

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
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**TEACHING PRONUNCIATION: TEACHERS' PERCEPTION  
AND ASPECTS TAUGHT IN ESTONIAN EFL CLASSES**  
MA thesis

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## **ABSTRACT**

Pronunciation as an aspect of English language has not been receiving as much attention as, for example, grammar has. Therefore, the way to teach it and what should be the goal while teaching it has always been with no clear instructions. As the English language changes so do the goals in teaching it and as such, the term ‘intelligibility’ has been coined the new goal in teaching pronunciation. The aim of this thesis is to find out what are the perceptions of EFL teachers in Estonia regarding the teaching of pronunciation and their beliefs about pronunciation in general. It also aims to see how frequently the most common (and some of the more problematic) aspects of pronunciation are used by them while teaching it. To achieve this, a three-part questionnaire was designed based on Jafari et al’s (2021) study, with one part dedicated to the background of the respondents (including their education and training in pronunciation teaching), one part with statements about pronunciation (and teaching it) on a Likert-type scale and one part to examine the frequency of aspects used to teach pronunciation (also on a Likert-type scale).

The thesis begins with an introduction which outlines the motivation for writing this paper and gives an overview of the chapters that follow. The first chapter is dedicated to research done previously in pronunciation teaching, divided into three sub-chapters with focus on the concept of intelligibility, teaching pronunciation and the beliefs teachers hold in regard to it. The second main chapter gives the methodology used in the current study, with data analysis divided into two main parts (based on the division in the questionnaire used), followed by a discussion of the findings. The thesis ends with a conclusion.

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## INTRODUCTION

Although there has been extensive research done on classroom practices when it comes to language skills in English, pronunciation teaching, unlike grammar and writing, has received less attention for the better part of the previous century and interest towards it has risen only in the last decade or two (Bai & Yuan 2019: 134), although the materials concerning pronunciation instruction still remain outnumbered by theoretical research on phonetics (Low 2021: 23). Since the 90's, research on pronunciation has improved drastically but still leaves a gap in knowledge when it comes to the purpose of pronunciation teaching – what is the goal? Intelligibility has been coined the new focus in the field of pronunciation (Jenkins 2000, Galante & Piccardo 2021) and as such, the traditional method of pursuing a native-like accent (such as American English or British English) has been called into question (Kiczkowiak 2021). To quote one teacher from Lim's (2016, Teachers' Attitudes towards ASEAN English Varieties in the Classroom, para. 1) study of Cambodian pre-service teachers' cognition and practice in pronunciation teaching: "Now from the perspective of English as a lingua franca it seems that English has no standard anymore. /.../ it seems that we can use it in any way we want as long as we are intelligible." The question arises: if the 'standard' English is not acceptable as a goal in pronunciation anymore and instead we thrive for intelligibility, what are the rules to teach pronunciation by?

It is worth noting that when it comes to pronunciation, research about the history of its teachings is scarce or non-existent – as Murphy and Baker (2015: 2–3) remark, it was not until the 2000's that teachers were observed in classrooms to determine different pronunciation teaching methods. Before this, the main sources on pronunciation teachings consisted of different discussions on language teaching in general, reviews, reports and published studies on the topic; as such it is difficult to determine what exactly were the classroom practices regarding pronunciation but the best way, perhaps, is to analyse different historical resources to create a

truthful picture (Murphy & Baker 2015). Leaning on such sources, Murphy and Baker (2015) have suggested that the written language received much more attention than the spoken language in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and not until the 1850s was it prioritised more. According to Murphy & Baker's (2015) research, pronunciation teaching history can be divided into four waves: the "imitative-intuitive" wave, which started in the 1850s, where the main focus was on "exposure, imitation and mimicry", the "analytic-linguistic" wave, which started in the 1880s (and which was the result of the formation of the International Phonetic Association in Paris in 1886-1889), where applying phonetics in language teaching took the centre stage, the third wave, which came about in the 1980s (the precursor to this were the Audiolingual Method and the emergence of Prator and Robinetts' Manual of American English Pronunciation), saw the rise of Communicative Language Teaching in pronunciation and focused on improving and creating new material (like text- and coursebooks), and finally, the fourth wave, the "emergence of empirical research", which started in the 1990s and aims, to this day, to support ESL pronunciation teaching via research.

With the rise of interest and research in pronunciation and specifically, pronunciation teaching, the aim of this paper is to introduce the beliefs of Estonian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers on pronunciation teaching and to analyse the different aspects they teach regarding pronunciation in their classrooms. To achieve this, two research questions were proposed:

1. How do English teachers in Estonian schools perceive the teaching of pronunciation?
2. How often are different aspects of pronunciation taught in Estonian EFL classes?

These two research questions were created as the main focus; however, a secondary question, which was not the primary focus of the current study, was proposed to tie it with the second research question on different aspects of pronunciation teaching:

- 2.1. What activities do Estonian EFL teachers use to teach pronunciation in class?

The thesis is divided into two main chapters: 1. Research on Pronunciation and Teaching of Pronunciation and 2. English Teachers' Perception of and Aspects Taught in Pronunciation Teaching in Estonian EFL Classes. The first chapter focuses on previous research done on pronunciation in general and on the methods and practices involved in teaching pronunciation, as well as research done with similar aims to this paper, indulging in beliefs and practices of ESL and EFL teachers around the world.

The second chapter begins with an introduction to the method used to research the beliefs and aspects of pronunciation teaching used in Estonian EFL classes. Here, a clearer overview of Jafari et al's (2021) study on the beliefs and practices of EFL instructors in the context of Iran will be given, as this study is also the model for the current one. After a detailed description of the mentioned study's method and the changes made for the current study as well as the overview of the participants involved, the second chapter continues with data analysis, which is divided into two parts (2.2.1 English Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Pronunciation in Estonian EFL Classes and 2.2.2 Aspects of Pronunciation Taught in Estonian EFL Classes). The second chapter ends with a discussion. The conclusion will summarise the current study as well as analyse its limitations and will give implications for future research.

It is important to note that while this research is carried out with EFL learners in mind, much of the research overviewed in the literature review is based on ESL (English as a Second Language) context as well. For the purpose of this research, both ESL and EFL context in pronunciation teaching is relevant but it should be noted that there are (albeit not significant) differences in how and what aspects of pronunciation are taught in these two settings. This paper will not indulge in these differences, but it should be kept in mind while applying the outcomes of this thesis to any further research.

# 1. RESEARCH ON PRONUNCIATION AND TEACHING OF PRONUNCIATION

## 1.1 Pronunciation: Towards Intelligibility and Comprehension

As Pennington (2021: 3) states, the question is not whether pronunciation should hold as much weight as any other aspect of language teaching, but what would be the best way to teach it and what should be kept in mind while doing it. There have been many debates about whether pronunciation in foreign language classrooms should be taught with a native-like accent in mind or with the outcome being international intelligibility (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu 2013: 507). Besides intelligibility there are also other key points that have risen in the last few decades that have affected the way we teach pronunciation, such as accepting the implications that social features might have on pronunciation, specific communicative context, multilingual orientations and more (Pennington 2021: 3–4). But what does it mean to be internationally intelligible? According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (Intelligible), “intelligible” means “capable of being understood or comprehended”. Pair that with “international” and it becomes clear, that by international intelligibility - which has been named as the core problem, or perhaps a solution, of pronunciation by many researchers (e.g. Jenkins 2000, Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu 2013, Galante & Piccardo 2021) - it is meant that foreign language learners as well as second language learners aim to be understood by the same native as well as non-native speakers such as themselves, instead of pursuing a native-like accent. Munro et al (2006: 112) emphasised, however, that there must be a distinction made between intelligibility, which is the “extent to which a speaker’s utterance is actually understood”, comprehensibility, which is more to do with the difficulties a listener might experience, and accentedness, which refers to differences in what the pronunciation sounds like compared to the goal at hand. More than often, pronunciation is viewed as the skill to speak with a native-like accent and in such cases, the British accent (or RP – Received Pronunciation) or American

accent (or GA – General American) both “serve(d) as the norm, the model and the goal” (Walker 2018: 64). In her book “The Phonology of English as an International Language”, Jenkins (2000: 63) dedicates a chapter to intelligibility in the English Language Teaching, providing that phonology and the skill to understand it is necessary to engage in international communication. People engaging in international communication, therefore, need to be aware of such forms (like phonology) that are used and understood all around the world by non-native English speakers (Jenkins 2006: 161). Even if international intelligibility would be acknowledged as the first goal in pronunciation teaching, students might still be sceptical. Many ESL and EFL learners feel the need to accomplish a variety of or just one perfected native-like accent by the end of their pronunciation training. Walker (2010, 2014a, cited in Harmer 2015) suggested that English pronunciation should be taught using the LFC (Lingua Franca Core) developed by Jenkins (2000), who collected a set of aspects that she figured to be necessary for intelligibility. These features, as Walker (2018: 65) describes them, are as follows:

- all of the consonants except /θ/, /ð/ and /r/, where variation was acceptable
- the aspiration of /p/, /t/ and /k/ in initial position in stressed syllables
- the correct treatment of wordinitial consonants clusters
- vowel length differences, especially the shortening of vowels following voiceless consonants (e.g. cap–cab or wait–wade)
- nuclear stress placement (i.e. ‘I love speaking English’ versus ‘I love speaking English’)

Harmer (2015) points out that using the LFC created by Jenkins would mean focusing only on the sounds that we ourselves are motivated to speak or listen – depending on what the goal is. For example, if the goal is to sound more native-like, then that particular English variety set as the guideline should be followed, even aspects that would normally be excluded if the goal was

intelligibility. In essence, it would be counterproductive to deprive students with such goals in mind of that opportunity. (Harmer 2015: 278)

As for the teachers of English, back in the 80s “meaningful communication was seldom sought since accuracy was the goal.” (Walker 2018: 64). Nowadays, this outdated view is changing and has been changing for quite some time since the 80s, but it is not yet truly dismissed – schools in Estonia still take after the British English in grammar and vocabulary and as such use this English variety (i.e. Received Pronunciation) as a guideline for pronunciation as well (Trudgill & Hannah 2017: 5). We are not the only ones who have taken British English as the guidelines for teaching English as a foreign or second language. Surveys have found (Henderson et al 2012, cited in Couper 2021: 130) that most of Europe follows the same principle, favouring native-like accent as the model. While talking about the influence of RP in German, Booth (2015: 18) goes on to say that perhaps the reason why this particular accent is the model for so many English language teachers and learners is because “any model” used as the goal over a significant amount of time “can be expected to remain persuasive” for generations to come. The fact is that teachers, who do not possess either RP or GA, are still stigmatised to this day (Walker 2018: 64), so it is no wonder that this pattern has exceeded. As for assessment and general principles of teaching English in Estonia, our National curriculum goes by the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference). Paragraph 1.3 under Appendix 2, Subject Area “Foreign languages” in the National curriculum clearly states that the learning outcomes are in accord with the European Framework as well as the European Language Portfolio, ensuring that the students’ individual and age-based differences are accounted for, and they are motivated to learn. Furthermore, it states that present-day language learning is based on communicative needs and therefore the most important part is the usage of the language, not just knowing its structure. (Riigi Teataja 2014). Comparing this to Walker’s (2018: 64) comment on the 80’s, the focus in language learning has changed a lot.

In his paper, Levis (2016: 423–424) refers to the the development of pronunciation teaching in the four waves described by Murphy and Baker (2015), noting that the teaching of pronunciation has been here long before it was studied (Levis 2016: 424). It should, then, be no wonder that it is considered important not only for successful communication but for enhancing other skills of language learning as well, such as listening and vocabulary (Low 2021: 22). As Jenkins (2000: 64) points out, it is not only the speakers who have an important role to play when it comes to international intelligibility and their ability to assess whether it is necessary in a conversation; the listeners must realise that their expectations towards pronunciation might not always be met and thus must be able to accommodate their own pronunciation to that of their conversationalist. Levis (2016: 242) agrees, adding that although intelligibility may have different meanings depending on what role we play in a conversation, “pronunciation is always critical”. Furthermore, without having heard sounds they are supposed to be creating or even having the skill to distinguish them from sounds they perceive to be similar, learners will not be able to properly learn pronunciation (Levis 2016: 425). Moving forward with this idea, it becomes clear that to have successful communication, each party of the conversation must be aware of the other’s language patterns and be able to respond in a similarly intelligible way. Putting accents into the mix, Robin Walker (2018: 66) creates an analogy with different soft drinks in different scenarios to explain how accents differ and how they have their own use in different situations, basing it all on Jenkins’ Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins 2000). Having different accents simply means that they have the same core (the Jenkins’ LFC), just like all soft drinks are based on water, and that none of them are “inherently better than another, but some accents will be more effective or more appropriate in some situations than others”, just like some soft drinks are more appropriate and of use to us in some situations than others (Walker 2018: 66). Lastly, this is also confirmed by Garrod & Anderson (1987, cited in Trofivomich 2016: 412), who found that while in dialogue, both parties continuously mimic

each other's speaking patterns. Considering the alignment method, which puts intelligibility as the central core in all communication, any problems in communication or failure in being intelligible can be seen as the speakers' inability to follow and produce each other's language patterns. This means that both the speaker and listener must be viewed with the same amount of focus. (Trofimovich 2016: 417) It can then also be concluded, that besides accents, other factors like social context and role of audience (Jenkins 2000: 65), attitudes and beliefs could have an effect on the nature and quality of the language spoken (Trofimovich 2016: 418).

Accommodating each other in conversation is not uncommon and there are relatively different theories (e.g. Jenkins 2000, Fang 2017), all which agree that mimicking each other's language patterns is a common way to make up for intelligibility in conversation. The Communication Accommodation Theory (or CAT) suggests that there are two ways in which speakers aim for such a goal: convergence and divergence (Jenkins 2000, Fang 2017). Essentially, as Jenkins (2000: 67) puts it, "convergence is a strategy of identification" where speakers try to accommodate each other's "speech and other communicative behaviours" – this has to do with the linguistic part of pronunciation. Divergence, however, is a strategy where speakers essentially stress "speech and non-verbal differences between themselves" and their conversational partners (Jenkins 2000: 67) and takes more frequently place in situations where speakers identify differently in social and cultural ways. In many cases where interlocutors experience their partner speaking with an accent, the need for convergence is promoted by wishing to improve their own intelligibility (Jenkins 2000: 69). Furthermore, the motivation for using either of the strategies depends on socio-psychological theories (Fang 2017: 102). Firstly, people fall into convergence to be similar to that of their conversation partner and to be approved by them (similarity-attraction theory). People might also turn to convergence when the rewards and costs are factored in – if the reward leads to a more positive outcome, the costs of convergence (such as losing some of their L1 identity) might be ignored (social exchange

theory). Divergence, as mentioned, oftentimes takes place between different groups of people, where the conversationalists might emphasise the attributes important to them (intergroup distinctiveness theory). Lastly, when it comes to obstacles related to culture, convergence is more often favoured instead of divergence because it shows you are susceptible for cooperation (casual attribution theory). (Fang 2017: 102-103) It might happen, then, that when we talk to someone with an American accent while our own accent is entirely different, we feel the need to be or at least try to be at the same level with them, or promote some of our own attributes which we take pride in altogether, which leads to different strategies of accommodation and alignment.

When talking about different varieties of English, or World Englishes (WEs, as Jenkins (2006) has called them), the interlanguage theory presents us with a conception that “a second language speaker’s competence lies on an interlanguage continuum”, meaning that at some point between their native language and their second language any errors that may appear are caused by nothing other than the influence of the speaker’s native or first language. Some of these errors will become rooted whenever the speaker communicates in the future, becoming ‘fossilised’. (Jenkins 2006: 167) One of the arguments against this theory, however, would be that English speakers from the ‘outer circle’ (countries like India and Nigeria, where people speak non-native varieties of English) do not necessarily wish to copy the norm of the ‘inner circle’ (countries like the UK and USA, where traditional bases of English come from) varieties. This, as Jenkins (2006: 167) suggests, would mean that, while not universal, people with non-native accents strive more to be internationally intelligible instead of pursuing a native-like accent. For students, who are more concerned about their understandability and not their accent’s authenticity, this is a relieving factor. However, this does not necessarily mean that native-like accents should be thrown aside altogether. As mentioned above, students deserve the chance to pursue an accent of their choosing and Walker (2018: 67) suggests that first the

students must learn to be intelligible and once they are aware of it, they can continue to polish off the effects of their first language to sound more ‘native-like’. In striving for accentedness individual differences play a key role and as Suzukida (2021) found, not just that but also in comprehensibility. Along many individual differences researched, Suzukida (2021) found that motivation, for example, has a link between learning a second language and being successful in it. Students who know that learning English will help their future goals and even managing successful career paths have a chance of higher comprehensibility (Saito et al 2017, cited in Suzukida 2021: 52). In addition to motivation, “reinforcing L2 learners’ perception of L2 sounds will likely contribute to better L2 production” (Suzukida 2021: 54). Other studies (Galante & Thomson 2017, Galante 2018, cited in Galante & Piccardo 2021), have shown that drama can help the learners become more intelligible and comprehensible, as well as help with anxiety over speaking a second language. Therefore, all aspects which enhance foreign language learning should first and foremost focus on intelligibility and comprehension, especially in an EFL classroom. Another problem arises, when EFL speakers do not wish to “lose their L1 identity” when speaking the target language (Jenkins 2000: 71). In turn, some EFL teachers might feel the exact same way and Jenkins’ (2005: 539–540) study found that this might stem from teachers’ own unpleasant experience from their days as a student – one teacher even goes as far as to equivalent eradicating an L1 language to commenting on someone’s physical attributes. The Lingua Franca Core offers a solution for this: for intelligibility purposes, some aspects of the target language should be converged but where intelligibility is not an issue, first language features can be sustained (Jenkins 2000: 71). Another study comprised of interviews with Australian ESL teachers found that some of them, similarly to the teacher in Jenkins’ study, felt it too pressing and an invasion of privacy to correct their students pronunciation, as it is a part of their being, thus revealing that with the lack of resources on intelligibility, teachers are not equipped with necessary knowledge on how to assess whether

the student is being intelligible enough (MacDonald 2002: 8–9). All things considered, it remains a question whether this ‘native-like’ pronunciation should remain the goal if it is not connected with being intelligible (Kiczkowiak 2021: 55).

## **1.2 Teaching Pronunciation**

It has now been established that, drawing on what has been previously stated, the goal seems to be intelligible to others who speak English (Harmer 2015: 278). Pronunciation teaching has been a relatively known topic throughout the decade but not a lot of research has been collected to effectively evaluate the significance of the topic, unlike the topics of grammar and vocabulary, to which, as Foote et al (2016: 181) put it, “a considerable amount of research attention, both observational and experimental, has been devoted to”.

Teaching pronunciation raises many questions but essentially, the problems with it stem from either lack of training in the teacher training programs, leaving teachers baffled about what to teach and how (Couper 2021, Tsunemoto et al 2020, MacDonald 2002) as well as their personal experiences of being in contact with and using the target language in a natural setting (Tsunemoto et al 2020: 3). Another challenge for teachers would be the different language levels of students in the classroom, resulted from the lack of assessment of pronunciation skills in placement tests (Foote et al 2016: 182). In addition to the previously mentioned difficulties, while teachers seem to know exactly when to teach grammar, reading and writing, and what aspects should these topics consist of, the time for teaching pronunciation as well its components is vague. Even though teachers might struggle to compose a syllabus (designing the course with key aspects of course content and creating or connecting various activities while correlating them with the laid-out materials in coursebooks), materials today allow for little to no advice on how to compose it (Zimmerman 2018: 238). A few books (such as the Gateway collection of student books by Macmillan Education) allow for some pronunciation exercises as the students go along their chapter or unit but more than often, no student or teacher book

emphasises pronunciation in such an explicit manner. Coursebooks that do have separate slots for pronunciation rarely use Jenkins' LFC features as the basis. In his paper, Kiczkowiak (2021: 57) found that all 6 coursebooks examined predominantly focused on non-LFC features in their pronunciation slots, with intonation, sentence stress and connected speech being the most frequent features. The latter of these features, it should be noted, can even have a negative effect on the intelligibility of speech (Kiczkowiak 2021: 62) and as Levis (2016: 431) states, "most assertions about CSPs [Connected speech processes] are based on little more than teacher intuition". As for when to teach pronunciation, Harmer (2015, 281–282) states that finding time to teach pronunciation might not be as easy and to devote a whole lesson for it is unthinkable, especially for teachers following the guidelines of a laid-out curriculum. Besides devoting a whole lesson to pronunciation (which is unlikely for most English teachers), Harmer (2015: 281–282) also suggest finding 'discrete slots' to focus on specific sounds or word stress, dedicating only a few minutes at a time for each set. Such small pronunciation activities can be interesting for the students, since it is not something they do continuously, but it should also be noted, that pronunciation is a part of speech, and it does not always do well to teach it separately but should be integrated with other skills if possible (Harmer 2015: 281). For example, another way to teach pronunciation is to integrate it into listening, where the students could focus on a particular sound and try to produce it themselves (Harmer 2015: 282).

It is no secret, of course, that pronunciation is more than often taught in specific communicative context – it is not strictly stated as part of the curriculum but is handled by teachers based on the needs of the learners. Pronunciation does not have the same privileges as, for example, grammar, and therefore is rarely taught as a separate skill and is rather taught as an additional or optional course for mostly higher-level students or as a course for the staff. (Pennington 2021: 6) In short, as Pennington (2021: 13) states, pronunciation is mostly designed as a skill taught 'on the go', whenever problems or errors arise while teaching other,

more prominent goals of the lesson. Kiczkowiak (2021: 63–64) seconds this statement, adding insight to how coursebook writers are limited with what they wish to include in the books by editors and publishers (mostly for marketing purposes). He found that compared to grammar and lexis, the components for pronunciation teaching came only after the previously mentioned topics were covered, leaving it to be more of an inconvenience that can be easily included with features (such as connected speech) focusing less on the intelligibility aspect of pronunciation. Zimmerman (2018) presented similar findings while researching different student textbooks along with teacher instructional textbooks, claiming that these manuals (or any other additional materials) for teachers are often created only after the student books have been written and are treated with neglect, resulting in confused teachers who might not have a complete understanding on how these books should complement the student books (Zimmerman 2018: 234). Lastly, in the interviews conducted with Australian ESL teachers, it was mentioned how, without a clear focus on pronunciation in the curriculum, they either did not feel comfortable or lacked interest in teaching it separately altogether (MacDonald 2002: 6). Furthermore, apart from a collection of pronunciation books (*Headway* collection), there were no other materials to work with and so the “objectives related to pronunciation are mostly vague descriptions of learner goals which lack sufficient detail to be easily and consistently used by teachers” (MacDonald 2002: 7).

Whatever the method, the Lingua Franca Core, designed and improved over time, is going to be, in one way or another, the base for what to teach. Walker (2001: 4–5), giving an overview of what the LFC in itself comprises of states that one of the sets he has listed in his article, such as vowel sounds and quantity, consonant cluster simplification and tone, would be profitable to take as guidance while teaching pronunciation. Evidence by other researchers (Rahimi & Ruzrokh 2016, cited in Kiczkowiak 2021: 56) suggests that teaching pronunciation on the basis of LFC or with features based on it can be more successful than leaning on standard

British English. However, Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core has been a topic of controversy and a few researchers (e.g. Lewis & Deterding 2018) are surprised to see some aspects of pronunciation such as word stress left out of it. In their article, Lewis and Deterding (2018: 174), while reviewing corpus studies about word stress in Lingua Franca context, suggested that word stress may not be essential for intelligibility but can cause misunderstandings, just like, for example, consonant clusters. However, when looking at native-speakers and their conversations with non-native speakers, it is evident that while some methods (like simplification) may do more harm than good in terms of intelligibility, word stress, if used correctly, does not have a negative effect (Lewis & Deterding 2018: 174). Furthermore, the LFC might not be common knowledge for teachers, resulting in repairments in pronunciation which might not even hinder intelligibility. As Lim (2016) points out in his study, the way one teacher interviewed was concerned with the vowel sounds in pronunciation and the other with consonant sounds might indicate that they are not fully familiarised with the LFC, as some consonants like /θ/, /ð/ and /r/ are absolved from it. Pennington (2021: 14) agrees that the focus should be on intelligibility and adds that pronunciation should be taught "as a central aspect of language learning curriculum" and the methods used in teaching should differ from traditional ways to break the pattern of implementing "form-focused input and controlled practice" first and then moving on to use it in communication. For example, in his study, Levis (2016: 425) refuted the notion of teaching pronunciation "in stressed context", using examples that have been applied for decades and instead, encourages to turn to HVPT (High Variability Pronunciation Training) where perception takes centre stage, using "multiple speakers and many tokens in varied phonetic environments". Besides enhancing their perceptual skills, this method also introduces different English varieties to the students, helping them get accustomed to different types of accents. The methods for teaching pronunciation should also stem from the motivation of students, as there are students whose motivation is more grade-oriented or has

more to do with pleasing their parents; as such, different methods of motivational activities should find use in a language classroom setting in order for progress to be made (Suzukida 2021: 55).

While teaching pronunciation it is important to make sure that both the teacher and the students are aware of what their goal is. If the goal is intelligibility and comprehension, then it is vital to announce the reasons for studying pronunciation this way for the students. For example, as many students are unaware that several people might not be able to understand their speech because the listeners' own lack of knowledge in different English varieties, it is important to acknowledge this concerning the goals as well as feedback (Galante & Piccardo 2021). In their research and SPC [Speaking and Pronunciation Course] which resulted from it, Galante & Piccardo (2021) gave an example of feedback to a student who had just completed a speaking activity via a recording website called VoiceThread. The teacher in this particular course helped the student realise what might be the corrections they could make in order to be more intelligible for listeners, as some of them might be unfamiliar with their particular variety of English (in this case, it was a French speaker of English). So, it is vital to address the "issues of intelligibility and comprehensibility as being dependent on listeners' level of familiarity with speech diversity" (Galante & Piccardo 2021). Furthermore, it is important for the learners to understand that accents do not necessarily have a negative impact on intelligibility and that there are many other aspects to consider as well (Galante & Piccardo 2021). Besides accents in general (like the Australian or Irish accent), there is another form of accents tied to pronunciation – and that is of a more phonetical level. While a NNS (non-native speaker) might pronounce some words differently due to their own L1 language, the meaning of the utterance, in some cases, would only change on a semantic level – this is called a phonetic accent. But, when a NS (native speaker) tries to pronounce a word in a language unknown to them and the two words are different on a semantic level, phonetical accent would occur – semantic

confusion in such cases is inevitable. (Odisho, 2016: 36) This is why, as Odisho (2016) puts it, the phonological level in teaching pronunciation is much too important to leave out, if the goal is to convey the meaning of an utterance as precisely and with as little “cumulative noise” as possible.

### **1.3 English Teachers’ Beliefs on Teaching Pronunciation**

As mentioned earlier, pronunciation has not been researched as extensively as, for example, grammar and while researching pronunciation, in general, has been limited, pronunciation teaching in the context of EFL classrooms and non-native teachers has been even more scarce (Bai & Yuan 2019: 134). While pronunciation has not gotten the attention it deserves, it most certainly is a considerable part of teaching English in a comprehensive way, therefore it should be considered an important part of teacher training programs as well. If programs such as these aim to help teachers gain proper knowledge of pronunciation teaching as well as equip them with necessary tools to be successful, it seems reasonable that the practitioners’ beliefs are to be examined even before they start their chosen career (Tsunemoto et al 2020: 2). In order to understand how the process of teaching pronunciation in a classroom works, it is first required to know more about the attitudes and beliefs of teachers towards the subject itself (Lim 2016). Pre-service teachers and their own experience with pronunciation teaching as learners, not if and how they have been trained to teach pronunciation, is also believed to be a key aspect in connection with their own beliefs about teaching it (Tsunemoto et al 2020: 14). Similarly, Gordon (2019: 107) found that in the case of one NNS teacher, it was not necessarily the training she had received on phonology, but her own experience as an L2 learner and teacher that helped her find ways to teach pronunciation in a certain way (using phonetics, among other methods).

In a study with teachers and teachers in training from Uruguay and New Zealand, it was found that the most common questions related to pronunciation teaching were how to teach it

in a way that is appealing to the students, how to make proper corrections, and generally, what and how to teach. Besides the concerns of which accent to teach, there were also questions about teaching phonology and other parts of pronunciation (and techniques and strategies for it) as well as comments on managing to fit pronunciation into the curriculum at all with the constraints of time and materials used for studying. (Couper 2021) Just as in the previously mentioned study, MacDonald (2002: 6) found that when commenting on the curriculum, teachers often feel as though pronunciation is not fitted in and must be taught through other aspects of the language, which for one of the teachers in this study was the reason they disliked teaching it in the first place. Another teacher mentioned how teaching pronunciation alongside with other areas might be possible if she had been better trained to do it (Macdonald 2002: 6). Similarly, Jafari et al (2021) found that teachers rarely teach pronunciation separately from the usual lesson due to lack of time, approved curriculum or coursebooks. In addition, teachers interviewed in their study mentioned how they deal with pronunciation problems as they come up and furthermore, one teacher stated that they even dismiss correcting words right away but use the repetition of a correct pronunciation later on (Jafari et al 2021: 159). In another study, Bai & Yuan (2019: 137) found that non-native English' teachers find pronunciation equally as important as any other aspect of English language, which can be enhanced by pronunciation itself, along with helping the students feel more self-confident and motivated. Teachers questioned in this study in Hong Kong also explained that even though they believe pronunciation teaching to be necessary, a strict curriculum focused on exam-related skills (such as writing and grammar) prevented them from ever explicitly teaching it (Bai & Yuan 2019: 140). This confirms what Pennington (2021) has said about pronunciation not having a secure spot in teaching English. Lastly, Lim (2016) presents identical findings in his study, where all the teachers questioned dealt with pronunciation on the spot. Here too the teachers followed the guidelines, if there were any, of coursebooks when it came to pronunciation (Lim 2016).

Most teachers, who have received teacher-training or have attended courses related to teaching pronunciation have required more theoretical than practical knowledge (Tsunemoto et al 2020, Foote et al 2016) meaning that they might have trouble turning theory into practice (Tsunemoto et al 2020: 14) and “those who are interested in teaching pronunciation /.../ may not feel overly confident to be able to do so” (Foote et al 2016: 192). Even as teachers might believe that certain strategies, like using the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) for the purpose of practicing different sounds where the students’ own native accent might be an obstacle, are useful in pronunciation teaching, they feel unfit to use it in the classroom due to lack of training (Bai & Yuan 2019: 140). Those who have received any kind of training have usually the traditional tools for teaching pronunciation such as repetition (either individual sounds or whole words) and imitation (Jafari et al 2021: 163), although more authentic and interactive methods could help the students become more independent and help learn English more strategically, along with raising interest in learning pronunciation (Bai & Yuan 2019: 141). In Buss’ (2016: 632) study, the teachers questioned also used two of the most traditional methods for teaching pronunciation – repetition and phonetic symbols. The teachers had an extensive knowledge of phonetics (courtesy of Brazilian teacher-training programs) but most still used repetition as a means to teach pronunciation, even though it was not widely mentioned when asked about most effective ways to teach pronunciation (Buss 2016: 632). So, the base knowledge for pronunciation teaching is not just phonetical knowledge, but also awareness of different teaching methods, knowledge on how to shape them according to the learners’ needs and ways to turn theory into practice (Gordon 2019: 107). Furthermore, even with training, beliefs themselves might not carry over to teaching methods explicitly. Buss (2016: 632) found that even as teachers acknowledged what might be the most problematic parts of pronunciation for students, they did not necessarily devote a lot of time into teaching these aspects. The explanation might be that as the teachers rated intonation, for example, as one of the toughest

parts of pronunciation to teach, they might not have felt confident enough to pursue exploring this with the students (Buss 2016: 632). Similarly, MacDonald (2002: 9) found that even as a teacher mentioned their preference over being corrected when mispronouncing, they did not have a clear-cut way of implementing it in their own classroom. Furthermore, even as teachers might have accepted the intelligibility as the norm in theory, there are some who still refer to either American English or British English as the 'norm' or correct way of pronouncing (Lim 2016). Jenkins (2005: 540) reported similar findings, with all EFL interviewees in her study confirming that they would happily teach different accents in class but continued to make comparisons between their L1 accent and RP or GA with the latter two being as the 'correct' forms, confirming that even though they were not opposed to the EFL pronunciation approach in theory, in practice they were unable to implement it. Another reason why many teachers do not expose their students to different English varieties is the students' learning goals. Infrequent exposure to different English varieties hinders the students' ability to understand them, resulting in breaks in communication. Nevertheless, the problem with introducing different Englishes in a classroom might receive backlash from the students who have always found the standard to be British English or American English and might find it confusing being introduced to other varieties as well. (Lim 2016)

In EFL context where the class is being taught by a non-native teacher, several sociological and cultural obstacles might hinder the teachers' ability to teach pronunciation as they believe that their native accent might cause confusion for students. In Hong Kong, as a solution for this specific purpose, an organisation was created for hiring native speakers as pronunciation teachers only, leaving the non-native teachers with other aspects of English such as vocabulary and grammar (Bai & Yuan 2019: 139). This in turn, however, further implemented the belief that pronunciation should be taught only by native speakers and that a non-native teacher's L1 accent "disqualified the participants from teaching English

pronunciation.” (Bai & Yuan 2019: 139). Although, contrary to this and many other studies, the research conducted on Brazilian EFL teachers indicated that they do not, in fact, believe that only a native person should teach pronunciation (Buss 2016: 633). Furthermore, the questioned teachers seemed to think that native-like accent is not needed as the primary goal, although there might be some contradicting beliefs present due to the fact that the Brazilian teachers still regarded the ‘th’ sound as one of the key problems in pronunciation (Buss 2016: 633). This, as Buss (2016) suggests, might be to do with little awareness of research done in the field of pronunciation. It is, perhaps, important to also note that while the discrimination of NNS teachers can be incredibly daunting to many, some know that it can be an advantage rather than an obstacle. In a case study, the NNS teacher observed mentioned that being an L2 learner herself, she knew of the problems and difficult parts of pronunciation that students might encounter, which became an advantage while teaching pronunciation herself (Gordon 2019: 104–105). Similarly, there is also the advantage of non-native teachers speaking the same L1 as the students. While some research (Gordon 2019) has found that a foreign accent (L1 accent) might cause discrimination from others, some teachers still believe that this is not the case (Buss 2016: 633). Here we might see a difference in EFL and ESL classrooms, where EFL learners do not necessarily live in an environment where English is constantly needed, therefore they might face less discrimination regarding their L1 accents (in contrast, for example, to Canada, where the learners are constantly in an L2 environment) (Buss 2016: 633). As a result, the non-native instructors in Brazil felt more confident about teaching pronunciation because their L1 was that of the students’ and even though it is yet to be determined how much this contributes to reaching the pronunciation goals, non-native teachers have an advantage when comparing to the native teachers (Buss 2016: 633–634). Similarly to Buss’ study, Lim (2016) found that teachers’ own identity was linked to how they viewed teaching pronunciation. The teachers interviewed were confident enough in their pronunciation that they believed, with proper

training, they would be able to exceed in teaching pronunciation just as well as a NS (Native Speaker) would. Thus, their sense of identity as NNS was not negatively linked to teaching pronunciation. (Lim 2016)

## **2. ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF AND ASPECTS TAUGHT IN PRONUNCIATION TEACHING IN ESTONIAN EFL CLASSES**

### **2.1 Method**

#### **2.1.1 Design and Instruments**

To get a good sense of the beliefs and perceptions of English teachers in Estonian EFL classes regarding pronunciation teaching and to have a good overview of the methods they use to teach it, a questionnaire (see *Appendix 1*) based on the one used by Jafari et al (2021) in their research on the beliefs and practices of EFL instructors in the context of Iran was formed. This particular study did not have any specific correlation between the education systems in Iran and Estonia. The reason for choosing Jafari et al (2021) study was purely based on the parameters which were used to research pronunciation teaching among teachers. As the areas researched and specifically the parameters used all matched with what this thesis' author set out to achieve as well, the mentioned research was deemed as the most appropriate. Jafari et al (2021) used a Likert-scale questionnaire which consisted of 60 close-ended questions, covering four topics: how often different pronunciation activities are used, opinions and beliefs about pronunciation, how often different pronunciation aspects are taught and most serious pronunciation problems experienced by learners. The current thesis researched two of these topics – opinions and beliefs about pronunciation, using a set of phrases expressing different beliefs and attitudes taken from Jafari et al's (2021) study (out of 17 phrases 10 were used with the author choosing the ones she thought would best reflect the data she was hoping to receive), and how often different

aspects of pronunciation are used to teach it (out of 18 11 were chosen). For the third part of the questionnaire (aspects of pronunciation) in the current thesis, three aspects of the 11 chosen were either changed or elaborated on for better data quality: what was originally ‘Utterance stress’ in Jafari et al’s (2021) study was changed into ‘Sentence stress’ (for a more precise and understandable concept), ‘Problematic sounds like: e.g. the *th* sounds’ was changed into ‘Aspiration’ and instead of just the ‘Schwa’ sound the current questionnaire opted for ‘Specific phonemes’, with examples of different sounds. Furthermore, the Likert-type scale used in the current study was changed slightly, ‘always’ was omitted (with just ‘often’ remaining) and ‘rarely’ was replaced with ‘seldom’. As for the other two topics, the frequency of different activities of teaching pronunciation used in class was briefly touched upon in part II with an open-ended question. The last topic, most serious pronunciation problems, was omitted from the current study, to keep the focus solely on beliefs about pronunciation teaching and the aspects used for it in the classroom.

The questionnaire used in current thesis was divided into three parts. First, some background information was acquired, to distinguish any differences between the respondents referring to their educational background, pronunciation training and the length of their teaching careers. This part, in particular, aimed to distinguish any differences in between generations (with different teacher training programs), with the older generation favouring native-like accents as the pronunciation teaching goal while the younger generations favour intelligibility. The second part of the questionnaire focused on the perception the teachers might have on pronunciation teaching. The importance (Likert-scale) and methods of pronunciation teaching (open-ended question) was first questioned, followed by a set of phrases (Likert-scale) where the respondents were asked to mark the most suitable answer for them. The third, and final, part of the questionnaire was designed to find out how often different aspects of

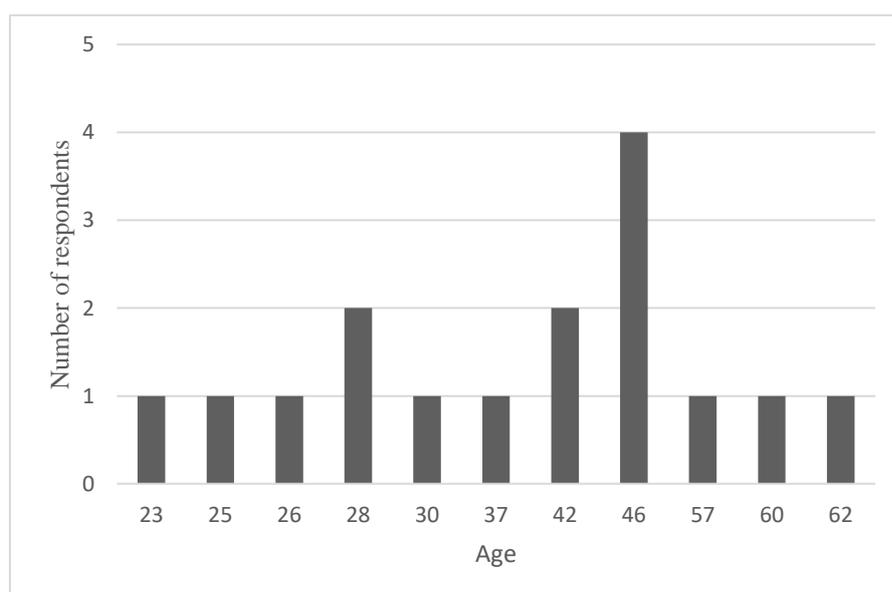
pronunciation are being used by the teachers (again, a Likert-scale was used). As such, the whole questionnaire was created with the following research questions in mind:

1. How do English teachers in Estonian schools perceive the teaching of pronunciation?
2. How often are different aspects of pronunciation used to teach pronunciation in class?
  - 2.1 What methods do they use to correct pronunciation in class?

The questionnaire was created as an online form entirely in English and distributed via emails directly to different schools or to the vice principals, who then distributed them amongst their English teachers. The schools were first chosen on the basis of the author's personal connections in hopes that this would increase the chances of feedback. Afterwards, as the responses to the questionnaire were scarce, a selection was made based on the distribution of schools, to avoid having respondents from only major cities.

### 2.1.2 Participants

In total the questionnaire was answered by 20 teachers. 2 out of 20 participants identified as male, the rest as female. The participants' age varied from 23 to 62 (Figure 1) (4 participants chose not to add their age).



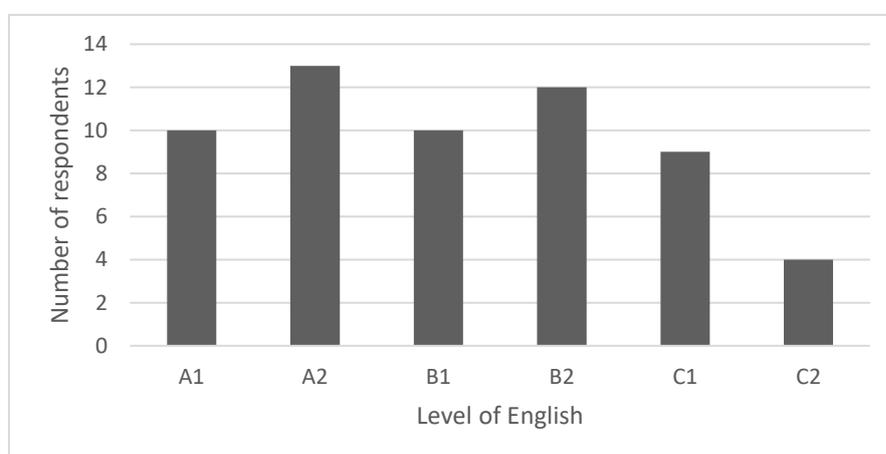
**Figure 1.** Division of respondents by age.

The mother language of all the participants was Estonian. 14 participants held a master's degree, and one held a PhD, the rest of the participants all held at least one bachelor's degree. The fields in which the participants had acquired their degrees all varied between teacher education (e.g. English teacher, class teacher) or English language (e.g. translation, English literature) (with one anomaly in tourism and one in digital technologies, see Table 1 for detailed information).

**Table 1.** Fields of acquired degrees.

Field of degree	Number of respondents
English language teacher	6
Class teacher	2
Teacher of foreign languages (other languages in addition to English)	3
Teacher of English language and literature	1
Translation	2
Teacher of several subjects	1
English philology	6
Primary school teacher	1
Educational technology	1
Digital technologies	1
Teacher of humanities and social sciences in primary school	1
Arctic adventure tourism	1

All levels of English being taught were represented among the respondents with B2 level and A2 level being taught the most (by 12 and 13 respondents respectively). The least taught level was C2, which was marked by only 4 (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The levels of English which the respondents teach.

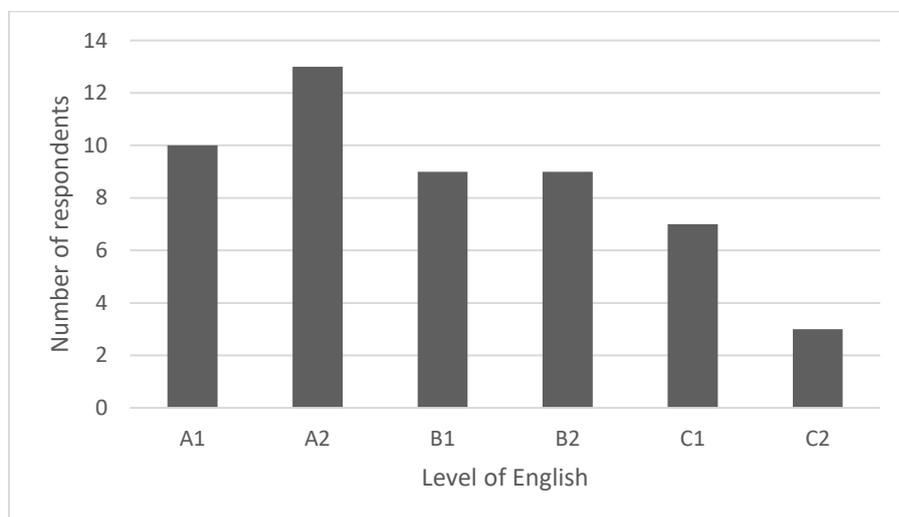
The length of teaching career expanded from half a year to 36 years. 10 respondents mentioned different teacher training courses additional to the ones they took in university, mentioning several courses taking place in the US or UK. Out of all the mentioned courses, only one mentioned a specific pronunciation-oriented course (Teaching phonics level 1 and 2) which is why the rest are not mentioned in this thesis, as they have no connection to pronunciation teaching. In the end, the study managed to get participants from all over Estonia with most of the respondents from bigger cities like Tallinn (9), Tartu (4) and Kuressaare (2) but with a few from smaller towns and villages as well, such as Rõngu (1), Otepää (1), Kehtna (1) and Võnnu (1) (one participant chose not to enlist the school they were employed at).

## **2.2 Data Analysis**

This data analysis will be divided into two parts. First, part II of the questionnaire will be analysed, giving an overview of the teachers' beliefs about teaching pronunciation based on the given sentences where the data was collected with a Likert-type scale. It is expected to provide evidence that based on these sentences the teachers in Estonian EFL class agree that intelligibility is the main goal of pronunciation teaching, as well as question the status of a native-like model as the main goal in pronunciation. Second, attention will be drawn to the aspects taught in pronunciation teaching in Estonian EFL classes by analysing the data obtained from part III of the questionnaire. Based on previous findings, similar results are expected to be found, with word stress (which was rated as second most frequent aspect taught by Jafari et al (2021)) being the most frequent aspect taught by Estonian EFL teachers and the phonetic alphabet and the articulation of specific phonemes as the least taught aspects.

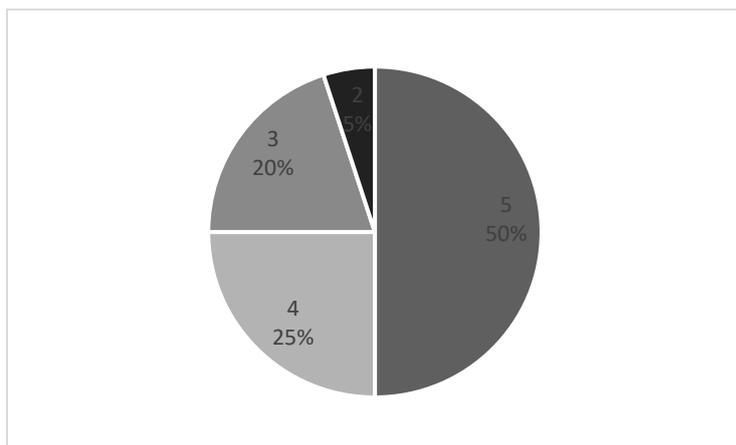
Before going to in-depth analysis of the two parts of the questionnaire, however, it is necessary to look at the levels in which the respondents teach pronunciation in (Figure 3), how important they think pronunciation teaching in the classroom is (Figure 4) and what are the activities that they normally use for it (Table 2). Comparing the levels of English in which the

respondents teach overall in Figure 2 to the levels in which they also teach pronunciation in Figure 3, it can be seen that all the respondents who teach levels A1-A2 also teach pronunciation in the corresponding levels. However, looking at the B1-C2 levels, there is a slight inconsistency – namely, there is one teacher who has mentioned teaching B1 level students but has not marked the level when asked about teaching pronunciation. Same goes for B2 level, where 3 teachers have not marked this as the level in which they teach pronunciation specifically. As for C1 and C2, 2 and 1 teacher(s) respectively have not marked these levels as ones they teach pronunciation in.



**Figure 3.** The levels of English in which the respondents teach pronunciation in.

As it can be seen from Figure 4, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was not important and 5 was very important, half of the respondents felt that teaching pronunciation in their classroom is very important. Only 1 (5%) chose 2 on a scale of 1 to 5 and the measurement of 1 was omitted entirely as none of the respondents chose it as their answer.



**Figure 4.** The importance of pronunciation teaching in the classroom.

As for the activities used to teach pronunciation, Table 2 shows 10 categories created based on the responses, with listening tasks and repetition and imitation being the most frequent activities. Only one teacher mentioned writing out new vocabulary on the whiteboard for pronouncing, and playing games was also mentioned once. Unsurprisingly, teaching phonics (and the IPA) was mentioned only by 3 but is still mentioned just as many times as drills, for example, making it not so uncommon after all. While corrections done ‘on the go’ was mentioned in research (Jafari et al 2021: 159) as something that teachers do a lot when teaching pronunciation because of the time restraints, only 4 mentioned oral corrections in the current questionnaire.

**Table 2.** Activities used for teaching pronunciation by the respondents.

Activities for teaching pronunciation	Number of respondents
Drills	3
Listening tasks	10
Repetition, imitation	10
Watching videos	2
Phonics	3
Drawing parallels with other languages	1
Reading texts, poems out loud	3
Games	1
Corrections orally during or after exercises	4
Visual representation of new vocabulary	1

### 2.2.1 English Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Pronunciation in Estonian EFL Classes

The first part of the analysis will look at all 10 statements and their responses. Table 3 gives an overview of the frequency of responses to each statement under three categories.

**Table 3.** Responses to the statements under three categories: Agree, Neutral and Disagree

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1. Teaching pronunciation is difficult	4	11	5
2. The consistency of a native-like accent (such as British English or American English) for the students is important	8	5	7
3. Pronunciation teaching is often unnecessary, as most learners are able to pick it up naturally when frequently exposed to authentic input.	6	3	11
4. Learners' L1 (mother tongue) accent should be eliminated as best to the learners' abilities.	4	8	8
5. The best person to teach pronunciation is a native speaker.	7	8	5
6. Native speakers should be the model for pronunciation teaching.	6	11	3
7. Pronunciation is best learned through language immersion, without the need for rules or theoretical explanations.	8	8	4
8. Most learners do not like when teachers correct their pronunciation.	7	8	5
9. Pronunciation instruction improves language accuracy rather than communication.	5	7	8
10. The main goal for pronunciation teaching is to help the learner become intelligible to other listeners.	17	2	1

5 out of 20 respondents felt that teaching pronunciation is not difficult, whereas the majority (11) felt neutral about it. One claimed it is a tedious effort but not difficult, another respondent agreed saying that it is quite easy, adding that the students just need some guidance every now and then – here, 2 respondents also expressed the influence of the environment around the students, especially the influence of social media where they hear plenty of different accents and mimic them. One respondent seconded this but added that it can only be easy if phonics is introduced from the start. One of the teachers pointed out that it depends on the

background of the students, elaborating that for example, Russian-speaking students find it more difficult to study pronunciation than Estonian-speaking students do – this sentiment was supported by another, who mentioned how it is more difficult to teach pronunciation as a teacher if the mother tongue of the student is anything other than Estonian.

As for whether it is important for the students to have a consistent native-like accent, the responses were quite tied, with 8 agreeing, 7 disagreeing and 5 remaining neutral. While one agreed that it is important, she also brought out that because she has a British accent (RP), the students ‘respond to her teachings more favourably’. Some agreed that the accent does not need to be consistent for non-native speakers and as such, it is no issue if they mix while speaking. A teacher pointed out that while ‘accents don’t matter’, it is still important to show the students the difference between different English varieties. She also brought out that for a teacher to change their accent would be unimaginable:

*At the same time I can't imagine having a teacher who speaks US Eng [American accent] one day and turns into Australian the next – so in that sense, yes, consistency is important.*

Many of the respondents, however, mentioned the fact that in today’s world, having a native-like accent such as British or American is no longer a necessity and that it is more important to be understood. This confirms that at least some English teachers are aware of the intelligibility goal. However, some respondents did feel that their students should sound ‘like the original as much as possible’ and echoing the above-mentioned statement about consistency, some also felt that students, not just teachers, should stick to one variety, not a combination of them.

Still, as it is seen from question number 6, 6 teachers agreed that native speakers should be the model for pronunciation teaching, whereas 11 felt neutral about the subject, with only three respondents disagreeing. Compared to whether they felt that the native-like accent should be consistent, it can be seen that having some kind of native-accent is desirable, although

whether or not this accent should be modelled after a native-like speaker is questionable. Two of the respondents mentioned that often, native speakers do not have the standard pronunciation they (teachers) aim for in the classroom and while they do believe that native speakers are a good model, they only think so if the English they speak is a standard one (there was no specification on what ‘standard’ for these teachers meant, but here it is assumed to be RP instead of, for example, Irish or Scottish accent). This sentiment was echoed by many, saying that native speakers might have a heavy local accent, which might hinder the understanding for students but perhaps the best way to sum up all of the respondents’ comments on this particular subject would be the answer given by one respondent who felt that it is important to have proper education on the subject, no matter the ‘nativeness’ of a person:

*It depends on where they [the native speakers] come from, whether they have a proper pronunciation, whether they themselves learned proper pronunciation at school to be an example for students from other countries.*

Similarly to this outcome, when asked about whether or not a native speaker is the best person to teach pronunciation, 5 respondents disagreed and 8 remained neutral, with the same explanations as for the 6<sup>th</sup> question: that if the native speaker has a regional accent, they might not be the best people for teaching pronunciation. One respondent also expressed disbelief about (any) native speakers being able to teach pronunciation better than a trained language teacher, while another remained certain that a properly trained teacher with excellent tools and methods to teach pronunciation would do as good of a job (or even better) as a native speaker. One teacher raised a question which is, in fact, the centre of pronunciation teaching and the core of the problem when it comes to the ‘intelligibility vs native-like accent’ discussion:

*Native speakers also speak their own variety - is there really such a thing as the only correct pronunciation?*

Tied to the question about the students' L1 accent and whether it should be eliminated, there forms a strong line between being intelligible and the belief that having an L1 accent does not hinder it. While 4 agreed that the L1 accent should be eliminated as best to the students' abilities, the rest were tied between 'disagreed' and 'neutral' and the explanations for this were all similar: non-native accents should not be derided but accepted and as long as the students' utterances are correct and their L1 accent does not obstruct understanding, there is no reason to eliminate it completely. For those who agreed that the L1 accent should be eliminated, the main argument was mainly to do with the learners' abilities – one teacher said that it is 'rather sad' when a learner is able to produce a native-like accent but is not willing to do it. Mostly, however, the respondents agreed that as there are so many different accents in the world, having a non-native accent is not to be scorned, as long as it does not become an obstacle towards being intelligible.

6 out of 20 disagreed that pronunciation teaching is often unnecessary because the students can pick it up while being frequently exposed to it naturally. One teacher, who felt that pronunciation can be taught just by being exposed to it, pointed out that this is only the case for students who live in an English-speaking environment. According to one respondent, however, even if the students are frequently exposed to English pronunciation, they often do not make the difference between correct or incorrect pronunciation. As nowadays there are many ways as to how a student might consume English language, it was also pointed out that students spend a lot of time online, where they hear more English than Estonian, meaning that it is possible to learn pronunciation without teaching it in the classroom as a separate part of the lesson. A large portion, though, disagreed with this statement – 11 respondents felt that students will not be able to pick up pronunciation on their own, even when exposed to it frequently. Sadly, most of these respondents did not have further comments on why they think this. One teacher, however, mentioned something that could be extended to most learners:

*I think it is important to teach pronunciation as I don't find it to be true that all students are exposed to "authentic input" equally.*

Another teacher said that even if the students are exposed to the authentic input, they might still not learn it and gave an example of some Russians living in Estonia, who have lived here for years and even decades, without learning the proper pronunciation of Estonian (not to mention the language in its entirety). Here, however, a parallel could be drawn with Suzukida's (2021) research on motivation and pronunciation learning – if the people exposed to authentic input have no motivation whatsoever to learn the language and its proper pronunciation, they are unlikely to do so without some guidance by a teacher.

As for whether it is possible to learn pronunciation just through language immersion and with no rules or theoretical explanations, only 4 disagreed. The main reasons for this were the extent of rules in English language – there are so little that it would only complicate things further. Another agreed that since the English language, and pronunciation in particular, has such mixed rules, that it would be unwise to cram them. Others were divided equally between 'agreed' or 'neutral', with one respondent allowing that if the students live in the target language's environment (like with the last question about being exposed to authentic input) it would be possible but otherwise, rules and theory are necessary. Another mentioned that although they agree with the statement partly, they also feel that there may come a point in their studies where the students themselves wish to know some theoretical background. Two felt that it depends on the language level of the learners, and one even mentioned that the more talented the students are, the more this statement is true, but not for the students who do not pay attention to pronunciation whatsoever. One interesting outcome of this given statement in the questionnaire was that the respondents could be divided into two categories. There were those, who thought that if you do teach rules and theoretical knowledge, you should do it with younger learners. Others felt that it is a necessary practice for older learners. While the former figured

that younger students need the extra guidance to understand how sounds actually work, the latter thought that younger learners might be discouraged by the theoretical knowledge and that older students especially would benefit more from the rules.

For question 8, 7 teachers agreed that most learners do not like teachers correcting their pronunciation, while 5 disagreed, leaving the majority in the 'neutral' area. The reason for this is simple, as demonstrated by the two respondents:

*It depends on how you do it.*

*Would also depend on how the teacher does it.*

There were quite a few additional comments similar to the previous two. The way that the teacher corrects has a definite correlation between whether or not the students like the feedback, although one respondent mentioned that no one likes to be corrected and another pointed out that correcting the students interrupts their flow of language, therefore they do not like it. The following response might be best to sum up the respondents' feelings towards correcting pronunciation in class:

*At least most kids want to get words right. I guess if I corrected every single tiny mistake, they would get belligerent and demotivated, but as long as I keep it in moderation then they want to know. Most kids only need correction for new difficult words.*

For question 9, most teachers felt that pronunciation instruction improves both language accuracy as well as communication and, by default, can also hinder both but, as one of them pointed out, not all pronunciation mistakes interfere with communication. One teacher mentioned the problem of pronunciation not being taught as a separate skill but together with everything else, while another said with certainty that pronunciation is not as important in communication as is vocabulary and grammar. Overall, most agreed that there are some pronunciation mistakes that may hinder communication and some that do not - being able to

practice pronunciation is the key. As one teacher pointed out, to be able to even make mistakes, first one must be able to speak at all:

*You can communicate with any pronunciation, the bigger problem for our children is to dare to open their mouths without fear of making mistakes.*

When asked if the goal in pronunciation is for the students to be intelligible, the majority agreed, even the one's who favoured their students having a native-like accent. This is to say that many of the respondents felt that one does not rule out the other – after all, having a good native accent also means to be intelligible. This left only one teacher who disagreed, saying that if the learner pronounces words incorrectly, they (along with the listener) might also not understand. However, from the respondents that agreed with the statement and conclusion can be drawn: intelligibility is far more valued amongst these teachers than having a native-like accent. As one teacher compared having a native-like accent and being intelligible, favouring the latter:

*Yes, rather than trying to make the Ss sound more US or Br-like, the most important thing is to make them easily understood.*

And, as another respondent pointed out, with intelligibility the main goal, instructions in pronunciation should only be given when the student is unintelligible. While most agreed that the main goal should be to support the students in communicating in English and as such, intelligibility comes first and native-like accent second, there were also a few who pointed out that a native-like accent is a good bonus and that being exposed to different accents will come in handy in understanding a diverse set of speakers. One teacher even mentioned something that can be connected to Jenkins' (2000) accommodation theory:

*It's easier to understand a native speaker, but often times two accented speakers will understand each other better than a learned speaker and a native speaker.*

### 2.2.2 Aspects of Pronunciation Taught in Estonian EFL classes

To get a better overview of the frequency with which different aspects of pronunciation are used to teach it, the parameters of ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’ were combined into a percentage from the whole to determine which of the aspects were the most frequent. Looking at Table 4, silent letters (for further explanations on each aspect see Appendix 1) was the most frequent aspect used when teaching pronunciation, with 13 out of 20 respondents using it ‘often’ and 6 ‘sometimes’, leaving only one teacher who used it ‘seldom’. Word stress takes second place, with 75% of respondents teaching it either ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’ in their classroom.

**Table 4.** The frequency of different aspects of pronunciation used when teaching it.

Aspects of pronunciation	Frequency				Most frequent aspects (% of Often and Sometimes)
	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	
Word stress	8	7	5	0	75%
Sentence stress	5	6	8	1	
Phonetic alphabet	2	8	5	5	
Minimal pairs	5	9	6	0	70%
Silent letters	13	6	1	0	95%
Accents	7	5	7	1	60%
Intonation	6	4	10	0	
Assimilation	2	3	11	4	
Voiced or voiceless consonants	2	8	6	4	
Aspiration	1	5	12	2	
The articulation of specific sounds/phonemes	3	8	8	1	

While Jafari et al (2021) had similar findings concerning word stress (it being the second most frequent aspect taught), the current results differ from it in that silent letters come as first while in Jafari et al’s (2021) research, it ranks after minimal pairs and accents. The percentage of the previously mentioned two aspects (70% and 60% respectively) shows that comparing to Jafari et al’s (2021) findings, Estonian teachers put a similar amount of attention into

introducing the students to different accents as well as minimal pairs. As this study did not contain the aspects most frequent in Jafari et al's (2021) study along with words stress (suffixes and syllable structure) there can be no parallel drawn from there – the decision to not include suffixes or syllable structure was based on the premise that for Estonians, these aspects are a few of the least problematic ones (suffixes in English have a similar way of construction as does Estonian; as for syllable structure, it is fairly uncommon to teach it in English in Estonian EFL classes because it has a different system than that of Estonian so to avoid confusion, word stress is taught without actually breaking down each word's syllables). Because of the difference in languages (Estonian and Persian) it was deemed unnecessary to include these two aspects to focus more on the aspects known to cause problems for Estonian students (for example, silent letters which do not occur in Estonian).

The most infrequent aspect used to teach pronunciation in the current study was assimilation, for which 11 teachers responded with 'seldom' and 4 with 'never'. Right after comes aspiration, to which 12 responded that they 'seldom' teach it while 2 'never' teach it. Compared to Jafari et al's (2021) research, the findings are similar in that assimilation was never taught by 35% of respondents and only 38% taught it sometimes. Surprisingly, while there were only a few respondents who brought out teaching phonics and the IPA as a method in one of the questions in the current research, the aspect of phonetic alphabet was chosen as being 'often' taught by 2 and 'sometimes' by 8 – which means that half of the respondents do use it in some way or another while teaching pronunciation. While voiced or voiceless consonants were one of the most infrequent aspects used in Jafari et al's (2021) research, in the current questionnaire the respondents divided into two, with 10 responding that they teach it 'often' or 'sometimes' and 10 teaching it 'seldom' or 'never'. Intonation is also divided into two (with 10 saying they 'seldom' teach it and 10 saying they 'often' or 'sometimes' do) but

no teacher marked it as ‘never’, while in Jafari et al’s (2021) research, intonation was fairly common, with 90% marking it as something they teach ‘always’ or ‘sometimes’.

Even though the research that has been chosen as the base for the current one has different parameters in that a few aspects were changed or omitted completely, and the Likert-type scale parameters did not always match (for the current research, ‘always’ was omitted and ‘rarely’ was replaced with ‘seldom’), the overall results can still be compared and discussed upon.

### **2.3 Discussion**

Firstly, there were no connections made between the age and teaching years of the participants and the way they perceive teaching pronunciation. Although this study was not extensive in the number of participants, the ages varied quite a lot and so do the teacher training programs in which they have acquired their education in. Thus, this study does not reflect any age-related tendencies in pronunciation teaching (such as older generation of teachers favouring the native-like accent as the goal while the younger generation favours intelligibility, as was proposed at first).

As suspected, the EFL teachers in Estonia agree that intelligibility should be the goal while teaching pronunciation to their students. However, there were a number of respondents who felt that a native person is still the best person to teach pronunciation and serves as the best model – even though the respondents gave different reasons as to why they remained neutral (for example, that a native person would be the best model only if they do not have a heavy regional accent), it can be seen that the EFL teachers in Estonia still lean heavily on what is supposed to be the ‘perfect pronunciation’, meaning that they do favour their students to have a native-like accent. This slight inconsistency in beliefs might have to do with the fact that teachers do not always feel confident while teaching pronunciation and thus, even as they firmly believe that intelligibility is the goal, they still have some doubts whether they themselves or a

native person would be best to teach it. This seems to be in correlation with Jenkins' (2005) findings on how teachers do believe in the goal of intelligibility but are unable to implement it. These findings align with Jafari et al's (2021) study as well in that teachers find a native speaker to be the best model. While in the study (Jafari et al 2021) used as a model the results showed that teachers believe learners need rules to study pronunciation, the current research shows that teachers in Estonia do not think it as necessary – many respondents added that the theoretical part can be boring and that with listening and imitation, pronunciation learning would be more effective than with rules and theory. However, both the model study and current research found that teachers do not believe in learning pronunciation simply by frequent authentic input and that it is necessary to teach it in the classroom as well.

While most of this study's participants felt neutral about the difficulty of teaching pronunciation, Jafari et al (2021) found that the respondents mostly disagreed on the matter, saying that it is not difficult for them. The reason, mostly, for this is that in the current study, teachers who would normally say that it is, in fact, not that difficult, also found that it depends a lot on the background of the students and their motivation for learning pronunciation in the first place. It is easier to teach pronunciation if the learners all speak the same mother tongue (in this case, Estonian) and use English on a daily basis and of course, whether or not they themselves deem it important enough to learn.

Like many studies before (Jafari et al 2021, Lim 2016, Couper 2021, MacDonald 2002), the current study confirms that while teachers do believe that pronunciation is important, they do not actively teach it as a separate lesson and while the respondents in this study did not bring out the method of correcting it on the spot extensively, the additional comments revealed that they do in fact deal with pronunciation issues as they come up. As two respondents summed it up, they do not do anything 'special' to teach it and do not implement any 'specific pronunciation training'.

While the current study did not focus on the problems in pronunciation teaching, some parallels still came up with Jafari et al's (2021) study as a result of additional comments wherever they were possible. As such, the learners' lack of motivation and differences between L1 and English were mentioned when commenting on teaching pronunciation just as in Jafari et al's (2021) study. In connection to students' motivation, the results of the study reflect a correlation between that and correcting the pupils and as several respondents mentioned, such constant correction might hinder the motivation of the students to study pronunciation at all.

The aspects used to teach pronunciation were similar to what Jafari et al (2021) found – word stress ranks as the second most frequent aspect in this study as well as in the previously mentioned one. A teacher commented this, saying that at the level of B2-C2, the errors usually are to do with word stress or silent letters in a word, while another agreed that in addition to word stress, it is usually sentence stress as well. From the current study it can be seen that a lot less attention is drawn to voiced and voiceless consonants, which was not the case with Jafari et al's (2021) study, and to aspiration and assimilation. Instead of silent letters, which was highly frequent in Estonian EFL classes, in Jafari et al's (2021) study, minimal pairs and accents made a more frequent appearance. However, minimal pairs and accents were also one of the most frequent aspects taught in the current study as well, with minimal pairs ranking as third and accents fourth. The high frequency of using silent letters in Estonian EFL classes could be accounted to the fact that this aspect is unusual for Estonians (since Estonian is a language where everything written is also pronounced) and therefore might pose more difficulty in pronouncing than, for example, assimilation (which was quite infrequent in Estonian EFL classes). Accents were taught quite a lot (though not as often as in Jafari et al's study), which could indicate that because the teachers believe that different English varieties should be introduced, they take time to actually implement this belief in their lessons as well.

## CONCLUSION

For the last two decades there has been a rise in researching pronunciation and, in particular, its teachings (Bai & Yuan 2019). While other aspects of pronunciation, such as grammar and vocabulary, have gotten the most attention, pronunciation has only been thoroughly researched since the 2000's (Murphy & Baker 2015, Foote et al 2016). This is most likely the courtesy of research papers dedicated to the concept of intelligibility (Jenkins 2000, Galante & Piccardo 2021, Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu 2013), a new view on how and what to teach in pronunciation. After Jenkins' (2000) *Lingua Franca Core*, which gives us aspects of English we should pay mind to, in order to be intelligible to others (meaning that the goal is to be understandable, rather than reach for a specific accent-oriented goal), researchers have debated over whether or not it is the best basis for teaching pronunciation. They (Lewis & Deterding 2018, Lim 2016) have questioned the use of it in pronunciation teaching, worried that some aspects left out might, in truth, be of importance or that some omitted are vital for intelligibility. Despite this the LFC has been integrated into teaching pronunciation since its development in one way or another (Walker 2018), even if teachers themselves might not implement it knowingly (Lim 2016). Intelligibility and having a native-like accent do not necessarily cancel each other out – after all, having a native-like accent (such as Received Pronunciation) in turn does mean being intelligible as well. Of course, here we need to be able to distinguish between intelligibility, comprehensibility and accentedness (Munro et al 2006) – if the goal is to be intelligible, it does not necessarily mean depriving students of learning a native-like accent (Harmer 2015). Furthermore, teacher training programs need to be more focused on what the goal is and how to get there (Couper 2021, Tsunemoto et al 2020, MacDonald 2002) so that theoretical knowledge would turn into practice once these teachers complete the program.

While researchers (e.g. Couper 2021, MacDonald 2002, Jafari et al 2021) have found that teachers understand the term of intelligibility and find pronunciation to be equally as important as any other aspect of English, they seem to have trouble finding time in the curriculum to pay more attention to it. Teachers are also struggling to put theory into practice (Lim 2016) and therefore the beliefs they have on teaching pronunciation might not influence the way they teach it in their classroom as much as it should. Paired with other issues such as the sociocultural norms of having a native-like accent in order to teach good pronunciation (Lim 2016), teachers are discouraged to focus on it in their lessons. The most prominent problem, however, is the question of ‘what’ to teach, if the goal is set. Many teachers use traditional ways of correcting or teaching pronunciation, such as repetition and imitation (Jafari et al 2021, Bai & Yuan 2019), all while giving a lesson on something else entirely, meaning that pronunciation is seldom dealt with as a separate aspect of English.

The current thesis explored different beliefs of Estonian EFL teachers, giving their perception on English pronunciation as well as teaching it. It also aimed to give insight into how often different aspects of pronunciation are taught in class knowingly. To do this, two primary research questions and one secondary were proposed: 1. How do English teachers in Estonian schools perceive the teaching of pronunciation 2. How often are different aspects of pronunciation used to teach it in class? 2.1 What methods do they use to correct pronunciation in class? To answer these, a questionnaire was conducted on the basis of Jafari et al’s (2021) study amongst teachers of English in Estonian schools. The first part of the questionnaire dealt with background of the respondents while the second part gave 10 statements about pronunciation and teaching it, to answer the first research question. The third part of the questionnaire was dedicated to aspects of pronunciation, aiming to find out the frequency with which they are taught as well as collecting data on the methods used in teaching pronunciation.

The data analysis and discussion came out with answers to all the research questions proposed. First, based on the findings, EFL teachers in Estonia are aware of the term ‘intelligibility’ and are active in setting it as the goal. However, they also regard having a native-like accent as a plus and consider it something that should also be kept in mind while teaching pronunciation. Teachers mostly found that a native person would be a good model when it comes to pronunciation, but only if the person does not have a strong regional accent. They also agreed that not all people who speak English as a native language are the best for teaching it, since teachers require proper training and oftentimes, a non-native teacher might do a better job than a native teacher. It is important to note that there seemed to be an overall agreement about introducing different English varieties to the students, as well. Estonian EFL teachers seem to hold a strong belief that the L1 accent should not be scorned and that as long as it does not disrupt intelligibility, it does not need to be eliminated completely. A large portion of the teachers felt that students would not be able to pick up pronunciation on their own and it needs to be taught. Overall, Estonian EFL teachers also believed that correcting pronunciation has to be done at the right time and in the right amount so as not to demotivate the students from trying to pronounce new words.

Similarly to the model study (Jafari et al 2021) of this thesis, word stress as an aspect of pronunciation to help teach it was quite frequent – second in both studies. Accents, albeit not as frequently used, were still quite high up (as they were in the model study). This, in some way, also shows that at least some beliefs held by the teachers (like the belief that the introduction of different accents is important while teaching pronunciation) also carry on to practice. While silent letters was not as common in Jafari et al’s study, it was the most frequent aspect to appear in Estonian EFL classes which could mean that it is one of the more problematic issues in pronunciation as well – furthermore, it might be that this is more frequent in English classes because in Estonian, silent letters do not make an occurrence.

Drawing from previous research, it is clear that the focus in teaching pronunciation has been changing for some time and questions, which have not been discussed in length previously, have emerged again for more in-depth analysis. While intelligibility seems to be making its way into teaching pronunciation, it is not as widely acknowledged yet and teacher training programs need to be able to discuss it in length along with introducing different English varieties to students. There is also need for more research to be done on the practices of teaching pronunciation – while teachers might know the theory, they are most often unsure on how to implement it in the classroom. This thesis also adds to the previous research in that teachers, however uncertain in teaching pronunciation, do believe that non-native speakers can do as good a job at it as native speakers, provided they have had extensive training.

The current thesis is limited in that the sample was not large enough to give a complete overview of the beliefs and perspectives Estonian teachers might have on the subject of teaching pronunciation and the distribution should be more inclusive as well. Furthermore, this thesis is more focused on aspects only Estonian EFL teachers might use in their classroom, so it is somewhat limited to only Estonian-speaking teachers, which should be kept in mind while applying these outcomes to any future research. Lastly, it might be interesting to focus more on the methods used to teach pronunciation than this thesis did, to see what are the connections to aspects most frequently used in the classroom while teaching pronunciation.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

#### Part I – Background information

##### Sex

Female

Male

Other

Prefer not to say

##### State your age.

Language – please write down your mother tongue

##### Education

Basic school

High school

University degree (BA)

University degree (MA)

University degree (PhD)

Other

Please state subject or field of acquired degree(s) (and specify your education, if you chose 'other' from the choices for the previous question)

Please state the name of the educational institution(s) you are currently working at.

Please mark all levels of English that you teach. (According to CEFR)

Beginner (A1)

Elementary English (A2)

Intermediate English (B1)

Upper-Intermediate English (B2)

Advanced English (C1)

Proficiency English (C2)

Please state the length of your teaching career (in weeks, months and/or years).

Please write down any teacher training programmes that you have taken part in and add the length (e.g Pronunciation training course, 4 weeks). Exclude any programmes that were a part of your university degree requirements.

## **Part II - Perception of teaching pronunciation.**

*This part of the questionnaire will look at the perception with which EFL teachers in Estonia view the teaching of pronunciation. 'Native speaker' in this questionnaire refers to a person whose mother tongue is English.*

How important do you consider the teaching of pronunciation in your classroom?

Not important 1    2    3    4    5 very important

What are your usual methods of teaching pronunciation in a classroom?

*For the next sentences, please choose the most suitable option (s) for your answer.<sup>1</sup>*

1. Teaching pronunciation is difficult

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Additional comments for the previous statement

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<sup>1</sup> Here, all sentences used the Likert-scale with options as Disagree, Neutral or Agree, as exemplified with the first phrase.

2. The consistency of a native-like accent (such as British English or American English) for the student is important

Additional comments for the previous statement

3. Pronunciation teaching is often unnecessary, as most learners are able to pick it up naturally when frequently exposed to authentic input.

Additional comments for the previous statement

4. Learners' L1 (mother tongue) accent should be eliminated as best to the learners' abilities.

Additional comments for the previous statement

5. The best person to teach pronunciation is a native speaker

Additional comments for the previous statement

6. Native speakers should be the model for pronunciation teaching.

Additional comments for the previous statement

7. Pronunciation is best learned through language immersion, without the need for rules or theoretical explanations.

Additional comments for the previous statement

8. Most learners do not like when teachers correct their pronunciation.

Additional comments for the previous statement

9. Pronunciation instruction improves language accuracy rather than communication.

Additional comments for the previous statement

10. The main goal for pronunciation teaching is to help the learner become intelligible to other listeners.

Additional comments for the previous statement

### **Part III - How often different aspects of pronunciation are taught**

*This part of the questionnaire will look at how often EFL teachers in Estonia teach different aspects of pronunciation. Please answer on the given scale how often you use the following aspects to teach pronunciation in your classroom.*

First, please state all the classes /language levels in which you teach pronunciation (e.g. B1, C2)

*For the next part, choose the most suitable answer according to how often you use these aspects to teach pronunciation in your classroom.<sup>2</sup>*

Word stress (Which syllable in the word is stressed, e.g. about=aBOUT)

Often

Sometimes

Seldom

Never

Sentence stress (The stressing of certain words within a sentence, e.g. I want that BAG or I want THAT bag)

Phonetic alphabet (Using the IPA (Phonetic alphabet) to show the pronunciation of words e.g. pasta = /pæstə/ (British English) or /pastə/ (American English))

Minimal pairs (Words that vary only by a single sound, e.g. bad and bed, leave and live, rat and hat)

Silent letters (Letters in words which are not pronounced while speaking, e.g. GH in night and B in debt)

Accents (Difference between English accents like British English vs American English)

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<sup>2</sup> Here, all the aspects had the Likert-scale as a way of answering, with options Often, Sometimes, Seldom and Never. An example has been given with the first aspect.

Intonation (Difference in the pitch of the voice, e.g. We have homework tonight (↓) vs We have homework tonight? (↑))

Assimilation (two sounds become similar to each other because they are spoken consecutively, e.g. Meat pie is pronounced as /mip pai/)

Voiced or voiceless consonants (e.g. /g/ is voiced as in gloves, /k/ is voiceless as in books)

Aspiration (A process of adding an extra puff of air to a sound (like /t/, /p/ and other voiceless stops) e.g. saying the /t/ in *top* with an expulsion of air, but no such sound is made for /t/ in *spot*)

The articulation of specific sounds/phonemes (e.g. /ə/ ('schwa'), velar nasal /ŋ/ (the 'ng' sound in *sing*), /w/)

Finally, please leave any additional comments you might have about the teaching of pronunciation here.

## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Johanna Teder**

**Teaching Pronunciation: Teachers' Perception and Aspects Taught in Estonian EFL Classes. Häälduse õpetamine: õpetajate nägemus ning õpetatavad aspektid Eesti inglise keele võõrkeele (EFL) tundides.**

Magistritöö

2023

Lehekülgede arv: 56

Annotatsioon:

Käesolev magistritöö uurib, kuidas suhtuvad inglise keele õpetajad Eestis hääldusõpetusse inglise keele tundides ning milliseid aspekte nad hääldusõpetuse juures sagedamini välja toovad ja kasutavad. Töö valmis Jafari et al (2021) uuringu põhjal, mis analüüsis Iraani õpetajate uskumusi hääldusõpetuse osas ning kuidas nad hääldusõpetust praktiseerisid. Toetudes eelmainitud uuringule, valmis kolme-osaline veebipõhine küsitlus, kus esimene osa keskendub vastajate taustaandmetele, teine osa sisaldab kokku 10 lauset, mis kirjeldavad arvamusi häälduse õpetamise kohta, et kontrollida, millised on Eesti inglise keele võõrkeele (EFL) õpetajate uskumused ja nägemus hääldusõpetusest ning kolmas osa keskendub häälduse erinevatele aspektidele, et teada saada, kui sagedasti Eesti EFL õpetajad neid oma klassiruumis kasutavad, et hääldust õpetada.

Töö jaguneb kaheks. Esimene osa hõlmab endas eelnevalt hääldusõpetuse teemal koostatud kirjanduse ülevaadet, mis jaguneb kolmeks alapeatükiks: hääldusõpetuse suund arusaadavuse ning mõistetavuse poole, häälduse õpetamine ja inglise keele õpetajate uskumused häälduse õpetamise kohta. Teine osa algab käesoleva uurimuse metodoloogia kirjeldusega ning annab ülevaate osavõtjatest. Sellele järgneb andmeanalüüs ning diskussioon.

Käesoleva uuringu andmetel nõustuvad Eesti EFL õpetajad, et hääldust õpetades peaks keskenduma arusaadavusele ja mitte spetsiifilise aktsendi täiustamisele. Samas on peavad Eesti EFL õpetajad ka tähtsaks seda, et õpilased tutvuksid erinevate inglise keelt kõnelevate maadega, et saada paremat ülevaadet erinevatest aktsentidest (peale briti ja ameerika inglise aktsendi). Õpetajad on samuti üksmeelel, et emakeele aktsendi olemasolu ei pruugi arusaadavust segada ning selle elimineerimine täielikult ei ole vajalik. Lisaks sellele selgus uuringust, et Eesti EFL õpetajad peavad parimaks hääldusmudeliks inglise keelt emakeelena kõnelejat, kuigi parim inimene õpetama võib nende arvates olla ka inglise keelt mitte emakeelena rääkiv õpetaja, kui tal on vastav õpetajaharidus. Kõige tihedamini käsitlesid õpetajad enda tunnis hääldust õpetades vaikivaid tähti (tähti, mis kirja pildis esinevad, kuid häälduses mitte), sõnarõhku, minimaalseid paare (sõnad, mis erinevad ainult ühe hääliku poolest) ning aktsente.

Märksõnad:

Inglise keele hääldus, hääldusõpetus, häälduse aspektid, aktsendid.

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