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EFL pronunciation teaching to Polish English studies majors

Abstract: The article discusses selected issues in teaching English pronunciation to Polish learners at the university level. The main assumption is that metacompetence and practical training are inseparable in that they interact effectively in successful pronunciation pedagogy. We discuss segmental issues, such as vowel category learning and teaching stop aspiration. Next, we proceed to suprasegmental elements, such as intonation, stress, and rhythm. We attempt to show how integrating students' general knowledge of linguistics with various training tasks in speech perception and production may lead to improved production and perception in English.

Keywords: teaching pronunciation, metacompetence, segmentals, suprasegmentals, speech perception, pronunciation pedagogy

1. Introduction

Traditionally, teaching FL phonetics focuses on segmental and suprasegmental phenomena. However, different views of their mutual relations and interaction have not led to a balance between the two strata of the physical manifestation of language in pronunciation pedagogy. This article presents the authors' view of the objectives and methods to be used in the teaching of practical English phonetics to university students. Although we argue that it is not desirable or even possible to separate the two aspects of FL pronunciation in the teaching/learning process, we address them in two separate sections for better clarity.

Another dualism to be mentioned in the context of language teaching in general is related to the learning setting, defining the process as

either L2 acquisition or FL learning. Even if Krashen's (1982) distinction between language acquisition and language learning is no longer as influential as it used to be and the distance between the two processes seems to have shrunk lately with the appearance of new communication technologies and travel opportunities, a lot of language education is still taking place in artificial classroom conditions. Needless to say, these learning conditions strongly determine the choice of an adequate teaching approach, which may differ considerably from the options that appear more appropriate in various other settings.

Moreover, given the character of their studies, even the most proficient philology students need a considerable amount of awareness and knowledge about the language. Typically, Polish English studies majors are still in a position to improve their FL skills, including pronunciation. Easy access to authentic materials and much better opportunities to contact native English speakers allow learners to use learning strategies characteristic of L2 acquisition, but some carefully selected explicit instruction may not only develop the required metacompetence but also enhance their practical phonetic skills.

2. Segments

Segmental units of a sound system of any language make up a fundamental tier which encodes meaning into physical properties. Segments in their basic form are contrastive in that substituting one segment for another leads to a change in meaning. In this form, we refer to them as phonemes, the smallest units of a language that can carry and change the meaning. However, segments may also have multiple allophonic realisations. It means that a given speech sound may differ in acoustic properties from another speech sound, but still they are both considered as variants of one phoneme. The status of an allophone of a given phoneme results from the fact that, firstly, substituting one allophone for another allophone does not change the meaning, and, secondly, allophonic realisations are predictable from the phonetic context. In foreign-language speech, incorrect productions of speech sounds may lead to either totally incorrect expression of the meaning or impression of foreign-accentedness. Very generally, it may be said that incorrect articulations of phonemes will lead to erroneous expression of meaning, and incorrect articulations of allophones will lead to foreign-accentedness, but the target meaning will be conveyed. For example,

incorrect production of /ɪ/ in *fit* as /i:/ will lead to the perception of *feet* rather than *fit*. It is because /ɪ/ and /i:/ are separate phonemes. On the other hand, producing /r/ in *try* with full voicing as in Polish *trawa*, instead of devoicing as in native English, will lead to the perception of accentedness, but the meaning will be preserved.

Although at first glance it may appear that phonemic contrasts are much more important than allophonic realisations because the former and not the latter result in breakdown in communication, misproduction of allophonic variants may also end in difficulties with decoding the target meaning. For example, English voiceless stops, unlike Polish voiceless stops, are aspirated syllable-initially. Aspirated stops are considered to be allophones of unaspirated stops, because they are conditioned by the phonetic context. Although aspiration is considered as allophonic realisation, it is a robust cue in perception by native speakers. As a result, articulation of the word *town* without aspiration in /t/ not only will result in the impression of a foreign accent but is also likely to lead to the incorrect perception as *down*. The reason is, as demonstrated by perception experiments, that native speakers of English are sensitive to aspiration in distinguishing /t/ from /d/, and therefore, the absence of aspiration after the release burst of /t/ is a cue to categorizing it as /d/.

In the following subsections, we discuss how phonetic training supported by metacompetence may be organised in order to train phonemic contrasts and allophonic realisations typical of English. We have chosen to discuss phonemic contrasts with an example of vowel category learning and allophonic realisations with an example of voiceless stop aspiration.

2.1 Phonemic contrast – vowel category learning

The vowel system of English is especially difficult for Polish learners. This results from the fact that Polish uses a sparse vowel system with only six non-nasal vowels, and British English exploits as many as eleven vowels in stressed syllables. Such an imbalance has a consequence in that learning of correct production and perception of English vowels is impeded by frequent assimilations to Polish vowels. Such a scenario is predicted by the two most influential non-native speech perception models: the Speech Learning Model (Flege 1995) and the Perceptual Assimilation Model (Best 1995; Best and Tyler 2007). Polish learners' production and perception of English vowels is characterised by either one-category assimilations or two-category assimilations. One-category assimilation occurs when an English vowel is mapped onto one corresponding Polish

vowel. This is, for example, the case for English /ɪ/, which is assimilated by Polish /a/. One-category assimilations are difficult in pronunciation training, because a native vowel functions as a good equivalent of a foreign vowel, and the learning process is blocked. Learners do not perceive such a vowel as different, and so they do not even know how to modify their articulation. Two-category assimilations are relatively easier to teach, because assimilation degree is rarely equal for the two native vowels, that is, the non-native vowel is frequently perceived as more similar to one and less similar to the other native vowel. In the following two subsections, we will discuss an example of a two-category assimilation of English /æ/ to Polish /ɛ/ and Polish /a/.

2.1.1 Pedagogical problems

English /æ/ is assimilated by both Polish /ɛ/ and /a/. As a consequence, Polish learners produce /æ/ as either /ɛ/ or /a/; however, the assimilation ratio is not equal for the two Polish vowels. The vowel /a/ appears to be a stronger assimilator (Rojczyk 2011a), most likely because many words with /æ/ are spelt with the letter *a*, and the articulation of this vowel has been observably lowered in contemporary British English. However, a number of words are still pronounced with /ɛ/. The reason is that the actual pattern of assimilation is confounded by other factors, such as neighbouring sounds or the degree of lexical assimilation into Polish (Gonet et al. 2010; Szpyra-Kozłowska and Radomski 2016). Sometimes it may even be a matter of individual preferences, as in the word *Manchester*, which may be pronounced by some with /ɛ/ and by others with /a/. Figure 1 shows a vowel chart with /æ/ and the two neighbouring Polish vowels /ɛ/ and /a/.

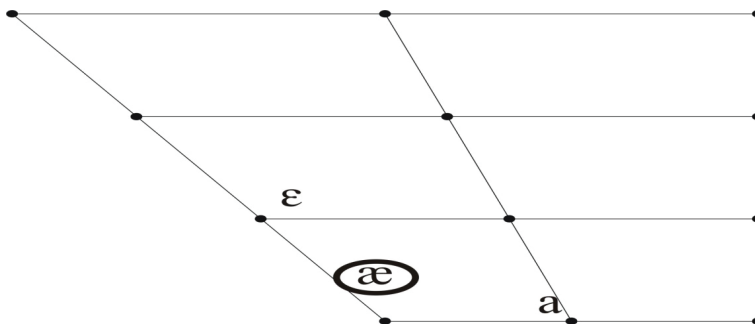


Figure 1. Vowel chart with /æ/ and Polish /ɛ/ and /a/

2.1.2 Didactic suggestions

The starting point for training articulation and perception of any non-native category should be a metacompetence component. Such a component consists of two parts: phonetic transcription and articulatory instructions. Narrowing it down specifically to /æ/, students are taught to link this sound category with its phonetic symbol and are provided precise articulatory instructions. Introducing from the very beginning a phonetic symbol makes this sound a discreet category, blocking potential confusion with other similar-sounding categories, such as / / . In other words, before the students start practising words with /æ/, they have to know which words have this vowel. Although English spelling is far from transparent, we also introduce some general spelling-to-sound regularities to help the students detect this vowel in frequent words. Correct articulatory instructions are a necessary foundation of a new category formation. Polish does not exploit a low-front vowel area typical of /æ/. Speakers of Polish have difficulties with maintaining both low and front position of this vowel. Typically, driven by their native articulation habits, they will either maintain the front position but raise the tongue, which will lead to the production of Polish /ɛ/, or they will maintain the low position but retract the tongue, which in turn will create a configuration for Polish /a/. Consequently, the students are instructed that the initial gesture for articulating /æ/ is pressing the tip of the tongue against the back of the lower teeth. Such a configuration prevents tongue retracting and maintains the front-low position. Another instruction is that the mouth should be open in articulating /æ/. It is our experience that students tend to articulate this vowel with insufficient jaw lowering, which significantly masks the target quality of this vowel. It is also recommended that the students practise sustaining muscle tension throughout the whole portion of the vowel. Although /æ/ is classified as a lax vowel, it is relatively tense and long. It is frequently the case that the students may be able to set the proper articulatory configuration, but are still unable to maintain the stable quality and duration.

Once the metacompetence component has been introduced, perception and production training is provided. The first step in teaching /æ/ is dissimilating it perceptually from the two neighbouring Polish vowels /ɛ/ and /a/. The learners need to make sure that /æ/ must not be substituted by either of the two Polish vowels. To this end, we recommend a cross-linguistic discrimination task in which the learners hear pairs of Polish-English or English-Polish words and are required to indicate if they hear same or different vowels in the presented sequences. The

pairs may be, for example, POL *mak* – ENG *mack*, POL *pet* – ENG *pat*, ENG *lass* – POL *las*, ENG *man* – POL *MEN*. This is followed by a cross-linguistic identification task in which the learners are asked to indicate whether they heard a Polish or English word. When the learners gain confidence in perceiving different quality of /æ/ from Polish /ɛ/ and /a/, they are provided with within-language discrimination exercises which engage the neighbouring English vowels /e/ and /ɪ/. Relatively good effects are achieved with contrasting standard /hVd/ sequences, such as /hed/ – /hæd/ – /had/, and then proceeding to other consonantal contexts. Finally, identification tasks are introduced in which the learners have to indicate which word they heard. Here, we require the learners to transcribe different syllables with tested vowels. They are informed that they must not concentrate on the potential semantic context of those syllables, but they should solely attend to the phonetic make-up of the syllables. For example, nonsense syllables may be used, such as /spæ/ or /d ps/. Moreover, we use a number of syllables which may resemble real words but are pronounced with a different vowel, for instance, /bl k/ instead of /blæk/. Such training is expected to enhance correct vowel categorisation and make it more independent from top-down lexical effects.

2.2 Allophonic realisation – aspiration of voiceless stops

English aspiration of voiceless stops is phonologically considered to be an allophonic realisation of a voiceless stop phoneme syllable-initially when followed by a vowel. However, when considered from the point of view of speech perception, aspiration turns out to be a very robust perceptual cue. In purely acoustic terms, English frequently does not have voiced stops syllable-initially, but rather only voiceless unaspirated and voiceless aspirated. It stands in contrast to Polish, which has acoustically voiced and voiceless stops in syllable onsets. As a result, Polish learners produce English syllable-initial /b, d, g/ with excessive prevoicing and /p, t, k/ with insufficient aspiration. While excessive prevoicing does not impede successful perception of /b, d, g/, insufficient aspiration leads to the perception of /p, t, k/ as /b, d, g/, because native speakers of English are sensitive to the presence of aspiration as a cue to voicelessness. Training aspiration of voiceless stops is one of the challenges in teaching English pronunciation to Polish learners, because here the L1 habits of producing unaspirated /p, t, k/ are observable even in very proficient learners.

2.2.1 Pedagogical problems

Teaching aspiration is relatively easy in the initial stages of training. This feature is perceptually robust, and many learners can imitate it after the model talker with only limited theoretical instructions. The difficulty lies in generalising aspiration into regular speech habits with other syllables and words. To put it simply, the learners will quite successfully aspirate in a phonetics laboratory, but they will not outside a phonetics laboratory. This is a major problem in aspiration training and can only be remedied by recursive retraining and self-monitoring. Using an illustrative example, when a learner practises aspiration in the word *pat*, the production of aspirated /p/ will be very good. However, when he or she is asked to correct the vowel /æ/ in this word and say it again, the production of /p/ is likely to be unaspirated in the second production. This results from reorienting attention from the trained feature and shows that the habit of aspiration is not generalised. Another problem which is observed with the learners who have already acquired a satisfactory level of automatic aspiration is generalising to sequences where aspiration is blocked. For example, the learners who correctly aspirate /p/ in *port* are also likely to incorrectly aspirate /p/ in *sport*. The failure to block aspiration after preceding /s/ is a characteristic feature of even highly proficient learners. In this case, pronunciation training benefits greatly from metacompetence instructions and additional practical exercises with tokens with sequences /sp, st, sk/.

2.2.2 Didactic suggestions

Instructions for aspiration are relatively straightforward, and the learners are fairly quick in correct imitation. This results from the fact that aspiration is psychoacoustically salient and easily detected by a perceptual system. It is advisable to start with graphic representations of the realisations of the words *tu* in Polish and *two* in English. In Polish, the voicing of the vowel commences immediately after the release of /t/, while in English, the portion of an ongliding vowel is masked by glottal airstream. The practical instructions may be supported by blowing a little slip of paper from the palm in producing English *two*. In this exercise, the aspiration airstream is exaggerated, but it is fairly illustrative of the differences between Polish and English voiceless stops. Next, we proceed to practising lists of words with initial voiceless stops, and we encourage the students to aspirate in an exaggerated manner as a way of habit formation. One more exercise that yields satisfactory

results is English accent imitation in Polish (Rojczyk 2015). The learners produce words in Polish with aspiration, which gives a comical effect and helps the learners to attend more accurately to this cross-linguistic difference. As mentioned in the previous section, the problem with aspiration is habituating this feature in spontaneous pronunciation. The learners must learn to self-monitor their pronunciation until aspiration becomes automatic and spontaneous. Self-monitoring may be assisted by spectrographic analysis of one's unprepared speech. As an example, the learners prepare a short story without orthographic representations and record themselves telling the story. Subsequently, they find tokens with syllable-initial /p, t, k/ and listen back or measure their aspiration. Aspiration produces visible spectrographic marks which are easy to find, and thus using speech-analysis software is an effective tool in teaching aspiration (Rojczyk 2011b).

3. Prosody: theoretical background

Despite several publications devoted to prosody (for instance, the popular intonation textbooks by Cook 1968; O'Connor and Arnold 1973), it was only the development of pragmatics and the communicative approach to FL pronunciation teaching (e.g., Brazil 1975, 1978; Brazil et al. 1980; Celce-Murcia et al. 1996) that drew more attention to largely neglected prosodic issues. Prominence and pause distribution and realisation on lexical and phrasal levels, speech timing, voice pitch variation patterns, and even voice quality manipulations (Kenworthy 1980) were increasingly recognised by teachers as vital for communication. It was noticed that stress and intonation cues are often more indicative of the true meaning of an utterance and the speaker's intentions than the semantics. Numerous studies (e.g., Anderson-Hsieh et al. 1992; Jilka 2000; Trofimovich and Baker 2006) confirm the impact of prosodic deviations on both comprehensibility and the level of foreign-accentedness of L2 speech. Moreover, the use of inadequate intonation patterns may cause misunderstandings and lead to negative evaluation and even discrimination of the speaker (Munro 2003).

Stress, rhythm, and intonation are usually mentioned as the basic prosodic phenomena, but they are by no means independent of each other. Stress, if understood as prominence in general, is realised not only by increased articulatory effort resulting in rising loudness, but also, not less importantly, by specific speech unit duration and voice

pitch arrangements, which determine, to a large extent, the timing and the melodic shape of speech. On the utterance level, the speaker stresses a speech unit in order to draw the listener's attention to the most important elements of the message, and robust prominence indication is regarded as vital for communication (Kenworthy 1990; Bogle 1996; Celce-Murcia et al. 1996; Jenkins 2000; Pennington and Ellis 2000; Hahn 2004). On the word level, some languages, including English but not Polish, use specific prominence relations between the constituent syllables as an important cue to word identification (Cutler 1984; Kenworthy 1990; Cooper et al. 2002; Hahn 2004; Field 2005), and lexical access often depends on the correct stress pattern realisation by the speaker (Brown 1990; Field 2005).

The local, lexical prominence patterns are incorporated in larger prosodic constructions, using, as already mentioned, apart from articulatory dynamics, temporal and melodic means of speech organisation. Together with the focusing function, Wells (2006:11f) distinguishes six important functions of intonation, clearly indicating its communicative power:

- focussing (highlighting informationally important units);
- grammatical (signalling grammatical structures and unit boundaries);
- psychological (organising speech into cognitively manageable chunks);
- discourse (interaction management, for instance, turn taking);
- attitudinal (expressing attitudes and emotions); and
- indexical (indicating the speaker's personal or social identity).

The last aspect of prosody to be mentioned, relatively independent of pitch variation but based on prominence distribution and timing, is speech rhythm. There is a lot of disagreement about the relevance of speech rhythm for communication. The influential, intuitively convincing Rhythm Class Hypothesis (Pike 1945; Abercrombie 1967), dividing languages into stress-timed and syllable-timed ones, has not been confirmed empirically (e.g., Dauer 1983). Still, more recent studies do not reject the Rhythm Class Hypothesis as long as it refers to cross-linguistic variation between stressed and unstressed syllables (Wiget et al. 2010) rather than strict isochrony of speech units.

3.1 Pedagogical problems

The growing awareness of the communicative power of prosody and the fact that it is “held responsible for numerous instances of miscommunication between native and non-native speakers” (Grabe et al. 2008: 311) has not changed the well-grounded conviction that it may be the

most difficult aspect of FL learning. This difficulty arises for several reasons, such as the objective complexity and variability of intonation patterns (cf. Roach 2000, Grabe et al. 2008) and the subjective feeling that “it is somehow less perceptible and less tangible than other areas of language” (Underhill 2005:75), which brings us to the physiological aspect of the perception and production of prosodic patterns, relying on the ability to discriminate pitch variations and motor control of the speaker’s own articulatory system. In fact, most people, though they “vary in their ability to hear intonation patterns, and there are quite often disagreements between trained listeners about what they hear in a speech sample” (Cauldwell and Allen 1997: 2), can use prosody efficiently in L1 but in a rather subconscious, intuitive way (Bradford 1988; Brazil 1994; Kelly 2000). Therefore, Roach’s (2000) advice that “the attitudinal function of intonation is something that is best acquired through talking with and listening to English speakers” (after Setter 2008: 367) is very useful for L2 learners but less useful in classroom teaching conditions.

Conscious control, not vital in SL acquisition but strongly desirable in the FL learning setting, appears far more difficult. Classroom conditions, far from a natural discourse setting, suppress learners’ natural prosodic intuition even in contexts where universal prosodic patterns could be used (Chun 1988). Furthermore, “the teaching of intonation seems to have been characterised by an even greater uncertainty and lack of confidence than the other areas of practical phonology. We do not have a practical, workable, trustworthy system through which we can make intonation comprehensible to ourselves” (Underhill 2005:75). Consequently, intonation is “one of those territories where many language teachers fear to tread” (Setter 2008: 367), and many researchers (e.g., Taylor 1993; Jenkins 2000) consider it hardly teachable.

Indeed, certain pedagogical approaches incorporate the idea that the difficulty of the topic should make teachers consider leaving intonation out of English pronunciation curricula for two main reasons. Firstly, given the difficulty in categorisation and description, let alone the variation and inconsistency of patterns, it is a great challenge to elaborate a consistent model of English prosody that might form a learning objective for the learner. Secondly, especially in classroom conditions, teaching prosody requires, apart from the knowledge, a good ear for voice pitch changes and the ability to demonstrate various prosodic patterns on the part of the teacher in order to provide the learners with necessary feedback. Needless to say, the learner also needs to possess or develop such abilities. As a result, teachers may try to reduce prosody issues to word stress placement, which, unlike tones, is hardly ever con-

sidered redundant for communication. The problem is, however, that stress, or prominence in general, is strictly related to pitch changes, and neglecting intonation may also lead to the learner's inability to control word stress.

3.2 Didactic suggestions

Typically, philology students are learners with above-average language aptitude and particularly high language awareness developed through their descriptive grammar, phonology, and general linguistic courses. Therefore, even though conscious prosody learning is a difficult task, the teacher may try to resort to their metacompetence to the students' benefit in both theoretical and practical aspects of English phonetics. In this section, we propose the main issues to be taken into account in teaching suprasegmental phonetics to university students of English. These comprise metacompetence, including the knowledge of phonological and phonetic terminology, and practical skills, including the perception and production of English prosodic patterns.

3.2.1 Prominence

The successful recognition and indication of prominence in speech is crucial for all prosodic issues. Learners should be made aware of the role of intensity, duration and pitch variation in signalling the prominent speech units. We suggest that the concept of prominence should be introduced very early in the course, beginning with the notion of word stress (cf. Porzuczek et al. 2013: 46–53). Practical training is preceded by explanation and demonstration of the main word stress cues, and references to how lexical stress is used across languages. Learners must also be made aware of the relativity of prominence, which results in equal attention paid to the strengthening of stressed syllables and the reduction of unstressed ones. At this point, we focus particularly on qualitative vowel reduction, which, absent from Polish, often proves to be the decisive factor in the native English listener's word stress recognition (e.g., Field 2005). Such instruction supports a coherent presentation of the English vocalic system by explaining the special status of schwa among the English vowels. Practical exercises include ear training in word stress recognition and articulatory control, using both the perception and production of real English words and stress position manipulations in nonce words. It is also useful to explain the relations between

word stress assignment and the phonological structure of the syllable (light and heavy syllables) on the one hand, and the morphological structure of the word (stress-fixing, stress-attracting, and stress-neutral suffixes; compounds, etc.) on the other.

3.2.2 Rhythm/Timing

In our view, speech rhythm is not a necessary constituent of a pronunciation course. Instead, we suggest exercises in phrase and sentence level prominence recognition and indication (cf. Porzuczek et al. 2013: 155–163). The timing of larger prosodic units may be treated as a resultant of prominence relations within and between their constituents. The realisation of this topic relies on the extension of the previous, word-stress-related knowledge and skills. The same aspects of prominence appear in relation to larger stretches of speech, where learners need to observe prominence level relations (primary and secondary stress), while, as we make clear to the students, the knowledge of unstressed syllable reduction applies to the weak forms of function words. Rhythm exercises are also useful if they aim at better articulatory control of stressed and unstressed syllables on the sentence level.

3.2.3 Intonation

Considering that most people, even amusics, are capable of using intonation efficiently in their native language, we suggest that the major problem in intonation teaching is to match the knowledge with physiological control and translate the pragmatic impressions into phonetic metalanguage, hoping to be able at further learning stages to employ learners' explicit knowledge of intonation for practical communication purposes. The awareness of intonation may be built using examples of melodic patterns which are common to Polish and English. These include the basic application of falling and rising intonation to contrast, respectively, statements and questions or completion and continuation (cf. Porzuczek et al. 2013: 164–166). Conscious associations between the pitch change direction and its familiar pragmatic functions may be used by at least some students to learn the most characteristic FL-specific contours that differ from L1 patterns. In the case of standard British pronunciation (SSBE), we focus on *wh*-questions and question-tag intonation (Porzuczek et al. 2013: 170–172). Finally, apart from pitch change direction, we draw the students' attention to the pragmatic

significance of relative pitch change amplitudes (Porzuczek et al. 2013: 167–168).

Generally speaking, in teaching prosody, the teacher tries to bridge the learner's subliminal, intuitive practical knowledge of intonation patterns with explicitly defined pragmatic functions and the technical description of contours in terms of nuclear accent realisation, directions, and amplitude of pitch change. Certainly, the difficulty of the topic makes us regard any success in this field as an added bonus of the course.

3.3 Teaching aids and techniques

Throughout the paper, we have advocated the idea of balance between metacompetence and practical skills in a course addressed to English studies majors. Therefore, the students become acquainted with the most important theoretical issues via explicit presentation, instruction and explanation provided by the lecturer, supported by self-study at home. The classroom part of the instruction is naturally based on auditory stimuli, but the efficiency of multisensory approach to teaching encourages the teacher to refer to the other senses as well. Phonemic and phonetic transcriptions are the most obvious visual aids in phonetics courses. Besides, visualisations of articulation mechanisms, intonation contours, and prominence patterns are employed. Furthermore, particularly in university conditions, the availability of speech-analysis software, such as PRAAT (Boersma 2001) or SFS/WASP (Huckvale 2003), offers new possibilities to visualise and thus help students understand and better perceive speech processes (Gonet 2016), including the elusive prosodic patterns (Anderson-Hsieh 1992, 1994). Introduction to speech analysis may also encourage the students to start their own research in the future.

A larger part of the course, however, is devoted to practical training, which involves elements of traditional drills wherever articulatory motor habit formation is necessary. At this stage, apart from audio-visual materials, the teacher may try using kinaesthetic stimuli, which often boost the efficiency of the multisensory approach (e.g., Celce-Murcia et al. 1996) with respect not only to prosody (Wrembel 2007) but also segmental phonetics (Szyra-Kozłowska 2015). Kinaesthetic involvement may seem a more obvious element of teaching younger learners, but university teachers also report positive response of students to this kind of exercise.

4. Conclusions

The primary objective of a pronunciation course for English studies majors is the same as in the case of teaching other groups of learners. Approximation to a native pronunciation model should result in at least “comfortable intelligibility” (Kenworthy 1990), although in the case of prospective English teachers and interpreters, a closer approximation of learner speech to a native-like level is most welcome. Knowing that the most effective way to acquire foreign language pronunciation, especially prosody, is by exposure to real communicative situations and authentic language, which imitates the way we develop our L1 speech, we strongly encourage the students to seize every opportunity of involvement in natural communication in English. However, the most distinguishing feature of a university course in practical English phonetics is the importance of metacompetence development, which, along with enriching the students’ general knowledge of linguistics, should lead to significant FL pronunciation level improvement.

Reflective questions

- Q1: What are the implications of and the differences between FL learning and SL acquisition for pronunciation pedagogy?
- Q2: How is learning of FL vowels influenced by L1 vowel system?
- Q3: Why is it difficult to teach English word stress patterns?

Practical tasks

- T1: Think about other segments in English which are difficult for Polish learners and try to explain why.
- T2: Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of teaching prosody before segmental phonetics.
- T3: Make a list of topics you would include in a university course of English intonation.

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