TRAINEE TEACHERS' AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT EFL PRONUNCIATION INSTRUCTION

Anna Jarosz, University of Lodz

Teacher cognitions and beliefs constitute an extremely important field in pronunciation teaching research because they shape and affect the learners' outcomes. Teachers acknowledge the importance of pronunciation instruction, but many tend to avoid it in their classrooms for various reasons such as lack of time or inadequate preparation. Even though some EFL teachers recognise intelligibility as the main pronunciation teaching goal, a large number claims nativeness to be the ultimate aim of pronunciation instruction. The study investigates beliefs of two groups: last-year students at the Institute of English Studies, who chose the pedagogical track so as to become English teachers, and in-service English teachers with experience varying from 10 to 23 years. The student group completed a 30-hour pronunciation pedagogy course, whereas the in-service teachers were randomly recruited from two state secondary institutions. The measurement includes a Likert-scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as a follow-up. The study results indicate slightly higher trainee teachers' pronunciation awareness than that of in-service teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Determining what might affect teachers' classroom choices and decisions is vital in order to explore their attitudes and views. Teacher-related variables such as teacher education, previous learner-experience, instructional experience in the profession, educational context and settings as well as curriculum requirements and restrictions all constitute important factors that can affect teachers' decisions about what and how they teach. The current study looks at the roles of teaching experience and of explicit training in pronunciation pedagogy in how different groups of teachers (pre- and in-service) perceive the teaching of pronunciation.

Literature Review

The construct of belief is extremely difficult to conceptualize. As Pajares (1992) states "belief does not lend itself easily to empirical investigation. Many see it so steeped in mystery that it can never be clearly defined or made a useful subject of research" (p.308). Beyond doubt, teachers' beliefs can affect their classroom practices and actions. It is vital that teachers analyze their beliefs and attitudes and try to delve into their own cognitions and their instructional decisions in order to learn "how to pave the way for better teaching" (Hamachek, 1999, p. 209) and to improve their professional preparation.

As regards pronunciation teaching, discrepancies in teachers' perceptions are evident. Even though teachers place pronunciation relatively high in the rank of importance in the learning process (Henderson et al., 2012) and teachers' positive attitudes towards pronunciation have been reported (Alsofyani & Algethami, 2017; Breitkreutz et al., 2001; Buss, 2015; Foote et al.,

2011, Henderson et al., 2012), pronunciation teaching has long been an area neglected by both native (NT) and non-native teachers (NNT) for a number of reasons (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Sardegna 2020). The NT might be insecure as to how their own accent variety complies with their learners' preferences and goals. The NNT often express a lack of confidence in their own command of English (Murphy, 2014) and can be self-conscious of their own non-native pronunciation, believing that their non-native accent constitutes an inadequate model for learners (Golombek & Jordan, 2005). Moreover, teachers feel insecure and unprepared to teach pronunciation. Reluctance to teach pronunciation may, thus, result from their dissatisfaction with the pre-service 'how to teach pronunciation' training, or its lack (Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Henderson et al., 2012; Sardegna, 2020). Furthermore, refresher courses or in-service training opportunities are very limited (Alsofyani & Algethami, 2017; Baker, 2011) and usually expensive. Apart from inadequate preparation, teachers are not well supported by coursebooks, which may not offer any pronunciation practice, especially at levels higher than intermediate (Henderson & Jarosz, 2014; Jarosz, 2019). When pronunciation is found in the coursebooks, there may be no sufficient or explicit guidance for teachers as to how it could be incorporated and further expanded during lessons, and how relevant it is for the general speaking skill. Furthermore, national curricula and exam criteria often do not set any specific requirements with regard to pronunciation, causing pronunciation to be neglected in the daily classroom work. Teachers also display insecurity as to how pronunciation should be assessed and monitored during the course (Macdonald, 2002). In light of these reasons, pronunciation teaching occupies very little classroom time and is usually limited to teacher error correction on the word level rather than being carefully planned or structured (Foote et al., 2011; Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2015).

There is a growing need, therefore, for pronunciation pedagogy courses addressing both student teachers learning to teach in their academic courses and also experienced teachers (Burri, 2015). Burri, Baker & Chen (2017) investigated cognition development of pre-service and in-service teachers as a result of a pronunciation pedagogy course. They perceived teacher education and teacher cognition development as different but intertwined processes. Koster, Korthagen, and Schrijnemakers (1995) observed that trainee teachers are influenced by their own former educators. In other words, they assume similar roles and their professional self-image is shaped by their past role models. Their deeply entrenched beliefs and perceptions about teaching and learning are also frequently resistant to change (Warford & Reeves, 2003).

With reference to pronunciation teaching/learning goals, previous research indicates a dichotomy in goal perception. As Levis (2005) observes, two opposing principles - intelligibility and nativeness - govern pronunciation teaching. The nativeness principle maintains that native-like pronunciation is possible and desirable to achieve in a foreign language, whereas the intelligibility principle holds that being understood is the most important goal for learners. In English as a second language (ESL) contexts, the goal of learner intelligibility and comprehensibility prevails (Sardegna, 2020) and ESL teachers tend to perceive it as an attainable and realistic objective for their learners (Breitkreutz et al., 2001; Foote et al., 2011). The goal of native-like pronunciation, on the other hand, is stronger in many English as a foreign language (EFL) settings (Alsofyani & Algethami, 2017; Henderson et al., 2012).

Teachers are also often requested to voice their opinions on their willingness and readiness to teach different pronunciation features as well as to reflect on the actual techniques and strategies they employ in the classroom. A number of studies reported a crucial role of suprasegmentals in intelligibility although they are frequently considered difficult and demanding to teach

(Breitkreutz et al., 2001; Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Foote et al., 2011). As Sardegna (2020) observes, training courses in pronunciation instruction help teachers gain more confidence also in the field of prosody teaching. As regards pronunciation teaching techniques and strategies, the majority of teachers report resorting to the traditional, audio-lingual techniques such as repetition (Buss, 2015), reading aloud, looking up the pronunciation of new words in dictionaries or dialogue presentation (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010). Furthermore, guided rather than communicative tasks are selected for classroom practice (Baker, 2014; Yunus et al., 2016).

Research Questions

In exploring teacher cognitions about pronunciation instruction, it is crucial to gain insights not only into how experienced in-service teachers perceive pronunciation instruction, but also into the perceptions of future teachers with no classroom experience, at the onset of their teaching career. Therefore, the following research questions guided the study:

> **RQ1** What are the beliefs and goals of trainee teachers and in-service teachers with respect to their own pronunciation?
> **RQ2** What are the perceptions of trainee teachers and in-service teachers about pronunciation teaching?

METHODS

Participants and the Polish context

The study examined two different groups of participants (36 in total). The first included 17 non-native university students training to become EFL teachers, who have just completed a 30-hour pronunciation pedagogy course. The university teacher training program contains the following components: 60 hours of practical phonetics and 60 hours of descriptive grammar (phonetics and phonology) in the first year (BA program), 60 hours of practical phonetics in the second year (BA) and 30 hours of pronunciation pedagogy in the fifth year (MA program). Undergraduates are not employed as regular teachers in Polish schools. Interestingly though, many of them offer private tuition to individual learners. 16 student respondents in the study admitted teaching English to individual learners (from1 to 4) of different ages (neighbors, family members, acquaintances) for no longer than ten months.

The other group consisted of 19 in-service English teachers with experience varying from 10 to 23 years, randomly recruited from three state secondary institutions. Only seven of them, whose teaching experience was the shortest (10-13 years) claimed to have received training in teaching pronunciation while studying at university. They, however, had no recollection of the course content. The others, with much longer experience (17-23 years), denied or did not remember attending any pronunciation pedagogy course in the past.

Thus, the participants' teaching experience constituted the main and most significant variable differentiating the two groups. They also differed in their declared knowledge of pronunciation pedagogy: high for the students (resulting from the recently completed course) and very low for the in-service teachers.

Data collection and analysis

The data were collected from a Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = I don't know, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) and semi-structured interviews that expanded on the information provided in the questionnaire. The mean values and standard deviation (SD) were counted for the questionnaire in order to compare the two groups. Field notes were taken during the interviews with the aim of finding common recurring themes, which are presented in the results section and analyzed qualitatively by theme.

RESULTS
Participants' beliefs about their own pronunciation

Both the instruments were divided in two sections to elicit information on the participants' attitudes to their own pronunciation and their beliefs and perceptions with relation to the relevance of pronunciation teaching during all-skills EFL courses. As shown in Table 1, all trainee teachers and all but two in-service teachers agreed that pronunciation is a vital component of English speech. The students admitted having learnt to teach pronunciation, whereas there was some discrepancy in the teachers' opinions here. The students generally agreed that they had not been very satisfied with their pronunciation before they started studying. However, it was enhanced by the phonetics courses at the university. The relatively high values of SD for statements 3 and 4 indicate that the teachers were not in agreement with reference to their satisfaction with their own pronunciation and its improvement later, especially that twelve of them did not attend or remember any pronunciation pedagogy course. Unlike the trainees, they were unsure about their own pronunciation progress while completing the questionnaire. However, similarly to the trainees, they considered their pronunciation to be correct and intelligible. With regard to phonetic transcription, two teachers reported not being familiar with it; the others and also all students claimed to know it. Unanimously, both the groups agreed on the usefulness of phonetic transcription in learning English pronunciation. All trainee teachers conceded that their pronunciation needed improvement, but three teachers disagreed with this point.

Table 1

Questionnaire results: participants' own pronunciation

	Statement	MA students – mean/SD	In-service teachers – mean/SD
1	Pronunciation is important in speaking English	4.76/0.42	4.37/0.99 (2-rather not)
2	I learnt how to teach pronunciation during studies	4.52/0.77	3.12/1.53
3	I was pleased with my pronunciation before studies	2.41/0.84	3.25/1.08
4	My pronunciation improved after the phonetics course	4.41/0.77	3.87/1.26
5	My pronunciation is better now	4.64/0.47	3.47/0.88
6	I think my pronunciation is correct	4.11/0.47	4.84/0.36
7	My pronunciation is intelligible	4.41/0.49	4.47/0.49
8	I am familiar with phonetic transcription	4.41/0.59	4.37/1.18
9	Phonetic transcription is useful in learning English pronunciation	4.94/0.23	4.68/0.65

10	My pronunciation needs to be improved	4.76/0.42	3.73/1.37

Further comments expanding the Likert-scale questionnaire answers are presented in Table 2. The three questions elicit participants' reflections on their own pronunciation. They generally indicated that the students showed greater phonetic awareness and ability to employ metalanguage in their descriptions and observations of changes and necessary improvements. The students appear to be cognizant of precise phonetic areas and goals for the future (such as individual sounds and sound contrasts as well as suprasegmental features of connected speech, rhythm or intonation). That could be tentatively explained by the fact that the trainees had just completed the pronunciation teaching course which aimed at raising their awareness and convincing them that pronunciation should and can be taught effectively. The more experienced teachers, on the other hand, seem to have had problems identifying potential pronunciation problems and areas for further development. Two of them regarded their English pronunciation as close to the British native model. Nine students and four teachers acknowledged their pursuit of the nativeness goal.

Table 2

Interview results: participants' own pronunciation (n=)

	Question	MA students' answers	In-service teachers' answers
1	Has your pronunciation changed in any way. How?	I am more aware now of differences between sounds (15) I know pronunciation rules (7) I can distinguish between accent varieties (7) I make fewer mistakes (7) Word accuracy has improved (4) It is more native-like (5) I am more fluent (5) My speech sounds better (5) I have better pronunciation intuition (2) My intonation is better (1)	It is hard to say (14) I think it is the same as before (7) It is closer and closer to RP (2)
2	What do you think about your pronunciation?	Nobody has ever evaluated my pronunciation (7) My speech is more fluent now (7) There are fewer mistakes (7) It is not ideal but I am pleased (6) I can communicate easily but improvements are needed (5) I am doing my best, there is still a lot to improve (4) I pay attention to how I speak (2) How I speak influences my students (2) It is intelligible and correct (2)	It is not bad (7) I can effectively communicate (7) It is Polish-accented (7) My pronunciation is correct (4) Irish natives believe I speak with a British accent (1)
3	What would you like to improve	Reach native-like model (9) Fluency (5) Dentals (4)	I do not know, it is ok (9) It is ok now, anyway, I will not speak like natives (6)

| in your pronunciation? | Connected speech (4) Certain sounds (4) Rhythm (4) Intonation (3) Transcription (3) Word stress (3) /iː/ and /ɪ/ (1) /s/ and /z/ (1) | I want to head in the direction of upper-class standard British accent (2) Reach native-like model (2) |

Participants' beliefs about pronunciation teaching

The second part of the questionnaire and of the interview was dedicated to the respondents' attitudes and perceptions with reference to pronunciation instruction and their own classroom practices. As displayed in Table 3, both students and teachers agreed that pronunciation should be taught. Even though two teachers admitted not teaching pronunciation, the rest claimed to do it. All the trainees and most teachers conceded that they corrected pronunciation errors. There were no significant differences between the students' and the teachers' answers to the rest of the questions (4, 5, 7), but the teachers were more convinced of being good accent models for their learners.

Table 3

Questionnaire results: participants' beliefs on pronunciation teaching

	Statement	MA students – mean/SD	In-service teachers – mean/SD
1	Pronunciation should be taught	4.88/0.32	4.84/0.36
2	I teach pronunciation	3.87/0.78 (16 participants)	4.10/1.07
3	I correct pronunciation errors	4.81/0.39	4.10/0.91
4	It is difficult to teach pronunciation	4.00/0.79	3.73/0.63
5	Students want to learn pronunciation	3.56/0.86	3.42/0.87
6	I am a good accent model for learners	3.75/0.43	4.36/0.48
7	Pronunciation teaching should be integrated with general English teaching	4.93/0.24	4.36/0.48

The interview elicited more detailed answers grounded in the respondents' practices and experience. The data point to more conscious instructional actions taken by the trainee teachers. They enumerated various tasks and techniques aiming at planned and structured pronunciation teaching, whereas the experienced teachers only reported employing repetition, dictionaries and coursebook exercises. Seven teachers found it difficult to point which pronunciation features they taught (see Table 4). Error correction seemed also more varied in the students' practices since they referred to more techniques, and seven of them mentioned providing explicit explanation of problem-inducing areas. Both the trainees and the teachers suggested several reasons why pronunciation teaching is difficult, with only one trainee teacher expressing a contradictory opinion that pronunciation teaching is easy because of learners' eagerness.

Table 4

Interview results: participants' responses regarding their pronunciation teaching practice and beliefs (n=)

	Question	MA students' answers	In-service teachers' answers
1	Which pronunciation features do you teach? (provide examples of exercises or tasks)	Songs (9) Minimal pairs (7) Plural and past endings (7) Rhymes and poems for English rhythm (7) Difficult sounds practice (6) Words with difficult sounds (5) Phonetic alphabet, transcription (5) Matching words with sounds (4) Acting out (scenes, dialogues) (4) Listening and repetition (3)	Repetition of difficult words after a model (11) It is hard to say (7) The exercises in the book (4) I use an online dictionary to present the model for the learners to repeat (4) I provide other words with the same sounds (2)
2	How do you correct your students' errors?	Repetition after a model (11) Correction and repetition (7) I explain a given aspect when the mistakes occur (7) Additional practice to eliminate the mistake (5) After pair work, we correct mistakes together with other learners (4) I introduce phonetic transcription (4) Phone apps (2)	In a traditional way presenting the RP model (11) By recast (5) After the speech, we correct mistakes together with other learners (3) I correct only the mistakes which affect intelligibility (5)
3	Why is it/isn't it difficult to teach pronunciation?	Teachers do not feel safe, they need more training (3) Polish learners have problems with certain sounds (dentals, trap vowel) (3) No letter-sound correspondence (3) Syllabus packed with grammar, lexis and skills, no time for pronunciation (2) Pronunciation is not an important criterion during exams (2), so learners lack motivation Too large groups Individual aptitude Teachers' (un)willingness to teach pronunciation influences learners Teachers' pronunciation is not too good Differences between Polish and English sound systems	I do not have enough knowledge (10) Learning pronunciation is boring for learners (7) Pronunciation is not an important criterion during exams (5) Difficult because learners are exposed to different accent models (British, American, Australian) Learners do not want to learn phonetic transcription. It is difficult for them Some learners believe learning transcription is boring There are no visible effects

	Teachers have to look for materials
	It is stressful
	Adults believe it is not doable
	Easy because learners are eager

DISCUSSION

The study explored EFL trainee teachers' and in-service teachers' beliefs. The results suggest that there are attitude differences between inexperienced trainee teachers and experienced in-service teachers. As regards self-assessment of their own pronunciation, the trainees mentioned specific pronunciation features more frequently and they accurately defined which phonetic features required further improvement. The teachers appeared to have accepted their pronunciation (labelled by all of them as correct and intelligible) and the fact they would not succeed in achieving the native accent anyway. Thus, only four teachers (21%) explicitly talked about nativeness as a goal. Among the trainees, the percentage of those who wanted to achieve nativeness was higher and constituted half of the group (52%). The principle of intelligibility thus has dominated the EFL experienced teachers' perceptions, whereas nativeness still remains crucial for pre-service teachers.

With reference to pronunciation instruction, the results corroborate previous findings that teachers consider pronunciation significant and believe it should be taught (Alsofyani & Algethami, 2017; Breitkreutz et al., 2001; Buss, 2015; Foote et al., 2011, Henderson et al., 2012). The respondents expressed numerous reasons (e.g. insecurity and lack of preparation, exam criteria, Polish-English sound system differences) why pronunciation instruction is challenging and difficult. Even though most of them claimed to teach pronunciation, seven teachers could not specify how and what exactly they taught, and the rest talked about traditional repetition techniques, dictionary use and reliance on coursebook material when asked to explain how they taught, which supports previous research outcomes (Buss, 2015; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010). The trainee teachers' answers about how they taught displayed greater phonetic awareness and they tended to be more specific in defining the techniques and activities applied in their pronunciation teaching practices (e.g., minimal pairs, dialogues, rhymes, songs). Interestingly, seven students mentioned employing explicit explanation of areas where a pronunciation error occurred and thus going beyond 'listen and repeat' error correction techniques.

The differences observed in the in-service teachers' and the trainee teachers' beliefs may result from the fact that the latter group had just completed a pronunciation pedagogy course, which raised their phonetic awareness. As a result, they displayed more knowledge and theoretical preparation in the field of pronunciation instruction and were more likely to perceive it as a vital part of English teaching. Further research into EFL pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs could shed more light on how the teaching goals evolve with time and whether and to what extent they are affected by teaching experience and routine. In addition, exploring how the declared beliefs are translated into real classroom practice unquestionably merits attention.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Jarosz, PhD, is an assistant professor at the Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics at the University of Lorz, Poland. She is an experienced teacher of English and specialises in phonetics and phonology as well as teacher training. Her main areas of interest are: L2 pronunciation acquisition, pronunciation pedagogy and phonetics. Apart from the English Studies, she also received an MA diploma in Italian.
Contact information:
Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics, University of Lodz
Pomorska 171/173, 90-236 Lodz,
Poland
Email: anna.jarosz@uni.lodz.pl

REFERENCES

Alsofyani, M. and Algethami, G. (2017). Exploring EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding pronunciation teaching in a Saudi setting. *Arab World English Journal 8 (4)*, 384-400.

Baker, A. A. (2011). ESL teachers and pronunciation pedagogy: Exploring the development of teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. In. J. Levis & K. LeVelle (eds). *Proceedings of the 2nd Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference*, ISSN 2380-9566, Ames, Iowa, September 10-11, 2010 (pp. 82-94). Ames, IA: Iowa State University.

Baker, A. A. (2014). Exploring teachers' knowledge of second language pronunciation techniques: Teacher cognitions, observed classroom practices, and student perceptions. *TESOL Quarterly 48 (1),* 136-163.

Breitkreutz, J. A., Derwing, T. M. & Rossiter, M. J. (2001). Pronunciation teaching practices in Canada. *TESL Canada Journal 19*, 51-61.

Burgess, J. & Spencer, S. (2000). Phonology and pronunciation in integrated language teaching and teacher education. *System, 28(2),* 191-215.

Burri, M. (2015). "My perspective changed dramatically": A case for preparing L2 instructors to teach pronunciation. *Faculty of Social Sciences - Papers. 1945.*

Burri, M.; Baker, A. A. & Chen, H. (2017). "I feel like having a nervous breakdown": Pre-service and in-service teachers' developing beliefs and knowledge about pronunciation instruction. *Faculty of Social Sciences - Papers (Archive), 2938.*

Buss, L. (2015). Beliefs and practices of Brazilian EFL teachers regarding pronunciation. *Language Teaching Research, 20 (5),* 1-19.

Derwing, T., & Munro, M. (2005). Second language accent and pronunciation teaching: A research-based approach. *TESOL Quarterly, 39(3),* 379-397.

Foote, J. A., Holtby, A. K., & Derwing, T. M. (2011). Survey of the teaching of pronunciation in adult ESL programs in Canada, 2010, *TESOL Canada Journal, 29*, 1-22.

Golombek, P., & Jordan, S. (2005). Becoming "black lambs" no "parrots": A poststructuralist orientation to intelligibility and identity. *TESOL Quarterly, 39(3),* 513-533.

Hamachek, D. (1999). Effective teachers: What they do, how they do it, and the importance of self-knowledge. In R. P. Lipka, & T. M. Brinthaupt (eds). *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 189-224). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Henderson, A., Frost, D., Tergujeff, E., Kautzsch, A., Murphy, D., Kirkova-Naskova, A., Waniek-Klimczak, E., Levey, D., Cunningham, U. & Curnick, L. (2012). The English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey (EPTiES): Selected results. In E. Waniek-Klimczak, I. Witczak-Plisiecka & J. Majer, J. (eds). *Research in Language 10*, 5-27.

Henderson, A., & Jarosz, A. (2014). Desperately seeking a communicative approach: English pronunciation in a sample of French and polish secondary school textbooks. *Research in language Vol. 12(3)*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

Koster, B., Korthagen, F. A. J., & Schrijnemakers, H. G. M. (1995). Between entry and exit: How student teachers change their educational values under the influence of teacher education. In F. Buffet, & J. A. Tschoumy (eds). *Choc d!emocratique et formation des enseignants en Europe* (pp. 156–168). Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon.

Levis, J.M. (2005). Changing contexts and shifting paradigms in pronunciation teaching. *TESOL Quarterly 39*(3), 369-377.

MacDonald, S. (2002). Pronunciation: Views and practices of reluctant teachers. *Prospect, 17(3),* 3-18.

Murphy, J. (2014). Intelligible, comprehensible, non-native models in ESL/EFL pronunciation teaching. *System, 42(1),* 258-269.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning Up a Messy Construct. *Review of Educational Research 62*(3), 307-332.

Sardegna, V. G. (2020). Pronunciation and good language teachers. In C. Griffiths & Z. Tajeddin (eds). *Lessons from good language teachers* (pp. 232-245). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Szpyra-Kozłowska, J. (2015). *Pronunciation in EFL instruction. A research-based approach*. Bristol, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters.

Warford, M. K., & Reeves, J. (2003). Falling into it: Novice TESOL teacher thinking. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 9(*1), 47-65.

Yunus, M. M., Salehi, H. & Amini, M. (2016). EFL teachers' cognition of teaching English pronunciation techniques: A mixed-method approach. *English Language Teaching, 9*(2), 20-42.