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Current Issues in Pronunciation Teaching to Non-Native Learners of English

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Abstract

Pronunciation plays an indisputable role in communication; even more so in communication between native and non-native speakers of English. The goals for pronunciation teaching have shifted from accent-free or native-like pronunciation to comprehensibility and teaching practices aimed at non-native English learners vary and are often based on teachers' opinions rather than research findings. The paper aims to present the current topics in twenty selected research papers dealing with pronunciation teaching (teaching practices in the English language classrooms, selected segmental and suprasegmental features). The analysed papers indicate that a teacher's good theoretical background can raise students' awareness and the overall performance of pronunciation phenomena, whether at the segmental or the suprasegmental level. Students may benefit from different strategies applied to pronunciation learning, but traditional teaching methods are still prevalent in the contemporary English language classroom.

The contribution presents partial results of the research project KEGA 001TTU-4/2019.

Key words: pronunciation, intelligibility, nativeness, research, teaching, non-native learners, pronunciation

Introduction

Language is a complex communication tool consisting of language layers analysed according to their respective linguistic disciplines; however, speakers use its entire range of means concurrently and appropriately for the particular act of communication. In the current period of globalization, speakers often communicate in foreign languages, the use of which brings new aspects to communication. Levis (2005) presents a draft of a Speaker-Listener Intelligibility Matrix for communication between native and non-native speakers. Communication between two native speakers presumes shared strategies and the successful transfer of information. In reality, the extent to which this communication succeeds depends on many factors such as the use of nativized varieties of English (e. g. India). When native speakers speak and non-native speakers listen, it resembles the typical non-native way of foreign language

learning. On the contrary, non-native speakers bear a higher degree of responsibility for successful communication when native speakers are listening. Two non-native speakers use a given foreign language as their lingua franca. Therefore, context is important for the outcome of this communication. Jenkins (2002) claims that currently English is spoken by a higher number of non-native speakers than native speakers, thus investigation into possible issues is required.

Pronunciation is one of the key aspects of speech, which is reflected in the recent growth in research into pronunciation teaching. At the beginning of the new millennium, Derwing and Munro (2005) commented on the lack of investigation into pronunciation teaching to non-native learners due to the study of pronunciation shifting to the field of applied linguistics. In approaches to non-native language teaching relevant to that period improved pronunciation was a result of exposure to the target language (Foote et al., 2016). Subsequently, teachers were given few guiding principles and some non-native teachers avoided teaching pronunciation (Munro & Derwing, 2005). Almost a decade later, Thomson and Derwing (2014) observed a clear growth in interest in pronunciation research and carried out an analysis of 75 studies focusing on how non-natives learned pronunciation, concluding that non-native learners benefit from the explicit explanation of pronunciation rules. Pronunciation is viewed as different from other aspects of language proficiency, as the ability to imitate sounds is not tied to language proficiency (Thomson & Derwing, 2014). However, Nair et al. (2017) suggest, some non-native language teachers believe that the ability to learn an accent is based on talent or exposure to the target language.

The specific pronunciation features non-native learners of English should command are determined by the listeners' ability to identify the meaning of words pronounced differently from the form presented as models. The difference in non-native pronunciation may be caused by an error as well as the use of an accent or a pronunciation variety. While native speakers are allowed to use their native accents (social, geographical), often with greater variation than non-native speakers; non-native speakers are taught to imitate Received Pronunciation or General American English accents (Jenkins, 2002). Levis (2005) argues that even though the majority of native speakers speak neither of these accents, a large part of instructional materials presents them as prestigious models and their use in actual communication may not be effective. She suggests including non-native accents to pronunciation teaching. Jenkins (2002) believes that pronunciation teaching makes the most compromises when compared to the teaching of other language layers and adds that "[t]he links between accent and identity on the one hand and accent and articulatory motor skills on the other are, it seems, so ingrained that traditional English pronunciation teaching is destined to fail for all but a small minority of L2 learners" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 86).

The position of pronunciation training has not been stable over the different periods of English language teaching. While the early approaches to language teaching (the Direct Method or Grammar Translation) either ignored pronunciation or taught it through drills and repetition to achieve native-like pronunciation, the Reform Movement or Audiolingual/Oral Method viewed pronunciation instruction as an important part of non-native language learning (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). Today pronunciation teaching concentrates on those aspects of English pronunciation that constitute and carry meaning and aims to respect the natural accent of English learners (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Jenkins, 2002; Levis, 2005; Saito, 2012). Those theories (e. g. the Critical Period Hypothesis, Flege, 1987) that assume that learner's age may limit achieving accent-free pronunciation of non-native English learners in English were challenged soon after their presentation (e. g. Patkowski, 1990).

Regarding acceptance of the concept of comprehensible pronunciation with an accent among non-native learners of English, new goals to pronunciation teaching were formulated. Levis (2005) compares the terms nativeness and intelligibility. *The nativeness principle* is based on the assumption that native-like pronunciation and the ability to imitate target sounds by non-native learners of foreign languages can be achieved by motivation, exposure to the target language and pronunciation training. This principle has not been fully accepted due to a lack of evidence; however, this principle seems to be reflected in many textbooks on pronunciation practice. On the contrary, *the intelligibility principle* is based on the assumption that "learners simply need to be understandable" (Levis, 2005, p. 370) and deviations from model pronunciation compromise the comprehension to a different degree.

Intelligibility is a universally accepted term; however, there are different classifications and instruments used to measure it. In the past, intelligibility was evaluated using cloze tests, transcriptions or rating scales. Crowther et al. (2015) list the evaluation methods for both approaches – while nativeness is evaluated using accentedness ratings, comprehensibility (intelligibility) is rated via the listener's relative difficulty to understand an utterance. The data indicate that listeners take into account the speaker's native language as well as the type of utterance. A large role in the evaluation of speakers' performance and intelligibility is played by evaluator bias against the phenomena, accents, speakers as well as their experience with a particular accent or pronunciation feature (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

The concept of intelligibility has been variously subclassified (comfortable, functional, overall; for details, see Isaacs, 2008) with the same general conclusion – the listener should understand the speaker's message without the need for repetition or rephrasing the utterance. Derwing and Munro (2005) therefore

identified two main concerns in pronunciation teaching – intelligibility that allows the non-native learner to communicate successfully with different groups of native and non-native English speakers and secondly the non-native accent that has an impact on the social interactions between non-native speakers and their listeners. The needs of different learners from different linguistic backgrounds vary, as Wells (2008) pointed out. Pronunciation features challenging speakers of one language may be easy for speakers of another language and can be caused by a different set of phonemes in each language. Crowther et al. (2015) add that pronunciation of sounds in a foreign language contains elements traceable to native language and the non-native learners of English who share one native language display similar pronunciation features in the foreign language. The linguistic homogeneity or heterogeneity of a group of non-native learners and the instructor's native language are a major factor in pronunciation teaching (Foote et al, 2016). All these factors are accompanied by the individual ability of non-native learners to produce and recognize specific sounds.

Methods

The paper focuses on two main areas of interest: (1) pronunciation classroom practices and (2) segmental and suprasegmental level. The first area, classroom practices, should provide examples reflecting the presented concepts of the nativeness and intelligibility principles in practice. The second area, studies in segmental and suprasegmental phonology, follow the traditional view on the branches of phonology (Roach, 2009). There is no agreement on the superiority of either of the two branches in the ELT classroom (Hahn, 2004; Thomson & Derwing, 2014), so a new investigation into the current opinion may be insightful. The papers were selected from the World of Science database that collects peer-reviewed journals from multiple publishers and disciplines. The papers searched keywords “pronunciation”, “teaching”, “phoneme”, “suprasegmentals”, “approach” and their combinations and the selection only included papers published after the year 2000.

Four papers (in chronological order Jenkins, 2002; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2005; Thomson & Derwing, 2014) helped in the general overview of the current trends in pronunciation teaching. During the selection of papers for the study, the papers were identified as the most frequently cited in the relevant literature. Even though they are review papers and do not present actual results of pronunciation teaching research, they are used as a theoretical background for many study designs.

All selected studies concern non-native English teaching to adult and young adult learners, present results of original research and provided a detailed description of the methodology. After their selection, the studies were inspected

for the identification of the pronunciation issue, the methodology and the results. The articles were published in academic journals with an impact factor (*TESOL Quarterly, Research in Language, Language Awareness, The Modern Language Journal, Applied Linguistics, The Language Learning Journal, American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, The Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes, Studies in Second Language Acquisition, The English Teacher, Laboratory Phonology*) or conference proceedings.

Pronunciation classroom practices

As it has been already suggested, the role of pronunciation in non-native language teaching has been in a state of constant change. In the earlier approaches, foreign language pronunciation was either the result of exposure to the target language or approaches used complex sets of drills and repetitions. As suggested, “[t]o a large extent, pronunciation’s importance has always been determined by ideology and intuition rather than research.[sic] Teachers have [sic] intuitively decided which features have the greatest effect on clarity and which are learnable in a classroom setting” (Levis, 2005, p. 369). Saito (2012) claims that while the morphological and syntactical levels of languages are taught in contextualized meaningful exercises, pronunciation practice is decontextualized due to the use of drills and repetition.

Pronunciation is one of the aspects of language both native and non-native teachers of English are not keen on teaching and a lack of adequate teacher training results in an intuitive use of available materials and techniques (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Setting pedagogical goals must be based on knowledge of pronunciation issues. Unqualified teachers may have misconceptions about phonological phenomena, cannot evaluate or use teaching materials accurately and do not set realistic goals when teaching pronunciation in compliance with the results of scientific research. Also, even the teaching materials do not reflect the current research results (Derwing & Munro, 2005), and can be perceived as boring; however, Baker (2013) argues that teachers completing a pronunciation course have and apply a wider range of pronunciation activities into their classrooms.

In a longitudinal study of teacher behaviour with non-native learners, Foote et al. (2016) calculated that only about 10% of classroom time was devoted to pronunciation, often in the form of corrective feedback and primarily concerning segmentals. In comparison, this was only about half of the time devoted to grammar and only about a seventh of the time devoted to vocabulary. The teachers in the study mostly presented pronunciation in the form of tongue twisters and practice lacked recasts with form-focused instruction. In addition, teachers also displayed discordance between pronunciation surveys and actual pedagogical practices. Nair et al. (2006) discussed the reasons why ESL teachers do not teach

pronunciation. Among other reasons, teachers prioritize other language layers in opposition to the acoustic one, which results in a lack of time for pronunciation practice. The participating teachers also preferred teaching comprehensible pronunciation to error correction. Accordingly, for pronunciation practice, teachers in Northern Cyprus apply traditional techniques (dictation, reading aloud and dialogues) and avoid using modern technologies. This could be caused by a lack of formal pronunciation instruction during teacher training; therefore, using traditional techniques imitates their own training in English (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010).

Baker (2013) collected opinions on the knowledge, beliefs and practices of five teachers about their teaching practices in pronunciation training. The teachers declared a lack of knowledge and preparation for pronunciation teaching and the techniques they used were predominantly based on non-communicative activities (listening text presentation, explanation and examples, production practice, kinaesthetic/tactile practice, checking, question-answer display-knowledge verification or exploration repetition drill, visual or audio identification, repetition drill-audio identification, visual or audio recognition, etc.); free open-ended techniques and student-led activities (a game with a set of rules and competition, a drama based on practice and performance of a play or a scene, presentation, discussion) were primarily used in the higher levels of English classes, while guided techniques that contain a blend of both types of techniques (question-answer referential, production—student feedback practice and production—audio identification or recognition, mutual exchange, preparation) were applied the least due to the teachers' limited knowledge of their incorporation into teaching. According to Baker (2013), the use of all the aforementioned techniques in combination can provide long-term results in pronunciation teaching and listening discrimination activities provide a basis for the further development of students – the ability to recognize a pronunciation feature aurally is important for its future production.

Teachers may spend the most time dealing with segmental errors because they do not have sufficient training with teaching suprasegmentals. Another reason is that teaching suprasegmental features requires reference to terminology (Foote et al., 2016). Couper (2011) tried to find out whether terminology created by teachers and students learning pronunciation (socially constructed metalanguage) and critical listening (listening and contrasting sounds to establish boundaries between pronunciation phenomena) improve learners' pronunciation. The comparison of results of four different groups taking part in the experiment sessions indicates that both aspects, socially constructed metalanguage, as well as critical listening, have an immediate effect on the students' performance and the initial signs of learning indicate that this approach can be an effective strategy for

pronunciation instruction. However, explicit instruction did not provide any significant differences in pronunciation before or after the course in the study by Algethami (2017).

Derwing et al. (2007) compared two adult immigrant groups of non-native English learners comparable in education level and language proficiency but differing in mother tongue who attended a language course that concentrated on grammar and receptive communication skills. The comparison revealed that important progress in fluency and comprehensibility was made by the group with slightly higher exposure to English outside class. Willingness to communicate was also important for mastering language and pronunciation. Finally, Trofimovich and Gatbonton (2006) identified that overall comprehensibility can be improved during a pronunciation course lasting one semester; however, this period is not sufficient to remove an accent. The mastery of English pronunciation by foreign learners requires systematic and persistent practice. Several pronunciation learning strategies proposals were developed. For instance, Oxford (1990) developed a taxonomy for pronunciation learning strategies (PLS) to help learners develop proper L2 pronunciation. Pronunciation learning strategies are divided into two classes (direct and indirect) and then further into six groups. The six major strategies are enumerated as following: memory (e.g., using key words), cognitive (e.g., recognizing and using formulas), compensation (e.g., avoiding using unknown words, using mime and gesture), metacognitive (e.g., focusing on specific sounds, organizing), affective (e.g., rewarding yourself), social/cooperation (e.g., asking for correction). Direct strategies involve memory (representing sounds in memory) and indirect strategies include affective pronunciation learning strategies. Two research studies used Oxford's taxonomy as a starting point in the investigation.

The first study by Akyol (2013) concentrated on the identification of students' pronunciation learning strategies. The researcher applied an updated version of the Pronunciation Strategies questionnaire with 52 items built on taxonomies of pronunciation learning strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and cooperation) by Oxford (1990). The results revealed that all respondents used all strategies for learning pronunciation, but the use of strategies differed. The most important was cooperation; the least frequently used was the cognitive strategy. The data also revealed that students who do not attend any pronunciation course follow the most professional user of English in the classroom as their model. The second study based on Oxford's (1990) classification is by Mirza (2015) who compared the phonetic competence of 22 Lebanese, all native Arabic speakers, students studying English with French (EFL) or English only (ESL) after pronunciation training (the use of transcription, repetitions, and minimal pair drilling). In a pre-test, the researcher identified 10

commonly mistaken phonemes. After a five-week course, the participants took a post-test, firstly to identify the improvement of the pronunciation of the two groups of learners, and secondly to identify whether the pronunciation learning strategies positively impacted their performance. After identifying the groups' common pronunciation mistakes, the researchers applied cognitive strategies (simplified phonetic transcription, minimal pair drills, sound codes/associations, reading aloud, pronunciation rules), social strategies (peer correction, reading aloud together). The data revealed that the strategies improved the pronunciation of both groups of learners. However, comparing the results of both groups of participants, there was no significant difference between the two groups of English learners.

In another study, Crowther et al. (2015) compared learners' results from two types of multifaceted speaking tasks. The analysis of the performances focused on segmentals, word stress, intonation, rhythm, speech rate, lexical appropriateness, lexical richness, grammatical accuracy, grammatical complexity, discourse richness, as language is a multifaceted and complex communication tool that provides the speaker a wide range of means to express various messages with an appropriate set of linguistic components for that specific utterance. The results indicate that comprehensibility does not depend only on pronunciation and the ability to imitate the target sounds but on the selection of other linguistic tools.

Saito (2012) claims that intelligibility is based on the fulfilment of "minimal phonological requirements" (p. 843) that allows successful communication between non-native speakers and native speakers, or non-native speakers and non-native speakers, and can be a basis for study into pronunciation teaching. The author also argues that teaching both, segmentals and suprasegmentals is relevant for comprehensibility. Ideally, pronunciation features should be taught alongside morphosyntactic features for the overall improvement in language proficiency.

Jenkins (2002) formulated a proposal of pronunciation features non-native learners of English should practice during pronunciation training, as the importance of intelligibility for non-native speakers is growing. Non-native language courses often comprise students of mixed linguistic backgrounds. As has already been mentioned, the traditional pronunciation models of Received Pronunciation and General American are now viewed as more prestigious rather than practical in everyday communication, and Jenkins (2002) suggests non-native models for pronunciation lessons. In her pronunciation curriculum (Lingua Franca Core, Jenkins, 2002) she included the following items:

- dental sounds are replaceable in some contexts
- rhotic accent recommended
- /t/ sound in words in word medial position,
- allophonic variations in words retaining their meaning

- aspiration of voiceless plosives in the word-initial position
- pre-fortis clipping
- word-initial clusters complete
- simplification of word-medial clusters only according to the phonotactic rules
- /nt/ in the word medial position
- additions to consonant clusters acceptable
- vowel quantity maintained
- regional vowel allophones allowed except for the sound /ɜ:/
- nuclear stress to clarify sentence meaning.

These features are the most recognizable to most English speakers, native and non-native alike, and their negligent pronunciation may cause the highest degree of incomprehensibility. Jenkins also identified secondary, non-core pronunciation features that are desirable to teach, however, they compromise comprehensibility to a lower degree and they include the dentals /ð/ and /θ/, dark /l/, consistent vowel quality, weak form pronunciation, word-final consonant assimilation, grammatical and attitudinal functions of intonation, word stress and stress-timed rhythm.

Selected studies on segmental and suprasegmental level

Segmental phonology deals with individual sounds, their use and importance in communication. There are two types of scientific studies dealing with individual phonemes. The first type represents contrastive analyses of phonetic inventories of two languages. There are numerous contrastive studies for any two languages. Even if their purpose is primarily to summarize findings and are mostly theoretical or descriptive, they are very important for both pronunciation teachers and learners. These comparisons facilitate the understanding of the two pronunciation systems and highlight the key distinctive features of both, the mother tongue and English. Secondly, these papers try to propose effective methods for familiarization with acoustic systems. For illustration, two studies were selected. The second type of research paper deals with specific issues pronunciation mistakes caused due to incorrect selection of the appropriate phoneme.

From the first type of research paper, the study by Demircioglu (2013), for instance, concentrates on issues Turkish learners of English have when learning to make and use English diphthongs. The second study by Nuhui (2013) deals with issues regarding difficulties Albanian EFL university students have in learning the English phonetic inventory. The author provides an overall comparison of Albanian and English phonetic inventories. Specifically, the author deals with features of individual vowels and diphthongs that require special attention in their training. Within consonants, the author concentrates on plosives, their voicing and

aspiration, as well as the incorrect pronunciation of words containing the velar nasal /ŋ/, voicing voiceless consonants (e. g. /z/ instead of /s/ in *small*), or aspiration in word-initial position. Analogically, Şimon et al. (2015) tried to find phonological differences and possible solutions for Romanian learners of English.

From the second type of paper, the study by Franklin and McDaniel (2016) compares two phonemic inventories to find a relation between the interference between the mother tongue and the target language (English). The time speaking English was a critical variable, and the researchers applied phonological process analysis. The study was based on the theory by Flege (SLM; Flege, 1981; Flege et al., 1995 in Franklin & McDaniel, 2016) according to which a learner's foreign accent stems from the decreasing ability to learn new sounds with increasing age, however, it can be supplemented by experience and time spent speaking the foreign language. They also emphasise the importance of knowing the phonetic inventories of the mother tongue and the target language to expect potentially problematic sounds. The participants of the study were two female native Japanese speakers who both mainly have experience with reading and writing in English, with little opportunity to speak English and different exposure to English. Their reading performances were compared using a contrastive analysis between Japanese and English phonetic inventories and developmental norms for English children. The differences between Japanese and English consonant inventories were also presented in the paper. In Japanese, voiceless plosives are pronounced without aspiration and it lacks labiodentals /f, v/ and dentals /θ, ð/ fricatives. Also, Japanese lacks the English /l/ sound. After that, phonological processes were identified, as well as vocalization, final consonant devoicing and cluster reduction. Phonological differences between Japanese and English were also taken into consideration. After this, researchers compared the speech of the participating adult learners of English with the speech of native English-speaking children and described in which stages of their language acquisition pronunciation appears or disappears (e.g. "Final consonant devoicing begins to decline at approximately 3 years of age and disappears by the age of 4 years, and cluster reduction can persist until the age of 5 years", Franklin and McDaniel, 2016, p. 179) to make predictions of interlanguage phonological processes.

Suprasegmental features (stress, intonation and rhythm) are such features of language that carry lexical information, i. e. they might change the meaning of words, which is why they are paid special attention to in pronunciation training. In the first paper, Jung et al. (2017) studied lexical stress production in target words in three collaborative conditions: priming with task repetition, priming with procedural repetition and control group with no priming. Priming is understood as exposing the learners to language features (pronunciation, grammar or syntax) to facilitate the production of the target feature in the learners' production

(Trofimovich et al., 2013). In this study, the target words consisted of three or four syllables with the primary stress on the second syllable (e. g. 3-2 existing, 4-2 environment, the numeric system by Murphy, 2004 in Jung et al., 2017). The communicative tasks contained target vocabulary and were based on a design by Trofimovich, McDonough and Foote (2014). In this study, Trofimovich et al. (2014) studied the importance of interactive alignment (“a sociocognitive phenomenon whereby speakers tend to converge in their language use during the conversation by reusing each other’s expressions, structures, and pronunciation patterns”) during the exchange of information. The participants were expected to pronounce the target word that was pronounced by the researcher as a model (prime condition), and one word without the model pronunciation (no-prime condition). The experiment took 4 weeks and each participant attended five sessions. Researchers noted that incorrect production of stress is multidimensional (e.g. misplaced stress, multiple stresses, no stress). The results of the post-test show that the control group that did not attend any of the priming sessions achieved approximately the same results as in the pre-test, while the two groups participating in priming sessions achieved better results than in pre-test, with slightly better results in the repetitive priming group.

The importance of lexical stress is based on theoretical background based on the theory of “stress-deafness” (Peperkamp & Dupoux, 2002) and its impact on the acquisition of lexical stress. This term was coined on the basis of a study in which some native speakers of French could not recognize stress patterns of words due to the fact, that lexical stress in French does not distinguish lexical meaning of words, as opposed to Spanish, where stress carries lexical information. The stress patterns of trochee, iamb, dactyl and amphibrach were equally represented. The results showed that lexical stress as an intrinsic feature of all words is more likely to be recognized by proficient English speakers with pronunciation training and explicit theoretical instruction, rather than exposure to spoken English.

The study by Hahn (2004) identified the significance of word stress placement for native speakers when listening to non-native learners of English. The conclusion of the research indicates that speakers with correct word stress placement are rated more positively and their utterances are more memorable for listeners when compared to incorrect or absent word stress. In terms of interpretation of the utterances, the differences were not statistically significant implying that speech with incorrect stress placement is still comprehensible. Suprasegmental features matter in the sociolinguistic aspect of texts, stressing/destressing information according to its relative newness/oldness in discourse.

Field (2005) observed that two groups of native and non-native listeners had to transcribe speech acts with manipulated lexical stress and subsequently vowel

quality. Both groups displayed differences in recognition. Words stressed on a weak syllable are more incomprehensible than those stressed on a full vowel – manipulated due to the possibly higher degree of informativeness of full vowels and their higher prominence. In addition, right-shifted stress is more incomprehensible than left-shifted stress. The study also disproved the assumption that non-native listeners are more tolerant to incorrect stress placement than native listeners.

Discussion and conclusions

Pronunciation plays an important part in the ELT classroom, but its teaching practices and objectives display a great variety. The paper aimed to provide an overview of current trends in pronunciation teaching based on the analysis of twenty selected papers dealing with teaching practices and pronunciation features at segmental and suprasegmental levels. Four studies with high citation frequency (in chronological order Jenkins, 2002; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2005; Thomson & Derwing, 2014) provided the theoretical framework for the analysis. The aforementioned studies deal with the paradigmatic shift of pronunciation accuracy and imitation of native-like accent into the sphere of intelligibility that accepts the speaker's non-native accent.

Twenty studies analysed in the paper dealt with the English pronunciation of adult or young adult non-native learners of English. The only exception was the study by Peppercamp & Dupoux (2002) who compared the importance of word stress in French and Spanish (2002). All remaining studies contained an element of the native English pronunciation (a native model, a native listener or a speaker) contrary to Jenkins' suggestion to use non-native accents as pronunciation models. The studies assert that teachers prefer more traditional teaching methods and non-communicative activities to the communicative ones (Nair et al., 2006, Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010) even though the combination of both types seem to be effective in pronunciation learning (Baker, 2013). Oxford's (1990) direct and indirect strategies for pronunciation learning are also efficient in language learning (Mirza, 2015) but non-native English learners use them differently (Akyol, 2013). Motivation is also an important element in pronunciation learning (Derwing et al., 2007). The theoretical knowledge of students about pronunciation issues (Couper, 2011) raised by creating metalanguage has also proven to be a successful tool in pronunciation mastering. Teachers are not keen pronunciation instructors and spend only a limited time dealing with pronunciation issues (Foote et al., 2016). Teachers with pronunciation training generally use a wider range of pronunciation training activities in their classes (ibid.), contrary to the untrained ones who usually prefer instruction in the form of error correction (Foote et al., 2016).

All non-native learners of English should command key pronunciation features at segmental and suprasegmental levels, even if the “minimal phonological requirements” (Saito, 2012) or the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2002) depart from the traditional prestigious models (RP or General American accents) for English non-native learners. Studies dealing with a comparison of two phonological systems (Demircioglu, 2013; Nahiu, 2013; Şimon et al., 2015) are still being carried out because non-native learners must know the pronunciation specifics of the language they learn. However, an in-depth analysis of phonological development may predict future progress in pronunciation training (Franklin and McDaniel, 2016). At the segmental level, word stress is one of the suprasegmental features the current research studies focus on. Hahn (2004) confirmed the importance of the correct word stress placement for native listeners of English. In addition, Field (2005) also confirmed the importance of word-stress placement for non-native listeners. Repetition and example are effective strategies to learn English stress placement (Jung et al., 2017; Trofimovich et al., 2014). Pronunciation is only one aspect of speech, but it must complement the utterance to elicit comprehensibility (Crowther et al., 2015).

As the overview of the research studies presented above shows, pronunciation research focuses on different aspects, from self-reflective studies dealing with teaching practices to their impact in the classroom, and typical mistakes non-native learners make in the process of foreign language learning. The focus of pronunciation teaching should shift from nativeness to comprehensibility or intelligibility, allowing students to keep their natural accent. The studies confirm to various degrees the effectiveness of pronunciation training but prove that learners of all ages are encouraged to practice pronunciation. Following the current paradigm in pronunciation training, none of the papers presented ideas supporting the complete erasure of accents coming from the mother tongue of learners; on the contrary, all research papers accepted the natural accent of the learners.

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