

/tu pi:/ or not /tu pi:/

Teachers' attitudes and approaches to teaching
English pronunciation in Finnish
upper secondary schools

Bachelor's Thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract Viimevuosien aikana englannin ääntämisen opetus on Suomessa noussut tärkeäksi osaksi kielen oppimista uuden lukion opetussuunnitelman johdosta. Koska dialogisuutta on uudessa opetussuunnitelmassa painotettu, on ääntämisen opetuskin päässyt nostamaan päätään isommaksi osaksi Englannin kielen opettamista. Tähän on myös vaikuttanut ajatus kansainvälisemmästä kielikompetenssista, joka ajaa ajatusta siitä, että oppilaan on hyvä selviytyä kommunikatiivisissa tilanteissa niin hyvin kuin mahdollista, tässä globalisoituvassa maailmassa. Jotta tämä tavoite voitaisiin saavuttaa, on huomiota kiinnitetty ääntämisen opettamiseen, materiaalipaketien kehittämiseen, ja ylipäätään puhumista kannustavien tehtävien lisäämiseen. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää mitä lukio-opettajat ajattelevat ääntämisen opetuksesta, mitä he pitävät tärkeänä ääntämisen opettamisessa, miten he opettavat ääntämistä, ja mitä näkemyksiä heillä on natiivimaisen ääntämisen tavoittelusta ja ymmärrettävyyteen pyrkimisestä. Vaikka tutkimusta ääntämisestä on paljon, on sen painotus ollut enemmän opiskelijoiden mielipiteissä ja näkemyksissä, joten tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tuoda esille opettajien näkökulmia. Tutkimukseeni osallistui kolme lukion englannin opettajaa kahdesta lukiosta Keski-Suomen ja Pirkanmaan alueilta. Tutkimus toteutettiin puolistrukturoituna haastatteluna, joka sisälsi avoimia kysymyksiä kolmesta isommasta pääaiheesta, jotka olivat tärkeät osat ääntämisen opetuksessa, opettajien menetöt ääntämisen opetuksessa, ja natiivisuus sekä ymmärrettävyys. Tutkimus toteutettiin marraskuussa 2018. Tuloksista selvisi, että ääntämiseen tarkoitetut tehtävät ovat monipuolistuneet ja lisääntyneet, ja opettajat kokivat tärkeäksi, että ääntämistä opetetaan positiivisella asenteella, keskittymällä yleiskuvaan eikä yksittäisiin virheisiin. Opettajat myös kokivat, että ymmärrettävä ääntäminen on tärkeämpää kuin natiivimainen, ja että tärkeintä olisi oppia pois ralienglannista ja oppia ääntämisen perusteet. Opettajat nostivat esille myös teknologisoitumisen kasvun, joka on yleistynyt tehtäväpaketeissa ja josta on tullut opetusta helpottava osa jokapäiväisessä opetuksessa. Tulokset antavat pienen vilauksen siitä millaisella tavalla englannin ääntämistä opetetaan, mutta laajempien johtopäätösten tai hyötyjen saamiseksi olisi tutkimusta tehtävä suuremmalla skaalalla.	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation teaching is a topic that has been out of the spotlight in regard to teaching English in Finnish schools. Only in the past few years has it begun to be noticed in terms of requirements in the syllabus and in terms of the matriculation examination, which is where the upper secondary school students are most rigorously tested in their skills in English, apart from their pronunciation. There has been talk of adding a pronunciation task to the matriculation examination, whereas for now there are only written assignments and an oral comprehension part. It would seem that pronunciation is finally beginning to get the attention it arguably deserves.

This shift in priority could be attributed to the emergence of the concept of global Englishes (Pennycook 2006) – which will be discussed more later – and the ever-growing reach of the English language. Since English has become a lingua franca, it has arguably become paramount to teach students to be able to become understood in this global world where English is the one language everyone seems to speak. Whether the wish to give more importance to teaching pronunciation comes from the aforementioned growing need to be understood or from some other reason, the change can be seen in the Finnish syllabus.

It would seem that much of the previous research regarding the teaching of English pronunciation has been focused on the student's perspective, which is why I thought it pertinent to find out what the teachers thought about the matters. That is why the purpose of this thesis is to shed light on the teachers' views on the issues of teaching English pronunciation in this world where nativeness seems to not be as sought out, and global Englishes are becoming the future. The focus of this thesis will be on the way Finnish upper secondary school teachers teach English pronunciation and what their thoughts are on the issues of global Englishes and of nativeness. This thesis hopes to find how a teacher might approach these issues in their day-to-day teachings and to give some aid to teacher trainees in order to further their own views on teaching pronunciation.

2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The languages of today's world are eclipsed by English in terms of speakers and influence. Therefore, it is important to assess how English is being taught nowadays, and to see if there has been progress or change in the zeitgeist of teaching English pronunciation with the advent of English as a lingua franca and global Englishes (Pennycook 2006). This chapter will outline some of the previous research in teaching pronunciation in today's world, and in nativeness versus intelligibility, to build a foundation over which the rest of this thesis will be built.

2.1 Teaching pronunciation in today's world

Pronunciation has begun to surface as a topic of discussion in the era of globalisation and English as a lingua franca. Due to global Englishes (Pennycook 2006) growing evermore, the topic of nativeness and intelligibility has surfaced (Bøhn 2017), with regard to teaching English as a second (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL). The state of English pronunciation teaching has been under scrutiny and research in a large-scale study by Henderson et al. (2012), which surveyed a total of 843 teachers, of which 481 completed the survey. The teachers were from seven countries and represented teachers from all levels of the private and public sectors. In the study it was found that many teachers chose to use RP (Received Pronunciation) in their teaching, but that their students preferred General American (GA) more. (Henderson et al. 2012:20). The teachers also thought the importance of teaching pronunciation to be 3.77 out of 5 on average (Henderson et al. 2012:11). However, the Finnish participants answered that they devoted only up to 25% of their time to teaching pronunciation, but as Tergujeff (2012:35) points out, the scope of precision on the questions was not enough, since up to 25% could mean every-thing from devoting 1% to devoting 25%. The statistics of the importance of teaching pronunciation and actual teaching pronunciation seem to point out what Tergujeff (2016) states in the introduction to her study. She states that pronunciation teaching has been seen as the "Cinderella" of language learning, with most of the time being devoted to other aspects of language teaching. Even though there seems to be a desire to teach, there just might not be time for it.

2.2 Nativeness versus Intelligibility

There has been discussion about whether English ought to be taught with native-like pronunciation as the goal or should there be an embrace of the global varieties of English, as long as the language spoken is understood by others. These are some issues discussed in a 2017 study on assessing pronunciation in an EFL context by Bøhn. From interview questions and questionnaire answers the data regarding nativeness was contradictory, since there was much disparity between the answers. Some teachers thought the pursuit of native-like pronunciation to be non-mandatory, while others said they would not give a perfect grade for someone who was not close to a native speaker's accent. Some statements also maintained that local varieties of English need to be accepted, but that a native-like accent is still preferable, while not a necessity. (Bøhn 2017:60-61, 64-65).

The second research question in Bøhn's (2017) study was about intelligibility. The question was about how intelligibility affects assessment of pronunciation. The answers to this question included more unified responses. The respondents to both the interviews as well as the questionnaires stated that they would mark someone down if their speech was hard to understand, which supports the notion that intelligibility plays an important role in the teachers' assessment of pronunciation. Overall the teachers in the study leaned more towards intelligibility, with some pronunciation features being held more important in terms of grading, for example word and sentence stress. The participants disagreed on the issue of nativeness, as some held it in a higher regard than others. (Bøhn 2017:61-66).

Though there has been a lot of discussion in the field about how in general such matters as intelligibility and "perfect" pronunciation are perceived in teaching, there exist also studies that actually discuss the social aspects of the opposite idea, the reality of non-native speech and 'sounding foreign' in society. A great example of this is the work by Moyer (2013) which discusses social aspects related to things such as accent, non-native speech and the difficulties that a foreign language learner faces in terms of pronunciation. Moyer (2013) states that even the smallest of mispronunciations and issues in word stress etc. can cause the listener to spot one as a non-native speaker. (Moyer 2013: 50). This can have a negative impact on the individual for example in the case of being an immigrant and wanting to assimilate to the surrounding society. In a prior study by Moyer

(2004), she brought forth an example of two Turkish men who had migrated to Germany at an early age, but only one of them had achieved a native-like accent. This was due to differing levels of desire to assimilate to the surrounding society, since the one who did not attain native-like level of pronunciation had negative attitudes towards German culture in general (Moyer 2004: 115-118). This is an interesting idea because a similar case could be perceived in Finland in the case of *pak-koruotsi*, ‘forced Swedish’, which means the study of mandatory Swedish in Finnish schools. Since there are negative attitudes towards the language and the notions of uselessness attributed to it, similar effects could take place as in the study by Moyer (2004), that because of social reasons, students are inhibiting their will to gain native-like pronunciation in Swedish, even if the resources are present.

3 KEY CONCEPTS AND THEORY

This chapter will outline important concepts of assessing and teaching pronunciation in Finnish upper secondary schools. From the perspective of the present study the most important form of assessing a student's language skills is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which is the most used model for assessing language competence in Finland. In this section I will also pay attention to the aspects presented in the previous research section which are also important to this study: nativity, intelligibility, and how pronunciation is being taught. The second part of this section is going to focus on the description of pronunciation skills in the newest upper secondary school syllabus in Finland.

3.1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

Common European Framework of Reference – will be referred to as CEFR – is a set of codes, a widely used European guideline for language learning and teaching. It is commonly used as a support for various language syllabuses, national curricula and examinational materials (CEFR 2001: 1). The main focus of CEFR (2001) is to provide aid in learning, teaching, and assessment of languages in the European countries. This helps to create a common starting point, from which the learning of language originates. Closely linked to this are the general competences that are essential to communicative situations (ibid.: 1). The upcoming sections will outline briefly the idea of general competence in CEFR, and what is the norm of individual learning according to CEFR.

As mentioned before, CEFR aims to provide an extensive, yet general overview of language learning, assessment, and teaching. Since the point of a common framework is for it to be generalisable to a multitude of scenarios, the basis of CEFR is on an idea that language learners act as “social agents” who perform a variety of different tasks in different settings to gain their individual goals of language (CEFR 2001: 1-4).

According to CEFR (2001), the general competences of a learner can be related to four different sections: *knowledge*, *skills*, *existential competence*, and *ability to learn*. *Knowledge* is generally

shared between groups of people and all information from academic contexts to everyday life communicative situations are essential and relevant to the basics of language learning. Though it is not an easy process to link together the new and prior knowledge, they both support each other in terms of modification and reconstruction. (CEFR 2001: 11) Related to this is the set of present *skills* that the learner possesses, all of which have already created certain cognitive learning strategies for an individual to utilise also in language learning activities. For example, using some machine or a vehicle considers similar thought and learning processes that language learning requires. Thus, prior skills offer an asset acquiring new ones, such as language competences. The third aspect of competence is *existential competence*, which can be described as a combination of one's personality and character traits, and one's views and attitudes concerning social situations and other interactions, etc. The reason these aforementioned traits are of any note to such a framework is because of the consideration that said traits are a part of one's abilities and general competence, and as such affect - and are possibly modified through - language learning. The last of the four aspects of competence is the *ability to learn*, which comprises of the previous competences, and can be thought of as a sort of ability to discover new knowledge, and deal with the unknown. The application of one's *ability to learn* varies even on an individual level depending on the contexts they find themselves in, and these variations should not be considered as fixed, but as plastic, akin to learning styles. (CEFR 2001: 11-13).

Since this study focuses on an aspect of oral production, pronunciation, it is evident to discuss here the communicative language competence section of CEFR, or so to say the construction of oral language proficiency in it. In here, I shall go through the main components of communicative competence and describe them briefly.

According to CEFR (2001), communicative competence is usually constructed of three parts: *linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic*. By linguistic competence, CEFR refers to all the generic "systems" of language, which include knowledge of lexical, phonological and syntactical aspects (CEFR 2001: 13). From the point of view of communicative language learning, linguistic competence does not only constitute the quality aspects of learning but also the cognitive parts of it, meaning the ways that an individual memorises, stores, accesses and associates with the knowledge. The second dimension of the competence is the sociolinguistic competence, which

refers to the different sociocultural aspects of language utilisation. These aspects become evident in all social, communicative situations between participants, especially those of different cultures of origin. Such aspects may influence the communicative situation greatly and thus all language learners should be sensitive to them. These aspects include e.g. humour, sexes, classes, rules of politeness and different norms. Lastly, the pragmatic competence concerns the meaning-making process of language learning, the sort of functional use of language. It refers to the knowledge of such matters as cohesion, coherence and discourse, all of which are important part of the production of different linguistic acts. Also, such flavours of language such as irony and parody, are a part of it and are related to the cultural sensitivity of language use. (CEFR 2001: 13).

Though CEFR offers distinctive and clear descriptions of language use and learner processes, one must note that context, situational factors and social phenomena all affect language learning greatly. The codes for languages can vary between different groups of people, different cultures, even between different learning programmes, depending on their chosen function or set goal. Social aspects and norms that were mentioned earlier cannot be under-emphasised here either. Language, and its learning, is an international and sociocultural phenomenon where settings can change communicational norms and ideologies a lot.

In other words, as language learners are exposed to different language-related events or activities, they aim towards specific results by utilising their present skills. So to say, different actions for “language learning” are sparked by various contexts that offer them engagement in language activities. However, it can be noted that all language use is affected by various dimensions of language, such as strategy, tasks, texts, general competences, language processes, to cite a few. (CEFR 2001: 9).

3.2 English pronunciation teaching in Finnish school context

The newest syllabus for Finnish upper secondary schools was published in June 11, 2015 (Opetushallitus 2015) by the Ministry of Education in Finland, and it was taken into operation in August of 2016. The main focus - relevant to this thesis - of the new syllabus was to improve the dialogical aspects of language teaching.

From the perspective of oral competence, the core feature of the new syllabus is the multi-modality of learning a language. Considering the teaching of foreign languages, the focal points are language learning on a global scale, the role of a language as a tool in intercultural communication, and overall the ability to navigate the global world and one's own abilities in functioning in said world. All of these aspects are strengthened by the syllabus' emphasis on dialogicity.

Though the new syllabus emphasises the importance of dialogicity, there does not seem to be much change in terms of teaching pronunciation and oral skills inside the descriptions of English courses. The one visible notion found was a sentence about how all of the courses ought to versatily emphasise both spoken and written communication, although the emphasis is entirely dependent on the course (Opetushallitus 2015: 110). There are no mandatory courses on pronunciation or oral skills, but there is one advanced course - which is voluntary - on strengthening the student's ability to speak English fluently.

Thus, it can be said that by far the pronunciation part of oral communication has not received a special place in the newest syllabus, although there has been some heated discussion around the importance of pronunciation and the addition of phonetical tasks into teaching, to enhance the learning of students' oral skills.

4 PRESENT STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate English teachers' attitudes and approaches to teaching English pronunciation in a Finnish high school setting. There has not been much research done on this particular demographic, apart from the previously mentioned research by Bøhn (2017), since mostly the research seems to have been focused on the students' perspective. Also, the large-scale studies done on this topic have focused on a variety of different school levels, not just high school level, which will be the focus of this study. Due to the small amount of research done from the teachers' perspective I was interested to find out what their points of view are on the issues of English pronunciation, global Englishes, and nativeness. I wanted to see what their opinions were in a larger scale: their approaches to teaching pronunciation, the importance they place on teaching pronunciation, and their thoughts on the aim of sounding native. To answer these questions, I will focus on three research questions (RQ's) that include these themes:

1. *According to English teachers, what is important in the teaching of pronunciation?*
2. *What methods do English teachers use when teaching pronunciation?*
3. *What are the teachers' views considering the goal to sound native in pronunciation?*

My expectation for the results was that the teachers would find English pronunciation to be important, and that the main goal would be to be understandable, but that they strive for nativelylike pronunciation. However, I assumed they would not allocate much time to teach it though, since their time is limited, and other parts of the language would be more important. Their methods would be repetition of words in the exercise books, and oral tasks. In the next part, I will discuss the participants of this study, and the methods of data collection.

5 METHODS

The following sections will discuss the methods of data collection and analysis in more detail. Information about the participants in the study will be included, and the methods applied in general will be exemplified. Lastly, the method of analysis will be discussed in the end.

5.1 Participants

The participants of this study were three Finnish high school teachers of English. All of them have long careers, which I thought would lend greater insight to the state of pronunciation teaching, and to the issues of nativeness and intelligibility. I also thought that with longer careers behind them, the teachers would have better insight to the job itself, and they would have seen changes that have happened in the curriculum in the past few years. It could prove fruitful to ask about the differences in their approach to teaching pronunciation in the light of these changes, and to see if it affected their attitudes in any way regarding the goal to sound native versus the goal to be intelligible. The teachers are from two different schools. Two of the teachers are from a high school in Western Finland, and one from a high school in Central Finland. The schools I chose are both medium sized, typical high schools, because I wanted to get answers representative of the average Finnish high school setting, not the elite high school setting where the values regarding teaching might be not representative of the situation in Finland as a whole.

5.2 Data collection

For this study, I collected my data by using a qualitative method and gathered the information through four separate interviews. The interviews consisted of a series of topics and questions inside those topics, which were open ended enough to allow for fruitful answers, but still kept the focus of the interview on the topic at hand. Since the interview was semi-structured, I also left myself

room to improvise if a situation presented itself where I could attain more data from a tangent that a question caused the interviewee to go on. Data collection was done by recording the interviews and transcribing them afterwards. The interviews were conducted in Finnish due to it being the common native language of all the participants and myself. I chose to do interviews because I thought that I could get better and more insightful answers that way, since the interviewees can expand upon their initial thoughts on the questions. Through the interviews I revealed deeper knowledge and frameworks of the teachers' attitudes and approaches towards the issues discussed. The interviews lasted for roughly 30 minutes and consisted of questions derived from the research questions. The questions ranged from assessing the teachers' thoughts on the changes in the new curriculum to the teachers' responses to English being taught as a lingua franca. The focus of the questions was to enlighten and enrich the discussion on the state of English pronunciation teaching in Finland, and to find the teachers' point of view on the topics discussed.

5.3 The method of analysis

The data gathered from the interviews was open-ended and the interest in the answers lies in the content, which would be in the form of transcription from audio recordings. When analysing the data, I tried to find common themes in the answers of the interviewees, for example if all participants thought that native-like pronunciation was the only right goal.

The data used in this study will not focus on numeric data, but on a small set of interpretive data. Because of its qualitative nature there were no reliability tests used, and if this study were to be taken further, a larger sample would be needed. Since I was interested in analysing the phenomena present in the study, not pure numerical data, this approach was suitable for the study. I utilised thematic analysis, creating subcategories from the data I collected regarding the different themes found in the data. The data was categorised on its surprising differences and dominant similarities in the aspects of teaching English pronunciation, with the main aspects being nativeness versus intelligibility, the teachers' views on the importance of teaching English pronunciation, and the ways of teaching pronunciation the teachers use.

6 FINDINGS

The data will be presented in order of the research questions, and it will be discussed from the more general points down to the more minute and important findings. Through placing the data collected in different themes the findings can be compared better, and the cohesion of the analysis can be bettered. The broader themes will be the RQ's and inside those will be the division into smaller themes, e.g. the tasks the teachers use in teaching pronunciation etc. The teachers will be referred to as T1, T2, and T3 when clear distinction is needed for clarity.

6.1 The teaching philosophies of the teachers

The first topic that was discussed was the personal interests and goals of the teachers in regard to teaching English. The main finding that was present in all the teachers' answers was that they wished to make the students more excited to learn English, and to give the students greater belief in their language proficiency. All of the teachers also pointed out that they were there to help the students learn, and not to "only lecture" them about English. When asked to elaborate one of the teachers said that the students are the active participants, and the teacher merely guides them along. The teachers also emphasised giving the students time to work on their tasks, and to give them autonomy in their work where ever it was deemed permissible. Moreover, one teacher supported the importance of self-guidance:

Example 1

"It is important to have a sort of... interest in the language and is able to plod through a little...and dares to throw himself/herself into it. That they see learning a language as such ... "a pleasant job" for them."
(Translation from Finnish by Eelis Rossi)

This comment showed especially the main idea of the current syllabus in language teaching; the student's role has changed to a more multifaceted one where he or she is the agent of the learning process that is ignited to take responsibility of his/her own learning through the guidance of teacher.

Another goal that was presented was that the learning of English – or any other language, since two of the teachers also taught other languages – was to be meaningful to the student. The students should feel like what they do matters, and that they learn in the classroom. Regarding this, one of the teachers presented that they are very interested in helping students who might have challenges in their learning and finding tools to aid these students is an important aspect to which they wanted to put time and effort into. The act of differentiating also came up when discussing the challenges students might have in learning a language, but apart from giving the students a choice as to what task to do depending on their own volition, the teachers said that it would be very difficult to give everyone the exact tasks that stimulate them. One of the teachers said that the teaching “goes with the majority”, stating that:

Example 2

“It is very challenging that when someone is very good already...like how to for example then get the rhythm in a longer text.. We have many ways and places where we can intervene, we have nowadays the oral course where we can see that [pronunciation] better, but in standard courses the people who already have better competence are left a bit weaker... it seems that we go along with the skill-level of the majority” (Translation from Finnish by Eelis Rossi)

This is an important finding as it gives a very practical viewpoint to the living reality of pronunciation teaching in class and how it is related to learner levels. Though there has been more work towards differentiation that is an important part of language teaching of the new syllabus too, it is the truth that teachers do not have infinite resources to put into all parts of language learning, and thus it is more important to focus the teaching on what the majority would find important, also from the point of view of pronunciation teaching.

6.2 Teachers’ methods for teaching pronunciation

Since the current syllabus has emphasised the multiformity of teaching as one of its core aims, it could be expected that this has also reached the methods of teaching that teachers utilise in their everyday classes in foreign languages. Fortunately, this did become real in the answers of all the teachers as they emphasised the fact that teaching materials have become more multifaceted and

multi formed in the recent years. All of the teachers pointed out that the exercises considering oral production in general have multiplied and thus directed the teaching towards dialogicity.

To discuss this deeper, when teachers were asked about how they teach pronunciation in their day-to-day lessons, all the teachers stated they used multiple types of oral exercises. They said they utilise various types of reading exercises and listening-writing-exercise combinations and also pair discussions where students themselves get to rehearse the most difficult words with their partners. One common example employed by the teachers was to have the students read the chapters out loud, and to go through the wordlists provided for each chapter. One teacher also elaborated that they had used tasks where phonetic transcription of words were rehearsed, but she said that these were not the key theme in her teaching but used more as a way of teaching the students the basics of pronunciation. However, though the oral tasks were used by teachers as the main method, T2 specifically stated that she also encouraged the students to work in English even when doing non-oral tasks with their peers.

What related closely to the teaching itself was the attitude towards management of errors and mispronunciation. The teachers pointed out that they do not correct mispronunciations on an individual basis. Considering the ways in which teachers made use of this thought was that for example, T3 said that she might give an example of how the word is pronounced to the whole class. Similar way was applied by T2 who mentioned that if she saw that many students struggled with a specific word(s), she would present the correct pronunciation to the whole class. T1 also talked about giving the students the right ways to pronounce words and where the word stress should be, but not going for a particular accent or way of speaking that they would teach the students. However, something that stood out was that T3 gave different varieties of examples in pronunciation, e.g. in Received Pronunciation or in General American, to give the students the choice as to which one they would prefer to learn. This is an interesting and crucial finding as it points towards the autonomy of a learner and also the fact that the student is the main agent in their own learning and finding out the most suitable styles for himself/herself to enhance their language competence. To scale it bigger, this could be also seen as a route for shifting the dominance away from the BrE and AmE varieties that are commonly used as the “main accents” in Finland in English language teaching. Further, if

the teachers would continue to give multiple choices for students to choose from in the future, it could give way to more “international” usage of English, which would serve learners better.

Lastly, as a theme of its own, all of the teachers brought up the rise of technologisation that has found its place into the oral tasks of language teaching. Modern technology was present in their teaching practices in many ways, since a variety of different software were mentioned to be used to aid the teachers in teaching. T1 talked about using text-to-speech applications, while T2 and T3 mentioned an application called Vocaroo, which allows the student to record their speech at home and send it to the teacher for evaluation. This would help the less courageous students to be able to present their pronunciation from a place of safety, and therefore give a more accurate representation of their skills to the teachers. This shows that even if technology can sometimes be troublesome to some parts of teaching and take attention away from the still-needed and important traditional ways to work, it can offer a far bigger amount of possibilities for learners of all types, giving them a chance to express the multitude of their linguistic competences in a better way.

6.3 Teachers’ views on nativeness and intelligibility

Elina Tergujeff notes in her presentation for her lectio praecursoria (Tergujeff 2014) that the variant of pronunciation which ought to be taught is one that is understood by others. This notion was also seen in the answers of the teachers, all of whom underlined the importance of intelligible pronunciation over native-like pronunciation. The teachers’ shared the view that the goal of teaching the students pronunciation should be for them to speak correct and understandable English. Native-like pronunciation should be used as an example, but the main focus ought to be on the intelligibility of the students’ speech. One of the teachers also pointed out that:

Example 3

“Well..eh...Well I try not to focus as much on the native-like pronunciation...that we would not aim for that...rather, I have even said that if you pronounce like a native, but you cannot behave like one, then that can be a more negative thing...that then you have to know all the other aspects if you’re good at pronunciation.” (Translation from Finnish by Eelis Rossi)

However, there were a few crucial points about which the teachers wanted to teach the students in terms of pronunciation errors. The main points were that the students should try to not speak so-called “rally-English” – a Finnish variety of speaking English where most of the words are pronounced as if they were Finnish words – and that they should learn proper word stresses and have an overall “pleasant pronunciation”. The teachers emphasised that they would pay attention to the most disruptive examples of mispronunciation that Finnish people tend to make and those which prevent intelligibility of English the most. However, as mentioned earlier, they would teach the examples of this to the whole class, rather than pointing out individual mistakes.

Another point that was brought up was the common sense that should be taken into consideration when teaching pronunciation. One teacher for example stated that aiming for native-like pronunciation on a general level is not a realistic or necessary goal for the majority of students in upper secondary school level. Clarity and universality as core ideals in pronunciation were thus seen more crucial. In addition, one teacher pointed out that it is important for the students to recognise different speaker varieties but also be able to understand how some words are said and also recognise them when they are being pronounced to them. This is where two of the teachers mentioned that the teaching of phonetics might help and bring better understanding of pronunciation-centred aspects of language use. T2 for example utilised methods where she pronounces difficult words together with the students or rehearses sounds by feeling with hand whether the vocal cords move or not. However, T3 wished to also encourage students to learn better pronunciation by self-studying, explaining that:

Example 4

“That is also the aim in the contemplation of pronunciation that even if all do not have courage to pronounce in class, that they would, so to say, throw themselves to try and test it at home... because the muscles in mouth are in such different position when you pronounce the language “correctly”...yes, that they would have courage to throw themselves into it, into pronunciation” (Translation from Finnish by Eelis Rossi)

In conclusion the data gathered was relatively representative of my prior hypothesis. Where my hypothesis was incorrect was in the questions of intelligibility versus nativeness and on the variety

of methods utilised by the teachers. The teachers did not have nativelike pronunciation as something that was the absolute goal, but more as something that was used as an example of *correct* pronunciation, whereas I hypothesised that nativelike pronunciation would be the “end goal” so to speak. The methods used for teaching pronunciation were also more varied than I previously thought, and technology was utilised on a very impressive scale. One point that was not inside the scope of this study but came out in the interviews as tangential points from the teachers, was the emphasis placed on the importance of differentiation on pronunciation tasks, and the ways that different competence levels were taken into consideration. It would seem that the teaching of pronunciation goes with the competence of the majority, and that especially the more advanced students might be left with less differentiation than the others. This is something that could be an aspect taken into consideration in further research, as well as the usage of Received Pronunciation and General American as the main varieties of English for teaching pronunciation. Perhaps in a few years the notion of *global Englishes* could bring forth the idea of teaching in the variety local to the country, and not the variety which is deemed as native to the language.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the attitudes and approaches of upper secondary school English teachers regarding how they teach pronunciation, where they think the focus in teaching pronunciation ought to lie, and their thoughts on nativeness and intelligibility. A secondary goal was to shed some light on the practices of three regular teachers when teaching pronunciation in a day-to-day setting. The aim of this second goal was to give some real context to how pronunciation is being taught by these teachers - of course as the size of the study is only three teachers, this cannot be extrapolated to the Finnish school system as a whole, but it can at the very least give some inkling as to what might be happening in other schools as well. The findings in this study and the answers from the teachers were relatively uniform and in line with what was hypothesised in the beginning of this study. For future research this topic has vast amounts of ground to cover, and for example by expanding the scope from three to hundreds the findings might implicate larger uniformities or varieties in the way pronunciation is being taught in Finland.

The findings of this research showed that the teachers have similar types of ideas in their answers. The question of what is important in teaching pronunciation was unanimously answered with “clear and intelligible pronunciation”. The correct way of pronunciation was also emphasised with regard to word stress and trying to improve general pronunciation from the *rally-English* -variety of English as spoken by many Finnish people. An interesting notion brought up in the answers was that the teachers supported a more equal way of teaching pronunciation, in which they did not correct single mistakes by individual students, but rather took up the more mispronounced issues with the whole classroom. They also gave possibilities for different levels of pronunciation for the students who were either struggling or who had already learned pronunciation above the required skill level. The second larger topic was on the methods of teaching pronunciation, and this question also received quite similar answers. The teachers utilise the material and tasks that are in the work books and they seem to nowadays be of satisfactory quality. All the teachers also mentioned using technology in their teaching, whether it be with quiz-applications or with software to let students do pronunciation tasks at home and send the teachers audio files of their speech. They discovered that these types of exercises can help with students who might not otherwise “try pronouncing” as well as they might be able to.

Most of the views represent and support the reality of the state of pronunciation in school education; it still does not have a clear foothold in the present curriculum, but it would seem that in the future this could change for the better. Though the versatility of oral tasks has been on the rise and been the core focus of the new syllabus especially in the section of foreign language learning, the main focus still lies in the generality of enhancing and adding oral production to the courses, more than actually focusing on the smaller aspects of language inside this theme. Pronunciation is thus a perfect example of it, since it still continues to be embedded inside oral exercises in language courses rather than having a course of its own. However, the teachers seemed to find the exercises on the work books to have improved and become more multimodal, and many of the tasks given by the teachers involved possibilities for oral communication. Thus, it would seem logical to begin including tools for the improvement of the students' pronunciation since they are speaking the language more and more.

As the teachers interviewed for the present study mentioned, the common preference seems to nowadays be in "sounding pleasant", and the intelligibility of the oral language use rather than native-like pronunciation. Since this is the case, it becomes evident that there should be more room given to the pronunciation aspect as it seems to be one of the key issues that Finnish people find especially difficult. Thus, it could prove useful to provide more in-depth sessions on pronunciation inside some already existing language courses and their syllabi or bring a theme of pronunciation into text exercises of all course materials. Also, one other option could be to create a small course for phonetics inside the curriculum and its courses, for pupils to take as either compulsory or voluntary. This is important because many of upper secondary school students are interested in majoring in languages in universities, and there will be courses on phonetics. Because of this it would be beneficial for those who wish to go to study languages to have some base knowledge on phonetics prior to enrolling to aforementioned classes. Having a course on phonetics could also be paired up with pronunciation and thus it would aid all students, and not just the ones who wish to make language their career. It is understandable that it would require lots of extra resources and some further education for the teachers, but it would not be impossible to have the teachers adapt to this change to aid with the enhancement of students learning. After all, dialogicity and its improvement is one of the main objectives of the current national curriculum of Finland.

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