

Within Language,
Beyond Theories
(Volume II)

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Studies in Applied Linguistics

Edited by

Anna Bloch-Rozmej
and Karolina Drabikowska

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Within Language, Beyond Theories (Volume II):
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FOREWORD

The monograph *Within Language, Beyond Theories* presents a collection of insightful studies pertaining to the most perplexing problems in the areas of theoretical and applied linguistics. Contributors offer accounts of new evidence drawn from a number of the world's languages and analyses that surpass the limits of contemporary frameworks in search of more explanatorily adequate solutions to linguistic dilemmas. We delve into previously unexplored areas of linguistic reality, aiming to gain insight into the structure of the system and establish laws governing its inner organization. Importantly, linguists of different persuasions share the belief that our enhanced understanding of the grammar of language and its constituent modules will foster new advances in the novel application of the models proposed. Assisted by innovative ideas in corpus studies, translators and discourse researchers will be able to make invaluable contributions to the development of their fields.

Volume Two, entitled *Studies in Applied Linguistics*, comprises eighteen chapters organized into three parts. The articles reflect current trends in scientific debate and offer solutions surpassing the boundaries of traditional approaches to applied linguistics. Authors focus on the most intriguing themes in the fields of language learning, language teaching, psycho- and sociolinguistics as well as lexicography and translation studies, thus pointing out directions for future inquiry and international scientific enterprise.

Part I: Language Learning and Teaching

Chapter One addresses the issues and challenges involved in teaching phonetics to non-L1-homogeneous classes. It discusses the phonetics and phonology of Polish, Spanish and Turkish, the knowledge of which is needed in order to predict the potential problems that a foreign student might encounter while learning English pronunciation. Moreover, it demonstrates how helpful such awareness can be in phonetics classes.

In a similar vein, Chapter Two investigates the perception of German vowels by Polish and Turkish students. The means to establish the differences in vowel perception was an experiment involving Turkish and Polish students. The length of German vowels in nonsense words was

digitally manipulated so that the ability to distinguish between the short and long counterparts of same-quality vowels could be tested. As a result, the perceptive differences and similarities between these three languages were established, which also has a bearing on the teaching of phonetics.

Chapter Three examines two types of instructions in language learning, that is, meaning- and form-based. An experiment was conducted involving 14 learners of Polish – a highly inflected language – and the acquisition of case endings was analysed. The study presents the error distributions at different stages of learning and the correlation between the type of instruction and the parameters: *Ending*, *Word Order* and *Lexical Transparency*.

Strategies involved in language learning are also discussed in Chapter Four. However, a different perspective is taken since the study focuses on students' use and preferences with regard to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), in particular, learning, memorising, compensation, metacognitive, social and affective strategies. Moreover, the results of a survey conducted among 118 participants show correlations between some of the strategies.

Chapter Five shifts the focus of Part I from language learning to testing. It is devoted to an essential part of test development, that is, task/item design. Item formats typologically categorised by Hudson (2002) as selected response and constructed response items are scrutinised with relation to their assessment effectiveness.

Chapter Six explores the issue of conversational convergence among advanced non-native speakers. Its goal is to determine the ability of students at a high level of language proficiency (C2) to maintain dialogic relationships. The chapter presents an analysis of 23 conversations between Polish students of English gathered during their oral exams. What seems to distinguish their dialogues is the fact that their structure differs extensively from that of proficient users in discourse and lexicogrammatical terms. The chapter demonstrates how often such natural interaction dialogue features as repetition, backchannelling, tails, tags, and vague and hedged forms are utilised by advanced non-native speakers.

Chapter Seven is concerned with the role of pragmatics in the business English course syllabus. Its primary aim is to demonstrate how pragmatic knowledge may contribute to the effectiveness of such courses with the focus on the skills that are necessary for future professionals. The chapter proposes specific elements that should be incorporated into business English courses because of their influence on students' future performance.

Chapters Eight and Nine offer interesting insights into Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Chapter Eight addresses the problem of quality in bilingual education (BE) with special emphasis put on three challenges, that is, national context and cultural self-knowledge, language policy and practices as well as the process of change management. It also stresses the role of teachers and institutions in creating a high-quality BE environment.

Chapter Nine focuses on CLIL in Polish primary schools. The chapter provides a presentation of the goals of CLIL and its implementation with special attention on the effectiveness of the *top-down* and *bottom-up* approaches in the Polish educational environment.

Part II: Psycho- and Sociolinguistics

Chapter Ten takes up the theme extensively discussed in Part I, that is, language learning, however, it shifts its attention towards first language acquisition. Specifically, it is concerned with conjugation and declension in Hungarian. The system proposed in this study is a set of paradigmatic groups. The regular and irregular forms are here replaced by stronger and weaker features, which are activated when new input appears. The proposed system is supported by a Wug-test, containing both nouns and verbs and aiming at eliciting paradigmatic and derivational forms.

Chapter Eleven takes a psycholinguistic perspective on onomatopoeias. It distinguishes two kinds: imitative and echoic ones, basing the categorisation on research in semantics, semiotics, phonetics, acoustics and neurology.

Chapter Twelve investigates the impact that physical attractiveness has on the perception of a foreign accent. In order to establish the influence, an experiment was conducted whereby the attractiveness of speakers was manipulated according to the beauty stereotype. The results show what influence physical and vocal attractiveness has on male and female listeners.

Chapter Thirteen explores the issue of the endangerment of the Vilamovian ethnolect. General problems such as reasons for language extinction and methods of revival are viewed from the perspective of a specific case, that is, a language spoken by a small community situated in the eastern part of Silesia.

Part III: Lexicography and Translation Studies

Chapter Fourteen is concerned with the practical application of the Conceptual Theory of Metaphor and Metonymy and Frame Semantics in lexicography. In particular it assesses the applicability of conceptual metaphor, metonymy and conventional knowledge to idiomatic expression and proposes a set of criteria for designing a dictionary of idioms.

Chapters Fifteen and Sixteen aim at examining the contents of dictionaries that are already available. Chapter Fifteen offers an insight into interdisciplinary dictionaries published between 2007 and 2012. The profile emerging from this analysis comprises such general elements as subject, volume, terminographic technique, foreign equivalents, information about the corpus of texts and their main purpose as well as detailed features, namely volume, type of microstructure, level of symmetry, presence of indices or other attachments, metalanguage, a bibliography and information about the sources and the thematic scope.

Chapter Sixteen also explores specialist dictionaries, however, its focus is on how manuals and dictionaries of linguistics make reference to Spanish functionalism. It establishes which basic tenets of Spanish functionalism, as the most fundamental pieces of information, should be included in entries and with respect to this it analyses the corpus of the most prestigious linguistic sources.

Chapter Seventeen addresses the problem of the translation of polysemous English words into Latvian. The main focus here is on the semantic hypertrophy of the basic equivalent that seems to have a considerable influence on translational habits in present day Latvian.

Chapter Eighteen investigates the translations of Heine's "Lore-Ley." It examines the linguistic means of expressivity and emotionality that contribute to the effect of the demonization of women in both the original and its Polish translations. They are recognized in the form itself, that is, bound language, its expressiveness, particular word choices as well as at the sound level.

The present volume constitutes a means to report on research in progress that is being conducted by linguists of different persuasions, yet rooted in the field of applied linguistics. It captures the latest advances in this branch of language studies, illuminating both universal and language-specific patterns and variety in the structure and use of natural languages. The ideas and solutions formulated on the pages of this book are intended to both enrich and stir scientific debate in applied linguistics. We wish to express our thanks to all the Contributors to this volume for sharing with us their innovative ideas and the results of their research findings. We are

also grateful to Maria Bloch-Trojnar, Konrad Klimkowski, Elżbieta Sielanko-Byford and Nigel Byford for valuable comments on various aspects of this monograph.

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PART I:
LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

CHAPTER ONE

EXTENDING FOREIGN PRESENCE IN ENGLISH PHONETICS CLASSES

ANITA BUCZEK-ZAWIŁA

1. Introduction

Whether one believes in the idea of the variety known as English as an International Language or not, the essential questions facing, among others, English pronunciation teachers are those related to diagnosing and prioritizing potential problems in pronunciation training. This concerns not only establishing problem areas in the prevailing English (foreign) – Polish (native) contrastive context, but it also needs to acknowledge the increasing presence of foreign students of English in practical phonetics and phonology classes in Poland, especially at the university level for philological courses. This presence is a direct consequence of the internationalization of university studies throughout Europe, including Poland.

The consequence of all this is that we no longer have linguistically homogenous classes consisting of Polish Students of English (Philology), but more and more frequently we need to accommodate participants from other countries, with their tendencies to transfer their own sound systems onto English. Both Polish and foreign students are somewhat inhibited by their native articulatory habits and perceptive abilities, yet to different degrees and, possibly, in different areas.

This chapter addresses these issues, trying to look for possible solutions or alternatives, based on the author's experience with (mostly but not exclusively) Spanish and Turkish students of English spending one or two semesters in Poland and also of actually teaching pronunciation classes in the students' home institutions. Extending a teachers' factual knowledge contrastively, resulting in a growing familiarity with the phonological systems of languages other than Polish or English, will

consistently contribute to not so much changing the curriculum dramatically but rather to varying its components and shifting its focus to include problem areas generated by the foreign students' presence. The idea advocated here is, fundamentally, that of using this foreign presence to increase the phonetic/phonological awareness of all students and to actually facilitate the acquisition of good pronunciation patterns.

2. The target of practical phonetics courses

Unlike participants in various extra-curricular language courses, students of English philology on the whole treat English professionally. They are studying it not only or not primarily for practical, communicative or utilitarian purposes, but mainly to use it as a medium in their (prospective/selected) professional career, be it as teachers or interpreters or in any other field. Thus, they simply do not fit into the category of target users of Jenifer Jenkins (2000) *Lingua Franca Core*, focused as it is on those features of English speech which are considered indispensable for communicative intelligibility between non-native users. Naturally, they still perceive and appreciate the value of English as a tool of international communication.

In that context, actually less and less insensitivity among English philology students (and, thankfully, among an increasing number of university lecturers) towards the way their pronunciation deviates from an acceptable standard is observed. They are beginning to realize that being a competent, proficient language user entails gaining or developing that proficiency in all language components or planes. Thus, they begin to define their priorities not only in the fields of grammar or lexis, but they also want to be reasonably native-like in the area of speech, which is always a long-term process.

Still, the study of the practical phonetics of a foreign language is commonly considered an unnecessary burden and a subject that puts unreasonable demands on both students and their teachers¹ (Buczek-Zawiła 2011). Whereas a *conditio sine qua non* of good pronunciation is an awareness of the normative regulations concerning a language's orthophony, that is, an awareness of how exactly the target language ought to sound. This becomes particularly significant for those students who plan

¹ The outline of the situation as well as the reasons behind it are elaborated on in Buczek-Zawiła (2011). Baran-Lucarz (2006) adds here the inadequate amount of time allocated to pronunciation training in the course curriculum for philology, ranging between 60 to 120 hours at most.

on having a professional career in areas connected with talking: teaching or interpreting. As professionals they ought to possess all the necessary competences and be good models to be emulated by their own students or colleagues (Baran-Lucarz 2006, 7). The goal of a nearly-accent-free oral competence may be unattainable to all but to a good number of L2 acquirers it will prove possible. Therefore, phonetics must be viewed as an important element of a quality education (Buczek-Zawiła 2011, 326).

Sometimes the trainees are not fully aware of their own pronunciation deficiency and need to have their attention drawn to any deviations. They form a fairly homogeneous group in that respect, being rather more tolerant of errors than can be accepted. That is true for those whose first language is Polish, that is, our regular students, as well as for those with other mother-tongue backgrounds, like those from Spain or Turkey. However, through studying practical phonetics, all of them become much more critical evaluators of their own performance.

Minimally, then, for students of English Philology, the curriculum of a course in practical phonetics ought to incorporate:

- Explicit training in segmental phonetics, both for the vocalic and the consonantal inventories and with significant vacillations or (positional) variants.
- Instruction in suprasegmental features, including stress, rhythm and intonation.
- Familiarizing students with aspects of connected speech, such as assimilations, elisions and liaison.
- The rudiments of phonetic/phonological theory that would facilitate the acquisition of good speech habits and progress in pronunciation.

Needless to say, this content is frequently subject to time/space limitations. Nonetheless, the attainment of a commendable level of target language proficiency must involve learning the correct pronunciation of segments, words and whole utterances.

Native-like pronunciation – alongside structural accuracy, fluency, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence, knowledge of the realia etc. – is a logical objective of advanced foreign language learning, particularly expected of prospective teachers. Trainees whose grammar and vocabulary are native-like but whose foreign accent is significantly marked are, sadly, a much more typical end-product of teacher preparation programs.

3. Instructor's competence in a non-L1-homogenous group

After Poland's accession to the European Union and the acceptance of the Bologna Process standards for higher education, it became possible for students of Polish universities to go and study abroad for a semester or two in partner institutions within the Erasmus exchange program. The traffic, however, was/is not one-way: an increasing number of students from various European countries come to spend part of their course of studies in Poland. This is chiefly observed in Neo-philological Departments, where the visitors find courses running parallel to those that they experience in home institutions. Characteristically, these foreign students try to choose as many courses in the module of Practical Language Skills as possible, and that includes classes in pronunciation. Observations over the years indicate that among young Europeans two nations seem to be particularly mobile and willing to come and study in Poland: the Spaniards and the Turks. Occasionally, Italians and Lithuanians crop up in larger quantities.

This situation creates new challenges for instructors, especially pronunciation trainers. The curriculum and, accordingly, the techniques of teaching and practicing pronunciation skills, have been designed with Polish students in mind, taking into account their characteristic problem areas and making frequent excursions to whatever mother-tongue knowledge and skills can offer. Certain characteristic types of error occur and they may often be grounded in habits transferred from the first language. Such occurrences are by no means restricted to interferences from Polish. Spanish and Turkish students exhibit their own cross-linguistic influences on English. Yet, it appears that it is here that at least a basic familiarity with the students' native phonologies, treated contrastively with the English targets can be of help. One has to realize, however, that even the most carefully constructed comparisons between two linguistic systems cannot in principle prevent interlingual interference, especially between closely related languages. Such a transfer of acquired skills or knowledge can be positive, when production of acceptable L2 utterances is facilitated by the compatibility of linguistic behaviour in the first and foreign language; or negative, which manifests itself in the errors that learners make (Papierz 2009, 53-54).

Characteristically, linguistic confrontation focuses on the important differences, while treating the similarities as redundancies which do not contribute in a significant way to effective language acquisition. The idea of comparing and contrasting languages which are genetically and typologically close may appear a rather vacuous activity, since one can expect more similarities than differences between them. The important

aspect is the direction in which the comparison is made, as the language that constitutes the basis for such a juxtaposition will in a way be more privileged in its description (Papierz 2009, 50). The popular belief seems to be that since mistakes resulting from transfer arise where the two systems of languages are similar but not identical, they are most common in the interlanguage of people whose L1 is closely related to English (mostly within the Indo-European context), whereas speakers of unrelated languages (Chinese, Arabic) actually have fewer problems with transfer effects but more with those connected to the intrinsic difficulty of certain aspects of English (Swan and Smith 2001, xi).

When attention is shifted to the phonetic-phonological plane, one has to recognize the more confrontative bias in the analysis. Phonetically, we examine the articulatory, physiological properties of segments in the compared systems as well as the specificity of prosodic means (such as stress, quantity, intonation). The differences at this level can be rather dramatic. In contrastive phonology the basic unit of analysis is the phoneme as a unit of sound structure serving the purpose of perceiving, recognizing and distinguishing between the existing units of meaning, that is morphemes. Such an analysis of phonological systems may proceed in five steps: defining the phonemic inventories in the compared languages, identifying the equivalents between the two phonemic systems, listing the existing variants, establishing distributional restrictions for phonemes and allophones and defining the frequency of occurrence of each phonemic opposition in the compared languages (Papierz 2009, 51).

It would seem logical to assume that the instructor who has the minimum realization of what may be expected from all of his/her students in terms of predictable deviations from the standard is in a favourable position, since they can now identify new priorities or re-organize the course organization in terms of focus, emphasis and technical repertoire. This stand is further corroborated by a statement from Sobkowiak (2004, 19-20):

learners of differing linguistic backgrounds acquire English differently; they have their specific problems (and successes), their particular paths of progress, their characteristic errors. A Pole needs different advice and guidance in English than other learners. Some knowledge of what types of errors are characteristically Polish (Spanish, Turkish, Russian etc.), and why, is thus a necessary background for offering remedies.

4. Polish, Spanish and Turkish pronunciation learners

A closer inspection of the phonological and phonetic facts related to Polish, Spanish (of the mainland European variety) and Turkish reveals certain striking similarities between these systems. However, the differences between them and English are frequently equally surprising. Let us give a brief overview of those facts.

4.1. Polish

Apparently, according to Śpiewak and Gołębiowska (2001, 162), the greatest challenge for Polish speakers of English is connected with the inconsistencies between the spelling and the pronunciation of English, since Poles expect every letter in a word to be pronounced, a fact so much characteristic of their own language. The problem is compounded by the flexible stress placement rules in English, especially when compared to the regular penultimate accent in Polish words (with only several, again regular, exceptions). These two factors are most clearly observable when one notes the consistent use of the full, unreduced forms of all words in the speech of Polish learners of English: no vowel reduction is found in unstressed syllables, they tend to receive full, frequently spelling-influenced articulation.

Polish has six oral monophthongs and two nasal vowels. With no length contrast between the vowels, considerable difficulty distinguishing tense vs. lax vowels (*bit/beat*) is characteristic of Polish users of English (Rogerson-Revell 2011, 286). What follows directly from the above is the fact that numerous instances of phonetic substitution are evidenced in the speech of individuals, for instance [æ] may be confused with [e] or [ʌ] and actually the Polish open-mid vowel [ɛ] may substitute for many distinct vowels. Śpiewak and Gołębiowska (2001, 164) state in a straightforward manner that

open vowels are the single most difficult area for Polish speakers, both as regards hearing the differences between them and producing accurate vowel sounds.

In the opinion of many, mistakes in the production of English vowels by Polish learners are considerably more difficult to prevent and eradicate than the mistakes made in the articulation of consonants (Miatluk, Szymaniuk and Turłaj 2008, 29). In an attempt to identify possible or actual problem areas resulting from phonetic interference from the learners' native language, we need to add two more elements: the non-

existence of the so-called “weak vowels” [ə] and [ɪ] in Polish, hence the replacement with a full vowel (Śpiewak and Gołębiowska 2001, 164), and the absence of diphthongs in the native vocabulary, with the related tendency to articulate the second element of English diphthongs in a glidal fashion as [j] and [w] (Miatluk, Szymaniuk and Turłaj 2008, 30, 41).

Polish has a large and complex consonant system with many place of articulation oppositions. In perception and comprehension, their English (near)counterparts do not present major difficulties for learners, however, when producing them certain persistent deviations can be noticed. Among them is the non-aspiration of voiceless plosives in English since the initial [p, t, k] are not aspirated in Polish (Rogerson-Revell 2011). Additionally, since [θ] and [ð] do not exist in Polish, the first segment may be substituted with [t], [s] or [f], the latter by [d], [z] or [v]. They will always be a problem (at least until reaching a certain substantial level of proficiency) as predicted by the classic assertion of Contrastive Analysis:

the degree of difficulty of learning any Target Language (henceforth TL) structure should be equivalent to the degree to which this structure is different from Native Language (henceforth NL). Thus, according to this reasoning, maximum pronunciation difficulty should be represented by learning an entirely new TL contrast (Eckman and Iverson 1997, 188).

Another problem sound is [ŋ], typically mispronounced as [ŋg] word medially or [ŋk] domain finally. The velar nasal in standard Polish functions only as a positional variant of [n]. The palato-alveolar English fricatives and affricates [ʃ, ʒ, ʧ, dʒ] are regularly articulated by Polish speakers as alveolars, which gives them a too harsh quality to the English ear (Śpiewak and Gołębiowska 2001, 165). And because of palatalised consonants in Polish, learners are frequently unable not to palatalize English consonants in a similar context, e.g., before a front vowel as in *animal*, modelled on *nigdy*.

Word final voiced stops, fricatives and affricates are regularly devoiced (Rogerson-Revell 2011) and that leads to potential confusion between pairs like *miss – Ms; eaten – (Martin) Eden* or *bed – bet*. Polish permits complex consonantal clusters and in clusters voicing agreement is observed between obstruents or obstruents and sonorants. This feature is transferred onto English, resulting in un-English combinations such as [ˈbrɔːtkɑːst] instead of [ˈbrɔːdkɑːst] or [dɪzˈmɪs] for [dɪsˈmɪs] (Miatluk et al. 2008, 60-61).

As mentioned, word stress, predominantly, is placed on the penultimate syllable – which may cause problems. Sobkowiak (2004, 21) considers errors resulting from word-accent misplacement to be rather

serious, not only because they reflect what he terms a “deeply rooted Poglish habit,” but also because they trigger vowel substitution and mispronunciations affecting whole sets of words across the language, whenever the appropriate context arises. Polish falls towards the “syllable-timed” end of the stress vs. syllable-timed continuum, which makes it difficult to acquire and copy the stress-timed rhythm of English.

Finally, among the global pronunciation errors which contribute to a foreign accent in the English of Poles is the (initial at least) inability of Polish speakers to link words in connected speech: they do not link final consonants to initial vowels in neighbouring words as in *an apron, more oranges further on*, they also do not use “linking glides” [j] or [w], as in *my eye* or *two eggs*, as these are non-existent in Polish (Śpiewak and Gołębiowska 2001, 163).

4.2. Spanish

Coe (2001, 91) reports that speakers of Spanish find English pronunciation harder than speakers of most other European languages. There are many regional and national varieties, generally mutually intelligible, consequently most of the difficulties mentioned here are common across varieties.²

The Spanish and English consonant systems show many similarities, but the vowel systems and sentence phonetics differ significantly and as such can cause problems for Spaniards learning English. The major difficulties are summarized in Coe (2001, 91):

- Difficulties in recognizing and using English vowels
- Strong devoicing of final voiced consonants
- Even sentence rhythm, without the typical prominence of English, making understanding difficult for English listeners
- Narrower range of pitch [...] producing a bored effect

² The list is compiled on the basis of several distinct sources, most of them devoted to Spanish English contexts (Coe 2001; Rogerson-Revell 2001; Mott 2005; Buczek-Zawiła and Okas 2008). Some are descriptions of the phonetics and phonology of Spanish (Haładkiewicz-Grzelak 2006; Nowikow 2012) and are believed to offer vital insights in the area of possible cross-linguistic influence. However, some inconsistencies have been observed in some of these accounts, these will be pointed out when necessary.

These difficulties are deeply rooted in the Spanish phonological system. For example, the language possesses the most frequently encountered system of basic vowels /a/, /u/, /i/, /e/ and /o/. Haładkiewicz-Grzelak (2006, 38) refers to it as the “essence of simplicity,” especially in comparison to the seven short /ɪ, e, æ, ʌ, ɒ, ʊ, ə/ and five long /i:, u:, ɑ:, ɔ:, ɜ:/ vowels of English. The Spanish vowels are higher, tenser and shorter than their English counterparts (Mott 2005, 250). Where length is part of the difference, speakers encounter considerable difficulties in the perception and production of such contrasts. In English, vowel reduction is a phenomenon inducing various phonotactic changes, whereas in Spanish even the vowels in absolute final positions retain their full quality, hence vowel deletion or vowel reduction of any kind are totally absent in Spanish (Haładkiewicz-Grzelak 2006, 41). The phonotactic restriction that bans some of the short vowels in English from occurring word-finally is also problematic for students. The Spanish vowels preserve their original quality in all contexts and are not, as in English, reduced to schwa when unstressed. Also, they are free to occur in closed or open syllables, word initially or finally. This already points to the prospective difficulties in assimilating the system of English (Buczek-Zawiła and Okas 2008, 143-44). And because schwa [ə] does not exist, unstressed vowels are pronounced simply with the “written”, “spelling” vowel (Coe 2001, 94). According to Pamela Rogerson-Revell (2011), considerable confusion is demonstrated by speakers in several individual segments: [e] and [æ] can be a problem, with [e] frequently used for both. Since [ʌ] does not exist in Spanish, it is taken over by other vowels, typically [ɑ:] or the diphthong [əu] (*must* sounds like *mast* or *most*). Both [aɪ] and [eɪ] diphthongs occur in Spanish, yet there may be spelling interference, so that *main* [meɪn] may be pronounced [main]³.

As regards the consonants, the bilabial fricative [β], as in *Cuba*, the voiced velar fricative [ɣ], as in *Diego*, and the palatal [λ], as in *calle*, are a Spanish idiosyncrasy and are absent from languages such as Polish or English. As for the other consonants, very close equivalents can be found in English and they are therefore articulated with no serious difficulty. A feature that Spanish shares with Polish, but which creates problems in English is the devoicing of word-final consonants in indigenous words. Spanish actually allows a total lenition of a stop consonant in this position

³ Students uniformly underline (in personal interviews) that they tend to pronounce everything they see and normally the way they see it written. Hence the erroneous forms with the past tense *-ed* ending, which is normally pronounced everywhere as a syllabic variant, so that a word like *laughed* has two syllables [ˈla:fed].

and bans word-final plosives in clusters. As for the voiceless plosive series [p, t, k], there are conflicting messages in the relevant sources: Haładkiewicz-Grzelak (2006, 24) explicitly stresses that “the [...] crucial difference is the lack of aspiration of Spanish voiceless stops” (this is corroborated in Mott 2005), whereas Rogerson-Revell (2011) speaks of “little aspiration for /p t k/” without specifying what she means by that. An additional difficulty is connected with the regular lenition – which in this case means spirantization – of intervocalic voiced plosives into corresponding fricatives.⁴

Mott (2005) warns further that voiced fricatives such as [v] or [z] may only appear as positional variants of voiced stops (e.g., between vowels or voiced segments), and the voiceless [s], [f] and [θ] are remnants of a once very rich set. This constitutes immediate problem areas, given the role the voiced alveolar fricative [z] plays in the inflectional system of English. The lacking [ʃ] spirant and its voiced counterpart [ʒ] do not occur even as positional allophones. The (inter)dental [θ] has a reasonably wide distribution. Its voiced partner, however, appears only as a result of voice assimilation whenever it is followed by a voiced consonant (Haładkiewicz-Grzelak 2006, 28), it sometimes may sound like a [d] for a beginner Spanish learner of English. As for affricates, European Spanish has only [tʃ], “with obvious consequences for the learners” (Coe 2001, 93). All this results in confusion and mispronunciations such as *Sue/chew* for *shoe* and *pleasure* realized as *pletcher*, *plesser* or *plesher*.

One more segmental problem is connected with the confusion between [b] and [v]: in Spanish there is a sound which is a sort of combination of the two sounds, it is realised as a [b] in the initial position (*berry* for *very*) but as a continuant intervocalically.

Mott (2005, 260) notices that the initial clusters of two consonants of Spanish are similar to those in English, although they are generally less frequent, except for the fact that Spanish speakers do not have an [s]+consonant combination. Here, a vowel is inserted, a prothetic [e], applying to loanwords like *estructura*, *estadística* (Haładkiewicz-Grzelak 2006, 41). The same strategy of introducing a vowel in this position is regularly transferred into English: learners will tend to insert a vowel before the “s”: *escream*, a good *eschool* (Rogerson-Revell 2011). In terms of phonological processes, voicing seems to play a significant part in Spanish, it is, however, always the regressive type of assimilation. Progressive voicing is completely absent in Spanish. This situation causes

⁴ The precise situation and contexts are outlined comprehensively in Haładkiewicz-Grzelak (2006, 25-26).

problems in its own right: voicing segments in word medial clusters, also in compound structures, and an inability to progressively voice some of the inflectional endings of English (*-es* and *-ed*). Similarly, final consonants in English are sometimes difficult for foreigners. For instance, Spaniards have difficulty with the final [d] in words like *card*, *heard* or *field*. The problem lies not in a gap in the consonant inventory, as the phoneme /d/ exists in Spanish, but in the fact that Spanish has few final consonants and [d] is not one of them. The example of *field* illustrates one more difficulty, this one arising due to the non-occurrence of groups of consonants word-finally in Spanish, such sequential problems are usually resolved via elision (Mott 2005, 148).

4.3. Turkish

Turkish uses fundamentally the same alphabet as English (since 1928), yet its orthographic system, which to a large extent employs one-to-one letter-sound correspondence, can cause interference with the English pronunciation (Rogerson-Revell 2011).

It has eight vowels and no diphthongs. Vowels in Turkish tend to be shorter than in English and in some contexts vowels are elided (*city* may turn into *stee*). Since no quantitative contrast between vowels exists in this system, learners exhibit distinct difficulty distinguishing between tense vs. lax vowels. For Turkish speakers [æ] may be confused with [ʌ] or [ɑ:] (Rogerson-Revell 2011); additionally it may be substituted with [e], resulting in forms like *set* for *sat* (Thomson 2001, 215). It is a sound that “plagues Turkish-speaking learners” (Thomson 2001, 215). [ɒ] and [ɔ:], as in *not* and *nought* are also normally confused, both may be replaced with a vowel closer to [ɑ:] (Rogerson-Revell 2011) or diphthongized to [ɔʊ] (Thomson 2001, 215). Confusion is also observed between [u]/[ʊ] and [eɪ] may be confused with [e] (*mate/met*) (Rogerson-Revell 2011). Additionally, the final element of the English diphthongs closing in [ɪ], namely [aɪ, eɪ, ɔɪ], may become devoiced and resemble more the German palatal spirant [ç] (Thomson 2001, 215). The English schwa [ə] finds its nearest equivalent in the tenser and higher [ɪ] of Turkish. However, under the influence of orthography, speakers often produce the full vowel quality for the unstressed one, as in [ɪmkɒnvɪmɪnt] or [ɛddɪʃɒnəl].

Turkish has twenty consonants and shares many of them with English. Among those which are not shared are [θ] and [ð], which do not occur in Turkish and are typically substituted with an over-aspirated [t] and [d] (Thomson 2001, 216). Strangely, [v] and [w] may be confused in perception and production, especially in the neighbourhood of back

vowels. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that the Turkish alphabet does not have the letter “w”, thus loanwords containing this sound are spelled with a “v”, contributing to the confusion. /ŋ/ is found only before [k] or [g], therefore these stops are never elided after the velar nasal in English. Turkish speakers tend to devoice [b d g dʒ] at the end of words and syllables, they sound like their voiceless counterparts. They will similarly not make the vowel lengthening necessary before final voiced sounds (Rogerson-Revell 2011).

Turkish shares many final consonant clusters with English. However, if the final consonant is a voiced plosive it may be problematic (*bulb* > *bulp*). Initial consonant clusters are not allowed in Turkish, while clusters of more than three consonants in any position are unusual. The most problematic initial clusters are those beginning with [s], where vowel insertion is a common strategy (*step* > *istep* or *sitpe*) (Rogerson-Revell 2011). In Turkish, loanwords from English opt for the initial easing vowel (*istasyon* “station”), while when speaking English the tendency is to insert the vowel after the first consonant: *siprink* for *spring* or *filute* for *flute* (Thomson 2011, 216).

As with English, word stress is mobile in Turkish, so word stress should not be too problematic except where Turkish patterns are different to English ones. For example, stress is typically on the final syllable in many Turkish words, including nouns, pronouns, verbs, conjunctions and adverbs. In comparison, English nouns, main verbs and adjectives are front-stressed (Rogerson-Revell 2011). There is no schwa so the vowel reduction which is necessary to produce an English rhythm is not present and the rhythmic pattern is generally much more even because of the tendency to pronounce each syllable clearly. This is also transferred onto English.

To sum up, what transpires from the above outline is that certain problems are more likely to recur than others in pronunciation training. Moreover, one can extrapolate certain areas of difficulty that are common to speakers from different native language backgrounds. The table below illustrates the commonalities and differences between Polish, Spanish and Turkish speakers of English.

Table 1-1. Overview of potential pronunciation problems by language group

Language	Final voiced/voiceless stops distinguished	Aspiration of initial plosives [p t k]	[θ] [ð]	[v] [w]	[s] [z]	[ʃ] [ʒ]	[tʃ] [dʒ]	[r]	Consonant clusters s(C)C	Tense/lax vowels contrast	[ə]	Word stress	Rhythm & intonation
Polish	√	√	√	x	√	√	√	√	x	√	√	√	√
Spanish	√	x	x	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	x	√
Turkish	√	√	√	√	√	x	x	x	√	√	√	x	√

A cursory look through the data in the table shows that, interestingly, native speakers of these very different languages share many pitfalls when trying to master the way English ought to be spoken. It should therefore be relatively easy to combine them into one instructional group. It turns out, however, not to be that simple.

5. How to reconcile the same with the different?

Parrot-fashion repetition of foreign-sounding new sounds for familiar letters, rolling them around your mouth, exercising sounds that you did not know were possible, incredulous of the idea that they could deliver meaning is what characterizes a student’s experience of many pronunciation training classes. The idea advocated in this chapter is that significantly better results can be achieved when the students develop an awareness of their own problem areas as well as some of their underlying reasons.

Escudero (2005, 180) proposes that the role of the input is more important than an age-related lack of cognitive plasticity. This is because rich L2 input can overrule the reduced level of plasticity in adult learners. One prerequisite to a successful L2 pronunciation class is to provide sufficiently rich input, both in terms of the model on which L2 sound perception can be systematically based and the practice activities accompanying it. Escudero (2005, 180-81) underlines as well that throughout their learning, L2 students will have different perception

grammars for their two languages. In the case of Spanish learners of English, where [i] and [i] contrast for example, the new length distinction will not be used when perceiving L1 vowels because this distinction was created in the L2 perception system to optimally cope with the L2 production environment. Consequently, drawing on the rigorous phonetic and phonological description of L1 and the target L2 provided leads to predicting the initial state for L2 acquisition, i.e., the perceptual system that learners will initially use in their L2 (Escudero 2005, 308-309).

In linguistically non-homogenous groups, mutual observation and interaction with each other allow students to develop a sort of meta-awareness not only of their own deficiencies in the pronunciation of English but also of the problems and difficulties experienced by their foreign classmates. In that respect all of them become more phonetically-conscious and able to recognize, but also frequently reproduce, foreign sounding articulations. They probably regard it as a sort of fitness training for their speech organs. That in turn helps them to self-monitor their own production. That is a worthy aim in itself.

Apart from worthy aims, there are also the course requirements, which specify, again rigorously, the objectives for the students to attain. It is also stated that any student participating in the course is to achieve the specific goals written into its program, naturally, to a different degree. The issue here is how to convince all of them that these goals are attainable and how to guide them in order to assist them in their learning. It comes as a revelation to the instructor as well that some of the aspects of English speech so far have been taken for granted and not paid particular attention to. Additionally, whenever it is deemed helpful, we draw on what the students are familiar with in their native language, which, until comparatively recently, meant Polish only.

To offer but one example, the notoriously problematic English (E) [ɪ] vowel⁵ is regularly introduced via contrasting it with the Polish (P) [i]: the students' attention is drawn to pairs of words like P. *syn* – E. *sin*; P. *dym* – E. *dim*; P. *tym* – E. *Tim*; P. *typ* – E. *tip* etc. At first, it is often difficult to hear sounds that are not identical to those of our first language. Until one is capable of perceiving the difference properly, any attempt at reproducing them will be futile, that is why the first priority is to train students to perceive such differences. Thus, they are made sensitive to the

⁵ A vowel of practically identical quality is found in Lithuanian. Students of English there do not have to spend weeks trying to get it right, they also grab the quantity/quality distinction between [i] and [i:] of English straightaway. As such, they constitute useful peer-models for their Polish classmates to follow.