

The English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey: Finland

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This paper reports on the findings of the English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey (EPTiES)¹, concentrating on responses from EFL teachers working in Finland (n=103). The survey was designed to gain research-based information about the state of English pronunciation teaching in European teaching contexts, and it included questions related to teacher training, teaching materials and methods, assessment of pronunciation, status of pronunciation teaching, and pronunciation model, among other things. These issues are now addressed based on the data provided by the Finnish respondents.

Keywords: pronunciation teaching, survey, English as a foreign language, EFL, teacher training, teaching materials, pronunciation assessment, pronunciation model

1 Introduction

In Finland, foreign language teaching has a strong emphasis on oral skills. Despite the emphasis, there has been speculation about a lack of specific pronunciation teaching at least in English language teaching (Lintunen 2004: 215). Research-based information about the topic has not been available except for few recent publications (Lintunen 2004; Tergujeff et al. 2011; Tergujeff 2012), most of which have concentrated on learners' reflections over the teaching they have received during their school years. Wider mappings of pronunciation teaching in Finland have not been conducted. World-wide, English pronunciation teaching has mainly been studied in English as a second language (ESL) settings: research has been conducted e.g. in Canada (Breitkreuz et al. 2001; Foote et al. 2011), the USA (Murphy 1997), Australia (Macdonald 2002), and Great Britain (Bradford & Kenworthy 1991; Burgess & Spencer 2000).

In Europe, the shared interest in gaining research-based information about English pronunciation teaching practices and teacher attitudes also in English as a foreign language (EFL) settings led to a joint project between researchers from ten countries. The product of this collaboration was the English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey (EPTiES), the selected results of which are presented in Henderson et al. (2012). In this collaboration, the author acted as representative of Finland by participating in designing the online questionnaire,

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and gathering and analysing the data from Finland. This paper presents selected results obtained from the Finnish data, aiming to offer a cross-section of issues around English pronunciation teaching in Finland. The focus is on topics related to teacher training, teaching materials and methods, assessment of pronunciation, status of pronunciation teaching, and the pronunciation model.

What is known about English pronunciation teaching in present-day Finland so far is from the classroom observations in Tergujeff (2012), and learner surveys in Lintunen (2004: 183–188) and Tergujeff et al. (2011). These previous studies suggest that the teaching is somewhat teacher-centred, but pragmatic in a sense that avoiding communication breakdown seems to be a priority for teachers. Pronunciation practice is mainly done at the segmental level, and training of intonation and rhythm is quite rare. From a learners' viewpoint, using phonetic symbols in teaching English pronunciation is not common: in Lintunen's (2004: 187) survey, first-year university students of English were asked whether they had been taught how to read transcription symbols at school, and as many as 50.0% of the respondents (n=108) said symbols had not been taught at all. Only 5.6% were of the opinion that *all* of the relevant symbols had been taught. The survey by Tergujeff et al. (2011) was also aimed at university students (n=207), and according to the results, 1% of the respondents had *often* received teaching of phonetic script, 19% *sometimes*, 55% *rarely*, and 25% *never*. In this study it was not specified whether the learners had been taught to recognise or write phonetic symbols; the respondents simply indicated how often the teaching they had received had made use of phonetic symbols. However, Finnish EFL textbooks have a strong emphasis on phonetic training (Tergujeff 2010). The pronunciation model in the textbooks is mainly British Received Pronunciation (RP) (in a broad sense, following Wells 2008: xix), but other varieties (native and non-native) are also introduced (Tergujeff 2009; Kopperoinen 2011).

This paper first introduces the English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey (EPTiES) project and its data gathering in Finland. In addition, some background information about the Finnish respondents is given before the results section. Results are discussed as they are presented, and a short summary and the concluding remarks are given at the end of the paper.

2 The survey

The EPTiES project is a collaborative effort by a group of researchers from all over Europe. Shared interest in gaining more information about English pronunciation teaching practices and teacher attitudes in Europe led to the designing of an online survey, which was open from February 2010 through September 2011. It consisted of 57 questions, some of which were formulated to reflect specific national contexts. The survey was administered using LimeSurvey. The researchers and their contacts invited teachers of English from their own country to participate. In Finland, participants were invited by the author first by an invitation at the website of The Association of Teachers of English in Finland and through the mailing lists of local member associations of The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland (SUKOL). To attract more participants, the schools of ten randomly chosen municipalities were contacted directly. In total, the survey attracted 843 respondents from 31

European countries. Data provided by participants from Finland were analysed by the author with the help of LimeSurvey, SPSS version 19 and Microsoft Excel.

The survey attracted 103 predominantly female (95.1%) respondents from Finland. Not all of them completed the survey, but all responses are considered for those parts of the questionnaire that were filled in. Almost all the respondents are non-native (99.0%) speakers of English, and teach English in the public (92.2%) sector. The respondents are highly educated: 94.1% had finished at least an M.A. degree. In Finland, qualified EFL subject teachers hold an M.A. degree in English with a teacher training programme/didactics as a minor subject in the degree. However, not all respondents meet the formal qualifications of an EFL teacher, which is fairly representative of the situation in Finnish schools. Temporary and part-time teaching posts are often taken by teachers without full formal qualifications, having still finished a B.A. degree like the formally unqualified teachers that participated in the present study. Age of the respondents varies from 24 to 67, with an average of 44.6 years. They have teaching experience from 0 to 44 years, and 15.9 years on average.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Teaching context and exposure to English

The respondents came quite evenly from different teaching contexts, i.e. primary (29.4%), lower secondary (31.4%), and upper secondary (27.5%) level. Only a few respondents indicated to teach in other contexts (vocational school, university, other). When asked about their learners' native language, almost all (99.0%) respondents reported having L1 Finnish-speakers as learners. However, 22.3% of the respondents listed native languages in addition to Finnish. These languages include Swedish (the second national language of Finland) and typical immigrant languages such as Russian, Somali and Estonian.

The respondents (n=96) indicated that their learners are exposed to English language in their daily environment. TV programmes were said to be subtitled by 94.8% of the respondents. Even higher percentage of respondents (97.9%) indicated that foreign language films are subtitled in cinemas. This certainly holds true: subtitling is the main means of translation for TV and cinema in Finland. Occasional voice-overs do occur, but dubbing is not practised with the exception of children's programmes and films.

Whether the learners watch English-language news channels such as the BBC World was unknown to 39.6% of the respondents, whereas 38.5% indicated that *some* do. Only 6.3% answered with a definite *yes*. Table 1 below presents the proportion of the respondents who estimated that their learners are *frequently* or *sometimes* exposed to English via certain media. It appears that according to teachers, being frequently exposed to English via subtitled TV programmes, subtitled films in cinemas and online resources is much more common than being exposed to English through live or phone interactions, or radio programmes.

Table 1. Proportion of teachers who estimate their learners are *frequently* or *sometimes* exposed to English through different media.

learners are exposed to English via	frequently	sometimes
subtitled TV programmes (n=96)	95.8%	2.1%
subtitled films in the cinema (n=96)	54.2%	33.3%
online resources (n=95)	32.6%	41.1%
live interactions with NSs or NNSs (n=95)	7.4%	44.2%
radio programmes (n=96)	7.3%	24.0%
phone interactions (n=95)	4.2%	13.7%

As to whether the learners have opportunities to practise English outside the classroom, 62.5% replied *yes* whereas 34.4% replied *some* (n=96). Most of the respondents replied in the negative (62.5%) or were unaware (27.1%) of whether their learners receive private tuition outside their regular classroom. There is not much demand for private language schools in Finland, since public education offers good opportunities for language learning. Besides studying the second national language (Swedish or Finnish), it is obligatory to study at least one foreign language. If a learner goes through the educational system until graduation from upper secondary school, in principle he or she has an opportunity to study up to five languages other than the mother tongue, depending on the school. (See Kangasvieri et al. 2011 for language study options in Finnish basic education; National core curriculum for upper secondary schools 2003: 108 indicates that one extra foreign language can be studied as an elective in upper secondary school.) In this light, it is understandable that taking lessons at private language schools is not popular among children and teenagers in Finland, and such language schools do not even exist in great numbers.

The questions related to exposure to English reveal that according to the teachers, Finnish EFL learners are frequently exposed to English in their daily environment. The exposure seems more likely to happen via television, films and the Internet than via personal contacts with other speakers, whether native speakers (NSs) or non-native speakers (NNSs) of English. Television and films offer a great deal of exposure compared to Central European countries, for example, because dubbing is generally not practised in Finland. In general, English is strongly present in the Finnish society (e.g. education, working life, leisure activities, media) despite the fact that it has no official status, and what is more, Finns have positive attitudes towards English (see Leppänen et al. 2011). English is the most commonly studied foreign language in the educational system: 99.6% of all upper secondary school graduates in 2009 had studied English, and begun these studies at the primary level (Kumpulainen 2010: 88–89), usually on the third grade at the age of nine. On the negative side, in recent years the trend has been for the learners to choose fewer elective language studies (Sajavaara et al. 2007; Kangasvieri et al. 2011), and this is partly the result of the popularity of English.

3.2 Teacher training

The respondents were also asked to evaluate the teacher training they received, particularly in regards to training in how to teach English pronunciation. The section included three questions, the first of which dealt with an overall evaluation of the training on a five-point scale (1 = extremely poor, 5 = excellent). On average, the respondents evaluated their training as 3.16 (n=81). The most frequent response was 4 (32.1%), but the whole scale was used: 16.0 % of the respondents evaluated their training as *extremely poor*, whereas 13.6% said it had been *excellent*.

Here it was found worth considering whether novice teachers and highly experienced teachers evaluate their teacher training differently. The assumption behind this is that novice teachers have gone through the training recently, whereas the highly experienced teachers received their teaching even decades earlier, and in between the training and emphases of it may have changed. For the comparison, participants were divided into age groups, and the average rating for teacher training was calculated for the youngest (up to 30-year-olds) and the oldest (from 60-year-olds) age group. Indeed, the comparison gives interesting results: the youngest age group (n=10) evaluates the training they received as 2.30 on average, whereas the oldest age group (n=10) give an average rating of 3.90. As this suggests a correlation between respondents' age and their evaluation of teacher training, these items were tested for Spearman's correlation. The correlation was found to be 0.201, $p < 0.072$, which signifies suggestive statistical significance. With more data this finding could have been significant.

These results give grounds to speculate that with respect to how to teach English pronunciation, teacher training in Finland may have changed for the worse. This may be connected with at least three issues: firstly, the rise of English as a global language, secondly, the rise of the communicative approach to language teaching, and thirdly, the overall decrease of the teaching of phonetics in Finnish universities. When the oldest age group went through teacher training in the 1970s, the pronunciation model for English was RP and everyone was expected to strive for that. In general, attitudes towards other varieties and accented speech were not as positive as nowadays, where the English language is extensively used as a lingua franca by non-native speakers. Recently, confusion about which model to choose for teaching may even have caused unease and reluctance in dealing with the issue in teacher training. With the rise of communicative language teaching (CLT) from the 1970s, most of the traditional pronunciation teaching methods were rejected as incompatible with teaching language as communication (Celce-Murcia et al. 2010: 11), and pronunciation teaching was generally neglected (see Fraser 2000: 33). Also, as emphasis may have changed from accuracy to fluency, the departments may have moved into integrated pronunciation teaching, and the names of units and courses may also have changed from including straightforward *pronunciation* to e.g. *oral skills and communication*. Thus, the youngest age group might not think they have received extensive pronunciation-specific teaching even if the courses have included it. It should also be noted that as decades have passed since the teacher training of the oldest age group, the respondents may not remember the

details very clearly and their recollections may sometimes be influenced by a sense of nostalgia.

In an open-ended question, the respondents described how much training they had received. Here it became clear that the respondents had generally received a substantial amount of training *in their own English pronunciation* but little in how to teach it. When they were asked to describe the content and/or style of the training, the respondents listed very traditional pronunciation teaching methods: phonetics and transcription, repetition and drills, discussion exercises, reading aloud, and listening tasks. Training in the language laboratory was mentioned frequently, and some respondents mentioned a theoretical orientation, or that the training consisted mainly of lectures. In the Finnish educational system, foreign language teachers are trained at departments of foreign languages studying for an M.A. degree in the language(s) they intend to teach. Didactics and teacher training offered by departments of education are included in their degree as a minor. In other words, teacher education is not a single unit but consists of two parts. In a system like this it is essential that both substance and didactics are addressed properly, but in regards to English pronunciation and the teaching of it, this does not seem to be the case in Finland based on the present study.

The suggestive statistical significance found between the respondents' age and rating of their teacher training calls for further research on how pronunciation is dealt with in teacher training at present and how it has changed over the years due to curriculum developments in teacher training programmes. On the whole, the respondents' answers to the questions about teacher training give the impression that EFL teachers in Finland are well trained in their own pronunciation, but they lack training in how to teach pronunciation to learners. This can be seen as a major shortcoming, because in order to teach any skill to learners, having the skill yourself is not sufficient but pedagogical know-how is of course needed as well (Burgess & Spencer 2000).

3.3 Status of English pronunciation teaching

In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of English compared to other languages and the importance of pronunciation in relation to other language skills. In the same section they were asked how much of their teaching time they devote to teaching pronunciation. Answers to these questions imply that pronunciation is seen as an important skill but not much time is spent on teaching it. The amount of pronunciation teaching was also found little in a previous study: in four case studies, classroom observations of 32 EFL lessons in Finland revealed that the teachers participating in the study (n=4) referred to pronunciation 3.5 times per lesson on average (corrected, pointed out pronunciation, had the learners do a pronunciation task). The average varied between the teachers from 0.4 to 7.8. (Tergujeff 2012.)

In the present study, the importance of English was rated extremely high on a five-point scale (1 = not important at all, 5 = extremely important): 4.65 (n=78) on average. However, the importance of pronunciation in relation to other language skills was rated lower but still relatively important: 3.90 on average (1 = the least important, 5 = the most important). The time devoted and the time teachers would like to devote to pronunciation teaching per week seem to be

relatively in balance. However, it seems that the teachers would like to devote a little more time to teaching pronunciation than they currently do. The majority of the respondents (84.8%, n=92) devote *up to 25%* of their teaching time to pronunciation. There are respondents who indicated that they do not devote time to pronunciation at all (3.3%), but also respondents who devote *up to 50%* (7.6%) or even *up to 75%* (4.4%). All the respondents (n=92) would like to devote *up to 25%* (66.3%) or more of their teaching time to pronunciation, and quite a few *up to 50%* (28.3%).

Table 2. Time devoted to teaching pronunciation per week as indicated by teachers, and time they would like to devote to teaching pronunciation (n=92).

teaching time	devote to pronunciation	would like to devote to pronunciation
0%	3.3%	0.0%
up to 25%	84.8%	66.3%
up to 50%	7.6%	28.3%
up to 75%	4.4%	3.3%
more than 75%	0.0%	2.2%

The formulation of the question was somewhat unsuccessful because the options did not offer enough scope for precision. For example, *up to 25%* was also chosen by the potential respondents who only devote one per cent of their teaching time to teaching pronunciation. Narrower categories (such as used in Foote et al. 2011) would have given more exact information, and the results may have indicated that there are also very small amounts of pronunciation teaching.

3.4 Pronunciation teaching materials

When it comes to teaching materials, the respondents' answers indicate a preference for traditional, printed materials over online materials. In the context of Finland, there is research-based information about how extensively textbooks are used in the teaching of foreign languages and mother tongue (Luukka et al. 2008), but it is not known how teachers use the textbooks and how much the textbooks determine the contents of teaching. The present study also suggests that textbooks are widely used by EFL teachers in Finland: 97.8% of the respondents indicated that they use textbooks, whereas all other teaching materials are used by a smaller proportion of the respondents (see Table 3 below). However, using websites (whether intended or not particularly intended for language learning) seems to be more common according to the present study than according to the survey of Luukka and colleagues (*ibid.*). Whereas 53% of the respondents (foreign language teachers, n=324) in Luukka et al. (*ibid.*: 95) claim to use web-based teaching materials in their teaching *often* or *sometimes*, in the present study 80.9% claim to use websites intended for language learning. Other websites are used *often* or *sometimes* by 43% of Luukka et al.'s respondents (*ibid.*), whereas the proportion of respondents using comparable materials in the present study is 83.3%.

Table 3. Use of different teaching materials as indicated by teachers.

teaching material	used by
textbooks (n=90)	97.8%
CDs (n=90)	96.7%
dictionaries (n=90)	95.6%
DVDs (n=90)	85.6%
websites not intended for language learning (n=90)	83.3%
websites intended for language learning (n=89)	80.9%
videos (n=90)	60.0%
pre-existing online modules or courses (n=89)	44.9%
social networking sites (n=90)	34.4%
cassettes (n=89)	33.7%
podcasts (n=89)	23.6%
blogs (n=89)	19.1%
forums (n=89)	19.1%
mailing lists (n=89)	13.5%
virtual world environments (n=89)	2.2%

Comparing the results of the present study with Luukka et al. (ibid.) gives reason to believe that in just a few years at the end of the 2000s, the use of websites in the teaching of English has increased (the majority of Luukka and colleagues' respondents were EFL teachers). This can be seen as development towards the use of a wider range of teaching materials in the perhaps textbook-centred teaching tradition in Finland. An interesting demonstration of the textbook-centredness of foreign language teaching in Finland are the learner beliefs according to which one learns to *speak* English by *reading books* (Aro 2009).

Even if textbooks are still the most commonly used source of teaching materials, the present study shows that a variety of sources are used by many teachers. The results suggest that using websites in teaching English has increased, and moreover, using websites that are not particularly intended for language learning are used by even more teachers than language learning websites. This raises an extremely interesting question about what type of websites are used by EFL teachers and *how*.

3.5 Use of language laboratory and sound players

When asked about having access to a separate language laboratory, only 37.8% (n=90) responded *yes*, meaning the following question about language laboratory type was answered by a relatively small sample of the respondents (n=34). Of those having access to a separate language laboratory, 50.0% have a cassette-operated laboratory, whereas 67.7% have a digital one and 55.9% a multimedia language laboratory. More than one option could be chosen here. Portable sound players are accessed by 76.7% of the respondents (n=90). Of these (n=69), 98.6% have access to a CD player, 66.7% have access to tape players, and 49.3% to digital sound players.

How frequently the respondents use a separate language laboratory and portable sound players is demonstrated in Table 4. Respondents who have the possibility to use a language laboratory seem to use it, but many of them not to a great extent. The ones who stated earlier that they do not have access to a language laboratory (62.2%) obviously answered *never* (62.2%) to this question. Only 13.3% use a language laboratory *frequently*. Portable sound players are used *frequently* by 70.0% of the respondents (n=90), whereas 21.1% indicated *never* using them. The majority (77.8%) of the respondents (n=90) feel they have sufficient access to technical help.

Table 4. Use of language lab and portable sound players as indicated by teachers (n=90).

how often do you use	language laboratory	portable sound players
frequently	13.3%	70.0%
sometimes	12.2%	2.2%
rarely	12.2%	6.7%
never	62.2%	21.1%

When asked about the use of a language laboratory, the respondents were not asked to specify what they use the laboratory for. As the Finnish matriculation examination taken by the candidates after finishing upper secondary school includes a listening comprehension test but no obligatory test on oral production (The Finnish Matriculation Examination; a separate oral skills test may be taken as part of a voluntary course focussing on oral language skills), it may be that the upper secondary school teachers mainly use the language laboratory for listening tasks instead of production activities.

To conclude, working in the language laboratory does not seem very common, and in fact not that many of the respondents have access to a separate language laboratory. However, the lack of a separate language laboratory is not necessarily considered a shortcoming, because varied pronunciation teaching can be given in a regular classroom. On one hand, though, recording learners' speech requires extra equipment (e.g. portable audio recorders) under regular classroom conditions, and the benefit of being able to record a whole class simultaneously (as in a language laboratory) is lost. On the other hand, working in a classroom setting instead of a language laboratory may help to create more authentic speaking activities and encourage the teacher to apply communicative teaching techniques.

3.6 Teaching phonetic symbols

It seems the majority of the teachers (n=92) in the present study do include teaching learners to recognise phonetic symbols in their objectives, whereas teaching learners to write them is not so common. When these things were asked in the survey, there were three alternative answers: *yes*, *no*, and *some of the symbols*. The frequencies are presented in Table 5 below. There is a major difference between the proportion of teachers teaching learners to recognise phonetic symbols and teachers teaching learners to write them. Whereas 72.8% of the respondents indicated that they teach their learners to recognise the

symbols, only 5.4% teach to write them. Teaching to recognise and write *some of them* was almost equally common (22.8% and 17.4%).

Table 5. Teaching phonetic symbols as indicated by teachers (n=92).

Do you teach phonetic symbols?	to recognise	to write
yes	72.8%	5.4%
no	4.4%	77.2%
some of them	22.8%	17.4%

The respondents of the present survey were also asked to explain why they choose or choose not to teach phonetic symbols. An analysis of these open-ended questions reveals a variety of reasons for teaching the recognition and/or the writing of symbols. Most of the comments (n=75) about teaching to recognise phonetic symbols were very positive, as can be expected based on the fact that 72.8% of the respondents indicated this is in their objectives. Among the most frequent comments were that knowing how to read the symbols helps the learners in their pronunciation, and that knowing the symbols helps them to learn on their own, e.g. with the help of dictionaries. Also, it was frequently mentioned as *essential* in language learning. The respondents also seem to think that at least some of the learners are interested in learning the symbols and even find studying them fun. In addition, they find it helps the learners to distinguish written and spoken language, e.g. *“To aid in understanding the difference between written and spoken language”* (#773, Q34).

Teaching learners to recognise phonetic symbols was also motivated by an indication that EFL textbooks introduce the symbols and provide material for practising the symbols, e.g. *“The phonetic symbols are included in our study book in every chapter”* (#618, Q34). The strong foothold of phonetic symbols in Finnish EFL textbooks was discovered in a previous study (Tergujeff 2010), and the respondents' comments here give grounds to speculate that textbooks do guide teaching practices.

Those who did not comment on the reasons why they teach their learners to recognise phonetic symbols, concentrated on justifying why they do not teach them. Quite a few were of the opinion that young learners (especially at primary school level) do not need to be taught phonetic symbols. One of the reasons for this was said to be that it would be too difficult and confusing for them, e.g. *“Some students already have difficulties with regular spelling so they get very confused and they don't seem to get the idea anyhow”* (#764, Q34). Another reason for not teaching the recognition of phonetic symbols was lack of time. Teaching only some of the symbols was also mentioned in several comments. The symbols chosen for teaching are sounds introduced in textbooks, *“the most frequent ones”* (#759, Q34), or as in most cases, sounds that do not occur in Finnish, e.g. *“I think it's necessary to know the symbols that are not part of the Finnish phonetic system (e.g. sounds for 'th')”* (#599, Q34).

Whereas recognising phonetic symbols was considered a useful, even essential, skill by many of the respondents, being able to write the symbols was considered quite the opposite. The most frequent topic in the open-ended question about teaching learners to write phonetic symbols (n=74) was that it is unnecessary, e.g. *“-- I think writing phonetic symbols is necessary only for teachers”*

(#753, Q36). In addition, it was frequently specified that recognising the symbols is enough. Here as well, it was frequently mentioned that this sort of activity is not suitable for young learners. In fact, not teaching learners how to write phonetic symbols was more common amongst respondents teaching at primary level compared to lower and upper secondary level: 80.0% of the respondents teaching at primary level indicated that they do not teach the writing of symbols, whereas for lower secondary level teachers the rate was 62.5% and for upper secondary school teachers 67.9%. Lack of time and confusion among learners were also mentioned frequently. In the comments related to learners getting confused, the respondents mainly referred to spelling. Moreover, some of the comments were quite harsh, e.g. *“What's the point? I think that they have enough problems with spelling as it is”* (#557, Q36). The issue of teachers' priorities also came up regularly: several comments included the view that there are more important things to teach, and therefore teaching learners to write phonetic symbols is left to one side.

What is striking about the results is that there seems to be a very strict line between teaching learners to recognise symbols and teaching learners to write them: teachers, especially at primary level, felt that their learners do not benefit from knowing how to produce phonemic script. On the contrary, many teachers felt that learning to write phonetic symbols will exacerbate spelling difficulties. However, some respondents were of the opinion that learning to recognise phonetic symbols helps the learners to distinguish spoken language from written language. The present data confirm that using phonetic symbols for pronunciation teaching is seen as a controversial method, and it may come back to the fact that learners are different and not all methods benefit all learners. However, Lintunen's (2004) study suggests a correlation between skills in phonemic transcription and English pronunciation skills in adult learners. Moreover, the majority of the participants in his study were of the opinion that learning phonemic script had benefitted their pronunciation (*ibid.*: 185–186).

3.7 Ear training

Ear training is seen as part of pronunciation practice due to the close relationship of speech perception and speech production. Even though there is disagreement on how this relationship functions, the existence of it has not been questioned. (See e.g. Diehl et al. 2004; Baars & Gage 2007: 212.) What is meant by ear training in the context of pronunciation teaching is listening tasks that focus on pronunciation. Traditionally these have been sound discrimination exercises, but as Morley (1991) suggests, a wider range of listening foci could benefit learners. Instead of identifying individual sounds, the focus could just as well be on suprasegmental features such as stress or intonation. Moreover, listening tasks can be used to raise awareness about different varieties of spoken English (*cf. accent addition* in Jenkins 2000: 208–212).

In the present study, the term “ear training” presumably caused confusion among some of the respondents. When asked whether the respondents (n=92) use ear training, a substantial proportion responded *I don't know* (26.1%). It may be that these respondents have not been entirely sure what is meant by ear training. *Yes* was chosen by 40.2% of the respondents, whereas 27.2% indicated to use *some* ear training. No ear training is used by only 6.5% of the respondents.

Table 6. Use of ear training as indicated by teachers (n=92).

Do you use ear training?	proportion of respondents (n=92)
yes	40.2%
some	27.2%
no	6.5%
I don't know	26.1%

It is a shame that ear training probably was not a familiar concept to all teachers, which led to approximately one-fourth of the respondents indicating they do not know whether they use it in their teaching or not. A better formulation of the questions would have been “Do you use listening tasks in pronunciation teaching?”, for example. Traditionally listening tasks have a strong foothold in foreign language teaching in Finland, but the focus is usually on contents, not on form. This type of training is particularly common in upper secondary schools because the matriculation examination in foreign languages includes a listening comprehension test, as discussed above. Hence, if content-oriented listening tasks are done in any case, it would not be difficult to bring in some pronunciation-oriented listening as well. Surely the same speech samples could be used with different questions, and even if the content questions were kept, the teacher might want to add a few questions about a pronunciation issue.

3.8 Pronunciation model

The respondents were asked to estimate their learners' aspiration to have a native or near-native level of English pronunciation. This was done on a five-point scale (1 = do not at all aspire to sound native or near-native like, 5 = aspire 100% to sound native or near-native like), and the average result was 3.17 (n=78).

For both receptive and productive training, RP and General American (GA) seem to be most frequently used by teachers (n=76). When asked about receptive work, 94.7% of the respondents said they use RP, and 76.3% said they use GA. For productive work, RP was mentioned by 93.4% and GA by 63.2% of the respondents. The option of ‘a type of International English’ (IE) was interestingly the third-most frequent among the varieties used by teachers, both for receptive (42.1%) and productive (19.7%) work. The extensive use of this variety raises a question about what the respondents understand by it. Do they regard it as any second/foreign language variety, e.g. English spoken by Finns, or do they see it as a codified, culture-free variety like the one introduced in e.g. Jenkins (2000)?

For receptive work, a variety of different models was frequently chosen by respondents, e.g. Australian English (35.5%), Irish English (26.3%), Scottish English (23.7%), and Canadian English (21.1%). This is perhaps because of the effect of the EFL textbooks that are used in Finland: recent studies have shown that the textbooks' audio CDs include the use of various native and non-native varieties (Tergujeff 2009; Kopperoinen 2011). For productive work, it was very rare to choose a model other than RP, GA or IE.

When it comes to learners' general preference as indicated by the teachers (n=76), the same three models (RP, GA, IE) were frequently chosen by the respondents. However, GA was the most frequently chosen option both for

receptive (86.8%) and productive (78.9%) work, whereas RP did not receive as high a degree of popularity (65.8% for both receptive and productive work). IE was indicated to be generally preferred by learners by 15.8% of the respondents for receptive work, and 19.7% for productive work. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Teachers' use and learners' general preference for pronunciation model as indicated by teachers (n=76).

pronunciation model	teachers use for receptive tasks	learners prefer for receptive tasks	teachers use for productive tasks	learners prefer for productive tasks
RP	94.7%	65.8%	93.4%	65.8%
GA	76.3%	86.8%	63.2%	78.9%
IE	42.1%	15.8%	19.7%	19.7%

The present study suggests that according to teachers, Finnish EFL learners strive for a (near) native-like English pronunciation, at least to some extent. This is good to have in mind when debating the importance of pronunciation teaching in schools. Now that the status of English as a global language has made attitudes towards non-native varieties and accented speech more tolerant, teachers may feel pronunciation teaching is less necessary, and find it difficult to justify their choice of pronunciation model. According to the results, the choice of pronunciation model is traditional: most teachers use RP and/or GA in their teaching, RP still being notably more popular. However, there is a discrepancy between what models the teachers use and what the teachers say their learners generally prefer: in the learners' general preference, GA is more popular than RP or any other model. Then again, this is not surprising given the American dominance in popular culture, which often plays an important role in the lives of teenagers and pre-teens. Many of the respondents have presumably been taught RP themselves, so RP is a natural choice for pronunciation model. Finnish EFL textbooks deserve to be acknowledged for offering material for introducing other varieties as well. As mentioned above, various varieties are used by the respondents for receptive tasks, and this is surely due to textbooks including these varieties (Tergujeff 2009, Kopperoinen 2011).

3.9 Pronunciation assessment

According to the respondents (n=84), assessing pronunciation during the course (45.2%) is more common than assessing only at end of the course (3.6%) or using a combination of continuous and end-of-course assessment (33.3%). Diagnostic assessment is used by only 22.6% of the respondents. When asked about tasks used in diagnostic, formative and evaluative assessment, *reading aloud (with or without preparation time)* was the most frequently chosen option in all categories. Other frequently chosen options were *oral performances, listening & questions, and oral exams in pairs or groups*. The latter was used by a significantly greater proportion of respondents for evaluative assessment (52.4%) than for formative (32.1%) or diagnostic (14.3%) assessment. Use of written work, e.g. transcription, was marginal in all categories (8.3%-10.7%). Only 22.6% of the respondents

stated their assessment is linked to an established scale (national or international, e.g. the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001)). When asked to which scale their assessment is linked, 79.0% of these respondents (n=19) referred to CEFR.

Table 8. Tasks used in pronunciation assessment as indicated by teachers (n=84).

method	diagnostic	formative	evaluative
written work, e.g. transcription	8.3%	10.7%	8.3%
oral performances	23.8%	64.3%	50.0%
individual oral exams	8.3%	17.9%	32.1%
oral exams in pairs or groups	14.3%	32.1%	52.4%
listening & questions	17.9%	46.4%	35.7%
reading aloud	36.9%	70.2%	58.3%
other	9.5%	13.1%	9.5%
I don't know	3.6%	0.0%	2.4%
none of the above	60.0%	16.7%	19.0%

In Finland, teaching at all levels is regulated by national core curricula (e.g. National core curriculum for basic education 2004; National core curriculum for upper secondary schools 2003). These curricula include a Finnish version of the CEFR assessment scale. In this light, it is surprising how small a proportion of the respondents said to base their assessment on an established national or international scale.

4 Conclusion

Based on the present sample, the study offers a cross-section of Finnish EFL teachers' views on various topics around their English pronunciation teaching practices and teacher training. The most interesting results are obtained from questions around teacher training, teaching materials, teaching phonetic symbols, and pronunciation model. The survey suggests that teacher training in Finland does not give EFL teachers appropriate tools to teach pronunciation, but the training concentrates on their own pronunciation skills. Moreover, there may have been a change into a negative direction, as younger teachers seem to appreciate their training less than more experienced ones. When it comes to teaching materials, textbooks and other traditional materials are still most commonly used by teachers, but the frequency of teachers saying that they use websites is also very high. The teachers also seem to have found ways of making use of websites that are not particularly intended for language learning. Based on the present study, teaching phonetic symbols seems to be a controversial issue in pronunciation teaching. The respondents gave opposing views in their answers to open-ended questions about teaching learners to recognise and write phonetic symbols, some of them regarding it an essential skill to a language learner and some treating it as a cause of confusion in the learning process. The choice of pronunciation model by the respondents reveals the influence of textbooks: for receptive tasks the respondents use the varieties which have been found to be included in Finnish EFL textbooks. Overall, the most commonly

used variety for both receptive and productive tasks is RP, even though according to the respondents the learners generally prefer GA.

To reflect on the study, the survey was possibly too lengthy (only part of the questions is dealt with in this paper), the consequence of which was a substantial amount of non-completed responses. Also, as taking the survey was voluntary, it attracted respondents who for one reason or another were interested in taking part. In this particular case, the respondents may have been more interested in pronunciation teaching than the average (more than one-fourth indicated that they would like to devote up to 50% of their teaching time to teaching pronunciation). Despite the survey's limitations, I feel that it is a valuable addition to the work already done within English pronunciation teaching research in Finland. As part of a European collaboration, it also contributes to a wider, international mapping of English pronunciation teaching practices and teachers' views.

Endnotes

- ¹⁾ The online survey that was used to gather the data for the present study is a product of the author's collaboration with Alice Henderson (Université de Savoie; project leader), and Una Cunningham (Stockholm University), Lesley Curnick (Université de Lausanne), Rias van den Doel (University of Utrecht), Dan Frost (Université de Savoie), Alexander Kautzsch (University of Regensburg), Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova (University of Skopje), David Levey (University of Cádiz), Deirdre Murphy (Trinity College Dublin), and Ewa Waniek-Klimczak (University of Łódź) (in alphabetical order).

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