes, one might expect them to embrace International English as an alternative, or to choose many different varieties in their work. Although the choice of the model may not seem the key issue in pronunciation teaching, it seems to add an important piece to the puzzle. Putting them all together, we can try to create a generalized picture emerging from the survey.

4 The Pronunciation Profile of a Polish Teacher

The fact that the EPTiES focused on teachers, their practices, attitudes and beliefs, reflects the background idea behind the project that 'it is all in teacher's hands'. Obvious as it is that it is not only teachers who affect the pronunciation of their learners, it seems equally uncontroversial to claim that they may affect their learners' pronunciation practice and attitudes to a considerable extent. What is a pronunciation profile of a Polish teacher then? This section tries to answer the question on the basis of the generalized responses from [Sect. 3](#).

Table 6 Frequency with which EPTiES respondents pointed to a given variety—it was possible to choose more than one

	Teachers' preference		Learners' preference (teachers' view)	
	Receptive	Productive	Receptive	Productive
RP	444	425	343	335
Gen. American	376	303	348	327
Other varieties	585	56	127	27
International English	134	79	88	79
No preference	38	39	37	46

An average respondent of the survey is a young, educated female. She works in a private or public and private sector, teaching different age groups. Her main post is in a primary or secondary school, but she is likely to teach in evening schools or offer private tuition (conclusion inferred from the data and personal experience). She devotes some time to teaching pronunciation, but relies on the textbook as to the type of the practice. When she teaches phonetic symbols she does it for the purpose of making the learners more independent in learning new vocabulary from dictionaries, and often decides to teach only the symbols for the sounds that are very different in Polish and English. She believes pronunciation to be relatively important, she would not want to devote more time for teaching it than she does though, as there is too little time and pronunciation is not an important part of final exams, plus she believes it is not popular with the learners. This belief may stem from her own experience of pronunciation learning at the university, where she took pronunciation classes for a year or two, and did not feel she was fully successful. The course convinced her that RP is the best model for production, with GA second, but she is not interested in other varieties nor is she likely to accept foreign-accented English (International) as the norm. She believes the students share her views, but does not believe they aspire towards native or near-native pronunciation, which once again reflects her own experience and possible frustration with not reaching the aims in her own pronunciation instruction.

While much of the above profile needs to be treated as tentative and verges on conjecture, it is based on the data to an extent that it is believed to form a good starting point for further discussion. There are two major issues that emerge: firstly, it is teacher training in pronunciation that needs further discussion and modification, and secondly, the survey work must be continued for a more comprehensive image of an English teacher pronunciation practice profile to emerge.

5 Final Comment: It is (Almost) All in Teachers Hands After All

The teachers whose responses have formed the basis of the above analysis have all graduated from English Departments at Universities, various tertiary level institutions and/or Teacher Training Colleges. The age distribution of respondents corresponds to the degrees they hold—among 17 MA and 18 BA holders, the BA qualified teachers are the youngest and least experienced ones, with many of them enrolled in MA extramural programs at the time of the survey. It is interesting to notice in this context that it is the on-line version that has been completed by a higher proportion of BA holders, younger and less experienced teachers. It is in this group, however, that two respondents describe the pronunciation component in their teacher training—entries [737] and [830] in the on-line survey (see 3.3.). Both of these teachers received their BA degrees from teacher training colleges—both continued at the University with their MAs in progress at the time

of the survey, while many of the other respondents talked about the positive effect of their individual work or specialization in working towards the diploma (see 3.3., entry [713]).

While pronunciation teaching proves to be virtually absent from teacher training programs in the majority of institutions offering BA or MA in English Studies, it is the experience in their own pronunciation training that can be expected to shape teachers' attitudes and practice in teaching pronunciation. This experience seems to be relatively similar across the respondents: although the length and intensity of the course may vary from 1 semester to 3 years, it is 1–2 years on average. The method reported by the respondents is typical for accent-reduction courses, with language-lab activities, repetition, controlled practice, minimal pairs, reading, and finally, phonetic transcription. Although several respondents mention the analysis of difficult sounds for Polish learners and diagnostic recordings, the majority of these activities do not seem most appropriate for teaching English pronunciation as an element of general English course, at least not as the main ones. Nor is the assumed model likely to be accepted by the majority of language learners—many, if not all students majoring in English (see Janicka et al. 2005; Waniek-Klimczak 2002) aim to reach native or near-native pronunciation in the language of their specialization. Even in this group, however, there are many students who indicate ease of communication and fluency as their main aim. It is not surprising to see that when they graduate, they take their direct experience as the basis for future work and they have a whole range of opinions as to the aims and methods of pronunciation teaching to children or teenage learners. When their opinions as to the need to teach pronunciation are compared to their own experience, an interesting picture emerges. Below the answer to the question about the way they were taught pronunciation (1) is followed by the opinion whether the amount of teaching pronunciation in their practice is sufficient (2).

[721] (1) *We had classes in phonetics and pronunciation at the University. We were presented with various exercises to differentiate between the sounds.*

(2) *Yes, because I believe that Polish students don't have problems with pronunciation. Their pronunciation doesn't affect comprehension.*

[719] (1) *Course based on a textbook "sheep or ship"*

(2) *It is sufficient, because they don't have to be taught pronunciation only through such an explicit training, but also acquire pronunciation subconsciously, e.g. through listening.*

One can only hope that the attitude of these young teachers might be modified through their further experience and training; at this point, however, it seems evident that the quality of pronunciation instruction they received did not prove to be inspirational with respect to the usefulness of pronunciation and/or the need for explicit instruction. The comment made by the first respondent ([721]) seems particularly worrying coming from a teacher—this is the comment one might imagine as typical for learners, but not a fully qualified teacher.

When viewed from the perspective of teacher-training, the general picture emerging from the above discussion is far from optimistic. By not providing instruction on how to teach pronunciation within teacher training (with a notable exception of teacher training colleges, which, however, ceased to exist in the

Polish system), we leave the graduates with the belief that pronunciation teaching is what they experienced at university: accent reduction courses, specialized, often monotonous controlled practice exercises, with the frustration of the decision whether and to what extent a specialist in English can deviate from the norm in her or his language production. Thus, the responsibility for improving the quality of pronunciation teaching lies in both teacher training and practical phonetics classes. Only by improving both, i.e. separating training on how to teach pronunciation to different age-groups from the actual pronunciation training offered to English majors and revising the practice of pronunciation in practical phonetics to make a useful, meaningful experience for the students, can we hope to educate teachers well-equipped with skills needed for effective pronunciation teaching. Let us not forget how much is in their hands.

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