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Rethinking pronunciation teaching in teacher education from an ELF perspective

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Rethinking pronunciation teaching in teacher education from an ELF perspective

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It has long been thought that teachers of English should strive to acquire a native-like accent in order to be a good pronunciation model for their students. The so-called 'nativeness principle' (Levis 2005), i.e. the idea that a native-like accent is an achievable and desirable goal for an L2 learner, is still influencing pronunciation teaching practices in non-native language teacher education. However, this principle has been seriously challenged by applied linguists and especially by English as a lingua franca (ELF) researchers, who question the relevance of native speaker pronunciation norms for teachers and learners and call for a focus on international intelligibility in pronunciation teaching.

This paper takes a critical look at the nativeness principle, arguing that it cannot be regarded as a satisfactory approach to pronunciation teaching in general and in teacher education in particular. I therefore present an alternative, ELF-informed approach to English pronunciation teaching and provide suggestions for its implementation in a specific teacher education context.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, as is generally recognised, English has become a truly international language due to its widespread use as a 'lingua franca'. The English-speaking world is no longer confined to communities of native speakers. The whole world is now English speaking. Over recent years there has been an increasing awareness of the significance of the phenomenon of 'English as a lingua franca' (ELF) for L2 learners of English: its pedagogical implications have been widely discussed[1] and calls have been made for a re-orientation of English language teacher education to enable teachers to take account of the world-wide use of ELF in their teaching (e.g. Jenkins 2000, Seidlhofer 2011, Mauranen 2012, Dewey 2014). This

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1 See for instance Jenkins (2000, 2006a), Kirkpatrick (2007), Mauranen (2012), Seidlhofer (2004, 2011) and Widdowson (2012).

paper sets out to show how a pronunciation course for future language teachers could be redesigned in order to prepare them for putting into practice the pedagogical implications of ELF with regard to pronunciation teaching, taking the Vienna English Department as an example.[2] The reason for making pronunciation teaching (rather than any other aspect of language teaching) the main focus of my research was that pronunciation has been found to be the primary cause of communication breakdowns or misunderstandings in ELF interactions in a number of studies (Jenkins 2000, Deterding 2013),[3] which arguably makes pronunciation teaching an area where the need for a stronger orientation towards ELF communication is very pressing.

Traditionally, it has been assumed that pronunciation teaching should ultimately aim at eliminating a learner's L1 accent as far as possible. Levis (2005) termed this view the *nativeness principle*, which "holds that it is both possible and desirable to achieve native-like pronunciation in a foreign language" (Levis 2005: 370). Though this principle is no longer dominating pronunciation teaching as much as it used to (cf. Levis 2005), it still seems to have a considerable impact on non-native foreign language teacher education, with teaching degree students usually being required to lose their L1 accent as far as possible in order to constitute a 'good' model for learners. However, the nativeness principle has been challenged in applied linguistics on pedagogical and socio-psychological grounds (cf. Isaacs 2014: 140).

Further criticism of the nativeness principle comes from ELF researchers, who have questioned the presumed relevance of native speaker norms for the majority of L2 learners of English in an age where English is no longer 'owned' by its native speakers (NSs) (Widdowson 1994) and non-native speakers (NNSs)[4] are far more likely to communicate with other NNSs in ELF than take part in traditional 'foreign language' interactions with NSs. As a result, it has been argued that the aim of pronunciation teaching should not be the mastery of NS norms, but international intelligibility. Consequently, NS accents are no longer seen as the only appropriate pronunciation models and native-like pronunciation is no longer regarded as a necessary prerequisite for a good pronunciation teacher (Jenkins 2000, Walker 2010).[5] What teachers need instead is a certain linguistic and pedagogic knowledge and skills that enable them to promote international intelligibility in their

2 Note that this paper is based on the author's MA thesis, for further information please refer to Thir (2014).

3 It should be mentioned, however, that such a tendency could not be observed in a number of other studies on miscommunication in ELF (e.g. Mauranen 2006, Pitzl 2010).

4 I decided to employ the native/non-native terminology despite its problematic connotations (see Jenkins 2000: 8-9) since, like Seidlhofer (2011), "I take [the two terms] to mean very simply what they actually denote […]: a native-speaker of English is somebody whose L1 is English, and a non-native speaker of English is somebody who has an L1, or L1s, other than English" (Seidlhofer 2011: 6). Furthermore, I agree with Kubota that the rejection of this distinction might lead to some sort of 'colour-blindness' that will only disguise the inequalities faced by non-native speakers in various domains (Kubota in an email to Holliday, cited in Holiday 2005:5).

5 Similar points, albeit from an SLA perspective, have been made by Munro (2008) and Levis et al. (2016).

classrooms. Teacher education therefore needs to recognize the need to provide future teachers with adequate education and training on intelligibility in ELF rather than drill them in a NS accent.

This paper therefore takes a critical look at the nativeness principle and proposes an alternative, ELF-informed approach to English pronunciation teaching in teacher education. Its practical feasibility will be illustrated by concrete suggestions on how it could be implemented in a specific teaching context, the Vienna English Department. The latter seemed to be a particularly appropriate context for my research for the following reasons: first, pronunciation teaching figures prominently in the study programs of the department. Second, it constitutes an example of English language teacher education in an Expanding Circle context (Kachru 1985), which makes my suggestions of interest to similar institutions in other Expanding Circle countries. Third, I have been able to experience the department's pronunciation courses first-hand as a learner (when studying for a teaching degree) and later as a member of the teaching staff involved in one of them (when working as a student tutor for the British English language laboratory), which provides me with an 'insider-perspective' on the department's pronunciation teaching practices.

Section 2 of this paper discusses arguments against the nativeness principle put forward by applied linguists and ELF researchers. In order to familiarize readers with the Vienna English Department's current pronunciation teaching practices before presenting my suggestions for some adaptations for an ELF-informed approach to pronunciation teaching in this context, section 3 provides some background information on the department's current pronunciation course for future language teachers. Finally, in section 4, I present basic principles of an ELF approach to pronunciation teaching and provide suggestions for its implementation at the Vienna English Department with regard to the teaching models used, the course syllabus, and the teaching of certain communicative skills that have been found to be particularly important for phonological intelligibility in ELF (Jenkins 2000).

2. Challenging the nativeness principle

In this section, I will argue against the validity of the nativeness principle, focusing on the claim of achievability (section 2.1.) and desirability of native-like pronunciation for NNS learners of English in the light of socio-psychological considerations (section 2.2.) and in terms of its communicative value in ELF communication (section 2.3.). I should make it clear, though, that my criticism of the nativeness principle primarily relates to nativeness when being adopted as a general pedagogic goal for institutionalized pronunciation teaching. Certainly, I would not wish to discourage individual learners from deciding for themselves whether native-like pronunciation is an achievable or desirable learning goal for them.

2.1. Is native-like pronunciation achievable?

As far as achievability is concerned, it seems that "an overwhelming amount of evidence argues against the nativeness principle" (Levis 2005: 370). With this statement, Levis alludes to the fact that native-like pronunciation in a foreign language is only attained by a small minority of adult learners, even if those learners display an exceptionally high level of language proficiency in other areas. The exact reasons for the difficulty encountered by adult learners in acquiring a native-like accent are not yet fully known. Biological explanations such as the *Critical Period Hypothesis* (Lenneberg 1967) mainly operated on the assumption that the completion of brain lateralization after puberty might make the acquisition of a native-like accent difficult if not impossible for adult learners (e.g. Scovel 1969). However, the existence of such a 'critical period' for L2 pronunciation acquisition could never be proven, and a number of researchers remain sceptical about it (cf. Celce-Murcia et al. 2010: 16-17). Alternatively, it has been argued that adult learners often fail to acquire a native-like accent due to complex socio-psychological reasons, which I will discuss in more detail in section 2.2.

While researchers disagree on the exact reasons *why* native-like pronunciation is rarely attained by adult learners (cf. the discussion in Celce-Murcia et al. 2010: 16-18), it seems to be a widely accepted fact nowadays that a native-like accent cannot be regarded as a generally achievable goal for adult learners (cf. Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994b: 8, Levis 2005: 370, Setter & Jenkins 2005: 6, Ur 1996: 52). The 'achievability' claim of the nativeness principle can hence be considered unfounded. However, teachers and learners often continue to believe in the nativeness principle. As Levis (2005: 37) observes:

> *In language classrooms, it is common for learners to want to 'get rid of' their accents […]. Many teachers, especially those unfamiliar with pronunciation research, may see the rare learner who achieves a native-like accent as an achievable ideal, not an exception.*

As a consequence, both teachers and adult NNS learners might experience serious frustration when not being able to meet their own expectations: while teachers might think they failed in their teaching or might simply blame their students for the lack of success of pronunciation instruction, adult NNS learners, once they become aware of the difficulty of attaining a native-like accent in a foreign language, might think of themselves as 'failures' who will never be able to succeed in pronunciation learning.

A further problem of the nativeness principle is that it puts considerable pressure on NNS teachers of English, the vast majority of whom do not manage to attain a native-like accent in English either. A recent study by Levis et al. (2016) showed that it is not necessary for a NNS teacher to speak with a native-like accent in order to teach English pronunciation effectively. However, many NNS teachers believe that only a native-like accent would make them good pronunciation teachers and an appropriate pronunciation model for their students and thus tend to perceive their L1 accent as a threat to their professional identity (cf. Canagarajah 1999, Golombek & Jordan 2005). As a consequence, NNS teachers often feel

concerned about teaching pronunciation (Medgyes 1994, Tang 1997), which, in the worst case, might lead them to refrain from teaching English pronunciation altogether (Murphy 2014: 260). The nativeness principle can thus be considered detrimental to the pronunciation teaching enterprise as a whole, as it undermines NNS teachers' professional confidence as English pronunciation teachers.

The lack of achievability of native-like pronunciation in an L2 and the sense of inadequacy which the nativeness principle might instil in both L2 learners and NNS teachers are yet not the only reasons why its use in pronunciation teaching is problematic. As Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994b: 8) remark, apart from being not always achievable, "insisting on 'correct' pronunciation may not always be desirable". Dalton and Seidlhofer here allude to the fact that some L2 learners might in fact not want to sound like native speakers due to complex socio-psychological reasons.

2.2. Is native-like pronunciation always desirable? The socio-psychological dimension of pronunciation

One of the most basic functions of human language is the expression of our social, cultural and personal identities (cf. Kirkpatrick 2007: 10, Widdowson 1982: 11). Pronunciation seems to play a particularly important role in this respect, and the special relationship between accent and identity has frequently been discussed in the literature on L2 pronunciation acquisition (cf. Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994b, Daniels 1995, Guiora 1972, Jenkins 2000, Rogerson-Revell 2011, Walker 2010, Ur 1996). To give just one example, Setter and Jenkins (2005: 5) state that

> *[p]ronunciation seems to be particularly bound up with identity. Our accents are an expression of who we are or aspire to be, of how we want to be seen by others, of the social communities with which we identify or seek membership, and of whom we admire or ostracise.*

Speaking with a native-like accent in an L2 is thus not merely a matter of 'correctness' and hence desirable *a priori*, but indicates that a learner wishes to express identification or solidarity with the NS community rather than with their own L1 community. Obviously, this is a highly personal decision which should not be subject to external pressures on the part of the teacher. Thus, it has been argued that nativeness should not be made the goal of L2 pronunciation teaching as urging learners to strive for a native-like accent "may […] be seen as forcing them to reject their own identity" (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994b: 7), which for some may result in a frustrating learning experience characterized by identity conflicts and insecurity.

So the assumption of the general desirability of native-like pronunciation for L2 learners cannot be sustained from a socio-psychological point of view. But do the above considerations equally apply to future language teachers? Sceptics might argue that future English teachers belong to a very particular type of learner who probably display a higher-than-average feeling of affiliation with one (or more) of the major native English-speaking

cultures and, thus, feel more comfortable with adopting a native-like accent than the average learner (who probably identifies to a lesser degree with the native English-speaking world). What is more, in many cases, a future teacher's professional identity might play a considerable role with regard to their pronunciation preferences and constitute an important source of motivation to sound more native-like.[6] However, it is possible that a NNS teacher's identification with a particular English NS group or their sense of professional identity may be overridden by their personal and social identities, so that, despite everything, the acquisition of a native-like accent simply does not feel right to them. This seems plausible since, as Setter and Jenkins note,

> *our regional, social and ethnic identities […] are deeply-rooted, often from a very early age, and may prove subconsciously resistant to change even if on the surface, as language learners, we profess the desire to acquire a nativelike accent in our L2. (Setter & Jenkins 2005: 1)*

Notably, this (subconscious) psychological rejection of a native-like L2 accent is often considered an alternative explanation for the great difficulty faced by adult learner in attaining a native-like pronunciation in an L2.[7] The above quotation also addresses a further important issue: even learners who claim wanting to sound like a NS might sometimes, on a more subconscious-level, prefer retaining certain aspects of their L1 identity in their accent. As a result, they might display very ambivalent attitudes towards their own L1 accent (cf. Jenkins 2007; Walker 2010: 15).

So what can teachers and teacher educators do to take account of the socio-psychological aspects of L2 pronunciation learning? The literature on pronunciation teaching frequently suggests that rather than obliging learners to aim for native-like pronunciation, they should be given the possibility to retain some features of their L1 accent in order to express their identities through their accents. Ur, for example, maintains that

> *the aim of pronunciation improvement is not to achieve a perfect imitation of a native accent, but simply to get the learner to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably comprehensible to other (competent) speakers. (Ur 1996: 52)*

In this view, (comfortable) intelligibility instead of native-like pronunciation should be made the goal of pronunciation teaching – that is, pronunciation teaching should operate on the *intelligibility principle* (Levis 2005) rather than the nativeness principle.

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6 This, of course, might also have to do with the native-speakerist ideology (Holliday 2005, Phillipson 1992) most NNSs have been exposed to when learning English, which might have shaped their ideas of what a 'good' teacher should sound like when speaking English.

7 The idea would be that adult learners' ego-boundaries are already relatively 'fixed', with their 'language ego' (Guiora 1972) being much less flexible than that of child learners, the ego of whom is still in the process of development and hence more open to external influences such as foreign pronunciation (Dalton and Seidlhofer 1994b: 8, Guiora 1972; cf. Schumann 1975). It is assumed that the incorporation of a new identity by acquiring a native-like L2 accent is hence substantially more difficult for adult learners, if not impossible.

Ur (1996: 52) justifies her point of view by arguing that a learner's wish "to maintain a slight mother-tongue accent as an assertion of personal or ethnic identity […] should, surely, be respected". Similarly, Jenkins (2005: 147) and Walker (2010: 20) speak of the sociolinguistic *right* of L2 speakers to express their identity via their pronunciation and the "legitimacy" of L2 accents (Jenkins 2005), and therefore call for an approach to English pronunciation teaching that allows learners to retain features of their L1 in their pronunciation in English. Jenkins' (2000, 2005) and Walker's (2010) arguments are not only built on the socio-psychological factors involved in L2 pronunciation learning discussed in this section, but the sociolinguistic facts of how English is nowadays most widely used in the world, namely as an international lingua franca. The way in which the current spread of ELF constitutes a further argument against the use of the nativeness principle in English pronunciation teaching will be the topic of the next section.

2.3. Native-like pronunciation in the era of ELF

As stated earlier, native speakers of English are nowadays outnumbered by far by non-native speakers (cf. Crystal 2003: 61), who most often use English as an international lingua franca, i.e. for communication with other NNSs and NSs of different linguacultural backgrounds (Seidlhofer 2001: 133-134). As a consequence, the status of English native-speakers as the 'owners' of the English language and the relevance of NS language norms for international communication have repeatedly been called into question (e.g. Brumfit 2001, Jenkins 2000, Seidlhofer 2001 & 2011, Widdowson 1994). With regard to pronunciation, the necessity of adhering to NS pronunciation norms and in particular the importance of a native-like accent for successful international communication have been seriously questioned.[8] Empirical research on naturally occurring ELF interactions by Jenkins (2000) showed that many 'typical' features of standard NS accents, such as weak forms or the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, are dispensable for intelligibility in ELF, and can therefore be regarded as communicatively redundant in international communication. Notably, Jenkins' (2000) findings were largely confirmed in research by Deterding (2013), Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006), Osimk (2009) and Rajadurai (2006). What is more, a number of studies found pronunciation not to play an important role at all for mutual understanding in ELF communication (e.g. Mauranen 2006, Kaur 2011, Pitzl 2010). In addition, apart from not being a precondition for international intelligibility, a native-like accent does not seem to be a guarantee for it either. In fact, speakers of (standard) NS accents are not automatically the ones that are most easily understood in international communication (Smith 1992: 88,

[8] Notably, a similar point has been made by Munro (2008) with regard to second language communication in general (rather than ELF communication specifically): "[…] the fact that millions of second language users around the world communicate successfully using foreign-accented speech indicates that accent-free pronunciation is *not* a necessary goal for either learners or teachers of second languages" (Munro 2008: 194 [original emphasis]).

Walker 2010: 16-17). Thus, the communicative value of a native-like accent in international communication cannot be taken for granted.

The nativeness principle in English pronunciation teaching can, therefore, also not be justified on the grounds of communicative efficiency, especially if the learners concerned are more likely to engage in international communication rather than in NS-NNS communication. As this is the case for the vast majority of NNS learners nowadays, the focus of pronunciation teaching should instead be on the pronunciation features and skills that have been found to be crucial for intelligibility in ELF interactions. However, little will change in actual classroom practice if future teachers are not sufficiently educated about the implications of ELF for pronunciation teaching. As Jenkins noted already in 2000:

> *The major obstacle to the modernizing of English pronunciation teaching in recent years has been the failure to **educate** teachers. That is, to provide them with the facts which will enable them to make informed decisions in their selection of pronunciation models, as opposed to **training** them to reproduce unquestioningly a restricted range of techniques in order to promote all aspects of a single model, in whatever teaching context they should find themselves. (Jenkins 2000: 199 [original emphasis])*

Applying the nativeness principle in pronunciation teaching in teacher education by only *training* future teachers in a NS accent to make them a 'good' pronunciation model hence can be regarded as having far-reaching consequences for numerous learners of English. Teachers who are trained but lack the relevant *education*[9] might rely on traditional teaching approaches that focus on native-like pronunciation (with all the problems discussed above) rather than adopt unfamiliar yet modern approaches that focus on international intelligibility. As a consequence, numerous learners of English will be taught skills that will not only be very difficult if not impossible for them to acquire, but that may, moreover, be of little use to them in the contexts in which they will later actually be using English, while those skills that are more useful will not be given sufficient attention, or no attention at all.

Under these considerations, it seems important to consider pronunciation teaching practices in teacher education programs, such as at the Vienna English Department. The latter's teaching practices also seem particularly interesting as the department has become internationally known as one of the most important centres for ELF studies, which raises the question of how far such studies have had an effect on its own pronunciation program – of how research and teaching practice relate to each other. Therefore, the following section explores whether or not the traditional focus on NS pronunciation norms and native-like pronunciation still guides the pronunciation course for future teachers at our department.

9 The distinction between *teacher training* and *teacher education* goes back to and is elaborated on in Widdowson (1990).

3. Pronunciation teaching for future language teachers: a subject of controversy

At the University of Vienna, all students studying for a teaching degree in English language are required to take the pronunciation course 'Practical phonetics and oral communication skills 1' which is commonly referred to as 'PPOCS 1' (cf. University of Vienna 2014).[10] Students need to choose between courses with either Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) as the model. The course comprises one weekly 90 minutes session taught by a lecturer, accompanied by a weekly 90-minute language laboratory session led by a student tutor. 75% of a student's grade are determined in a final oral exam, in which the pronunciation of a student is evaluated by two examiners. The remaining 25% are made up by a student's grade on a theory test and the completion of a course portfolio.

Generally having the reputation of being difficult, the course has been a hotly debated topic amongst students at the Vienna English Department for a long time (see also Smit & Dalton 2000: 230). In a VIEWS paper based on his MA thesis, Daniel Spichtinger, a former student of the department, even claimed that the aim of PPOCS 1 (then called 'Sprechpraktikum') was "unclear, unrealistic, unnecessary and psychologically damaging" (Spichtinger 2000: 71) and criticized the course for "the sense of insecurity or even failure it breeds" (Spichtinger 2000: 71).[11] Notably, the aim of PPOCS 1 was then officially defined as '[to] become as native-like as possible' (Department of English 2000/01: 29, quoted in Spichtinger 2000: 71). Spichtinger's position was rejected by the academic staff responsible in a reply to him by Hüttner and Kidd (2000). While Spichtinger's claims have never been confirmed with empirical data (cf. Smit & Dalton 2000), it has to be said that PPOCS 1 remains a subject of controversy at our department, occasionally provoking strong reactions amongst parts of the student population.

The previous course aim of PPOCS 1 given above makes it clear that the course has been operating on the nativeness principle in the past – but has this approach changed during the past 16 years? Indeed, the exact wording of the course aim has been modified since 2000. The curriculum of the oral language skills module of which PPOCS 1 forms part (henceforth '*PPOCS curriculum'*)[12] now relies on the proficiency scale of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in its description of the level that students should have reached by the end of the module:

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10 The follow-up course ('PPOCS 2') focuses on more general speaking skills and is not compulsory for teaching degree students (cf. University of Vienna 2014 & 2015). Students in the Bachelor of Arts program, however, are required to take both PPOCS 1 and PPOCS 2 (cf. University of Vienna 2011).

11 Presumably, Spichtinger's reasoning was informed by considerations similar to the ones presented in section 2.1. and 2.2. of this paper.

12 The *PPOCS curriculum* is an unpublished internal document used only at the Vienna English Department; therefore, it has not been included in the list of published references, but under 'Course materials cited'.

> *To speak fluently and effectively with a consistent, natural-sounding standard or regional pronunciation in various forms of interaction and production at C1 or C2 level (PPOCS curriculum 2013: 2)*

The course aim of PPOCS 1 (and PPOCS 2) thus still implicitly orients to NS norms, since the CEFR (2001), which is intended to be applicable to all European languages, orients towards NS usage of the respective 'target community' in its description of proficiency levels. The CEFR is, thereby, overlooking the unique role of English as an international lingua franca, a shortcoming which has been pointed to repeatedly (e.g. Seidlhofer 2012: 77, Hynninen 2014, McNamara 2014, Pitzl 2015).

What is more, one of the current objectives of PPOCS 1 is to "speak fluently and comprehensibly with *a consistent accent* that is *recognizable as approximating one of the main varieties of English (e.g. British and American)*" (*PPOCS curriculum* 2013: 2 [my emphasis]). The curriculum does not make clear which varieties of English qualify as 'main varieties' (hence being acceptable in PPOCS 1) and which do not, but the examples given ('British and American') suggest that 'main' here implies NS varieties from Inner Circle countries (Kachru 1985). Yet, even if Outer Circle varieties are to be included, the course objective still seems to exclude a) uses of English especially in the Expanding Circle which are generally not regarded as legitimate varieties of English but merely as 'learner language' b) the use of English as an international lingua franca, which is not to be classified as a localized variety, but "a variable way of using [English]", that is "functionally and not formally defined" (Seidlhofer 2011: 77). Having to speak with an accent that is approximating one of the 'main varieties' – which usually means RP or GA, as those are the only teaching models offered in PPOCS 1 – hence entails that local students' Austrian or ELF accent is not being accepted in the course. So when "it is recommended that students choose the accent they feel corresponds more closely to their English or the accent they can identify with most" (*PPOCS curriculum* 2013: 5) this means choosing between the 'British English' or the 'American English' course.

Moreover, the focus on NS pronunciation norms and the disadvantaged status of an Austrian or other Expanding Circle accents in PPOCS 1 is quite apparent in the course materials.[13] The materials package for PPOCS 1 British English does not contain a single reference to ELF or NNS varieties of English, apart from (possibly L2) "Indian accents", which are mentioned in passing almost at the very end of the reference material [cf. *Part 1: Reference material*, p. 46]). Instead, the reference material contains a detailed description of the model accent RP and some information on the characteristics of GA and other NS accents

13 Note that I here refer to the materials that *all* students obtain for either PPOCS 1 British English or PPOCS 1 American English, regardless of the lecturer teaching the class. These are *Practical Phonetics and Oral Communication Skills Portfolio: paːt ˈwʌn ˈrefrəns məˈtɪərɪəl*, *Practical Phonetics and Oral Communication Skills Portifolio: paːt ˈtuː ˈprəʊgres rɪˌpɔːt ənd ˈwɜːkfiːts* and *PPOCS – Practical Phonetics and Oral Communication Skills language lab booklet for British English* for PPOCS 1 British English and *PPOCSfolio (1) /paːks'foʊlioʊ/ American English: Materials Package for Practical Phonetics and Oral Communication Skills 1* and *PPOCS American English: Language Laboratory reader* for PPOCS 1 American English. Materials used by individual lecturers only are not taken into account in this analysis.

(especially British accents, e.g. Estuary English or Scottish accents) as well as on the differences between the RP and the Northern German and Austrian German sound systems, including detailed explanations of the resulting 'mispronunciations' of Austrian speakers of English. These often take the form of an evaluative judgment (rather than a descriptive statement), implying a certain degree of deficiency in relation to the NS model, e.g. for /ɑː/

> *Austrian learners tend to have a quality which is **too** front; E[nglish] /aː/ has a slightly "dark" quality (Part 1: Reference material, p. 14 [my emphasis]).*

An Austrian accent is thus treated as a manifestation of lack of proficiency – there is no recognition here of the legitimacy of any variant pronunciation.

The same holds true for the materials package for PPOCS 1 American English, where Austrian pronunciation of English is regarded as a learner variety rather than a legitimate NNS accent and discussed under the heading "Twelve pitfalls of Austrian learners (ALs) of American English" (*PPOCSfolio American English*, p. 15-16). However, some NNS varieties and the international spread of English are briefly mentioned at the beginning of the portfolio for PPOCS 1 American English in the student profile questionnaire.

The focus on NS pronunciation norms in PPOCS 1 – which seems evident by now – does yet not automatically entail that the course aim is in fact native-like pronunciation (and, thus, that the course is still operating on the nativeness principle). This focus could also be due to the course aiming at intelligibility with regard to a particular group of the NS community, whose pronunciation norms and perceptions of (un)intelligibility thus constitute the reference point for teaching. However, when taking a closer look at the assessment criteria for the final oral exam, it becomes clear that the course aim of PPOCS 1 does in fact go beyond intelligibility for a particular NS audience. The final exam involves three different tasks: reading a prepared text, informal conversation and prepared talk (*PPOCS curriculum* 2013: 5). A student's pronunciation is then evaluated according to the criteria given in table 1 below.

Let us now consider the proficiency level which, in PPOCS 1, is regarded as most desirable and in principle attainable – the one meriting an A-grade on the final exam. Note that the point of discussion here is not whether or how many students achieve this level in practice, but what is officially declared as ultimate learning goal in PPOCS 1. As shown in table 1, the latter is not defined in terms of intelligibility (whoever the interlocutor and in whichever context), but largely in terms of strict adherence to the pronunciation norms of a particular variety, which, as we saw earlier, is assumed to be a 'main variety' of English. In fact, in order to obtain an A-grade a student's production of both the segmental and suprasegmental features of "a particular variety" must be "consistent, accurate and effortless" as well as "natural and appropriate". In other words, students should exhibit a proficiency level that can arguably be described as 'native-like'. Thus, it seems that the ultimate aim of PPOCS 1 is still native-like pronunciation (and not intelligibility), and that the nativeness principle, with its premise being the desirability and achievability of native-like pronunciation in an L2, is still a guiding principle of PPOCS 1. This impression is reinforced when considering the description of the lowest positive grade in table 1: even if a

student's pronunciation "does not impose strain on the listener" though "a small number of sounds [or suprasegmental features] is noticeably unstable", they merely merit a D-grade on these categories. Clearly, for a good grade in PPOCS 1, it is not sufficient to be intelligible to one's interlocutors (the nature of whom remains unspecified).

Table 1 Assessment grid for the PPOCS 1 final oral exam (*PPOCS curriculum* 2013: 6)[14]

	Sehr gut ['very good', Austrian A-grade]	*Befriedigend* ['satisfactory', Austrian C-grade]	*Genügend* ['sufficient', Austrian D-grade]
CONTROL OF SEGMENTALS: Consistency and accuracy of segmentals	Consistent, accurate, and effortless production of the segmental features of a particular variety.	Generally maintains consistent and accurate production of the salient segmental features of a particular variety, such as fortis/lenis distinction and vowel length; does not impose strain on the listener.	Generally maintains consistent and accurate production of the salient segmental features of a particular variety, such as fortis/lenis distinction and vowel length; does not impose strain on the listener, although the production of a small number of sounds is noticeably unstable.
CONTROL OF SUPRASEGMENTALS: Consistency and accuracy of suprasegmentals	Consistent, accurate, and effortless production of the suprasegmental features of a particular variety, especially assimilation, elision, and characteristic intonation patterns.	Generally maintains consistent and accurate production of the salient suprasegmental features of a particular variety, such as basic linking, sentence stress/weak forms, chunking, and word stress; does not impose strain on the listener.	Generally maintains consistent and accurate production of the salient suprasegmental features of a particular variety, such as basic linking, sentence stress/weak forms, chunking, and word stress; does not impose strain on the listener, although the production of a small number of features is noticeably unstable.
APPROPRIATENESS	Consistently maintains naturalness and appropriateness of pronunciation in all three of the tasks, even while attention is otherwise engaged. Shows ability to read text engagingly, respond to the examiner effortlessly, and to present a text effectively. Able to use pronunciation to convey finer shades of meaning.	Generally maintains naturalness and appropriateness of pronunciation in all three of the tasks. Shows ability to read the text meaningfully, to respond to the examiner adequately, and to present a text clearly.	Generally maintains naturalness and appropriateness of pronunciation in most of the tasks. Shows ability to read the text meaningfully, to respond to the examiner adequately, and to present a text clearly.

14 Note that the *PPOCS curriculum* does not give a description for the Austrian B-grade ('Gut', i.e. 'good') and the failing grade ('Nicht genügend', i.e. 'insufficient').

In sum, the pronunciation course for future English teachers at the University of Vienna does not seem to take account of the role of ELF in the current sociolinguistic landscape of the English-speaking world: rather than aiming at international intelligibility by focusing on the knowledge and skills needed to communicate successfully on the international stage, PPOCS 1 is still strongly oriented towards NS pronunciation norms and aiming at native-like pronunciation. The persistence of this 'traditional' view on pronunciation teaching seems to be somewhat paradoxical in the light of the fact that the Vienna English Department is widely known for having ELF as one of its major research foci. Thus, the department appears to find itself in a seemingly "schizophrenic" state (Seidlhofer 2008: 170): whereas books and papers are published that investigate the nature of ELF communication, challenge the prevalence of NS norms in ELT and call for a reconceptualization of linguistic proficiency in English, the department's pronunciation program has remained relatively untouched by these theoretical considerations. Instead, it continues to operate on a traditional notion of linguistic proficiency that views adherence to NS linguacultural norms as key to communicative efficiency and therefore bases pronunciation teaching on the nativeness principle. However, as discussed in section 2, such teaching practices are problematic for several reasons. Therefore, the next part of this paper explores an alternative, ELF-informed approach to pronunciation teaching in more detail, showing how it constitutes an appropriate basis for a revision of pronunciation teaching practices in teacher education.

4. Rethinking pronunciation teaching in teacher education

In section 2 of this paper, I have argued that pronunciation teaching based on the nativeness principle cannot be regarded as a satisfactory teaching approach from a socio-psychological and, especially in the age of globalization, from a communicative point of view. On the basis of my arguments, the essential requirements for a more desirable approach to English pronunciation teaching can be summed up as follows:

1) **Achievability**: Rather than a native-like accent, a more realistic and feasible goal has to be made the aim of pronunciation teaching.
2) **Identity**: As learners have a right to express their personal and social identity via their pronunciation, they should be given the possibility to retain some features of their L1 in their accent in English without having to fear lowering their grade or even failing their pronunciation course.
3) **International intelligibility:** As the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) is nowadays most relevant to L2 learners of English, linguistic and communicative proficiency should not be assessed in terms of close approximation to a NS pronunciation model, but in terms of the pronunciation skills that are necessary for international intelligibility.

I am proposing that these three requirements can be understood as guiding principles for rethinking pronunciation teaching practices in teacher education. Notably, they are listed by Walker (2010: 61-69) as the major advantages of an ELF approach to pronunciation

teaching, which, therefore, seems to be a relevant alternative to approaches based on the nativeness principle. In the following section, I will briefly outline the most important aspects of an ELF approach and explain how it manages to fulfil the three requirements listed above. To illustrate its feasibility, I will then provide some suggestions for the implementation of this approach in the particular teaching context of the Vienna English Department (section 4.2).

4.1. The essentials of an ELF approach to pronunciation teaching

The ELF approach to pronunciation teaching is largely based on the previously mentioned research by Jenkins (2000), in which she investigated intelligibility problems in naturally occurring ELF conversations. On the basis of her findings, Jenkins compiled the so-called 'Lingua Franca Core' (LFC), i.e. a pedagogical core of phonological features that she found to be crucial to communicative success in ELF and which learners of English who wish to engage in international communication should hence strive to master. The LFC includes:

> *1 The consonantal inventory with the following provisos:*
> *- rhotic [ɻ] rather than other varieties of /r/*
> *- intervocalic /t/ rather than [ɾ]*
> *- most substitutions of /θ/ and /ð/, and [ɬ] permissible*
> *- close approximations to core consonant sounds generally permissible*
> *- certain approximations not permissible (i.e. where there is a risk that they will be heard as a different consonant sound from that intended)*
> *2 Phonetic requirements:*
> *- aspiration following the fortis plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/*[15]
> *- fortis/lenis differential effect on preceding vowel length*
> *3 Consonant clusters:*
> *- initial clusters not simplified*
> *- medial and final clusters simplified only according to L1 rules of elision*
> *4 Vowel sounds:*
> *- maintenance of vowel length contrasts*
> *- L2 regional qualities permissible if consistent, but /ɜː/ to be preserved*
> *5 Nuclear stress production and placement and division of speech stream into word groups.*
>
> *(Jenkins 2000: 159)*

Notably, several features that typically form part of English pronunciation syllabi, such as weak forms, vowel quality or the *th*-sounds, do not form part of the LFC, as the transfer of L1 characteristics with regard to these features did not (or only very rarely) cause intelligibility problems in Jenkins' data. Within an ELF approach, L1 transfer in these 'non-core' areas is thus not automatically regarded as an 'error', but as an instance of phonological L2 variation (Jenkins 2000: 27, 158-160; Walker 2010: 38). In particular, Jenkins' (2000)

15 Only when the sound occurs "in initial position in a stressed syllable" (Jenkins 2000: 140). According to the LFC, aspiration is thus not required in /sp/, /st/ or /sk/ clusters in words such as <spoon>, <stop>, or <skin>.

research also revealed the importance of phonological accommodation skills for successful ELF communication, which, therefore, "should form an important part of any ELF pronunciation syllabus" (Jenkins 2005: 150).

It must be noted, though, that the LFC is not to be mistaken for a model for imitation that ELF speakers have to reproduce regardless of the communicative requirements of a particular interaction. This is a misconception which Jenkins herself has tried to clarify right from the start (Jenkins 2000: 131) as well as in later publications (e.g. Jenkins 2006b: 36). Thus, the LFC is not intended to promote adherence to a universal 'ELF accent'. As Jenkins states, "the non-core features [are] dictated entirely by speaker choice" (Jenkins 2007: 25), meaning that learners are free to use either their L1 variants or the NS variants with regard to these sounds. In other words, learners do not have to 'unlearn' or refrain from using the NS variants of non-core sounds such as /θ/, /ð/, and [ɬ] only because the LFC permits L1 substitutions with regard to these sounds. Moreover, "the accommodation element of the ELF proposals means that a speaker […] is entirely free to adjust the core features if this suits local communication needs" (Jenkins 2007: 25-26).

The main goal of an ELF approach to pronunciation teaching is thus the incorporation of the LFC components in a speaker's accent repertoire and the acquisition of phonological accommodation skills rather than that of all features of a particular NS accent. It therefore does not only conform to the requirement of focusing on those pronunciation skills necessary for international intelligibility (point (3) in the list of requirements provided above), but also constitutes a more achievable goal for English pronunciation teaching than a native-like accent (point 1) and gives learners of English the possibility to express their L1 identity via the non-core features (point 2).

Despite these advantages, adopting an ELF approach also poses a potential problem. As Walker (2010: 45) observes, "[a]n ELF approach does not respond to the needs of learners whose goal is a native-speaker accent". Thus, students who actually wish to acquire a native-like accent would be disadvantaged if a *strict* ELF approach was adopted e.g. by leaving the non-core features entirely unconsidered. As I am well aware that there are a number of learners, especially amongst teaching degree students, who genuinely desire to acquire a native-like accent and for whom this also seems to constitute a realistic goal (given that their pronunciation already includes numerous characteristics of a particular NS accent), I regard it as important to take account of the pedagogic needs of such learners as well in my suggestions for adapting English pronunciation teaching in teacher education. The next section of this paper therefore also provides some practical suggestions on how learners who wish to go beyond the acquisition of the LFC components and approximate a NS accent in English could receive pedagogical support in order to come closer to their personal learning goal even if an ELF approach was adopted as the basic guiding principle of pronunciation teaching. Such a differentiation is possible mainly for two reasons:

First, using an ELF approach does not preclude the use of NS models such as RP or GA as reference points in pronunciation teaching, but only means that the focus of teaching will be on those features crucial to intelligibility in ELF (Walker 2010: 53-54). Students who

want to approximate a NS model with regard to the non-core features as well could be supported through individualized feedback and optional pronunciation exercises (see further section 4.2.).

Second, even if learners are not yet clear about whether they will one day want to approximate a NS accent, an ELF approach will not preclude them from doing so in the future. This is because

> *[e]ven when a learner's goal is a NS accent, nothing in the LFC is 'unnecessary' or constitutes an 'obstacle' for the learner. That is to say, nothing needs 'unlearning'. (Walker 2008: 9)*

This makes the LFC "a very good foundation for *all* learners" (Walker 2010a: 46 [my emphasis]) – regardless of their long-term pronunciation goals.

Using an ELF approach would hence not close the door on a learner's future ambitions with regard to their pronunciation in English – everything remains possible. The only features of the LFC that might seem problematic in this respect are the realization of /r/ in post-vocalic position and the realization of /t/ as [t] in intervocalic position, the former standing in contrast with non-rhotic NS accents such as RP, the latter with NS accents such as GA. However, as stated above, an ELF approach to pronunciation teaching only requires learners to incorporate the features of the LFC in their accent repertoire in order to be able to make use of them whenever this seems necessary for mutual intelligibility. This means that also within an ELF approach, learners who prefer non-rhotic accents (such as many British English accents) will not be urged to act against this preference by having to constantly produce /r/ in post-vocalic position, and neither will learners who prefer to produce /t/ as [ɾ] in intervocalic position be urged to constantly use [t] instead if this goes against their inclination for e.g. American English. The only requirement is that learners incorporate the respective LFC feature in their accent repertoires as additional communicative resources to draw on if the need arises.

Having outlined the most essential aspects of an ELF approach to pronunciation teaching, it is now time to discuss what the practical implementation of such an approach in a particular teaching context – in this case a pronunciation course at the Vienna English Department – could look like.

4.2. Putting an ELF approach into practice

When we return to the Vienna English Department and its pronunciation course ('PPOCS 1'), one might expect that the adoption of an ELF approach in such a context will necessitate fundamental changes in the overall design of the current pronunciation course, the audio materials used, and the teaching techniques employed. Surprisingly, this is not necessarily so, and much of the current teaching practices could actually be maintained when implementing an ELF approach in PPOCS 1. This is possible because, as Walker (2010: 71) states, "teaching pronunciation for ELF is primarily about re-thinking goals and re-defining error, as opposed to modifying classroom practice". In fact, the suggestions which I will

present in the following sections would require neither an increase in the financial nor in the temporal resources currently allocated to the course. The overall course structure, i.e. a two-hour course accompanied by a two-hour pronunciation laboratory class, could be maintained, and so could be the organization into classes taking either General American or Received Pronunciation as the model.

4.2.1. Using RP and GA as models, not as norms

However, one crucial difference between an ELF approach and the current approach in PPOCS 1 would be the way in which NS accents such as RP and GA are used, which is directly connected to the question of what is regarded as a pronunciation error (an issue which is taken up in the quote by Walker above). As we saw when taking a closer look at the assessment criteria of PPOCS 1 (section 3), consistency and accuracy of pronunciation with regard to a 'main variety' of English are regarded as one of the most important indicators of language proficiency in the course, and features of Austrian English are generally treated as errors, as is 'mixing' features of different NS varieties. It seems that accents belonging to a particular main variety of English, such as RP and GA, are currently not used as models in PPOCS 1, but as what Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994a) term a 'norm', i.e. they are connected

> *strongly with ideas of correctness. The norm is invariable and has to be imitated independently of any considerations of language use. The aim, however unrealistic, is 100% attainment of the norm, which is regarded as an end in itself. (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994a: 2.7)*

In contrast, when adopting an ELF approach in PPOCS 1, NS accents such as RP and GA would be used as pedagogic models in the true sense of the word, namely "as points of reference and models for guidance" (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994a: 2.7). As Dalton and Seidlhofer explain further, this notion of model implies that speakers

> *approximate to [RP or GA] more or less according to the demands of a specific situation or a specific purpose. In other words, a model is always connected to language in use, and is therefore variable. Pronunciation models are pedagogic means to achieve the end of effective communication for specific learners. Ideas of correctness do not really apply – a pronunciation is simply more or less appropriate to a specific use of language. (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994a: 2.7)*

Thus, rather than asking students to imitate all aspects of the model accent featured in the practice materials as closely as possible, students in PPOCS 1 would only have to acquire those features considered crucial for international intelligibility, i.e. the LFC components listed in the previous section. The 'non-core' features would be open to their personal preferences and would hence not be subject to evaluation at the end of the semester, i.e. L1 features in the non-core areas would no longer be viewed as pronunciation errors. This does not mean, however, that students should not learn about or receive feedback on their pronunciation with regard to the 'non-core' features as well, as this kind of feedback will be essential for them to make an informed choice as to the extent to which they want to

approximate the chosen pronunciation model. The crucial point will be to make it clear to students which features have an important *communicative function* (Widdowson 1982) in international communication and that they are hence expected to have mastered them by the end of the course, in contrast to those features which merely have an *identifying function* and which they are hence free to work on in addition to the LFC features if they so desire.

It will also be important to make it clear that, though the LFC features are considered important for international intelligibility and must therefore be acquired in PPOCS 1, they should not be regarded as a new norm which students will always have to strictly adhere to regardless of the communicative and social requirements of a particular situation. As pointed out earlier, the LFC is not to be understood as yet another set of norms, but as a communicative resource to draw on according to the requirements of a specific situation. In order to be able to do that, students will of course first have to acquire the LFC components.

4.2.2. Ensuring the acquisition of the LFC components

A further necessary change when implementing an ELF approach in PPOCS 1 would be the reorganization of the course syllabus. As indicated above, I suggest that both core features and non-core features will still form part of the syllabus of PPOCS 1, but that students will only be expected to have mastered the former and not the latter by the end of the semester. It follows that the LFC components must be given priority in pronunciation training in PPOCS 1, i.e. they must be covered as early as possible so that students have enough time to improve on them sufficiently.

In the following, I will consider the current syllabi of the PPOCS 1 British English and American English language laboratories, as the general syllabus of the course given in the *PPOCS curriculum* (2013) is not as detailed, given that it does not distinguish between the British English and the American English course. The syllabi of the language laboratories are generally in accordance with the sequence in which sounds are taught in the 'main' PPOCS 1 classes taught by a lecturer.

At the moment, the syllabi of the PPOCS 1 British English and American English language laboratories (table 2) do not give priority to the LFC, and, therefore, introduce other features of RP or GA that are particularly difficult for Austrian learners before the LFC components.[16] Table 3 shows a tentative suggestion for a course syllabus of the PPOCS 1 language laboratories that allocates greater importance to the LFC features by shifting them to the beginning and middle of the semester, thereby giving students more time to practice them and incorporate them into their accent repertoire before the final oral exam.

16 Given that the majority of students in PPOCS 1 has Austrian German as their first language, the course has always concentrated on Austrian learners typical 'pitfalls' in English pronunciation, a focus which I suggest should be maintained in the future.

Table 2 Approximate current syllabi of BE and AE PPOCS 1 language laboratories

Week	**PPOCS 1 BE**	**PPOCS 1 AE**
1	Introduction, awareness raising	Introduction, voicing (s/z, t/d/, f/v, k/g, ʃ/ʒ, tʃ/dʒ)
2	/ɒ/, /ɔ:/, /əʊ/	Vowel length (i:/ɪ & u:/ʊ) and word stress
3	/ɜ:/, /ɑ:/, weak forms and weak syllables	/e/ vs. /æ/, sentence stress and weak forms (1)
4	/i:/ vs. /ɪ/, /æ/ vs. /e/ and vs. /ʌ/, sentence stress	/ɑ/ vs. /ʌ/, sentence stress and weak forms (2)
5	/p/ vs. /b/, /t/ vs. /d/, /k/ vs. /g/ (+ effect on vowel length)	/v/ vs. /w/, chunking, linking
6	/s/ vs. /z/ (+ effect on vowel length), /əʊ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/, /eɪ/, /e/, word linking	/ɝ/, /r/ vs. /l/, text reading
7	/v/ vs. /w/ and vs. /f/, word linking, sentence stress, chunking	allophones of plosives (flaps, nasal flaps, and aspiration), intonation (1)
8	/θ/ & /ð/ vs. /s/ & /z/ and vs. /t/ & /d/, chunking, sentence stress	diphthongs, assimilation, elision
9	/eə/, /ɪə/, /s/ vs. /z/, assimilation, intonation	/θ/ & /ð/, intonation (2)
10	/tʃ/ vs. /dʒ/ vs. /ʒ/, /n/ vs. /ŋ/, sentence stress, word stress	text reading, preparation of exam text, individual practice of personal 'pitfalls'
11	[l] vs. [ɬ]	As in previous week
12-14	text reading, preparation of exam text	As in previous week

Table 3 Tentative syllabi for the PPOCS 1 language laboratories with a focus on the LFC (adapted from Thir 2014: 113) [17]

Week	**PPOCS 1 British English**	**PPOCS 1 American English**
1	Introduction, aspiration of /p/, /t/, /k/ in word-initial positions	Introduction, aspiration of /p/, /t/, /k/ in word-initial positions
2	/b/, /d/, /g/ and /z/ in word-final position, pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping	/b/, /d/, /g/ and /z/ in word-final position, pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping
3	/s/ vs. /z/ + revision of pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping, /ɜ:(r)/	/s/ vs. /z/ + revision of pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping, /ɝ/
4	/ʃ/ vs. /ʒ/ & /tʃ/ vs. /dʒ/ + revision of pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping	/ʃ/ vs. /ʒ/ & /tʃ/ vs. /dʒ/ + revision of pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping
5	/v/ vs. /w/ vs. /f/	/v/ vs. /w/ vs. /f/
6	/r/, chunking, nuclear stress placement	/r/, chunking, nuclear stress placement
7	vowel length contrasts I: /i:/ vs. /ɪ/, /u:/ vs. /ʊ/, /ɑ/ vs. /ʌ/ (& vowel quality), revision of pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping	vowel length contrasts I: /i:/ vs. /ɪ/, /u:/ vs. /ʊ/, /ɑ/ vs. /ʌ/ (& vowel quality), revision of pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping
8	vowel length contrasts II: /ɒ/ vs. /ɔ:/ vs. /əʊ/ (& vowel quality), revision of pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping, (intonation)	vowel length contrasts II: diphthongs (& vowel quality), revision of pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping, (intonation)
9	Individualized practice (/θ/ & /ð/, /æ/ vs. /e/)	Individualized practice (/θ/ & /ð/)
10	Individualized practice (/aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/, /eɪ/)	Individualized practice (/æ/ vs. /e/)
11	Individualized practice (/eə/ & /ɪə/, [l] vs. [ɬ])	Individualized practice ([ɬ])
12-14	Individualized practice	Individualized practice

17 Note that the differences between the two language laboratory syllabi suggested in table 3 are mainly due to the fact that the language laboratory classes are currently organized into practice sessions (e.g. /θ/ & /ð/) that differ between the BE and the AE language laboratory groups. When redesigning the language laboratory syllabi I tried to preserve the current practice sessions of the BE and the AE language laboratories respectively as far as possible to facilitate implementation of my suggestions, resulting in the above differences in syllabus structure.

As shown in table 3, I suggest that all LFC features that are suspected to be particularly difficult for Austrian learners of English be covered in week 1 to 6. These include aspiration of /p/, /t/, /k/ in word-initial positions, /b/, /d/, /g/ and /z/ in word-final position, pre-lenis lengthening & pre-fortis clipping, the long central vowel /ɜ:/, /r/, and the contrasts between /s/ and /z/, /ʃ/ and /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, and /v/, /w/ and /f/ (Berger 2010: 107-110). In this way, students can start to practice features that might be particularly hard for them to acquire and that they will be assessed on by the end of the semester as soon as possible.

Then, in weeks 6 to 8, features of the LFC that constitute a minor problem for Austrian learners, i.e. chunking, nuclear stress placement and basic vowel length contrasts (Berger 2010: 107-110), can be practiced, and the length contrasts caused by pre-lenis lengthening and pre-fortis clipping can be revised. Note that students who also wish to work on vowel quality and intonation (i.e. two non-core features) would be free to do so at this stage simply by paying additional attention to vowel quality when doing the exercises on vowel length contrasts and by doing optional pronunciation exercises on intonation. To indicate that the practice of these features is not obligatory, they have been enclosed in parentheses in table 3.

The remaining laboratory sessions of the semester (from week 9 onwards) allow for individualized pronunciation practice: students can either continue to practice the LFC features or, if they have already mastered them and wish to sound more like the respective NS model, work on other features that do not form part of the LFC, such as /θ/ and /ð/ or /æ/ vs. /e/. Again, these features have been enclosed in parentheses in table 3 to indicate that their practice is optional. It should be noted that while the practice of the *production* of these (and the remaining) non-core features should not be obligatory for students in PPOCS 1, they should nevertheless be encouraged to train their *receptive* skills with regard to the complete sound inventory of the chosen pronunciation model, i.e. both core and non-core features.

4.2.3. Promoting phonological accommodation skills

As mentioned earlier, international intelligibility does not only rest on the mastery of a limited set of pronunciation features, but also on phonological accommodation skills, i.e. the ability to adjust one's pronunciation to the receptive needs of a particular interlocutor and, on the receptive end, the ability to "mak[e] an allowance for the accent and peculiarities of the other person's speech" (Bamgbose 1998: 11). Unsurprisingly, the development of such phonological accommodation skills is hence attributed great importance within an ELF approach to pronunciation teaching. Walker (2010: 93-94) suggests to practice productive phonological accommodation skills in monolingual classes with the help of focused group work and peer-feedback, a technique that could be applied in PPOCS 1 as well, given that the course is a largely monolingual teaching context.

In order to develop receptive phonological accommodation skills, exposure to a wide range of L2 accents in English is necessary (cf. Jenkins 2000: 184, 2005: 150). However, the practice of both receptive and productive phonological accommodation would probably

exceed the time frame of PPOCS 1. Exposure to foreign accents can nowadays easily be achieved outside the classroom (e.g. by watching English-speaking films and series featuring foreign accents that are freely available on the World Wide Web), yet the practice of productive pronunciation skills requires more pedagogic guidance and continuous feedback by a pronunciation teacher. I therefore suggest that the current focus of PPOCS 1 on productive pronunciation skills be maintained, while the practice of receptive phonological accommodation skills be left to the responsibility of students themselves. For this independent learning process to take place (and eventually be successful), the importance of increasing one's receptive accent repertoire, and hence of familiarizing oneself with as many different L2 accents as possible, needs to be clearly communicated to students in PPOCS 1. In addition, students could be provided with a list of suggestions for appropriate practice activities and resources for self-study to practice receptive phonological accommodation skills at home (e.g. in the form of links on the course's e-learning platform).

Providing (or suggesting) practice opportunities for phonological accommodation is not the only way in which phonological accommodation skills could be promoted in PPOCS 1. In addition, students should be enabled to attain a number of skills that might help them fulfill the necessary preconditions for productive or receptive phonological accommodation to take place in a particular communicative act. These preconditions are summarized in table 4. The middle and the right-hand column list the preconditions for productive and receptive phonological accommodation in ELF, respectively. The left-hand column specifies the level on which a particular precondition occurs ('linguistic proficiency', 'context' or 'metalinguistic awareness').

Table 4 Preconditions for phonological accommodation in ELF

Level	**Preconditions for productive phonological accommodation in ELF** (adapted from Jenkins 2005: 149)	**Preconditions for receptive phonological accommodation in ELF** (adapted from Jenkins 2000: 183, first summarized in Thir 2014: 120)
Linguistic proficiency (i.e. productive or receptive language skills)	1a) the ability to produce the phonological/phonetic adjustment 2a) a level of language that allows the speaker to concentrate on their pronunciation (besides other linguistic levels such as grammar or vocabulary)	1b) familiarity with the interlocutor's accent and a "tolerance of difference" with regard to phonological L2 variation due to prior exposure to different L2 accents 2b) the linguistic ability to indicate comprehension difficulties
Context	3a) a motivation to be understood (in order to complete the task to be carried out)	3b) a motivation to understand
(Meta-)linguistic awareness	4a) the ability to notice that features of one's accent constitute a problem for intelligibility	4b) the emotional readiness to indicate comprehension difficulties and no fear of 'error acquisition'

As shown in table 4, some of the preconditions for phonological accommodation in ELF are linked to an interlocutor's productive or receptive language skills: point 1a illustrates the need to help students acquire the LFC components in order to be able to produce them effortlessly if necessary; point 1b shows the importance of encouraging students to

familiarize themselves with a wide variety of L2 accents to increase their receptive accommodation skills. Suggestions for this have already been provided above. Points 2a and 2b state the need for possessing a level of language that allows students to focus on their pronunciation and to signal comprehension problems, which students at the Vienna English Department, being at a B2+ level according to the CEFR, surely possess by the time they enter PPOCS 1. Yet, it might be beneficial to remind students that given the strong link between a person's accent and their self-image, feedback on another person's pronunciation should always be given in a considerate and polite manner.

Two of the above preconditions (3a and 3b) are linked to the particular context of communication and can thus hardly be influenced by classroom teaching. The remaining two (point 4a and 4b), however, are linked to a certain (meta-)linguistic awareness which can arguably be developed through education: point 4a indicates the need to know which pronunciation features constitute a potential obstacle to intelligibility in ELF and to develop a certain degree of listener sensitivity to pick up on contextual cues that might indicate comprehension problems on the part of one's interlocutor. Point 4b points to the need to know that acquiring each other's 'errors' by accommodating receptively to another speaker is an unwarranted fear (cf. Jenkins 2000: 181-182 & 185-186) and to be aware of the importance of indicating comprehension problems to one's interlocutor rather than 'letting-it-pass'[18], as the latter "will otherwise lack one of the main incentives to adjust their pronunciation, that is, evidence of their lack of intelligibility for their receivers" (Jenkins 2000: 185). This might prove an important factor in overcoming any emotional reluctance to signal non-comprehension.

In order to help students in PPOCS 1 develop the (meta)-linguistic awareness described above (and, thereby, their phonological accommodation skills), I propose a revision and extension of the educational component of the course. At the moment, the latter is mainly concerned with equipping students with knowledge that will facilitate the accent-reduction process and help them acquire a particular NS accent, such as knowledge of the phonetic features of the chosen model accent, the major differences between RP and GA, and typical Austrian learners' pronunciation 'pitfalls' (cf. Thir 2014: 3.1. and section 3 of this paper). While there is no reason to object that students in PPOCS 1 be educated about these topics, this kind of knowledge alone is insufficient to develop phonological accommodation skills and, hence, be intelligible on the international stage. What is more, this type of education also fails to enable students to make an *informed* decision as regards their personal learning goals for English pronunciation, and, in the case of teaching degree students, as regards the appropriacy of different approaches to pronunciation teaching in a particular teaching context. In order to meet all these purposes, a revised educational component of PPOCS 1 should aim at helping students develop an understanding of the

18 The 'let-it-pass' strategy refers to a tendency in ELF talk to "let[] the unknown or unclear action, word or utterance 'pass' on the (common-sense) assumption that it will either become clear or redundant as talk progresses" (Firth 1996: 243).

nature of intelligibility and of the socio-psychological and the sociolinguistic dimension of pronunciation. That is, students should understand that

1) intelligibility is an interactive and dynamic process that is highly context-dependent rather than a quality inherent to a number of NS accents that lies solely within the responsibility of the (NNS) speaker (cf. Munro & Derwing 2015, Rajadurai 2007, Smith & Nelson 1985). NS pronunciation norms are, therefore, not universally applicable.
2) pronunciation serves not only an important communicative function, but also has a crucial identifying function. It is thus not always useful to think of pronunciation in terms of 'correctness', as what might be 'correct' in terms of exonormative NS standards might be entirely inappropriate in a particular context in terms of sociolinguistic or socio-psychological considerations.

In order to help students develop this kind of sociolinguistic and socio-psychological knowledge and awareness, a number of relevant issues could be addressed in PPOCS 1. A tentative selection of possible topics to be covered e.g. in the form of readings, personal reflections, class discussions, or as part of the portfolio that students have to complete in the course of the semester is given in table 5.

Table 5 Tentative list of topics to be covered in PPOCS 1[19]

Subject area	**Issues to be covered**
Topic cluster I: Pronunciation & identity	- Pronunciation and group identity (inter-speaker variation) - Identity in L2 pronunciation learning - Accents and language attitudes through social/ethnic stereotyping
Topic cluster II: Pronunciation & intelligibility	- The relative and interactive nature of intelligibility (intelligibility as context-, speaker- and listener-dependent) - Accentedness vs. intelligibility
Topic cluster III: The sociolinguistic facts – introducing ELF	- ELF, ENL, & other 'Englishes' and their pronunciation norms - Contrasting the ELF and the EFL (English as a foreign language) perspective on pronunciation teaching
Topic cluster IV: Intra-speaker variation – appropriacy and accommodation	- Appropriacy and accommodation of pronunciation according to social context, type of interlocutors, and purpose of language use (intra-speaker variation) - The 'communication-identity continuum' - Implications for pronunciation teaching (appropriacy vs. 'correctness', model vs. norm)

By covering issues such as the above in PPOCS 1, the course would no longer be primarily concerned with pronunciation *training*, in the sense of helping students to develop the motor control skills necessary to produce a set of English target sounds, but would also be a course in language *education* (as called for in Widdowson 1990: 62), in the sense of helping students to develop an awareness of the sociocultural and contextual factors affecting pronunciation and of its role in communication in general. This awareness will help students become more

19 Note that a more extensive version of the above list, containing detailed explanations and arguments in favour of the inclusion of each point in the PPOCS 1 syllabus, is given in Thir (2014: ch. 4.1.).

competent, context-sensitive language users who are able to accommodate their pronunciation (and reception) to the communicative and socio-contextual demands of a specific situation. In addition, it will help students become more competent language teachers who are able to make informed pedagogical decisions when teaching English pronunciation themselves.

5. Conclusion

This paper has provided a critical view on the so-called nativeness principle in pronunciation teaching and its application in teacher education. I argued that a native-like accent can neither be regarded as a generally achievable goal in second language learning – even for otherwise advanced learners, such as teaching degree students, – nor can it be regarded as desirable *a priori* for a learner to speak with a native-like accent due to its potentially problematic socio-psychological implications. This makes the application of the nativeness principle in teacher education – and in numerous other teaching contexts – highly problematic, as it might lead to false expectations (and, thus, experiences of frustration) on the part of both teachers and learners. What is more, the nativeness principle might have detrimental effects on the professional self-confidence of NNS teachers, which might cause them to refrain from teaching pronunciation altogether (cf. section 2.1.). In addition, with regard to English, the communicative value of a native-like accent cannot be taken for granted due to the fact that the majority of NNSs nowadays use English in the function of ELF, for international communication with mainly other NNSs. The idea that NNS teachers of English need to become 'as native-like as possible' in order to constitute a good pronunciation model for their students is thus not tenable anymore in the light of the current socio-linguistic landscape of the English-speaking world. Instead, teacher education needs to equip future teachers with the knowledge and the skills to adopt more modern approaches to pronunciation teaching that enable them to prepare learners for the complex linguistic reality that awaits them beyond the ELT classroom.

Under these considerations, I suggested an alternative, ELF-informed approach to pronunciation teaching in teacher education, which focuses on the acquisition of the pronunciation features and skills necessary for international intelligibility while giving L2 learners the option of retaining some features of their L1 accent. This approach takes proper account of the importance of ELF in the world, allows future teachers to embrace and express their L1 identity via their accent and also presents them with a more achievable learning goal than a native-like accent. I then provided a number of tentative suggestions of how such an approach could be implemented in practice in a particular teaching context, taking the pronunciation course at the Vienna English Department as an example. As shown in section 3, the latter is currently still guided by the nativeness principle, being focused on NS pronunciation norms and setting up native-like pronunciation as a desirable and achievable ideal. However, rather than necessitating fundamental changes in the course design or the audio resources used for pronunciation practice, I argued that a reorganization of the course syllabus, a reconsideration of the role played by the pronunciation models RP

and GA, the integration of opportunities for practicing phonological accommodation skills and a revision and extension of the educational component of the course would be sufficient for adopting an ELF-informed approach to pronunciation teaching in the course. One further necessary step which has not been discussed in detail here is that assessment practices would have to be adjusted accordingly (see Thir 2014: 123-128).

As pointed out earlier in this paper, the NS-focus in pronunciation teaching at our department suggests a tension between the established language skills program and the department's research into ELF and its implications for teaching – a seemingly "schizophrenic" state that appears to exist at many other departments of English as well (Seidlhofer 2008: 170). My suggestions for implementing an ELF approach in practice therefore also point to ways how this disparity could be resolved with regard to the area of pronunciation teaching by bringing the department's pronunciation program into close alignment with much of its theoretical and applied linguistics work. This entails, amongst other things, a crucial shift from teacher training to teacher *education* to help future teachers become competent language users and to enable them to make informed decisions as language learners (with regard to their personal pronunciation goals) and, later, as language teachers when teaching English pronunciation themselves.

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