# INVESTIGATING HUNGARIAN EFL LEARNERS' COMPREHENSION OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SPEECH VARIETIES OF ENGLISH: A TWO-PHASE STUDY

**Bálint Feyér**

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
feyerbalint@gmail.com

**Abstract:** The aim of the present research is to investigate Hungarian EFL learners' comprehension of English speech varieties, and how the learners relate to accents of English on the level of attitudes, using the theoretical framework of English as a lingua franca. The investigation includes two phases: a quantitative questionnaire study with a comprehension task complemented by a qualitative follow-up study. The participants of the first phase consist of 62 secondary school learners of English; 5 learners from the same population participate in the follow-up study. The findings reveal that the RP (received pronunciation) English speech variety recorded for ELT purposes is the most understandable for the learners, while unfamiliar or non-native accents pose a considerable challenge to understanding. Comprehension is influenced by a set of intertwined factors, including proficiency, language awareness and exposure to English speech. The participants are generally more appreciative of native speaker speech varieties, while they judge non-native varieties unfavourably, attaching further meanings and values to accents. The learners' judgement of speech varieties is related to their identity as well as their personal and cultural affiliations, which also seems to be related to their motivation.

**Key words:** English as a lingua franca, varieties, pronunciation, comprehension, attitudes

## 1 Introduction

Whether spoken as a native language or used by non-native speakers, English has the dual purpose of serving both as a means of communication and as a resource for expressing a speaker's identity. As a result of its growing international status, communication in English involves exposure to a wide array of L1 and L2 speakers. This makes it pedagogically relevant to acquaint learners with a variety of pronunciations instead of only one or two standard varieties. Besides, since speech sounds in L1 carry markers of identity (Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 1982; Labov, 1979), pronunciation may have further significance for non-native speakers than mere comprehensibility, as it can become invested with the role of expressing speakers' identities through English as an L2 as well (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006).

Both comprehension and attitudes towards speech varieties of English have been subject to research in the fields of applied linguistics and language pedagogy, with diverse foci of research and varying terminology. Jenkins (2000) studied the phonology of English as an international language (EIL)[1] from the aspect of comprehension, while other authors focused on the acceptability of international varieties of English in the framework of English as a lingua franca (ELF) (cf. Murray, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2005; Widdowson, 1994). Learners' attitudes towards speech varieties have also been investigated in various contexts (McKenzie, 2006; Park, 2003) yielding results which highlight the relevance of the sociolinguistic aspects of pronunciation in ELT.

Despite the wide range of studies with different L2 speakers of English, there is a need for empirical research into the role of speech varieties in ELT with regard to the Hungarian context. Although theoretical discussions, considering pronunciation in general terms as an

---

[1] The terms related to the different varieties of English are defined and discussed in section 2.

aspect of EIL or ELF (cf. Seidlhofer, 2005; Walker, 2010), voice general implications for ELT situations, it is also essential to investigate the issues of comprehension and attitudes in particular contexts of learning. As Widdowson (2003) argues, although English is the language of global communication, its learning takes place locally and is influenced by the L1 inventory of the learners as well as the socio-cultural characteristics of the learning environment. Therefore, it seems necessary to conduct an investigation in the Hungarian ELT context, firstly because the perception of speech sounds and thus comprehension may be influenced by the phonological inventory of the L1 (cf. Chuan, 2010) and secondly because attitudes to speech varieties may be shaped by cultural schemata typical of this particular context. Consequently, the study may yield findings contributing to ELT in Hungary by attempting to reveal how language teaching can be adapted to suit the needs of international communication based on the characteristics of the local context.

Therefore, the aim of the present research is to investigate Hungarian learners' comprehension of different speech varieties of English and their attitudes towards them. It examines the factors related to successful comprehension and the perception of accents at the affective level. The investigation included two phases: the first was a quantitative questionnaire study complemented by an accent comprehension task, henceforth referred to as 'Phase One'. This was followed by an interview study with selected participants from Phase One, focusing on specific aspects of the initial research (henceforth referred to as 'Phase Two').

In the present paper, the terms accent, pronunciation and speech variety are used interchangeably in a neutral sense, referring to the sound variants and the suprasegmental characteristics of a person's speech. This reflects the terminology in the literature (cf. McKenzie, 2006; Wells, 1982).

The next section provides an overview of the relevant literature and previous research into the issue. Subsequently, the method of Phase One is outlined, followed by its findings. After that, the method and procedures of Phase Two are presented along with an analysis of the data.

## 2 Theoretical background

### 2.1 Terminology

There is considerable variation in the literature regarding the terminology related to the varieties of English spoken around the world. The most commonly used terms are *English as an international language*, *global English*, *world Englishes* and *English as a lingua franca*. All of these terms are employed to refer to the use of English across cultures by speakers of various mother tongues, yet there are occasional differences in emphasis. The following sections discuss a number of approaches to English by using the relevant author's own terminology, which should clarify the conceptual differences as much as possible. However, in certain cases, varying terms are used interchangeably by the same author. For instance, Jenkins (2000) discusses the theory of *Lingua Franca Core* in her book entitled 'The Phonology of English as an International Language', with no apparent difference between the terms. In the rest of the paper discussing the present research project, the term *English as a lingua franca* (ELF) will be preferred because it encapsulates the nature of English used by its speakers worldwide and focuses on its role in international communication. ELF is originally defined as a "contact language between persons who share neither a native tongue nor a common culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication"

(Flirth, 1996, p. 240, as cited in Seidlhofer, 2005). The phrase "chosen foreign language" implies that native speakers' English is not included in ELF, nevertheless, the present discussion treats native speakers as well as non-native speakers as members of the ELF language community, since both types of speakers are involved in using and shaping the language.

## 2.2 Approaches to English

The role of English as the primary medium of international communication has been widely discussed in the literature, with the discussions focusing on the proportion and the type of speakers of English along with the norms and standards relevant for ELT. In a discussion of English as a global language, Crystal (2003) highlights the fact that with English being a global language, bilingual speakers and users of English as a second language from non-Anglo Saxon countries are gradually outnumbering the native speakers of the language. By contrast, speakers of RP, often serving as the pronunciation model in ELT, comprise a mere 3% of the British population (Trudgill, 2003), which is only one of the many native English speaking communities.

Considering the varieties which evolved in countries where English is not the majority language but has developed local features due to its function in everyday life as a result of the spread of English in past centuries, Jenkins (2003) uses the terms *World Englishes* or *New Englishes*. Such countries include Nigeria, India or Jamaica, for instance, where the users of English are regarded as fully competent bilingual speakers. The term *English as an international language*, however, encompasses virtually all the world's speakers, who use English for the purpose of communication, including native and bilingual speakers as well as learners of the language (cf. Jenkins, 2000; Widdowson, 1997).

Kachru (2006) classifies the spread of English into three concentric circles. The Inner Circle includes native English speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia or Canada, which are considered to be norm providers, suggesting an authority over the norms of the language. The Outer Circle comprises former British colonies, where English is an official language and plays an official role in the countries' life, which are called norm developers referring to the localised forms of English distinct from those in the Inner Circle. The Expanding Circle covers all other countries in which English does not have an official status and is acquired mainly through the education system. These countries are called norm dependent, as they are said to rely on the norms of grammar and language use provided by the native speakers of the Inner Circle.

The idea that non-native speakers of English from Outer Circle countries are, by definition, reliant on native speakers is strongly opposed by a number of authors (Canagarajah, 2007; Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2005; Widdowson, 1994), who view English primarily as a lingua franca (ELF). As opposed to EIL, which includes native as well as non-native speakers, ELF involves interactions mainly between non-native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2005). It is argued that due to the growing proportion of non-native speakers worldwide, communication in English often does not include native speakers at all. Hence, the relevance of native speaker norms of grammar and language use for ELF speakers is strongly questioned by the authors mentioned above.

A number of further authors point out that that there are strong biases towards native speakers within ELT, which involves the representation of culture, methodological preferences, employment policy, and, with particular interest to the present research, ideal models of language (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). This ideology is

referred to by the term native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005), which refers to an unjustified and unfair favouritism to native speakers of English at the expense of non-native speakers. Widdowson (1994) claims that despite being the cradle of the language and contributing to its global spread in the course of history, neither England nor any other nation of native speakers can claim ownership over the language. The norms of language use are to be decided by the global community of the speakers of the language in reference to their communicative needs. Consequently, the aim of language teaching should not be to approximate the native speaker in terms of language proficiency or language use but to develop linguistic competence which best suits the needs of the ELF speaker.

## 2.3 The role of pronunciation in the context of ELF

Based on the empirical investigation of EFL learners, Jenkins (2003) establishes a phonological inventory called Lingua Franca Core (LFC), consisting of sounds which are considered essential for comprehensibility in ELF as opposed to redundant features of pronunciation, which do not affect the success of communication. The main advantage of this approach is that it does not regard native-like pronunciation as the ultimate goal for learners, but focuses on the practical aspect of intelligibility instead. However, it may be problematic to make generalisations as to what is essential or redundant in ELF by investigating the communication of speakers of a limited number of L1s. While certain features may prove crucial in understanding for speakers of certain L1s, these findings may not be applicable to all speakers of ELF. This is because learners' L2 competence, including phonological competence, is based on their L1 and therefore, distinctive and redundant phonological features in ELF may vary from speaker to speaker (cf. Chuan, 2010). This is in line with Widdowson's (2003) general consideration according to which the use of English is undoubtedly global, nevertheless, learning is essentially local and thus learners' L1 should be considered in ELT.

In some of her later research, Jenkins (2009) complements the theory of LFC with additional ideas to enhance comprehensibility in communication among non-native speakers. She suggests that developing skills of accommodation and negotiating meaning are essential strategies for learners of English. This involves a heightened phonological awareness on the part of the speakers, whereby they take into consideration potential sources of misunderstanding due to pronunciation and modify their accent accordingly. Such skills require exposure to accents and conscious reflection on them in order to enhance receptive tolerance of varying sounds in identical utterances.

However, Andreasson (1994) points out that even though abandoning the goal of approximating a native-like English accent in ELT is theoretically justified, having native-like pronunciation is still regarded as an indicator of a proficient learner. Thus, the ability to successfully emulate native speaker pronunciation can still be seen as a status symbol in ELT. Therefore, whereas intelligibility is certainly a crucial issue in ELF, it is important to bear in mind that pronunciation can have further significance for L2 speakers because of its symbolic value.

## 2.4 The relationship of pronunciation, identity and attitudes

As shown most notably by Labov (1966), pronunciation in L1 use can have a more profound significance than merely communicating messages, since the presence or absence of certain linguistic features, typically accent features, may carry information about the speaker's ethnicity, age, social status or education. Moreover, in L1 these sounds display consistent

variation in different situations, serving as markers of style (Coupland, 2007) and speakers often make use of them in signalling their group identity, desired self-image or social affiliation (cf. Eckert, 1989; Podesva, Roberts, & Campbell-Kibler, 2002).

Consequently, it may be argued that with English becoming an important means of everyday communication to an increasing number of ELF speakers, similarly to L1, the sociolinguistic significance of pronunciation may became more and more of a central issue in L2 language use. While an L1 is used as an expression of local or national identity through language, English may become a means of expressing one's identity as a member of a global community (cf. Arnett, 2002). Walker (2010) also suggests, based on the findings of Jenkins (2000), that an L1 accent which meets the requirements of intelligibility in ELF can be used for expressing a national identity through English.

Furthermore, analogous to L1 language users, ELF speakers may also use English to project a desired self-image either as proficient speaker of a foreign language or as a professional member of a community of practice whose language of communication is English (cf. Dörnyei et al., 2006; Widdowson, 1997). In an ELT context, affective aspects of language, including pronunciation in particular, can bear significance to learner's motivation (cf. Dörnyei, 2005). Indeed, empirical research suggests that learners of English may notice variation in English (McKenzie, 2006; Park, 2003).

In the Hungarian context, Balogh (2008) investigated attitudes towards standard and non-standard accents of American English and found that learners attribute higher status to standard varieties, yet they show solidarity towards non-standard ones. Illés and Csizér (2010) studied learners' attitudes towards English as an international language and found that despite the recognition of English as a means of international communication, there is a lack of acceptance towards varieties of English and EIL is seen as a simplified language. These studies show that investigating attitudes towards varieties of English in the Hungarian context is a relevant field of inquiry, yet there seems to be a need for further empirical studies focusing on different aspects of the issue. Firstly, it is necessary to represent native as well as non-native varieties because of their important role in ELF. Secondly, practical aspects of variation with regard to ELT should also be included, such as comprehensibility or the potential effect on motivation, in order to yield relevant findings for language teaching. Thirdly, the complexities of attitudes and the underlying factors which influence them ought to be explored as well so as to gain a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

## 3 Research methods

The present research included two phases. In the first phase, a quantitative study was conducted in which participants completed a questionnaire along with an accent comprehension task with four different accents, after which they were asked to evaluate the speech varieties. Based on the results, a follow-up study was designed to confirm or complement the results of phase one by investigating individual learners. It was intended to explore the underlying reasons behind the previous findings and thus help in their interpretation.

The focus of investigation involves the following questions:

1. How successful are Hungarian EFL learners in comprehending speech varieties of English?
2. What factors influence Hungarian EFL learners' success in comprehending speech varieties of English?

3. What attitudes do Hungarian EFL learners have towards speech varieties of English?
4. What factors influence Hungarian EFL learners' attitudes towards speech varieties of English?

# 4 Phase one

The quantitative survey and the comprehension task along with a preliminary pilot study in the first phase of the project involved altogether 89 participants from seven secondary school classes. The following sections describe the details of this phase of the study.

## 4.1 The instrument and procedures

To investigate attitudes to speech varieties and their comprehension, the research instrument included a quantitative questionnaire with listening tasks. The questions consisted mostly of five-point Likert scales alongside biographical items and occasional open-ended questions (Appendix A). The tasks consisted of four gap filling comprehension exercises featuring four speech varieties of English, Hungarian, Egyptian Arabic, American, RP (Appendices B1-B4), each followed by a set of questions related to the given accent (Appendix C). The duration of a data collecting session was approximately 40 minutes. The constructs' reliability was measured by their Cronbach Alpha values, indicated in the subsequent sections where the variable is a multi-item scale.

### 4.1.1 General opening questions (Appendix A)

In the opening series of questions, the items were concerned with the following set of constructs. The Cronbach Alpha values of multi-item scales are indicated in advance in order to highlight the degree of reliability for measuring the given construct.

- the extent of exposure in reference to the types of exposure (e.g. exposure through films, internet), Cronbach Alpha: .787.
- the extent of exposure in reference to the varieties of English learners are exposed to, Cronbach Alpha: .728.
- awareness of English accents and phonology, Cronbach Alpha: .806.
- tolerance of ambiguity: focusing on general meaning, coping with not understanding everything, Cronbach Alpha: .771.
- benefits of contact with speakers of English, Cronbach Alpha: .574.
- general attitudes towards phonological variation in Hungarian and in English
- biographical questions: age, gender, proficiency in English.

### 4.1.2 The comprehension tasks (Appendices B1-B4)

The aim of the tasks was to measure the effect that the accent exerted on the comprehension of spoken English. To this end, a comprehension exercise from a standardised B1 level language exam[2] was adapted to the purposes of the present research. A relatively low-level exercise was chosen so that the proficiency of participants was not challenged, thus making it possible to measure only the effect of the accents.

An almost identical script was recorded four times with different speakers and with varying target words in a way that the information in the previous texts would not interfere

---

[2] Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET).

with the subsequent target items. The reason for opting for identical texts was to eliminate the potential effects of the different content. The speakers in the audio recordings included four narrators: a Hungarian, an Egyptian Arabic speaker, an American and an RP speaker of English[3], corresponding to Kachru's (2006) classification of World Englishes. It was assumed that due to the fact that the text was below the level of the learners' proficiency, the order in which the accents were played would not have a decisive influence on the result by making the later recordings easier to understand. This assumption was partly confirmed by the results (see 4.1) showing that the participants had a lower average score on the second accent compared to the first one. As for the socio-demographic factors, all the speakers were middle-aged educated males, sufficiently competent in English to make the recordings sound authentic. The personal variables of the speakers such as age, gender and education were intended to be kept uniform so that these would not influence the results of the questions relating to the speaker. It has to be noted, however, that the RP accent was taken from a professional recording, made specifically for ELT purposes, while the other accents were recordings of non-professionals with the use of sound recording techniques falling short of studio quality. Although these technicalities might have influenced the difficulty of the listening materials, it can be argued that the professional recording represented classroom English, which learners were exposed to in ELT, while the recordings of non-professionals retained the authenticity of English outside the classroom.

During the task, the learners were asked to fill in the missing pieces of information during a single hearing of the text. The texts contained 14 gaps each, which was necessary for two reasons. Firstly, the 14 gaps could ensure a sufficient number of variables in the texts so that no word in a text could be used to provide missing information in a following exercise. Secondly, this number allowed for phonological diversity in the target words and so the speakers' pronunciation could exert a strong influence on comprehension. The target words included numbers and basic words which the participants were expected to be familiar with. At the very end of the session, the learners were requested to correct their tasks based on the answer key, which was read aloud by the administrator of the data collection, and indicate their scores. This substantially reduced the time needed to process the data and also provided participants with the opportunity to view their results. The process of self-correction was strictly controlled and closely monitored in order to prevent inaccuracies.

4.1.3 Questions related to the accents (Appendix C)

After each comprehension task, the participants were asked to answer three short open-ended questions based on the particular accent. The open-ended questions provided room for the respondents to express their opinion concerning the accent and the speaker immediately after listening. The learners' free associations were expected to provide valuable insight into how they relate to speech varieties.

The subsequent Likert scales concerned the following areas:

- Perceived correctness, likeability and comprehensibility of the speaker's English
- Social proximity to the speaker, referring to 'layers of acceptance', asking whether the respondent would accept the speaker as an acquaintance, fellow learner, colleague, or English teacher

---

[3] The four speakers were selected from a number of candidates not featuring in the final study including French, German, Pakistani, Scottish, Cockney and inner London accents. Reasons for exclusion included problems with reading the script, conscious effort to conceal accent, or the time-limits of the exercise.

- Positive stereotypes pertaining to the speaker based on his accent, such as education, intelligence or friendliness, Cronbach Alpha by accent: Hungarian: .855, Egyptian: .851, American: .917, RP: .902.
- Familiarity with the particular accent.

4.1.4 Piloting the instrument

A preliminary version of the instrument was piloted on a group of four learners using a think-aloud protocol on the basis of which the wording of some questions was refined. After that, a small-scale pilot study was conducted on a sample of 27 learners using French, Egyptian Arabic, Scottish and RP accents. However, the French and Scottish varieties were replaced by Hungarian and American respectively, as they proved to be more relevant in the context of the Hungarian EFL learners participating in the piloting, who tended to regard pronunciations in terms of native, non-native, familiar and unfamiliar accents. The Egyptian Arabic variety remained to represent an unfamiliar accent from the Outer Circle (Kachru, 2006). Furthermore, additional constructs were added to the questionnaire, including phonological awareness, tolerance of ambiguity and familiarity with accents.

**4.2 Participants and procedures**

In the first part of the study, 62 learners from three secondary schools in Budapest were investigated, aged between 16 and 18, studying in grades 10-11, with language proficiency ranging from lower-intermediate (B1) to advanced (C2). The reason for selecting this population was that secondary school students were considered to represent the future generation of ELF users, and they were also more conveniently accessible in larger groups and had regular timetables facilitating data collection. Thus, conducting a complex quantitative survey was more feasible with secondary school learners than it would have been with adults.

The survey was administered to the learners during their English lessons after requesting access from the teacher and informing her about the purpose of the research. At the beginning of the data collecting sessions, which lasted for approximately 40 minutes, learners in all groups were given identical instructions, encouraging them to provide answers reflecting their genuine opinion about speech varieties. The participants were asked to provide a nickname, while their papers contained a code referring to the school, the class and the number of the participant so that the number of individual cases could be tracked back from the database. At the same time, the learners' anonymity was also respected because only they could identify themselves on the basis of the nickname if their class was revisited, requesting participation in the follow-up study.

**4.3 Data analysis and validity**

Data analysis was conducted with SPSS 17, using standard procedures. Descriptive statistics were provided concerning the relevant items and mean scores were compared by T-tests. Due to the complexity of the subject, clear-cut causal relationships could not be established between certain variables. For instance, proficiency, awareness, exposure or intended behaviour may be so closely intertwined that their effect on comprehension could be difficult to measure separately. Therefore, in these cases, correlations were provided to reveal the interrelation of these variables. Pearson's correlations were used since the items concerned included interval scales, for which this measurement is regarded as the most suitable (Dancey & Reidey, 2003).

**4.4 Results of phase one**

4.4.1 Comprehension of speech varieties

The results of the tasks showed differences with regards to the comprehensibility of the four speech varieties, as shown in Table 1. The time of the audio recording is also indicated.

| Accent variety | Time | Average score (out of 14) |
|---|---|---|
| Hungarian English | 1 min 36 sec | 6.3 |
| Egyptian Arabic English | 1 min 50 sec | 4.6 |
| American English | 1 min 30 sec | 6.9 |
| RP | 1 min 55 sec | 9.1 |

Table 1. The mean scores of the results of the comprehension tasks, out of a maximum score of 14, with the length of the extract indicated

The RP variety stood out from the rest, showing the highest score, with the Hungarian and American accent fairly close to each other, followed by the Egyptian Arabic variety as the least comprehended pronunciation.

There was a significant difference between the Hungarian and the Egyptian Arabic variety, ($t = 5.64$, $p < 0.001$), the Hungarian and RP ($t = -9.77$, $p < 0.001$), the American and Egyptian ($t = 7.63$, $p < 0.001$), the American and RP ($t = 7.63$, $p < 0.001$) and the Egyptian and RP accents ($t = -16.04$, $p < 0.001$). On the other hand, there was no significant difference between the Hungarian and the American variety ($p = 0.059$). These results were indicative of potential problems, since the highest scoring RP is spoken only by a minority of English speakers worldwide (cf. Crystal, 2003; Trudgill, 2001), and consequently, L2 users are less likely to encounter this variety in real life. On the other hand, the proportion of the global speakers of English warrants the skill of comprehending diverse and potentially unfamiliar speech varieties, which seems to be a challenge for Hungarian learners based on the present findings. To address such difficulties, the importance of familiarising learners of English with a wide range of native as well as non-native accents is emphasised by ELF research (cf. Jenkins, 2000).

**4.4.2 Background factors to comprehension of speech varieties**

As Table 2 shows, the two most important variables related to the comprehension of the speech varieties investigated were the self-declared language proficiency and the phonological awareness of learners.

| Accent variety | Proficiency | Phonological awareness |
|---|---|---|
| Hungarian English | .776** | .408* |
| Egyptian Arabic English | .618** | .336* |
| American English | .771** | .444* |
| RP English | .793** | .473* |

Table 2. Pearson's correlations between the accent-specific scores of the task, phonological awareness and language proficiency
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The strongest correlations could be found between the scores and proficiency, which indicated that receptive tolerance was closely related to more general language skills. However, despite the fact that exposure did not correlate with the test scores directly, it was closely connected to proficiency and phonological awareness, which revealed the complexities of the factors related to the comprehension of speech varieties. Table 3 shows the connections between proficiency, phonological awareness, and two aspects of the extent of exposure: the means of exposure and exposure to particular accents.

| | Proficiency | Phonological Awareness | Means of exposure |
|---|---|---|---|
| Phon. Awareness | .502** | | |
| Means of exposure | .307** | .532** | |
| Exposure to accents | .351** | .524** | .592** |

Table 3. Pearson's correlations between learners' language proficiency, phonological awareness and extent of exposure from the aspect of the means of exposure and the variety learners are exposed to
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

These correlations showed that proficiency, phonological awareness and exposure should be considered in relation to each other when investigating the comprehension of English pronunciations. The learners' proficiency, which helped them understand speech varieties, showed a positive correlation to exposure to different accents through the media as well as to personal contact when combined with reflection on the input and awareness of its phonological features.

### 4.4.3 Attitudes towards speech varieties

Learner attitudes towards the speech varieties under investigation were encapsulated in three variables: likeability, perceived correctness, and stereotypes attached to the speakers based on their pronunciation, whose scores are shown in Table 4.

| Accent variety | Likeability | Perceived correctness | Stereotypes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hungarian English | 2.2 | 2.8 | 3.1 |
| Egyptian Arabic English | 1.9 | 2.1 | 2.8 |
| American English | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4 |
| RP English | 4.4 | 4.7 | 4.2 |

Table 4. The mean scores of the variables of likeability, perceived correctness and the scale of positive stereotypes

There seemed to be a stark contrast between native and non-native varieties, with learners clearly favouring the former. Within the two groups, there was no significant difference between the two native varieties in any respect, yet Hungarian and Egyptian Arabic differed with respect to correctness ($t = 3.33$, $p = 0.23$) and the stereotypes pertaining to the speaker ($t = 5.02$, $p < 0.001$), both in favour of the Hungarian variety. Non-native accents were judged rather unfavourably, as was shown by the generally lower-than-average mean scores in spite of the relatively high score of the scale, 'acceptance of diversity in English' ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.94$).

These results were in line with the literature, suggesting that despite the fact that English is considered to be a lingua franca, which involves inherent linguistic diversity,

deviation from native speaker standards was not judged favourably by speakers, especially by non-native ones (cf. Andreasson, 1994; Murray, 2003; Park, 2003).

### 4.4.4 Background factors affecting attitudes towards speech varieties

Due to the fact that the four speech varieties were judged differently by the learners, generalisations could not be made as to which individual factors were related to all of them. Table 5 shows factors pertaining to the attitudinal variables of the four accents in the study.

| Variable | 1. H ster | 2. H like | 3. H corr | 4. E ster | 5. E like | 6. E corr | 7. A ster | 8. A like | 9. A corr | 10. B ster | 11. B like | 12. B ster | 13. t. of a. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.H stereo | | .545** | | | | | | | | .267* | | | |
| 2.H like | .545** | | .416** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.H correct | | 416** | | | | .376** | | | | | | | |
| 4.E stereo | | | | | .487** | .306* | | | | | -262* | | .327* |
| 5.E like | | | | .487** | | .309* | | | | | | | |
| 6.E correct | | | .376** | .306* | .309* | | | | | | | | |
| 7.A stereo | | | | | | | | .479** | .379** | .439** | | .-257* | .356** |
| 8.A like | | | | | | | .479** | | .605** | | | .263* | .413** |
| 9.A correct | | | | | | | .379** | .605** | | | | .374** | .373** |
| 10. B ster. | .267* | | | | | | .439** | | | | .509** | .361** | |
| 11. B like | | | | .-262* | | | | | | .509** | | .580** | |
| 12. B corr. | | | | | | | .-257* | .263* | .374** | .361** | .580** | | |
| 13. tol. of ambiguity | | | | .327* | | | .356** | .413** | .373** | | | | |

Table 5. Correlations between positive stereotypes scales (stereo), likeability (like) and perceived correctness (cor) related to the Hungarian (H), Egyptian Arabic (E), American (A), and RP (B) accents along with the multi-item scales of tolerance of ambiguity
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Generally, there seemed to be a connection between one or more variables from positive stereotypes, likeability and perceived correctness within one accent (this is indicated by bold font and framing for the sake of visibility). Other correlations showed overlaps between some of these factors across accents. Tolerance of ambiguity was related to all three variables of the American accent and to the stereotype variable of the Egyptian accent. There also seemed to be a relationship between the perceived correctness of the British accent and the variables of the American accent.

Based on these correlations, the learners liked an accent when they accepted it as correct pronunciation, and this judgement influenced their perception of the speaker, which, in the present context, meant favouring the two native varieties. The significance of tolerance of ambiguity indicated that learners who were comfortable with not fully understanding utterances evaluated certain varieties more favourably. The role of stereotypes showed that, similarly to L1, learners perceived certain aspects of an L2 speech variety as sociolinguistic markers, with which they associated meanings. Based on the open-ended questions following the tasks, these meanings were related to the speakers' origin, status as a speaker of English (learner or advanced user) (cf. Andreasson, 1994) and personality traits such as being kind, brusque, hurried or easy going. However, more in-depth research was needed to shed light on the exact sociolinguistic meanings attached to speech varieties by learners.

# 5 Phase two

The qualitative follow-up study included five participants selected from the sample of the quantitative survey. The same classes investigated in Phase One were visited one school year following the first data collection. The subsequent sections elaborate on the details of the second phase of the study.

## 5.1 Rationale of the follow-up study and selection of participants

After the large-scale quantitative survey, a more focused qualitative investigation was necessitated by the fact that although the former approach might have revealed general tendencies, the latter method could complement this by exploring the learners' thinking processes in depth along with their individual characteristics influencing accent comprehension and attitudes. The follow-up study was expected to contribute particularly to research questions 2 and 3, concentrating on underlying factors as opposed to factual descriptions. Although the quantitative data analysis may have shown correlations between variables, convergent qualitative data could corroborate such findings and also help in their interpretation.

Two types of participants were selected for the follow-up study, based on their results in the comprehension test. The first type included *high achievers*, who reached the highest score on the task with the Arabic accent, which proved to be the most difficult with the lowest average score. This was assumed to be indicative of high allophonic tolerance and it was therefore clearly worth investigating what characteristics distinguished those learners from the others and made them more successful in understanding a potentially difficult speech variety.

The second type consisted of *different achievers*, that is, learners exhibiting the greatest difference between their scores in the task with the easiest (in this case RP) and the most difficult Arabic accent. In order to measure this variable, first the two extreme accents of the whole sample were identified based on the means scores of the task. After that, a new variable was created by deducting the score of the difficult (low scoring) accent from that of the easy (high scoring) accent. In the present case, the Egyptian Arabic accent proved to be the most difficult and RP the easiest, which meant that the additional variable generated for each case was ([StBr_score]-[Egypt_score]). Based on the new variable, cases were ranked in descending order so that the cases with the highest value could be selected. In this way, those learners could be identified for whom a difficult or unfamiliar accent may have posed the greatest problems, having a presumably low level of allophonic tolerance. The in-depth study of these learners aimed to identify problem areas in comprehension along with individual characteristics influencing their comprehension.

## 5.2 The instrument and procedures

The purpose of the follow-up study was to focus on individual cases, exploring the process of comprehension along with an in-depth investigation of how learners relate to varieties of spoken English on the level of attitudes. For this purpose, a semi-structured interview was used including a think aloud protocol, a stimulated recall and a recording of the learner's own pronunciation (see Appendix B). The interviews took place as follows.

After the target learners were identified, the groups in question were revisited and the learners were asked to identify themselves with the help of the nicknames. If a case could not be identified due to unwillingness, absence or because they had left the school, the learner with the next highest score was requested to participate in the study. In this way, two high achievers and three different achievers were selected. The reasons for the asymmetry were lack of access and time constraints.

The selected learners participated in an interview session, one by one, lasting for approximately 25 minutes each in a classroom or school office where undisturbed display of audio material and voice recording were possible. The consent of the school was requested and granted for conducting research with underage learners. First, the learners were assured that what they said would be treated confidentially. Also, they were made aware of the fact that they were not being tested and whatever they said was valuable data for the research project. This was necessary in order to avoid inhibition and the effect of social desirability as well as to motivate the participants to provide unselfconscious answers. Each participant was asked to give their oral consent to having the session recorded. After the participants gave their permission, the digital recording device recorded the whole session.

The interview began with an introductory question about the source of the participant's English knowledge, which was followed by listening to the speech excerpt of the Egyptian Arabic accent. First, the audio file was presented in full length, after which it was played sentence by sentence. For the second hearing, the learners were given the transcript of the excerpt and they were asked to underline the words, phrases or parts of the text whose understanding would have been problematic for them without the text. During the process, they could also comment on what speech or sound features they found difficult and why. Afterwards, they could also reflect on general features of the text which might have interfered with comprehension, such as general articulatory features, speech rate, rhythm or difficult vocabulary.

This was followed by semi-structured questions centred around the constructs which proved to be relevant in the previous study, namely exposure to spoken English, phonological awareness, tolerance of ambiguity and attitude towards problematic accents. After that, the pronunciation of the learner was recorded as they read out part of the transcript, which served two purposes. Firstly, inferences could be made about the learner's productive phonological competence, where their pronunciation features came from (e.g., L1 or a native English variety) and whether they tried to emulate a particular native speaker accent, which could signal cultural affiliation. Secondly, reading out loud was intended to help in raising awareness and evoking feelings relating to the learner's own pronunciation. Thus, it served as a stimulus for the final questions focusing on intended behaviour, that is, the effort made to improve one's own pronunciation and the perceived significance of accent.

The interview data were transcribed and analysed using the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Participants are referred to by their pseudonyms: Knuth, Madár2 (high achievers); and Herkentyűbogár, Lelouch, Talpos01 (different achievers). When they are quoted, a line number is included, indicating the source of the information in the transcript, for example, Pseudonym (L404). The interviews were carried out in Hungarian, the native language of the participants, so that they could express their thoughts without the potential limitations of their proficiency in English. Therefore, the following quotations are English translations of the Hungarian transcript.

**5.3 Results of phase two**


5.3.1 Factors related to comprehension

The follow-up study revealed a number of underlying factors related to the comprehension of unfamiliar speech varieties, providing insight into the listening process and the reasons for the difficulties. It also corroborated certain findings of phase one, namely the importance of proficiency, exposure, awareness and tolerance of ambiguity, as well as highlighting the relevance of motivation.

Concerning the process of speech comprehension, the participants invariably mentioned that coping with the idiosyncrasies of the accent required a distinct mental effort, which may be equated with the concept of allophonic tolerance from the literature (Jenkins, 2009). This meant that participants had to concentrate on deciphering words, while simultaneously trying to understand the message. There appeared to be a difference between high achievers and different achievers. During the think aloud protocol as well as in their own listening experiences outside school, the former type of learners reported an extensive use of contextual cues and schemata, while the latter type were more focused on identifying words and tended to lose track more easily. This is in line with Jenkins's (2000) observation that learners using bottom-up processing in listening tend to have more problems with allophonic variants than the ones who rely on top-down processing.

Participants also mentioned that listening to a new accent involved a process of "tuning in" (Herkenytűbogár, L44), whereby on hearing a new or difficult accent, they needed a certain amount of time to become accustomed to the pronunciation. Tolerance of ambiguity may be a relevant factor here, since it allows more time for this process before learners give up and abandon listening to a problematic accent. Knuth (L203), one of the successful learners, reported that he paid conscious attention to features which caused problems in understanding, and once he could decipher the meaning, he tried to learn what the feature corresponded to so that he could understand it more easily in the future. An example of this, pointed out by Knuth, was the TH sound, which was consistently pronounced [z] by the Egyptian speaker. Based on the think aloud protocol and the interview, it could be observed that when isolated, the correspondence between the [z] and the TH sound could be easily identified, yet when this variant occurred in combination with other problematic features, it made understanding difficult for some of the other participants. For instance, in the phrase 'opposite to the reception door', in which the vowels of the polysyllabic words were frequently reduced, failure to identify the definite article made parsing difficult, thus the phrase could not be understood by Talpos01, Lelouche and Herkentyűbogár. The strategy of the high achieving learner reinforced the finding of phase one that a combination of exposure and awareness have a positive influence on the successful comprehension of unfamiliar accents.

The think aloud protocol also revealed some of the underlying reasons why the Egyptian Arabic accent was difficult for learners. The most often highlighted segmental feature was the pronunciation of the TH sound as [z] (see above). However, the participants tended to characterise this sound by the word "disturbing", which, on requesting clarification, turned out to be rather ambiguous, sometimes meaning "understandable but kind of irritating" (Madár02, L752), on other occasions obscuring understanding (as in 'opposite the recepion', quoted above). This slightly contradicts Jenkins (2000), who treats the TH sound as a redundant feature of the LFC, albeit in other works, it is mentioned that knowledge of typical

variants on the receptive level is beneficial (Jenkins, 2009; Walker, 2010). Besides, while these works discussing intelligibility in English as a lingua franca are focused on segmental features, in the present case it turned out that most of the reasons for miscomprehension were actually suprasegmental features such as intonation, rhythm and the general articulatory characteristics of the speaker. Also, while according to the LFC, schwa insertions are allowed, or at least preferred to sound deletion or cluster reduction, in the present case, they caused problems in understanding of the words "third" [sərəd] and "renting films" [filəmz].

As regards the comprehension of accents in the learners' listening experiences outside school, participants reported that they found American English easier to understand than British English in films, and non-native English more comprehensible than native speaker English in personal conversation. The former finding may have been related to the fact that learners tended to watch mostly Hollywood films and American television series. This confirmed the importance of exposure, and the resulting higher level of familiarity for comprehension. The latter finding was not shown by the relevant items of the qualitative study, yet the reason for this might have been that learners, as it turned out from the accounts of the interviewees, could not always differentiate accurately between the two varieties. In instances of personal contact, such as when visiting a foreign country or giving directions to tourists, participants reported that non-native speakers had been generally easier to understand than native speakers, because despite their accent, non-native speakers tended to speak with more consideration for the listener than native speakers. This echoes studies on ELF (Jenkins, 2009), pointing out that successful communication in English as a lingua franca is characterised by accommodation and a joint effort to understand each other. In the present study, an exception to this was an anecdote by Knuth, who could not communicate successfully with an Indian tourist asking for directions. On discussing the reason for the breakdown in communication, it turned out that both parties insisted on their own pronunciation, failing to accommodate to the other. This indicated that strategies of successful communication in ELF are not automatic processes and therefore have to be learned either intuitively through experience or consciously during language learning.

### 5.3.2 Factors related to attitudes

The key factor in shaping the respondents' attitude towards accents was the kind of significance they attributed to pronunciation. However, a distinction had to be made between the significance of the learner's own pronunciation and how they viewed that of others, as the judgement of the two exhibited some differences.

In the case of other people's pronunciation, comprehensibility was essential for a positive evaluation of the accent by the participants. On the surface, this appeared to be the dominant factor in the assessment of spoken English. However, further questions in the interview revealed that there was also a certain prestige attached to pronunciation. Native speaker pronunciation was held in particularly high regard, while non-native accents, including Hungarian English, were judged negatively, ranging from subtly derisory comments to overt ridicule. An example was the following remark: "I accept a foreign or Hungarian accent as long as it's comprehensible but I giggle inside when I hear it" (Knuth, L218). Furthermore, according to the participants, if a non-native speaker managed to emulate the pronunciation of a native speaker well, it was considered to be a sign of a proficient and successful learner, while respondents also attached symbolic value to such accents, assuming that these speakers are probably intelligent, educated and work in high positions. This resonated with the results of the attitude scales in phase one, as well as similar discussions in

the literature (Andreasson, 1994). However, one of the respondents, Knuth, confessed that although he was aware of the fact that non-native speakers with a strong accent may be highly proficient, he did not fully appreciate their knowledge of the language because of the accent. These findings indicated that although comprehensibility is an essential aspect of the evaluation of accents, similarly to L1 accents, communicatively redundant pronunciation features may indeed take on symbolic meanings. It was also indicative of the fact that the learners' attitudes were heavily influenced by native-speakerist ideas.

Respondents' preferences varied between British and American English, which are the two main native varieties they were aware of. For Madár2, British English represented the established norm for pronunciation, sounding complex and sophisticated, yet American English was also accepted as a definitive standard. Talpos01 showed an inclination towards British English but also considered American English appealing because it sounded relaxed. Knuth, on the other hand, showed a clear penchant for American English, which he considered more modern and also more widespread. According to him, British English is rather old fashioned and is promoted mainly by language education. For him, American English represents a highly valued and influential culture and society, for which he showed admiration. In sum, the preferences could be seen as reflecting the learners' affiliations to the respective cultures, which they accessed via exposure to English through the media of films, television and the internet. However, it could be observed in the participants that mere exposure to speech varieties did not have a decisive impact on attitudes: these were shaped by deeply ingrained values and personal affiliations towards cultures of the target language.

As for the participants' view of the significance of their own pronunciation, – similarly to the evaluation of others' accent – comprehensibility was also a key factor and exposure proved to be likewise influential in the formation of their own accent. However, there is some indication that the participants' own pronunciation is linked to their identity and their desired self-image. Firstly, the learners in the study invariably reported that being understood when communicating in English was of paramount importance. Secondly, because of their appreciation of native speaker speech varieties, when being exposed to them, they tried to imitate what they perceived as native-like features. They also tended to mimic their teacher's idiolect if they considered it to be close to a native speaker variety. This was considered important because by deploying a native-like accent, the participants intend to signal that they are proficient, educated and confident users of English. Nevertheless, there is an element of conscious selection among accent varieties, which has a more personal significance to learners, reflecting their identity. Nearly all the learners managed to identify a person, typically from the media, who they considered to be the ideal model for pronunciation. The underlying reason for this was that they found this person or character appealing, somebody that they could relate to or regard as a role model. An example for this was Knuth's appreciation of a highly positioned expert in an American software company, whose presentations he regularly watched on YouTube. Since Knuth was planning to work in IT, he considered this person as a model, which was linguistically signalled by trying to emulate his pronunciation. This may also explain his strong preference for American English, mentioned above; this was also indicated by the participant's recorded pronunciation, which tended to contain distinctive features of American English, such as rhotic R-s and dark L-s. These findings suggest that pronunciation in an L2 can be used for expressing the speaker's identity. This supports Dörnyei's (2005) theory that a learner's ideal self is a strong motivating force in language learning, yet, contrary to Walker (2010), it implies that expressing one's identity through one's accent in ELF does not necessarily make reference to national identity but is more complex and personal. In fact, L1 accent features were disliked and stigmatised, as they were seen as indicators of imperfect language knowledge. Therefore, learners with attitudes

similar to those observed in the participants of the present investigation may be unlikely to consciously accept L1 accent features in their own pronunciation or in that of others.

Last but not least, an important concept which emerged from the accounts of participants was naturalness. This means that the participants reported that they tended to feel inhibited, anxious and sometimes even frustrated when they had to invest too much energy in their pronunciation, that is, trying to emulate what they regarded as the desirable native speaker variety, because it distracted them from conveying a message, made them less fluent and sometimes negatively affected their willingness to communicate in English. Also, they found it pretentious and irritating when another non-native speaker made too much effort to pronounce sounds in an emphatically native-like manner. On the other hand, extensive use of stereotypical L1 features, such as pronouncing the TH sound as [s] or pronouncing the letters of words with their Hungarian sound equivalents were also subject to negative comments. Thus, naturalness represented a balance between adopting characteristics of native English accents in order to sound proficient, and allowing for some degree of natural L1 sound transfer to facilitate production and make speaking in English uninhibited and unselfconscious. This suggests that the two main criteria for ELF pronunciation, intelligibility and expression of a national identity (Jenkins, as cited in Walker, 2010) may have to be reconsidered when applied in the Hungarian context in that the latter criterion may be less important, while an additional aspect, naturalness, seems to bear more relevance to Hungarian learners.

# 6 Conclusion

The two phases of the present study aimed to investigate the issues of comprehension and attitudes towards speech varieties of English in the context of Hungarian secondary school learners. The following section provides answers to the four research questions, which are repeated for the convenience of the reader.

1. *How successful are Hungarian EFL learners in comprehending speech varieties of English?*

The findings revealed that participating Hungarian learners' comprehension of English speech is heavily influenced by the speaker's pronunciation and unfamiliar accents can cause considerable difficulties. The recording featuring the RP accent, made for ELT purposes, was the most understandable, while naturally paced Hungarian and American speech proved to be more difficult. The Egyptian Arabic accent, displaying the most idiosyncratic features, posed the greatest challenge for the learners. From an ELT perspective, this is problematic because in the light of the global use of English, learners and users of English need to comprehend a wide range of different accents.

2. *What factors influence Hungarian EFL learners' success in comprehending speech varieties of English?*

According to the present data, exposure and phonological awareness were both necessary for the learners to develop linguistic proficiency which helped them understand different pronunciations. Understanding unfamiliar or difficult English speech varieties required a special mental effort from the listener, which could be aided by top-down

processing, receptive accommodation or "tuning-in", and acquainting oneself with problematic features.

3. *What attitudes do Hungarian EFL learners have towards speech varieties of English?*

As for the participating learners' attitudes towards speech varieties, they showed a general inclination to accept diversity in English, yet they judged actual deviations from familiar native speaker pronunciations unfavourably. While the comprehensibility of accents appeared to be a clear priority, it was not the most decisive factor when forming attitudes about the accents. Acceptance of speech varieties as correct was related to the likeability of the accent, which also had an influence on the evaluation of the speaker. If the presently revealed tendencies hold for other sections of the population, it can be said that because of their predisposition to favour native accents, Hungarian learners are likely to be motivated to adopt features of native varieties into their English speech. However, it may be necessary to raise the learners' awareness of the diversity in English accents, so that they might view non-native or unfamiliar varieties more favourably.

4. *What factors influence Hungarian EFL learners' attitudes towards speech varieties of English?*

The learners' attitudes to pronunciation seemed to be influenced by its comprehensibility and by the symbolic values which they attached to the speech varieties. The native-like pronunciation of L2 speakers was associated with high proficiency in English, intelligence and good education, while the judgement of speech varieties was linked to the learners' cultural affiliations and their desired self-image. Additionally, according to the participants, an essential feature of their own pronunciation was that it should be natural, enabling spontaneous and unselfconscious production of speech.

**6.1 Limitations of the study**

Finally, it has to be noted that the conclusions of the present study ought to be interpreted with certain qualifications. Firstly, neither the size, nor the non-representative nature of the sample allows for generalisations for the whole population of Hungarian secondary school learners. However, because of the strong tendencies identified, the findings might prove to be pertinent to learners in similar contexts for future research. Secondly, the four accents featuring in the study only constitute a minute fraction of the countless speech varieties of English worldwide. They are merely supposed to represent types of speech varieties based on categories which proved to exert an influence on learners' comprehension and attitudes relating to them, such as familiarity, unfamiliarity and native or non-native features of speech. Thus, similar empirical studies with different speech varieties may be needed to corroborate the present findings or complement them with further insights.

## 7 Implications for ELT in Hungary

Despite its limitations, the findings of the study point to a number of implications for language teaching in Hungary. Firstly, the comprehension of certain non-familiar speech varieties may pose serious difficulties to learners; therefore, it seems necessary to include accent varieties in listening materials. Also, it is equally important to develop an awareness of

the idiosyncrasies of accents, since mere exposure without reflection is insufficient for developing an allophonic tolerance necessary for coping with speech varieties in ELF. Secondly, the data reveals that the attitudes of the participants in the present sample are pervaded by ideas of native speakerism. They judge non-native accents unfavourably, which results in a negative evaluation of the speaker and his or her proficiency in English. This is in contrast with concepts of ELF, which emphasize that the role of English is to serve as a means of international communication between people of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Although the native speaker varieties of English may serve as models or reference points for learners, it is unjustifiable and unrealistic to treat native English as the norm or the ultimate goal in language teaching. This conception of English as a lingua franca may foster an approach to the language in ELT whereby learners no longer regard it as a foreign language, which belongs to its native speakers, but are encouraged to find their own voice and use English as their second language.

*Proofread for the use of English by: Christopher Ryan, Department of English Language Pedagogy, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest.*

# References

Andreasson, A. (1994). Norm as a pedagogical paradigm. *World Englishes, 13*(3), 395–409.

Arnett, J. J. (2002). The psychology of globalization. *American Psychologist, 57*(10), 774–783. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0003-066X.57.10.774

Balogh, E. (2008). Hungarian student language attitudes towards speakers of regional American English accent varieties. In E. Waniek-Klimczak (Ed.), *Issues in accents of English* (pp. 150–168). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Canagarajah, S. (2007). Lingua franca English, multilingual communities, and language acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal, 91*, 923–939. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00678.x

Canagarajah S. (2009). *Resisting linguistic imperialism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chuan, Q. (2010). Investigating L1 transfer in L2 speech perception: Evidence from Vietnamese speakers' perception of English vowel contrasts. *HKBU Papers in Applied Language Studies, 14*, 73–107.

Coupland, N. (2007). *Style: Language variation and identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dancey, C. P., & Reidy, J. (2003). *Statistics without maths for psychology*. London: Prentice Hall.

Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dörnyei, Z., Csizér, K., & Németh, N. (2006). *Motivation, language attitudes and globalisation.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Eckert, P. (1989). *Jocks & burnouts: Social categories and identity in the high school*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Holliday, A. (2005). *The struggle to teach English as an international language.* Oxford*:*
      Oxford University Press*.*

Illés, É., & Csizér, K. (2010). Secondary school students' contact experiences and
      dispositions towards English as an international language – a pilot study. *WoPaLP, 4*,
      1–22.

Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language.* Oxford: Oxford
      University Press.

Jenkins, J. (2003). *World Englishes.* London: Routledge.

Jenkins, J. (2009). Negotiating intelligibility in the ELT classroom: The role of
      accommodation. *Best of Language Issues: Articles from the first 20 years of
      NATECLA's ESOL journal.* London: LLU+.

Kachru, B. (Ed.). (2006). *The handbook of world Englishes.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition.* London:
      Prentice-Hall International.

Labov, W. (1966). *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Washington, D.C.:
      Center for Applied Linguistics.

Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

McKenzie, R. M. (2006). *A quantitative study of the attitudes of Japanese learners towards
      varieties of English speech: Aspects of the sociolinguistics of English in Japan*
      (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

Murray, H. (2003). Swiss English teachers and Euro English: Attitudes to a non-native
      variety. *Bulletin VALS-ASLA, 77,* 147–165.

Park, Y. H. (2003). A polymodel approach to ELT: Perspectives from EFL learners. *EA
      Journal, 21*(1), 31–51.

Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language.* London*:*
      Longman*.*

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism.* Oxford*:* Oxford University Press*.*

Podesva, R. J., Roberts, S. J., & Campbell-Kibler, K. (2002). Sharing resources and indexing
      meanings in the production of gay styles. In K. Campbell-Kibler, R. J. Podesva, S. J.
      Roberts, & A. Wong (Eds.), *Language and sexuality: Contesting meaning in theory
      and practice* (pp. 175–190). Palo Alto, CA: CSLI, Stanford University.

Seidlhofer, B. (2003). *A concept of international English and related issues: From 'real
      English' to 'realistic English'?* Strasbourg: Directorate of School, Out-of-School and
      Higher Education.

Seidlhofer, B. (2005). English as a lingua franca*. ELT Journal, 59*(4)*,* 339–341.
      https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/cci064

Trudgill, P. (2002). *Sociolinguistic variation and change.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University
      Press.

Walker, R. (2010). *Teaching the pronunciation of English as a lingua franca.* Oxford: Oxford
      University Press.

Wells, J. (1982). *Accents of English* (Vol. 1). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly, 28*(2), 377-389.
      https://doi.org/10.2307/3587438

Widdowson, H. G. (1997). EIL, ESL, EFL: Global issues and local interests. *World
      Englishes, 16*(1), 135–146. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-971x.00054

Widdowson, H. G. (2003). *Defining issues in English language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford
      University Press.

**APPENDIX A**

**The English translation of the questionnaire on general learner characteristics**

Please mark with an X to what extent the following statements are true for you:

| | Not true at all | Not really true | Partly true, partly not | Somewhat true | Completely true |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I make an effort to have good English pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 2. I look up the pronunciation of words. | | | | | |
| 3. I try to guess where a speaker is from based on their pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 4. I can guess where a speaker is from based on their pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 5. I am interested in the different pronunciations of English. | | | | | |
| 6. I can understand various pronunciations of English. | | | | | |
| 7. I can determine the features in which pronunciations differ. | | | | | |
| 8. I pay attention to the type of English pronunciation of speakers. | | | | | |
| 9. I do not care about someone's pronunciation as long as I can understand it. | | | | | |
| 10. It is good to speak to foreigners because I can get to know their pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 11. It is good to speak to foreigners because it is different to speak with native speakers than to learn their language in school. | | | | | |
| 12. It is a good experience to practice English with foreigners. | | | | | |
| 13. It is good to speak to foreigners because it motivates me to learn English. | | | | | |
| 14. It is good to speak to foreigners because if I cannot understand them, I will be more motivated to learn English at school. | | | | | |
| 15. It does not bother me if I do not understand every word in a text. | | | | | |
| 16. It does not bother me if I do not understand every word when I hear English. | | | | | |
| 17. It is enough if I understand the gist of a text. | | | | | |
| 18. I can enjoy films in English even if I do not understand some words. | | | | | |
| 19. I often hear English on TV. | | | | | |
| 20. I often hear English on the Internet (e.g.: on YouTube). | | | | | |
| 21. I often hear English in the cinema. | | | | | |
| 22. I often speak during English lessons. | | | | | |
| 23. I speak English outside school. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24. I speak in English with non-native speakers. | | | | | |
| 25. I speak in English with native speakers. | | | | | |
| 26. I often hear unusual pronunciation in Hungarian. | | | | | |
| 27. I often hear unusual pronunciation in English. | | | | | |
| 28. I often hear British English. | | | | | |
| 29. I often hear American English. | | | | | |
| 30. I often hear Hungarian English. | | | | | |
| 31. I often hear English spoken by other Europeans. | | | | | |
| 32. I often hear English spoken by non-Europeans (e.g. Asians, Africans, Arabs). | | | | | |
| 33. I often hear English spoken by non-native speakers. | | | | | |
| 34. It bothers me if someone speaks English with a Hungarian accent. | | | | | |
| 35. It bothers me if I hear an unknown pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 36. It bothers me if someone speaks English with a foreign accent. | | | | | |
| 37. I laugh inside when I hear somebody speak with a Hungarian accent. | | | | | |
| 38. It bothers me if someone's pronunciation is difficult to understand. | | | | | |
| 39. It is acceptable that learners of English have different pronunciations. | | | | | |
| 40. It is better if learners of English try to speak one particular pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 41. It is acceptable if people have different pronunciation in Hungarian. | | | | | |

42. Gender:     Female          Male

43. Age:

44. Level of English (underline your level)

Elementary; Pre-intermediate; Intermediate; Upper-intermediate; Advanced

**APPENDIX B1**

**The reading comprehension task for the first accent**


1/                                          SCORE: 14/___

You can find the tour guide in the office, which is opposite the (1)_____

He'd like to talk about arrangements for meals and hotel (2)_____

Breakfast is available from (3)_____ to 9:30 a.m.

The dining room is on the (4)_____ of the hotel.

The hotel provides (5)_____ to take on your trips.

Each evening, you need to tell the (6)_____ what you would like.

Supper is served from 7.00 until (7)_____

The restaurant room has an excellent view of the (8)_____,

and is well-known for its (9) _____

Evening meal is not in the hotel on (10)_____,

when there will be an exclusive (11)_____ trip.

(12)_____ are an extra charge

The squash court normally costs (13)_____

You need to collect a (14)_____ from reception.

**APPENDIX B2**

**The reading comprehension task for the second accent**


2/                                                      SCORE: 14/___

You can find the tour guide in the (1)_____

He'd like to talk about arrangements for meals and hotel (2)_____

Breakfast is available in (3)_____ from 7.00 a.m. to (4)_____

The Blue Room is on the (5) _____ of the hotel.

The hotel provides (6)_____ to take on your trips.

You can collect them at (7)_____.

Evening meals are served from (8)_____ until 9.00 p.m.

The restaurant has an excellent view of the (9)_____,

and is well-known for its (10) _____

Evening meal is not in the hotel on (11)_____,

when there will be an exclusive (12)_____ trip.

All costs are included but (13)_____ is an extra charge

You need to collect a key for the spa from 8.30 in the morning and after

(14)_____ in the evening.

**APPENDIX B3**

**The reading comprehension task for the third accent**

3/ SCORE: 14/____

You can find the tour guide in the (1)_____

Which is opposite the (2)_____

He'd like to talk about arrangements for meals and hotel (3)_____

The Blue Room is on the (4) _____ of the hotel,

which is next to the (5)_____

The hotel provides (6)_____ to take on your trips.

You can collect it at (7)_____.

The catering room has an excellent view of the (8)_____,

and is well-known for its (9) _____

On Friday, there will be a special (10)_____ trip.

Most costs are included, but (11) _____ is an extra charge.

The tennis court opens at (12)_____

You need to collect a key from (13)_____

You will see your tour guide (14)_____ later.

**APPENDIX B4**

**The reading comprehension task for the fourth accent**

4/                                                                      SCORE: 14/____

The name of the hotel is (1)_____.

The tour guide's office is (2)_____ the reception desk.

He'd like to talk about arrangements for meals and hotel (3)_____

Breakfast is available in (4)_____

The dining room is on the (5)_____ of the hotel.

Breakfast is the only meal which is (6)_____.

For (7) _____ the hotel provides sandwiches to take on your trips.

You can collect them at (8)_____

Evening meals are served in the (9)_____

There will be an exclusive trip on (10)_____

On that day, you will have dinner (11)_____

The swimming pool opens at (12)_____ and it closes (13)_____

In the morning, you need to collect a key before (14)_____

**APPENDIX C**

**The English translation of the follow-up questions after each task**

How would you characterise the pronunciation of the speaker in a few words?
Please identify if you can the characteristic features of this pronunciation (e.g. the pronunciation of certain sounds, words, or general features)
How would you characterise the speaker's personality based on his pronunciation?

Please mark with an X to what extent the following statements are true for you:

| | Not true at all | Not really true | Partly true, partly not | Somewhat true | Completely true |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The speaker's pronunciation is understandable. | | | | | |
| 2. I would be happy to have him as a colleague at an English-speaking workplace. | | | | | |
| 3. He knows English well. | | | | | |
| 4. I would be happy to attend the lessons of a teacher with a pronunciation like this. | | | | | |
| 5. I would be happy to hang out with him. | | | | | |
| 6. I would like to have a pronunciation like this. | | | | | |
| 7. I would be happy to speak in English with him. | | | | | |
| 8. I like his pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 9. I would be happy to practice my English with him. | | | | | |
| 10. He speaks English correctly. | | | | | |
| 11. He speaks with correct pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 12. I would be happy to attend the same English class with him. | | | | | |
| 13. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is a nice person. | | | | | |
| 14. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is reliable. | | | | | |
| 15. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is friendly. | | | | | |
| 16. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is good company. | | | | | |
| 17. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is cool. | | | | | |
| 18. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is intelligent. | | | | | |
| 19. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is kind. | | | | | |
| 20. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker works in a high position. | | | | | |
| 21. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is educated. | | | | | |
| 22. This pronunciation is familiar. | | | | | |
| 23. I have heard a pronunciation like this before. | | | | | |
| 24. I often hear pronunciation like this. | | | | | |
| 25. For me, this is the usual pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 26. I would be happy to learn to speak with this pronunciation. | | | | | |

**APPENDIX D**

**The English translation of the questions for the think aloud protocol and the interview[4]**

*1. Please say a few words about your English education. Where does your knowledge of English come from? How important has it been to you to learn English? How good do you consider yourself at English?*

*LISTEN &* (REFLECT) How difficult is it to understand the text and what are the difficulties?

*2. Where do you listen to spoken English?*
(during lessons, in films, on the Internet, at school, outside school, how often, what speakers)

*3. When you listen to English, how much attention do you pay to the speaker's pronunciation? What do you pay attention to?*
(you pay attention to comprehensibility, you try to guess where the speaker is from, you make inferences about the speaker's personality)

*4. What is your reaction if you do not understand a film because of the pronunciation: do you carry on listening so that you can pick something out or do you stop listening?*

*5. What can disturb you in someone's pronunciation?*
(If it is incomprehensible, sounds Hungarian, why do these things disturb you?)

(At this point, the participant is asked to have their pronunciation recorded)

*6. How often do you speak in English?*
(Who do you speak to?)

*7. How much attention do you pay to your pronunciation?*
(How do you improve it?; What pronunciation is your goal?; Is there a person such as a teacher, friend or celebrity whose pronunciation you consider to be a model?; What does "good pronunciation" mean to you?)

*8. Is it only comprehensibility that is important in your pronunciation or does it have further significance?*
(Do you think other people judge you based on how you speak?; What judgements do they make?)

---

[4] In italics are the main questions, followed by complementary questions or notes in brackets, which may be used for clarifying the main question or directing the focus of the interview.

**APPENDIX E**

**The transcript of the excerpt with the Egyptian Arabic accent[5]**

Good afternoon everyone # and welcome to the Palace Hotel.
My name is Peter and I am your tour guide. #
You can usually find me in the office # which is opposite the reception desk. #
If you have any problems, # please come and see me. #
Now, I'd like to tell you about arrangements for meals # and other hotel facilities #
Breakfast is available in the Green Hall # from 7.00 to 9.50 a.m. #
This is on the third floor of the hotel #, next to the lifts. #
Breakfast is the only meal # which is self-service. #
For lunch, we can provide sandwiches for you # to take on your trips. #
You need to tell your waitress # at dinner each evening # what you would like. #
They will be ready for you to collect # at 3 p.m. from the kitchen #
before you leave on your trip. #
Evening meals are served # from quarter past 6 until 9.00 p.m. # in the restaurant.
It has an excellent view of the sea # and is well-known for its curry dishes. #
All your evening meals # will be here in the hotel #
except for Thursday # when we have organised a special seaboat trip for you. #
On that day you will have dinner on board. #
Bed, breakfast and evening meal # are included in the cost of your holiday, #
but renting films is an extra charge. #
There's no charge for anything else # – the meals are all included. #
And finally, the hotel spa. #
All guests are free to use it # from when it opens at half past seven, #
until it closes at 10 at night. #
But before 8.30 in the morning #and after 7.15 in the evening#
you need to collect a key from the reception. #
The rest of the time a member of the staff is there. #
Well, that's all I have to say for now. # I'll see you at dinner later. #

---

[5]Pauses during the second listening are indicated by a hash mark.