INTELLIGIBILITY-BASED INSTRUCTION AND ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

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Abstract

This paper draws heavily from my previous work on intelligibility (Hodgetts, 2020). It advocates basing pronunciation instruction on intelligibility goals, rather than native-like production goals and investigates the research available on the segmental and suprasegmental features that should be prioritized in order to enhance intelligibility and comprehensibility. First, the Chapter defines and explains the concepts of intelligibility, comprehensibility and accentedness, before discussing the merits of native and intelligibility-based targets of instruction in various contexts. It then examines which elements of segmental and suprasegmental language instruction might be included in an intelligibility-based syllabus. The crucial role of the listener is explored, as is the issue of English used as a lingua franca.

Keywords: ELF, intelligibility, comprehensibility, accentedness, nativeness

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of English as a global means of communication has led to a fundamental reconsideration of long-established assumptions in pronunciation teaching. In particular, the traditional prioritisation of native speaker norms as the principal target of instruction has been increasingly challenged, especially in contexts where English is primarily used as a lingua franca among speakers of diverse linguistic backgrounds. As English is now more frequently used between non-native speakers than between native and non-native speakers, the communicative demands placed on learners have shifted accordingly. Within this changing landscape, the concept of intelligibility has come to occupy a central position in pronunciation research and pedagogy.

In parallel with these developments, work in the field of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has further problematised the notion of a single, stable native speaker target. ELF research emphasises the functional use of English as a shared communicative resource rather than as a marker of native speaker identity,

and argues that pronunciation instruction should be guided by communicative effectiveness rather than adherence to native norms. From this perspective, an intelligibility-based approach to pronunciation instruction represents a more realistic and pedagogically defensible goal for many learners. Proposals such as Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core have attempted to identify those pronunciation features that are most crucial for maintaining intelligibility in lingua franca communication, while de-emphasising features that are either highly variable across native speaker varieties or carry a low functional load.

Nevertheless, while there is broad agreement that intelligibility should be a central concern, there is far less consensus regarding how an intelligibility-based approach should be implemented in practice. Debate continues over which segmental and suprasegmental features should be prioritised, the extent to which word stress and connected speech should be included, and how instruction can be adapted to different teaching contexts, including EFL, ESL, EAP, and outer-circle settings. In addition, intelligibility-based instruction has been subject to a number of critiques, ranging from questions about the empirical basis of ELF proposals to concerns about teacher and learner preferences for native speaker models, the dominance of native speaker norms in coursebooks, and the alignment between instruction and assessment.

The aim of this paper is therefore fourfold. First, it seeks to clarify the key constructs of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness, and to establish their relevance for pronunciation pedagogy. Second, it examines the appropriateness of native speaker versus intelligibility-based targets of instruction across a range of teaching contexts. Third, it reviews research-informed proposals for the content of an intelligibility-based syllabus, including both segmental and suprasegmental features, listening input, and discourse-level considerations. Finally, it addresses major critiques of intelligibility-based and ELF-oriented instruction, with particular attention to pedagogical feasibility, teacher education, materials design, and assessment. In doing so, the paper argues that while intelligibility-based instruction is not without challenges, it offers a more context-sensitive and communicatively valid framework for pronunciation teaching in contemporary ELT.

2. Intelligibility, Comprehensibility and Accentedness

The generally accepted definition of intelligibility is that proposed by Smith and Nelson (1985). They define intelligibility as the ability of the listener to recognise particular phrases or utterances. Comprehensibility, on the other hand, can be defined as the listener's ability to understand a message. This means that comprehensibility is connected to the level of strain caused in decoding the message (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Comprehensibility therefore depends on the subjective estimation on the part of the listener of how easy or difficult it is to understand the message (Foote & McDonough, 2017, p. 35). Accentedness is a somewhat different construct from either of these, and depends on the extent to which the listener perceives a difference between the target language variety that is most prevalent in the speech community

and the L2 (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Munro & Derwing, 1995). One commonality of comprehensibility and accentedness is that they are both subjective measures. However, by far the most significant factor to note is that accentedness does not impinge on intelligibility: It is often the case that speech can be heavily accented, but the message can still be understood by the listener (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Although accentedness can play a role sociolinguistically in terms of both L1 and L2 listener perceptions of the speaker (Lindemann, 2003, 2017), the key point is that intelligibility, which must surely be a more prominent consideration, will almost certainly not be affected (McCarthy, 1991, p. 89). This should therefore lead us to the conclusion that accentedness should not be a consideration in terms of the target of language instruction (Derwing & Munro, 2011).

3. The target of pronunciation instruction

In view of the evidence that speech can be intelligible even when it is heavily accented, the more fundamental consideration of whether EFL instruction should have a native speaker target of instruction or one of intelligibility (and to a lesser extent, comprehensibility) should be addressed. Of course, in an intelligibility-based course of instruction, comprehensibility could play a role because if an utterance is very difficult for the listener to decode, this could have an impact on intelligibility. For example, the listener might not be willing to make the effort required to decode the message; this will depend on who the listener is and the motivation they have in attempting to comprehend the message.

If native speaker production is the target of instruction, there are a number of problematic areas. First, it is far from straightforward to choose the native speaker target. One could assume that SSBE (Southern standard British English), SAE (standard American English) or indeed any standard form from any country where English is the L1 could be a solution. There is certainly some evidence that learners actually have a preference for a native speaker target of instruction model (Timmis, 2002; Waniek-Klimczak et al., 2015). There is also evidence that in ESL contexts learners express an ambition to sound like native speakers (Derwing, 2003). In ESL contexts, this wish does seem to be more appropriate as learners may wish to integrate with the local community of their new host country. However, this solution is not without detriments or complications. For example, if the area in which learners are moving to has a particular dialect that is significantly different to the standard form, it would seem to be counterproductive to only provide examples of the standard form. Of course, there might not be an expectation for learners to use that dialect in spoken English, but they should surely be familiar with the dialect in terms of receptive skills. Hodgetts (2020) found that learners on a ten week presessional EAP course had hardly any exposure to Northern English in lessons even though the course was based in that area and learners would have to communicate with the local population for the duration of their undergraduate or postgraduate degree course.

In EFL contexts, the adoption of a native-like target could be problematic for different reasons. For example, if learners intend to use English as a tool for communication with English speakers, both native and non-native, from a variety of different linguistic backgrounds, the choice of a native speaker target might not be beneficial (Kachru, 1992; Jenkins, 1998, 2000, 2007). Many have argued that the adoption of a native-like goal might lead to learner disillusionment if they realise that the gap between their own production and the target may never be bridged (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2018; Wagner & Toth, 2017, p. 87).

If we consider other contexts, the choice of a native-like target could be even less appropriate. For example, for those learners who are from what Kachru (1992) termed 'outer circle countries', aiming to sound like an L1 speaker from, for instance, the UK, could be problematic because of the relationship with their former oppressors. Countries such as India, Malaysia, India, Singapore and Kenya have developed their own 'Englishes' that are used to communicate with others as a lingua franca, primarily in their part of the world. Britain's colonial past has left scars on these and other outer circle countries. Elkins (2023) describes in detail the atrocities that were carried out in these colonised outposts of the British empire in the 20th century. From the concentration camps that incarcerated huge swathes of the Kenyan population during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya to the famine that was visited on the Indian population as a direct result of UK policies, there are several reasons why these populations might not wish to identify with the British population. Also, from a purely pragmatic point of view, it is not necessary for people from these countries to sound like they are from the UK if they are generally using English as a lingua franca, that is, a tool for communication with others.

It can therefore be seen that teaching context is hugely important when considering what the target of instruction should be. For illustration, it would be clearly absurd to teach pronunciation of the dental fricative in an ESL context in many parts of Ireland as the substitution of /d/ (voiced) and /t/ (voiceless) in place of the voiced and voiceless dental fricative is common. A clear solution in such a context would be to provide instruction in Irish English. However, in outer circle countries, and also perhaps in EFL contexts, if intelligibility-based instruction should be provided, guidance is needed in terms of which aspects of English should be taught and how an intelligibility-based syllabus might be implemented. Such guidance has been provided by Jenkins (2000), Levis (2018), Seidlhofer (2001, 2011), Walker (2010), and many others.

4. The contents of an intelligibility-based syllabus

Jenkins' lingua franca core (2000) is perhaps the most well-known proposal for the introduction of an intelligibility-based approach to pronunciation instruction. The proposal suggests that all segmentals should be included in instruction, with the exception of the dental fricative. This is chiefly because, as was mentioned earlier with the example of Irish English, substitutes are often used with very little

impact on intelligibility. Many varieties of Irish English and Estuary English contain substitutions. In addition, Chinese and French speakers of English also regularly use substitutions for the dental fricative. However, it is important to note that the impact on intelligibility varies according to which particular substitutions are used. This is because different phonemes carry a different functional load (Catford, 1988). Functional load is used to describe the level of interference or strain caused by using one phoneme rather than another. For example, substituting a low functional load pair, for example, a /d/ for /ð/, has been shown to have very little effect on comprehensibility (Munro & Derwing, 2006). Brown (1991) attempted to classify pairs of phonemes and described the communicative effect on decoding the particular substitutions. The scale that Brown produced ranged from one to ten, with a mark of one denoting a negligible impact on intelligibility and comprehensibility, and a mark of ten denoting substitutions that will have a highly detrimental effect on intelligibility and comprehensibility. Functional load is determined by a number of factors (Brown, 1991; Levis, 2018, p. 201), including the frequency that the pair errors occur, the position in which they occur (with a greater functional load attributed to errors with phonemes in final position as these make the meaning more opaque) and whether or not the pair errors are prevalent in all English varieties: If the errors occur in few varieties, there will be a low functional load; the opposite is true of pair errors that occur in most varieties (Brown, 1991; Levis, 2018, p. 201). The various voiceless dental fricative substitutions are good examples here, with Brown's classification (1991) rating /f/ as one, /t/ as four and /s/ as five on the scale when substituted for /θ/. Therefore, in Brown's scale all three substitutions have low to moderate functional loads. When discussing functional load it is also crucial to remember the communicative context of interaction and the fact that contextual clues might well mean that what we perceive as errors might not necessarily interfere with intelligibility, and in some cases might have little impact on comprehensibility (Marks, 2002; Munro & Derwing, 2006). Marks (2002) provides the example of the substitution of /s/ for the voiceless dental fricative in the utterance 'I'm thinking', with the result being 'I'm sinking'. Although new meaning is produced in terms of the word itself, there is hardly any likelihood that the listener will misinterpret the utterance; they will most likely correctly decode it to mean 'I'm thinking'. Intelligibility is also likely to be enhanced when the topic is one which is familiar for the listener (Gass & Varonis, 1984). Also, if a particular substitution is accepted in a certain part of the world, and if English is used as a lingua franca in that part of the world, there is little justification in viewing it as erroneous. Derwing and Munro (2015), Seidlhofer (2001, 2011), Walker (2010) and Levis (2018) have also supported the fundamental aim of Jenkins' (2000) lingua franca core proposal precisely because the idea of 'the native speaker' itself is a false one, particularly in the UK with its myriad of dialects. In terms of segmentals, if an intelligibility focus is to be undertaken, the functional load of phoneme substitutes should certainly be a major part of this focus. Other adjustments in the instruction of segmentals were suggested by Jenkins (2000), for example,

the omission of some consonant sounds in some circumstances where consonant clusters occur, but the major step suggested by Jenkins in terms of segmentals was the one regarding dental fricative substitutions. It is important to view Jenkins' work (1998, 2000) as a starting point for a lingua franca approach to pronunciation instruction. Other proponents of a lingua franca proposal have augmented or adapted Jenkins' work and continue to do so (Levis, 2018; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2011: Walker, 2010), but the fundamental principle that instruction should be intelligibility-based is something that they share. Similarly, turning to Jenkins' proposal in terms of suprasegmentals, there are those who agree with the concept of a lingua franca core, but disagree on how it could be implemented.

In terms of suprasegmentals, Jenkins (2000) proposed that nuclear stress and contrastive stress should be included in the core but that weak forms and word stress should not be included because of their complexity (i.e., they are extremely difficult to teach), they do not cause problems in terms of intelligibility, and particularly in the case of word stress, because of the variations that exist among native speaker varieties. One example of this is the word 'police', which has its stress on the second syllable in SSBE (Southern Standard British English) and its first syllable in Glaswegian English and Southern US English. If we examine weak forms, there is little doubt that, as Jenkins suggests, the omission of these weak forms does not unduly impact intelligibility (Roach, 1983, p. 102). However, Levis (2018, p. 259) points out that although it is not necessary to include weak forms in terms of production, they could be beneficial in terms of reception so that learners are better able to understand speech that includes these weak forms. Criticisms of the lack of inclusion of word stress in the core are much more significant (Dauer, 2005; Field, 2005; Levis, 2018). Field's (2005) research showed that in disyllabic words, a misplacement of stress from left to right could have a serious effect on intelligibility. For example, if the word 'FOllow' was instead pronounce as 'foLLOW'*, with the stress on the second syllable, this could render the word unintelligible. Field therefore suggested that these types of error (a left to right shift) should certainly be addressed in an intelligibility-based syllabus (see also Zielinski, 2008). The research review by Cutler et al. (1997) also suggests that because lexical stress patterns play a crucial role in enabling listeners to decode words, they are extremely important in the maintenance of intelligibility and comprehensibility. Furthermore, others have noted that errors that involve both segmental errors involving vowel quality and lexical stress can make utterances even more unintelligible; this is the case with both L1 and L2 English listeners (Field, 2005; Richards, 2016). As a result of these observations, many have suggested that word stress be included in an intelligibility-based syllabus (e.g., Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2012; Levis, 2018; Waniek-Klimczak, 2015). However, it is crucial to note that not all word stress errors have a detrimental effect on intelligibility. A misplacement of stress in disyllabic words from right to left (unlike a shift from the left to the right) has a negligible impact on intelligibility. Also, it seems that even though they have traditionally featured in

several English language coursebooks, the erroneous production of noun-verb pairs (e.g., PROduce-proDUCE) seems to have hardly any impact on intelligibility (Cutler, 1986). It therefore seems that, contrary to Jenkins' (2000) suggestion, word stress should play an important but limited role in an intelligibility-based syllabus.

In terms of stress beyond the word level, the inclusion of nuclear stress certainly seems to be valid due to its impact on intelligibility or comprehensibility (Levis, 2018). Similarly, Levis (2018) agrees that the communicative value of contrastive stress in its function of introducing new information is also vital. Additionally, others have argued that perception training can be of value (Pickering, 2001). This should include examples of pronunciation features in the context of discourse, rather than the features being presented in isolation (Pickering, 2017). Another potential area for exploration could also be classroom activities that involve analysing spoken discourse in order to raise awareness of the tone choices made by speakers (Halliday & Greaves, 2008).

Discourse-based exercises aimed at producing lively speech that includes appropriate chunking can also be of assistance in terms of enhancing comprehensibility (Brazil, 1994; Hincks, 2003; Hincks & Edlund, 2009; Levis, 2018; Lewis, 1993, 2002). Indeed, it seems clear that a focus on suprasegmentals can be particularly effective. Derwing et al. (1997) found a good deal of improvement in intelligibility and comprehensibility in *fossilised* learners after only three months of suprasegmental instruction. In terms of organising longer stretches of speech, in EAP and business English contexts, formal and semi-formal presentations demand clarity and a level of engagement with the audience. Giving presentations can be assisted by the use of signposting language (e.g., *The FIRST point I'd like to make is…/The SECOND point…*) and their corresponding intonation, for example, in the introduction of different sections and different points (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Levis, 2018). Greater pitch variation in academic presentations has also been shown to facilitate audience decoding of the message and greater audience engagement (Pickering, 2001; Wennerstrom, 1994). Attention to pitch movement and key has also been shown to be beneficial in aiding interaction and comprehensibility, even between L2 English speaker interlocutors (Pickering, 2009). Of course, chunking can also be beneficial with the specific skill of giving a presentation too (Lewis, 1993; 2002). Furthermore, Foote and McDonough (2017) have shown that lively speech can be assisted by learners using shadowing to emulate the intonation patterns of a speaker. They are then better equipped to use these patterns when it comes to delivering their own presentations (see also Levis et al., 2022). Shadowing is a technique involving learners repeating the utterances they hear on an audio recording or film immediately after hearing them.

It can be seen that although the concentration on nuclear stress and contrastive stress is meritorious and certainly appropriate for an intelligibility-based syllabus, comprehensibility could be enhanced by the use of further exercises, for example, those involving chunking and shadowing. If intelligibility is the goal, it is clear

that both segmental and suprasegmental instruction are vital (Derwing & Munro, 2015). However, because teaching context is such an important consideration, the balance between the two might shift according to context. For example, adult learners may benefit more from discourse-based activities as they will already be more equipped with certain discourse skills than children (Johnstone, 2002, p.13). Because of this, and also because of the nature of many segmental instruction activities (e.g., minimal pair drills), it is preferable to focus on discourse-based suprasegmental instruction with adult learners (McNerney & Mendelsohn, 1992, p. 186; Piasecka, 2011, p. 136).

There is also a great deal of work in terms of listening exercises suitable for a lingua franca syllabus. Of course, if teachers follow what Levis (2005) terms 'the nativeness principle' (rather than the intelligibility principle), the choice of listening materials for teachers is relatively simple: They will choose whichever native variety they deem to be more suitable, considering perhaps which variety is more popular among learners or more widely spoken in the country in which instruction is taking place. However, choosing listening materials for an intelligibility-based syllabus is necessarily more complex. Obviously, exposure to a range of both native and non-native Englishes is crucial because if the main motive of learners is to use English as a tool for communication with a range of interlocutors, they should have some familiarity with diverse Englishes and also different types of interaction. Different instruction contexts will necessitate a different approach, but the main target of instruction should be to expose learners to the accents that they are likely to encounter (Cauldwell, 2013; Levis, 2018, p. 241). There has also been work in recent years that stresses the importance of listening exposure to a variety of types of speech. In particular, it has been argued that naturalistic exposure to unscripted speech is a crucial tool in improving learner listening skills and their recognition of pronunciation patterns (Levis, 2005; Pawlak, 2011, p.168). Certainly, because of the increased complexity of such speech, instruction needs to include scaffolding to assist learners by, for example, adjusting the length of the extract, the number of times the learners hear the extract or focusing learners' attention on particular aspects of the listening, such as the number of syllables or contextual clues (Wagner & Toth, 2017); particularly in TESL contexts, such exposure to natural speech should encourage learners to interact within the local community, and such interaction should improve fluency (Derwing et al., 2006, pp. 191–192). Thomson (2018) has also shown that exposure to high variability pronunciation training can be beneficial in improving learner pronunciation skills and suggests that all teachers should be aware of this technique. Similarly, Cauldwell (2018, 2020) criticises the scripted language often used in EFL coursebooks, using the metaphors of greenhouse and garden to describe the extracts traditionally provided. Cauldwell goes on to argue that 'jungle listening', i.e., authentic, unscripted listening extracts, should be provided, and that teachers are doing a disservice to learners if they do not do so. The same point is made by Shockey (2003, 2011), who argues that the sometimes messy English found in authentic

speech, complete with false starts, is a much more useful source of listening than the often sanitised and artificial examples provided in many coursebooks.

As we have seen, there have been important extensions to Jenkins' (2000) work on the lingua franca core, including recommendations for the inclusion of word stress (Dauer, 2005; Field, 2005; Levis, 2018), exercises to enhance intelligibility and comprehensibility by utilising chunking (Lewis, 1993, 2003) and shadowing to foster lively speech (Foote & Mc Donough, 2017), and the inclusion of unscripted listening extracts from both L1 and L2 speakers of English (Cauldwell, 2018, 2020; Shockey, 2003, 2011; Thomson, 2018). It seems clear that any intelligibility-based syllabus should include these elements; however, others have focused more attention on the role of the listener in facilitating intelligible communication. Levels of intelligibility are necessarily a two way street, involving interaction between two or more people, and there is research to suggest that if L1 speakers of English are exposed to the English of L2 speakers, the L1 speakers will, after some time, find the language of L2 speakers of English more intelligible (Gass & Varonis, 1984; Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2008). Further evidence of the important role played by listener familiarity with L2 varieties of English is provided by Browne and Fulcher (2017, p. 39). Put simply, if L1 speakers are exposed to, for example, Chinese speakers using English, it is likely that over time the L1 speakers will become more familiar with Chinese English and therefore certain non-standard pronunciations, such as the substitution of a dental fricative with /s/ for the voiceless dental fricative and a /z/ for the voiced dental fricative. Of course, this familiarity might also be enhanced by representations of certain Englishes in film and other media. In the UK, French accented speech seems to be more easily recognisable due to its representation in films and television programmes (Hodgetts, 2020, p.147). If listener familiarity is indeed a factor in facilitating intelligibility, as it seems to be, there could be steps taken to make L1 speakers more familiar with these different Englishes. Derwing et al. (2002) have suggested that one possible vehicle for this could be to make changes in the curricula of L1 countries so that native speakers are exposed to these L2 varieties. Although this could certainly be valuable in assisting intelligibility, it is dependent on governmental action in L1 countries, and such changes may well not be seen as priorities.

Perhaps a more feasible way of enhancing intelligibility lies in the utilisation of contextual clues, and Jenkins (2000) does suggest that learners should be exposed to accommodation skills to facilitate interaction. As Kennedy and Trofimovich (2008) point out, when L1 speakers employ their real world expectations of how discourse will unfold, they are more efficient at predicting content, and this in turn aids intelligibility. Therefore, intelligibility can be enhanced if L2 speakers provide a semantic context for their interaction by, for example, using contextual information (Rossiter, 2003). Rossiter therefore suggests that learners should be encouraged to do this. Two ways in which this can be achieved are through substitution and paraphrasing (Littlewood, 1984, Rossiter, 2003). Attempting to articulate the same message using different language could be beneficial because, for example, it might be the case that

the initial message was lost due to a particular pronunciation error. If the speaker attempts to articulate the same thought in a different way, the new articulation might not contain that error. Incidentally, for EAP learners in particular, the paraphrasing of spoken messages in cases where there is a communication breakdown could also have another advantage: it could help to familiarise learners with a crucial skill, paraphrasing, that is required in their written academic work when citing sources. Of course, written paraphrases will be different in nature, but learners will be exposed to certain elements of paraphrasing that are transferrable, such as synonym swapping.

The idea of contextualisation is also important for intelligibility in another sense. Pronunciation should be viewed within a communicative context, and used as part of spoken communication (Levis, 2018). As such, Levis (2018) suggests that instruction should be multi-modal in nature and encompass body language to assist in the maintenance of intelligibility. Others have also suggested that although utilising English orthography is rather challenging due to its often opaque relationship with phonological realisations, there are still some opportunities where spelling patterns can be used to assist pronunciation (Dickerson, 1990).

5. Critiques of intelligibility-based instruction and the lingua franca core

This paper has examined the issue of intelligibility and how intelligibility and comprehensibility should be paramount considerations as targets of instruction rather than accentedness. Although the research does seem to suggest that this would be appropriate in most teaching contexts, it is worthwhile considering the critiques of such an approach. We have thus far explored some research that criticises Jenkins (2000) work on the grounds that certain aspects of pronunciation instruction, such as word stress, are omitted (Dauer, 2005; Field, 2005; Levis, 2005). However, these and other critiques regarding omissions from the core do not fundamentally challenge the idea of a lingua franca approach; they may disagree with the contents of the core, but they generally accept the need to develop pronunciation instruction that is intelligibility-based rather than based on a notion of native speaker pronunciation. However, there are other criticisms which seem to be more of a challenge to the idea itself. Firstly, some have criticised the empirical basis of Jenkins' (2000) research (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2015, pp. 77–83). Others have argued that Jenkins has simply swapped the top down approach that existed in native speaker models for another top down approach, the only difference being that the arbiter of instruction content is now the lingua franca core or other ELF proposal (Jarosz, 2019, p. 18). Although this argument seems persuasive, in essence, it is stating that both positions, a native speaker target and one of intelligibility, are problematic (because they both necessitate a top down approach). Also, the vital consideration here should surely be the purpose of advocating one goal of pronunciation instruction rather than another. The goal of native speaker target instruction is to produce learners who sound like native speakers; the goal of ELF intelligibility-based instruction is to facilitate communication with

a range of native and nonnative speakers. Surely, with perhaps the exception of ESL contexts, where integration is paramount, the latter goal is a more worthy one, particularly when one considers that in many contexts adherence to a native speaker goal could lead to disillusionment and therefore a lack of motivation (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2018; Wagner & Toth, 2017, p. 87). It is certainly true that it might be difficult to reach a complete consensus on what should be included in an intelligibility-based ELF syllabus, but bearing this in mind, the suggestion made by Levis (2018) that instructors should follow research-based guidelines rather than being encumbered by fixed rules is certainly a possible solution. Also, as Levis (2018) acknowledges, teaching context must be taken into account.

Another objection to the adoption of what Levis (2005) terms 'the intelligibility principle' is the preference that non-native teachers and learners have shown for what Levis (2005) terms 'the nativeness principle'. This has been shown in a number of pieces of research. First, research in 45 countries by Timmis (2002) showed that learners in the sample overwhelmingly wanted to sound like native speakers (the exceptions being South Africa and India). Similarly, in the EFL context of undergraduate English learners in Poland, Waniek-Klimczak et al. (2015) found a preference for a native speaker goal among learners. This preference is not only confined to EFL contexts but can also be found in ESL contexts (see Derwing's 2003 research on learner attitudes in Canada).

There is also evidence that nonnative teachers in many contexts tend to favour a native speaker goal of instruction (Jenkins, 2007; Timmis, 2002). In the EFL state school context of Greece, Sifakis and Sougari (2005) found that teachers expressed a preference for a native speaker model of instruction. They also found that teachers lacked awareness of the use of English as an international language, i.e., a lingua franca. There is also evidence to suggest that the correction of generally intelligible dental fricative substitutions /s/ and /z/ seemed to be a prominent cause for concern on a UK presessional course (Hodgetts, 2020), something which seems at odds with intelligibility being a course goal.

In the case of both learners and non-native instructors, the preference for a native speaker target seems to be entrenched, even though instructors might well have completely different ideas of what this native speaker target instruction entails (Bohn & Hansen, 2017). Instead of acquiescing to such preferences as Harmer (2001) suggests, surely the solution, as Sifakis and Sougari (2005) posit, lies in teacher education in terms of the function of English in the particular context in which instructors operate. Indeed, even in ESL and EAP contexts, teachers themselves have stated that they feel they have insufficient education in terms of how to teach pronunciation (Baker & Murphy, 2011; Couper, 2017; Derwing & Munro, 2015; Foote et al., 2011; Hodgetts, 2020; Macdonald, 2002). Certainly, teacher training could be an important way of ensuring that instruction supports the communicative goals of learners. Also, it is important for course leaders themselves to be aware of what intelligibility and comprehensibility entail and to communicate this effectively, by clarifying for teachers what attention to

intelligibility and comprehensibility entails. Teachers (and indeed course leaders) might believe that they are following an intelligibility-based goal, but could also be prioritising pronunciation areas which are indeed more consistent with a native speaker production goal of instruction (Hodgetts, 2020).

One obstacle that teachers might face in implementing an intelligibility-based programme could be coursebook content. For example, Levis & Cortez (2008) found that the coursebooks they examined provided minimal pair examples of words that were not commonly used (see also Cook, 2008, p. 82). If this is the case, the communicative value of coursebook materials is not optimal. There is also questionable content in other ways: The vast majority of authors tend to be L1 speakers, the context of the situations presented in the literature often revolve around L1 countries, and the speakers themselves in the dialogues also tend to be native speakers (Cook, 1999; Strauss, 2017). Cook (1999) suggests that this should be remedied.

The dominance of the native speaker in ELT published materials, in terms of the authors themselves, the situations presented in them, and the dialogues presented (native speaker to native speaker) is well documented (Cook, 1999; Strauss, 2017). L2 learners could therefore benefit from L2 positive role models, both in the listening activities presented and the typical situations depicted in coursebooks (Cook, 1999). Inappropriate tasks could also be problematic, with Levis (1999) discovering intonation tasks in some coursebooks that even L1 speakers struggle to compete. A lack of guidance with many pronunciation tasks is also a key issue, as is the lack of a diverse range of task types (Derwing et al., 2012).

Reasons for the domination of the native speaker in terms of dialogues, content and context in EFL coursebooks has been attributed to the military and economic power that native speaker countries possess, particularly the United States (Crystal, 2003). Phillipson (2016) also points to the important role played by the universities, publishers and the British Council in the promotion of the native speaker model. Of course, instructors can do little to challenge the economic power wielded by these entities, but there are other ways in which the teacher and the industry can challenge an automatic adoption of the native speaker model (in coursebooks).

One step that can and has already been taken to facilitate an intelligibility-based ELF approach is to move away from the native speaker model in assessment (Harding, 2017); this was addressed in the amendments that were made to the CEFR (Piccardo, 2016). For teachers on exam oriented courses, this is crucial because it could be counterproductive to have an intelligibility-based syllabus if exams are not also intelligibility based.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the evidence that I have examined in this paper shows that in most instruction contexts a goal of intelligibility should be adhered to. This can be achieved by providing a wide range of unscripted listening examples, including different types of speech (native and nonnative) in addition to or in some cases instead of the examples provided in coursebooks (depending on the range of examples provided). Both segmental and suprasegmental instruction should be provided with a communicative purpose, but the guiding principle should be whether any non-standard production interferes with intelligibility or comprehensibility. Low or medium functional load substitutions of phonemes (using, for example, Brown's 1991 classification) should not be prioritised precisely because they are unlikely to interfere with either of these to a significant degree. In terms of suprasegmentals, although attention could be given to features of connected speech in terms of receptive skills, production of these should not be a priority. The evidence I have presented seems to suggest that a focus on nuclear stress and contrastive stress can aid intelligibility and comprehensibility, as can certain types of word stress, exercises to encourage lively speech and chunking (for example, shadowing). Perhaps most importantly, instructors should be reflective of their own input in terms of materials used and error correction applied and be cognisant of the need to focus on the core elements of intelligibility and comprehensibility.

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