
Do pronunciation models matter? Reflections from Irish and Scottish classrooms.

Gemma Archer
University of Strathclyde



Structure

- Background
- Do pronunciation models matter for teachers?
 - i. Scottish and Irish survey results, 17/18
 - ii. Strategies to increase ‘pron-tegration’
- Do pronunciation models matter for students?
 - iii. 5-week classroom based study, 2016

Aims: to provide food for thought (and discussion!) on pronunciation practices in regional classrooms.

ISE? SSE? A quick word on acronyms

According to Kirk (2011) Irish standard English/ Hiberno English is

- Spoken by mostly educated, professional people including students
- A variety influenced by the norms of written language
- Transcribed in the ICE Ireland corpus (2007/8)
- May contain some limited regional elements, but is on the whole a global variety rather than a regional one
- Basically, what we are all speaking at this conference!

This definition is the same for Scottish Standard English (SSE).

The
beginnings of
my journey
with
pronunciation



Is it just me?

No!

- » Pronunciation was once the ‘pinnacle of importance’ (Levis, 2005)
- » Introduction of Communicative methods of teaching 1960s and 70s led to decades of neglect: belief that students would learn ‘naturally’ through communicating.
- » Despite the current pronunciation resurgence, many teachers still don’t include it due to:
 1. **Lack of training in phonology and teaching pronunciation** (MacDonald, 2002; Fraser, 2000; Yates, 2001; Bradford and Kenworthy, 1991; Murphy, 1997; Walker, 1999; Breikrutz, Derwing & Rossiter, 2001; Henderson, 2012).
 2. **Lack of awareness of the importance and transferability of pronunciation.**
 3. **(For many years) Lack of appropriate contextualised materials** (Derwing, Diepenbroek, & Foote, 2012) a lot of ‘drill and kill’! (Fraser, 2000).

Do pronunciation models matter for teachers?

Scottish and Irish survey results, 17/18

A fourth reason?

Could the mismatch of regional teachers' accents with that of RP dominant materials also contribute?

Archer (2017): Does accent mismatch dissuade teachers from teaching pronunciation?

Questionnaire: distributed via email, social media and various gatekeepers.

2017: Initial round of data collection	2018: Second round of data collection
➤ 114 responses	➤ 205 responses
➤ 30 Scottish Standard English (21%)	➤ 72 Scottish Standard English (35%)
➤ 9 Standard Irish English (8%)	➤ 32 Standard Irish English (15.2%)

17/18 combined total:

- 41 Irish teachers
- 102 Scottish teachers

Typical Respondent

Irish respondents

EFL teacher

Teaching 10+ years

CELTA qualified

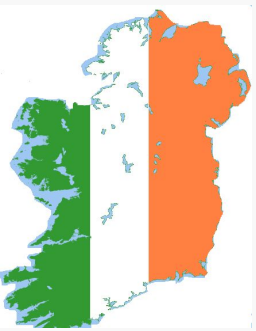
Scottish respondents

ESOL teacher

Teaching 10+ years

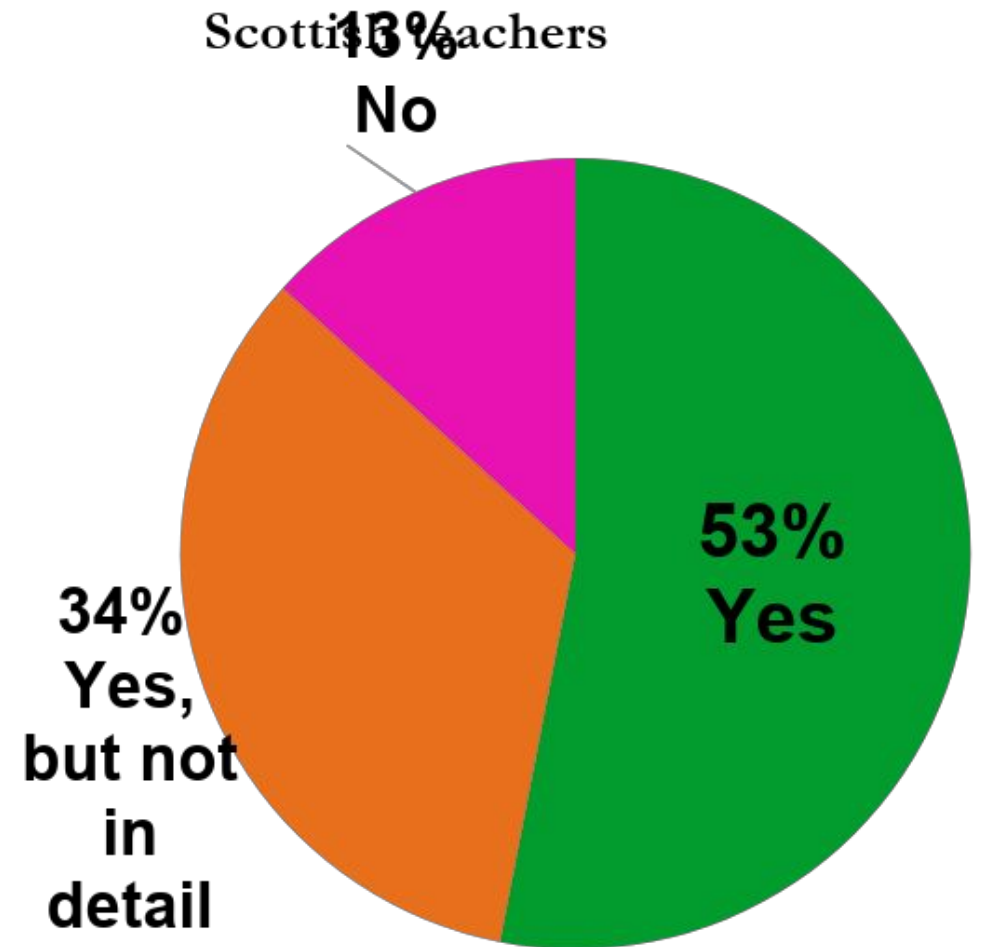
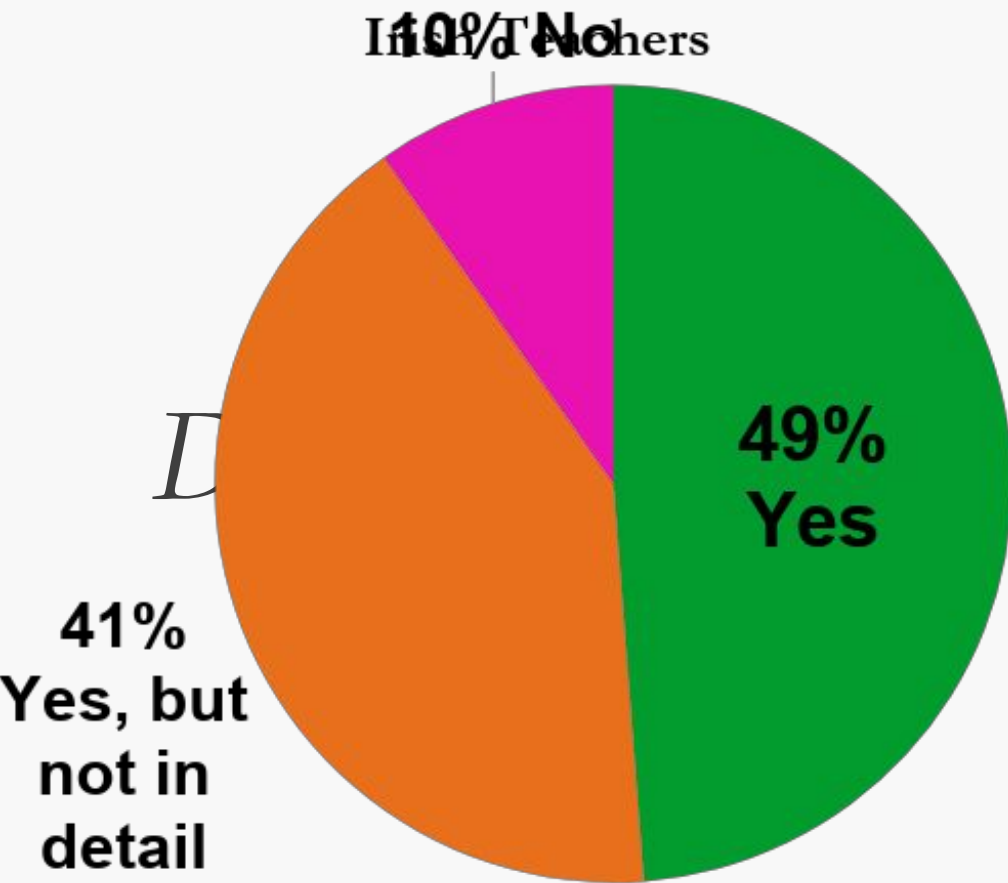
Masters/CELTA qualified

Question 1: Did you receive explicit pronunciation training?

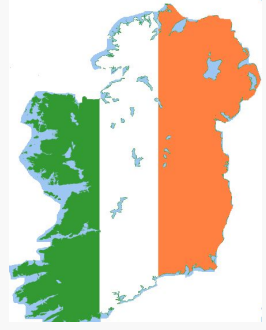


Did you receive explicit pronunciation training?

(Archer, 2019)



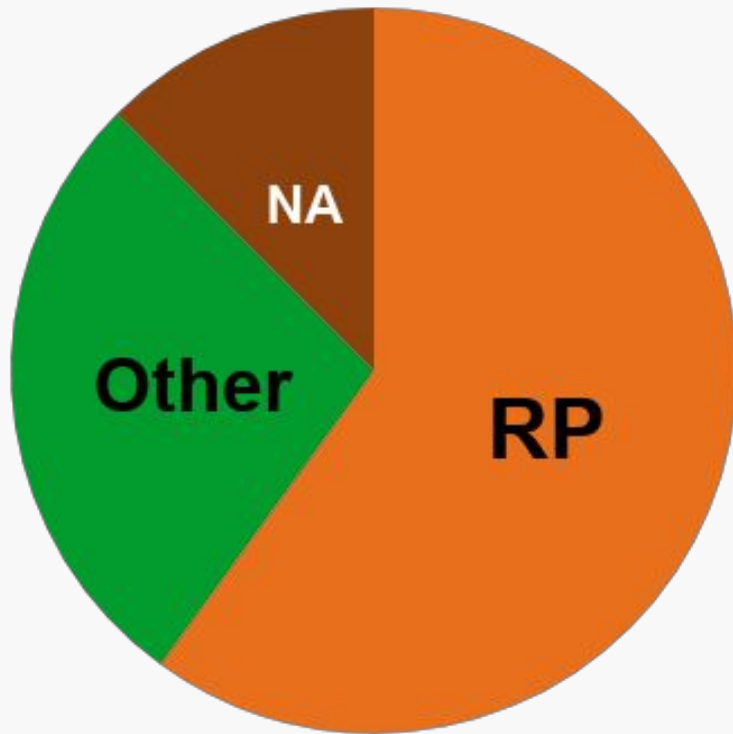
Question 2: Which pronunciation model were you taught with?



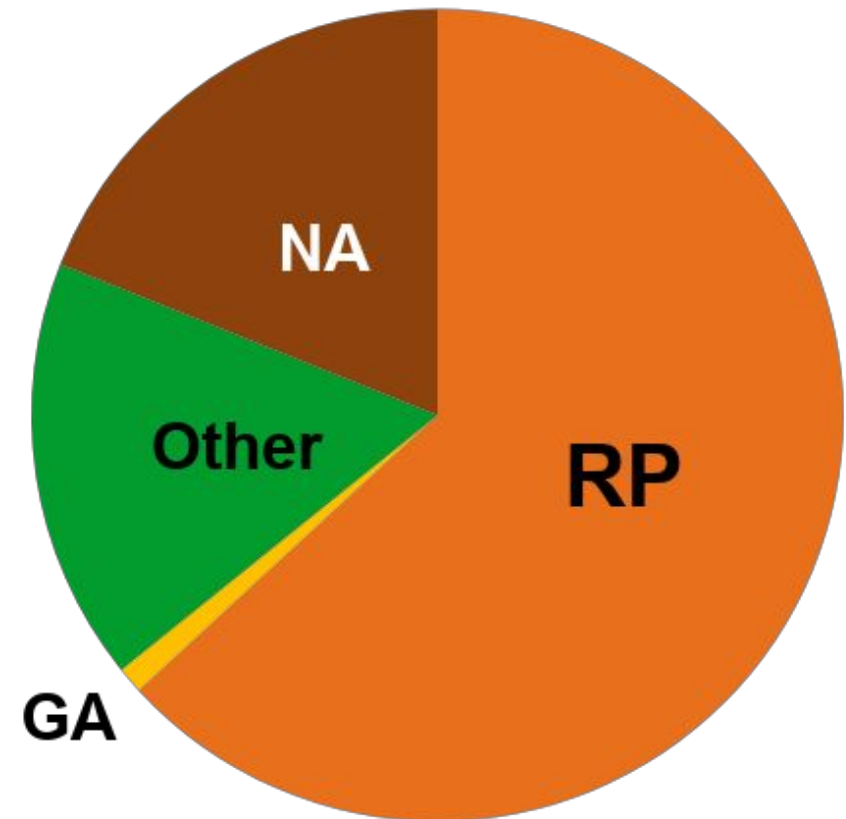
Which pronunciation model were you taught with? (Archer, 2019)



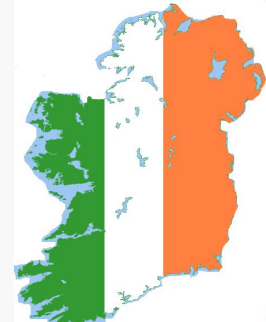
Irish Teachers



Scottish teachers



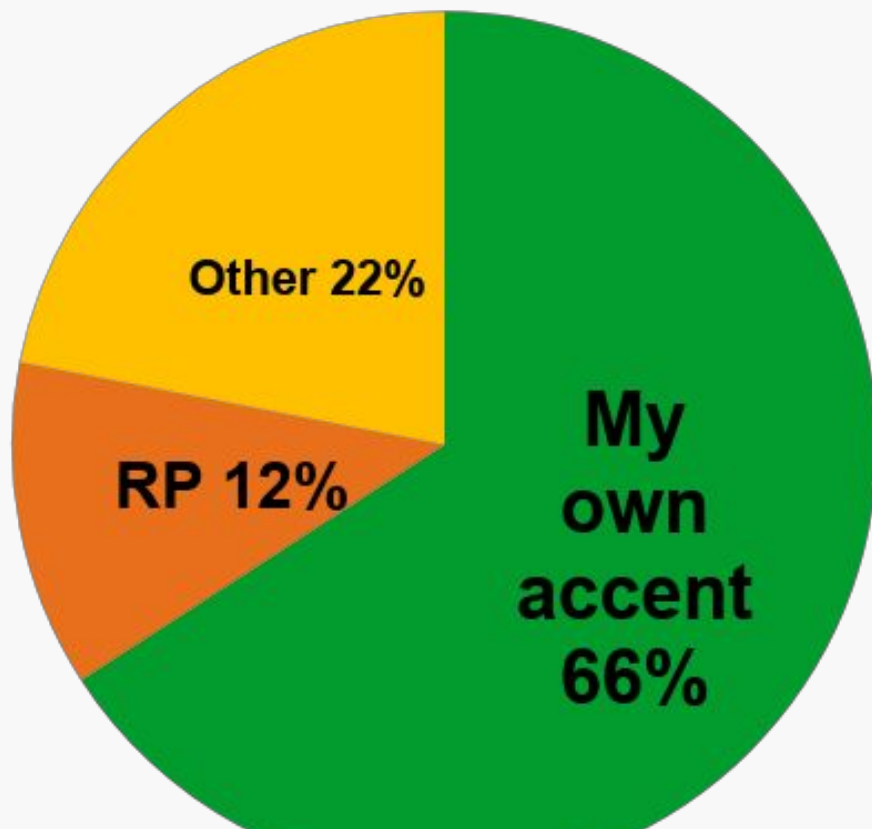
Question 3: When teaching pronunciation, which accent model do you use?



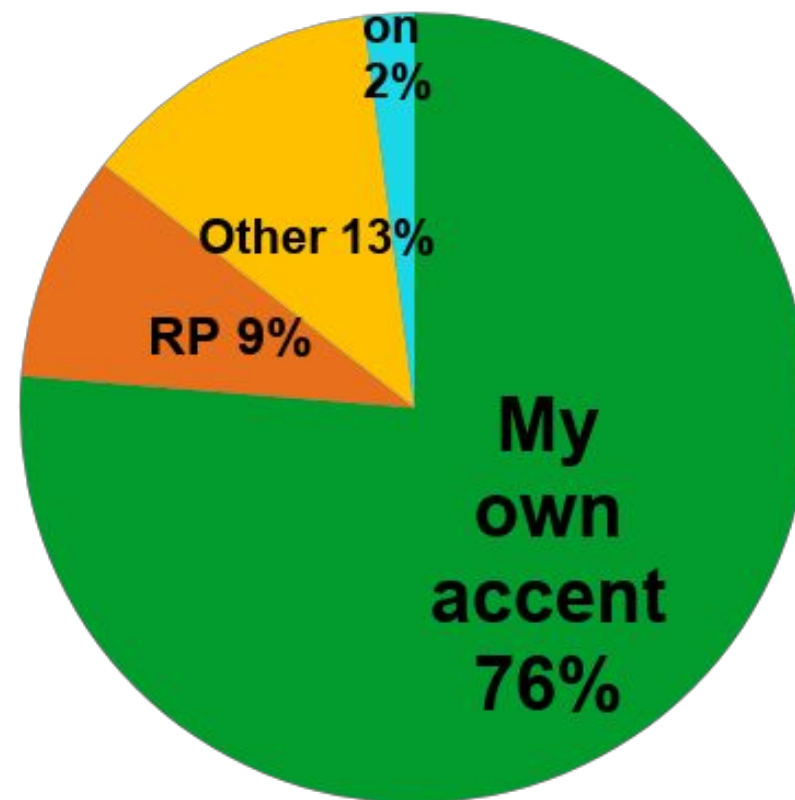
When teaching, which accent model do you use? (Archer, 2019)



Irish teachers



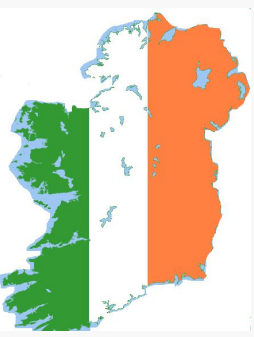
SCOTTISH TEACHERS
I don't teach Pronunciation





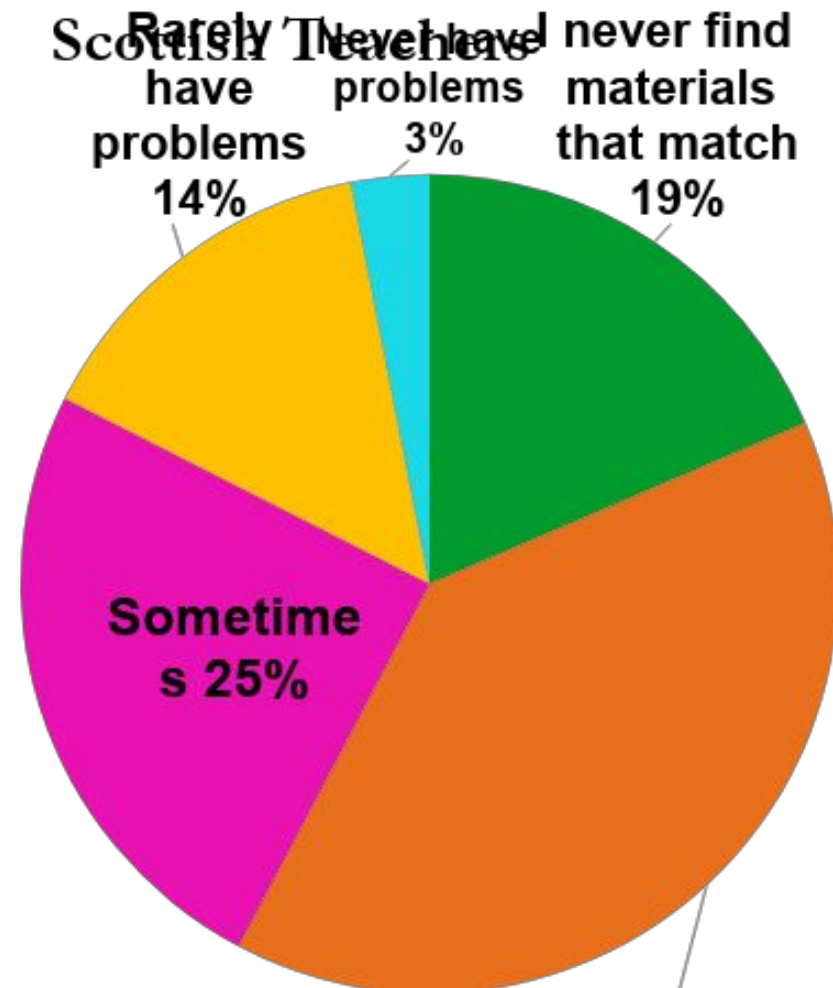
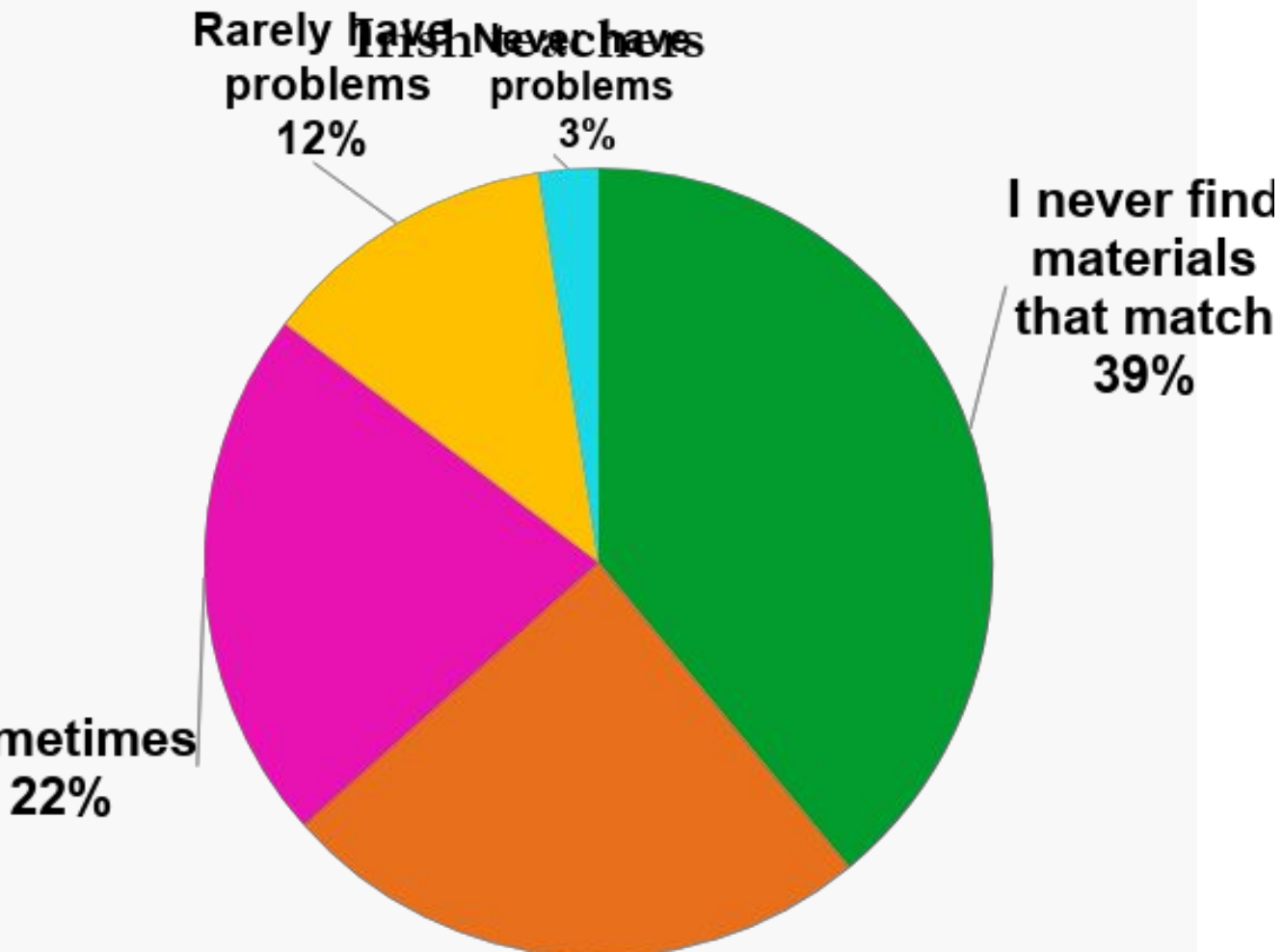
Confused.com[®]

Question 4: Have you ever struggled to find materials that match your accent?



Have you ever struggled to find materials that match your accent?

(Archer, 2019)



Have you ever struggled to find materials that match your accent: a comparison (Archer, 2019)

RP/SSBE respondents

Yes on many occasions: 2%

I never find materials: 6%

Sometimes: 20%

Rarely have problems: 39%

Never have problems: 33%

Summary:

Teachers reporting difficulty in finding materials
(never find materials, on many occasions, sometimes)

RP/SSBE: 28%

Scottish teachers: 83%

Irish teachers: 85%

Question 5: If you answered:

‘I never find materials that match’

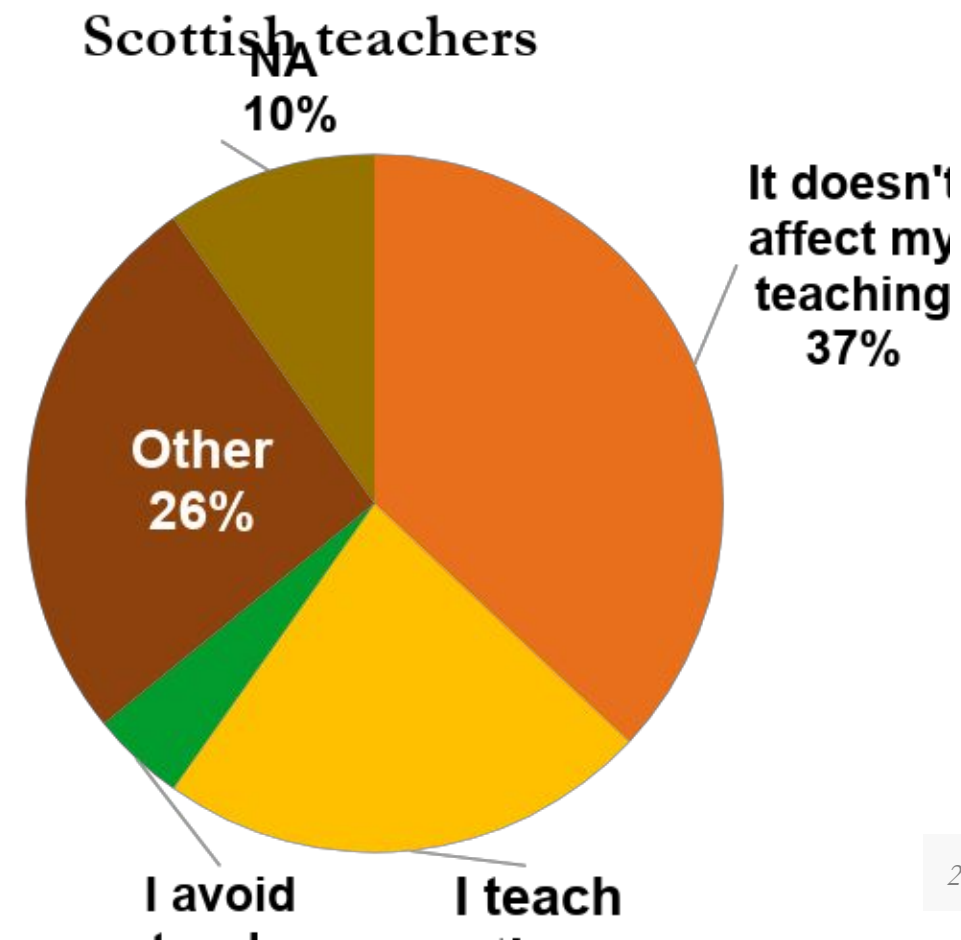
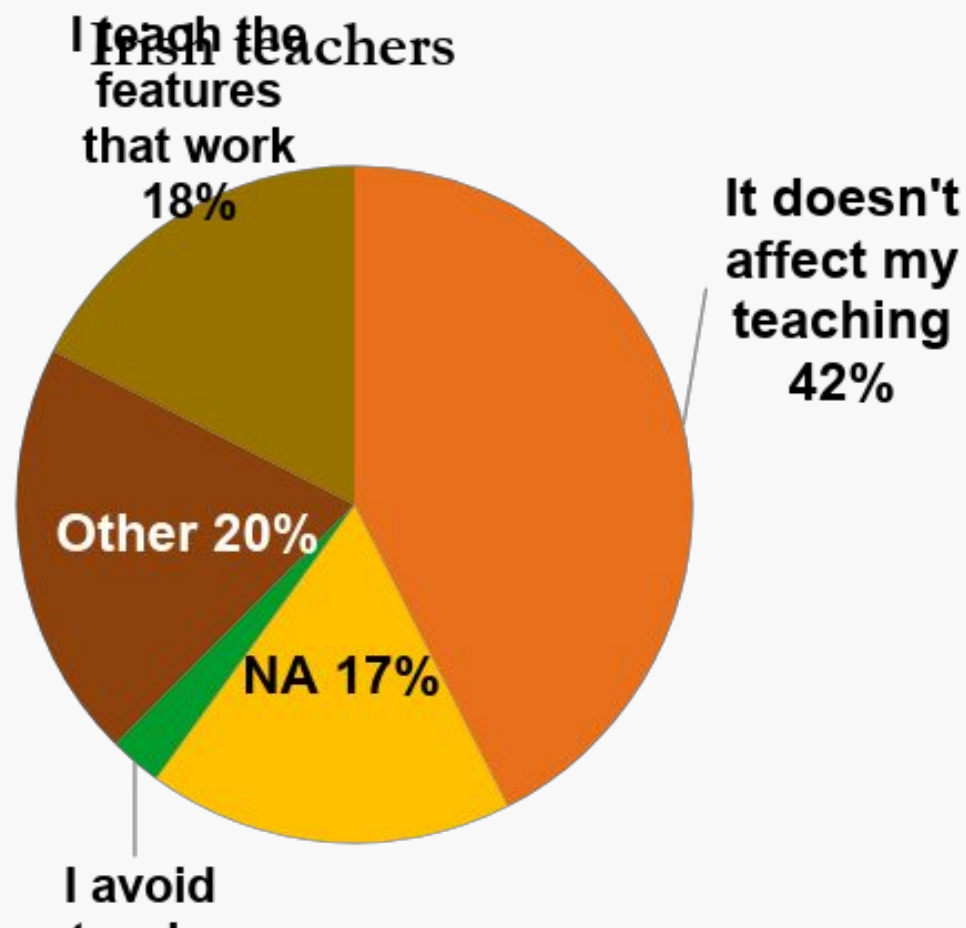
‘On many occasions’ or

‘Sometimes’

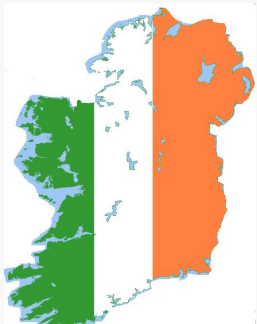
How does this affect your teaching?



If you answered '*I never find materials*' '*On many occasions*' or '*sometimes*', how does this affect your teaching? (Archer, 2019)



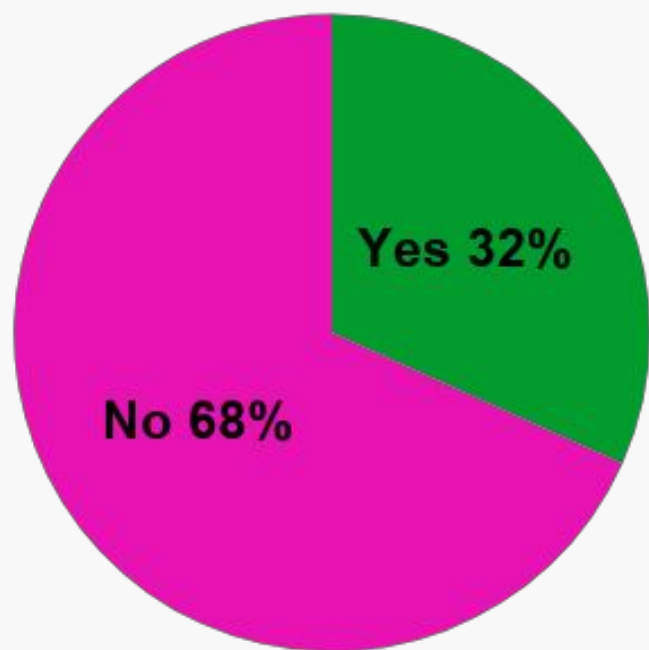
**Question 6: Has your accent ever specifically prevented you from being able
to teach something in a textbook or syllabus?**



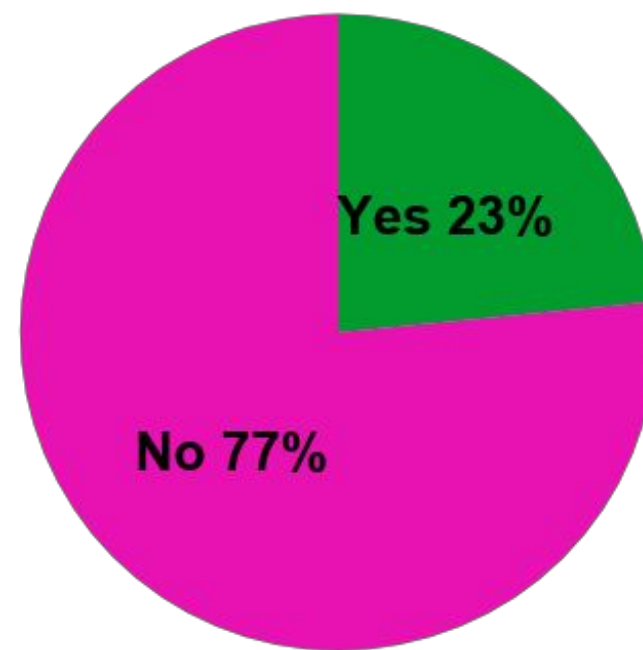
Has your accent ever prevented you from being able to teach something in a textbook or syllabus? (Archer, 2019)



Irish teachers



Scottish teachers



Question 7: Which features were you unable to teach?



Which features were you unable to teach?

(Archer, 2019)

Irish teachers

- I found vowel sounds and some diphthongs from the Underhill chart didn't correspond to my accent
- Tend to skip focus on schwa and th (not vital part of or even detrimental according to Lingua franca Core) - works out well with my Irish accent :)
- /r/ in RP
- Differences between the vowel sound in 'chair' and 'car'
- Where RP omits /r/ e.g. horse, there, car
- Three of the phonemes do not apply to Irish English; so I do not teach those lessons and, on occasion have to introduce my own exercises; especially around the rhotic R; and how we assimilate in connected speech.
- Sounds like 'caught' and 'court'.
- Vowel sounds tend to be the problem, especially /ʌ/ and /ʊ/ /ʊə/ and /ɔ:/
- I don't use textbooks for listening/decoding. My students are adult refugees from low socio-economic backgrounds. They need to understand and communicate with local people. However I do use the BBC learning English pronunciation videos on occasion.



Scottish teachers

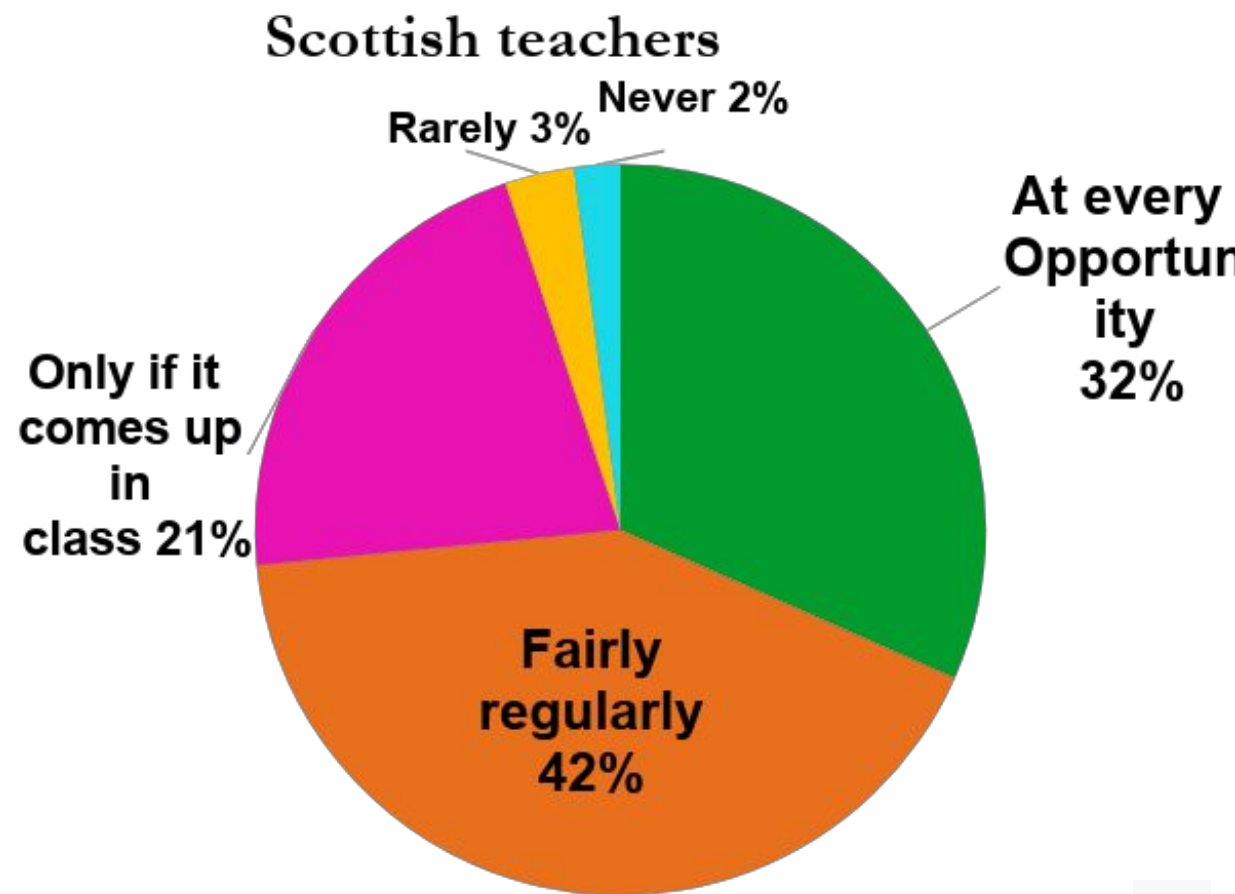
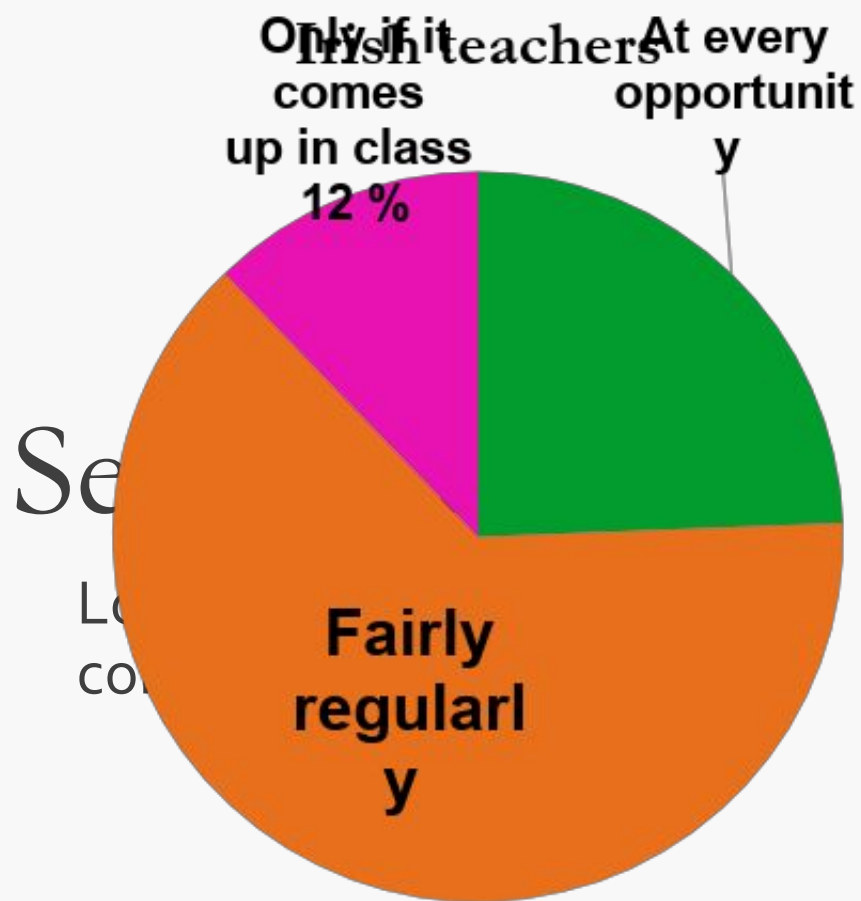
- Vowel sounds can be tricky and often have to give examples in both RP and my accent as ss can be very sceptical if you differ from the textbook/ audio.'
- 'When the textbook suggests that the following are the same: "four" and "for"; "paw" "pour" and "poor"; "pawn" and "porn"; "caught" and "court".'
- 'Long and short vowels can be tricky.'
- 'I feel a little silly teaching students RP pron. of words with /ɑ:/ that I would pronounce with /æ/. Equally, it can be hard to distinguish between /ʊ/ and /u:/ in my accent.'
- 'There are some sounds that I don't have, e.g. bIRd. It seems forced to teach it that way.'
- 'many vowel sounds'
- '/ʊ/ and /u:/ - I still don't get the difference!'
- 'RP features e.g. the long /a/ in car park.'

Question 8: How regularly do you include pronunciation in your classes?



How regularly do you include pronunciation in your classes?

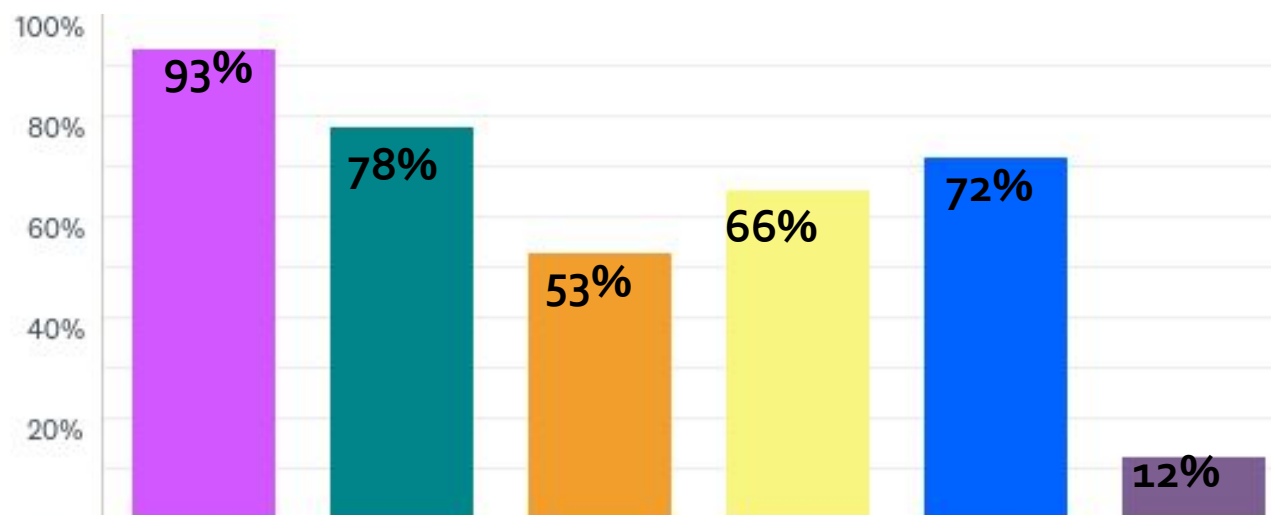
(Archer, 2019)



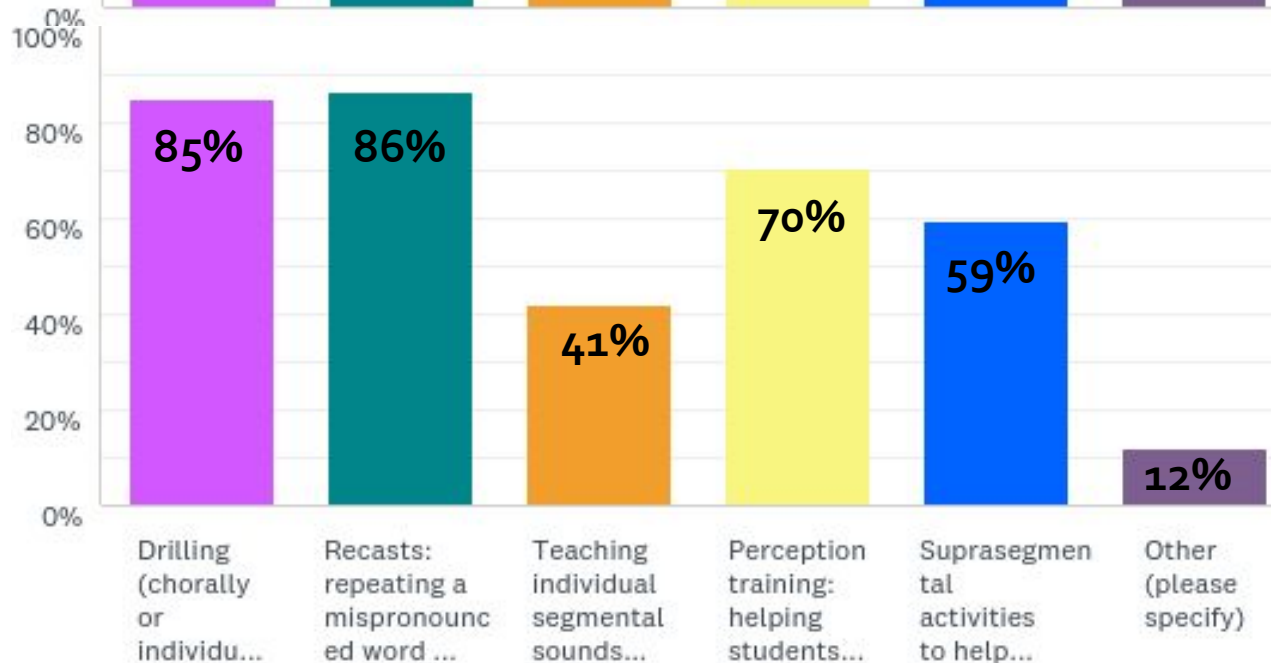
Question 9: What are the most frequent pronunciation activities you include in your lessons?

Is everyone really doing it all the time? (Archer, 2019)

Irish teachers



Scottish teachers



Perhaps not!

(Baker & Murphy, 2011;
Foote, Trofimovich, Collins, & Urzúa,
2013)

Key points taken from the data

- » Disconnect between what we are trained with (mainly RP) and what we go on to use in the classroom (mainly our own voices)
- » RP materials can cause difficulty for teachers, particularly vowel sounds and non-rhotic /r/
- » SSE/IE speaking teachers sometimes struggle to find apt. materials/
Consequences? Teachers *may* only teach a limited range of features, or even avoid pronunciation altogether.
- » Teachers may think they are doing more pronunciation work that they actually are.

Strategy 1: Consult the ‘other’ 20%

Consensus:

- » Teach the ‘book accent’ **and** the ‘real accent’. Be explicit in how they differ.

Consider: Does only teaching one prestige model deprive students of real knowledge and strategies to deal with the language they hear every day/outside the classroom?

Sources:

- » *Authentic Listening*, Hancock McDonald
- » *Teaching the pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca*, (Walker, 2010)
- » www.elllo.org
- » <https://www.dialectsarchive.com/ireland> (IDEA)
- » <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/research/gsound/Eng/Database/Phonetics/Englishes/Home/HomeMainFrameHolder.htm> (*Accents of English*, Uni. Edinburgh)
- » Obliging friends and family!

Strategy 2: The art of the 'right' chart

When working on production

» Introduce students to segmental sounds using **the most appropriate chart for you/ your linguistic community**

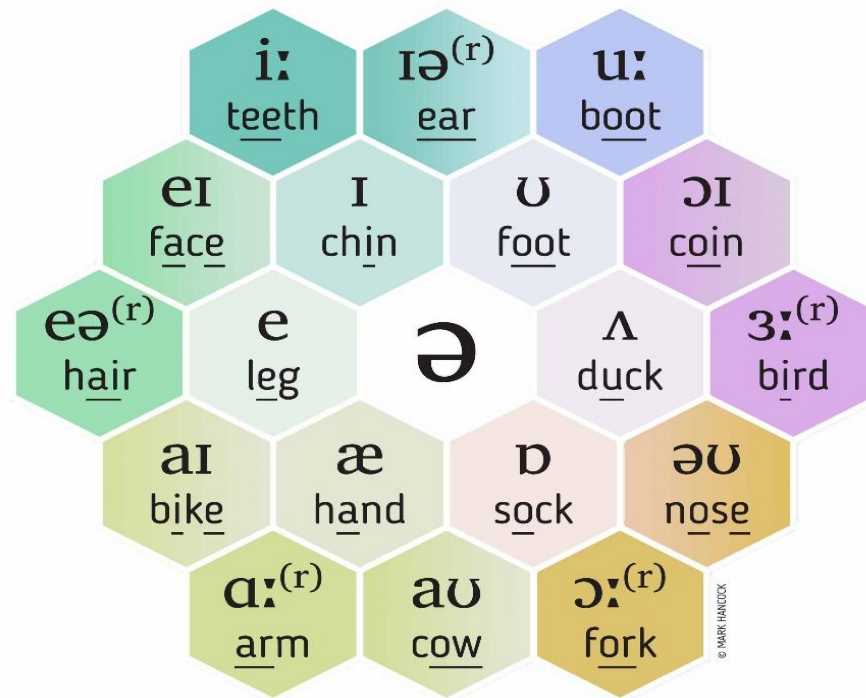
» Underhill

© Underhill, A.

source: <http://www.macmillanenglish.com>

ɪ	I	ʊ	u:	Iə	eɪ	ɔ:	X
e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	
p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j

- Hancock
McDonald



p pen	b bin	m man	f fish	v vest
t toe	d door	n note	θ think	ð there
k key	g girl	ŋ ring	s sun	z zip
l leaf	r rat	h hat	ʃ shoe	ʒ television
w watch	j year	ʔ button	tʃ chair	dʒ jam

© Mark Hancock
Source: <http://hancockmcdonald.com>

Strategy 3: What to do with vowels....?

Options:

1. Use your own voice, and provide alternative audio models to show explicit differences. Or ask students to decide which model they want.

OR

If you don't want to use your own voice, use a pre-recorded audio of another variety, but highlight differences through your own voice.

2. Consider prioritising high functional load vowels e.g. /ɪ/ /i:/
3. Consider the Lingua Franca Core: consonant sounds more important than vowels, but vowel length can affect intelligibility (Jenkins, 2000).

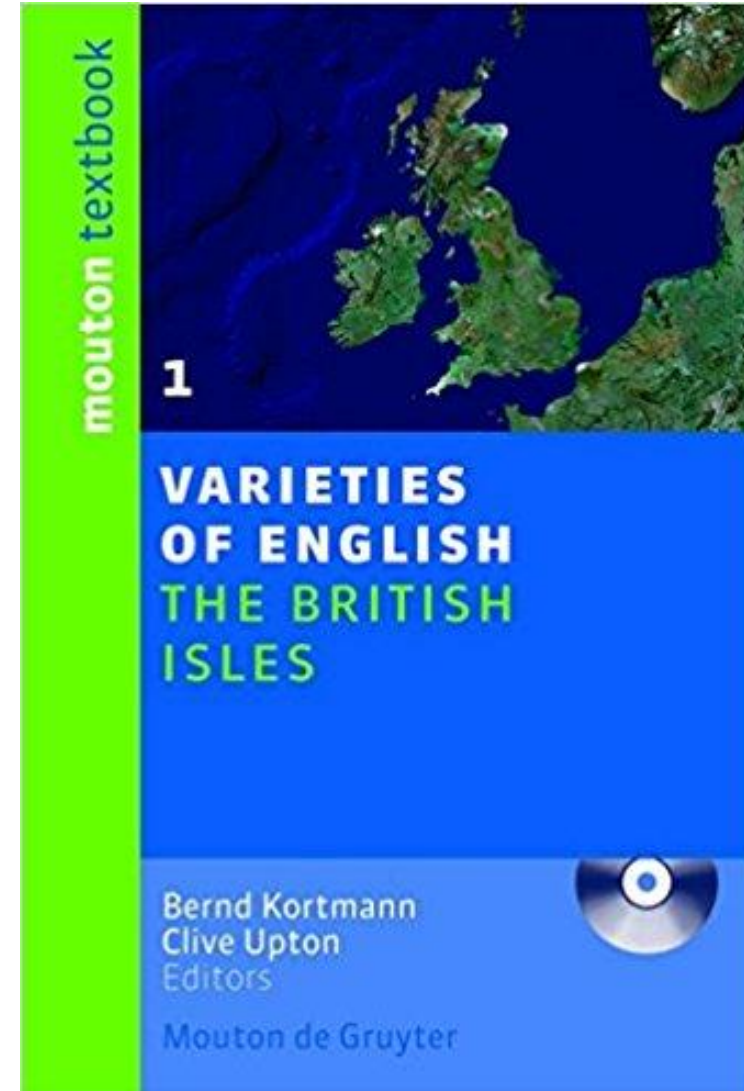
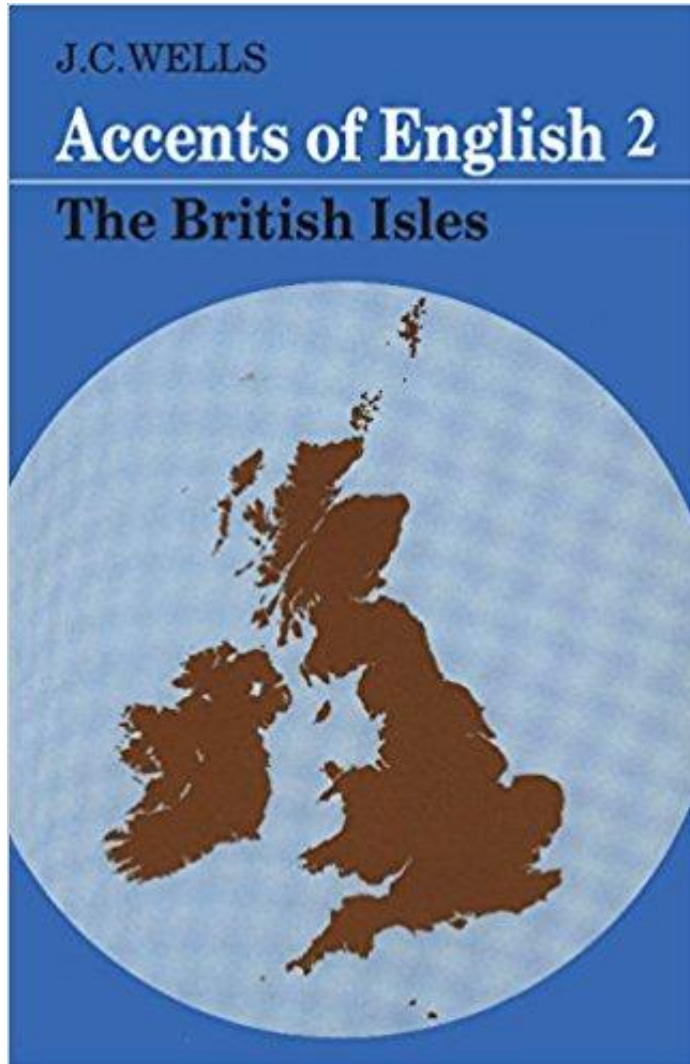
Strategy 4: Consider the Lingua Franca Core

The Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000) advocates teaching certain core pronunciation features for maximum intelligibility rather than native-likeness.

LFC core features include:

- » All consonant sounds (except /θ/ and /ð/)
- » Consonant clusters
- » Rhotic /r/
- » /t/ not tapped i.e. butter not '*budder*'
- » More clear /l/ than dark [ɫ]
- » Nuclear/ tonic stress

Strategy 5: Bedtime reading



Strategy 6: Teacher Training

- Given that phonological instruction comes late for most teachers (if ever) push for:
 - i. in-house training
 - ii. collaborative study with peers
 - iii. trickle down sessions
- Make and share audios with your colleagues (Audacity)
- Plan lessons which teach both local and global varieties of English

Do pronunciation models matter for students?

5-week classroom based study, 2016

Do pronunciation models matter to our students? (Archer, 2018)

If this is the answer, what's the question?

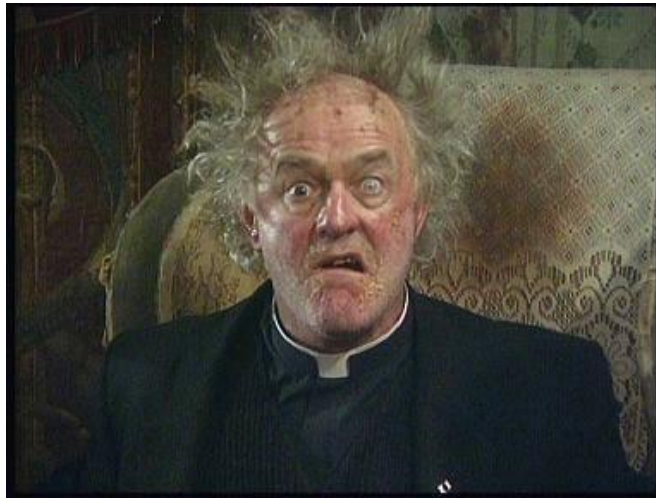
A.

- » It's ugly, I hate it!
- » It's not proper!
- » It's too fast!
- » Sad ... I thought everyone would speak like in Harry Potter!

B.

- It's more official
- It's the way gentlemen talk
- It's how my favourite star, Tom Hiddleston, talks
- It's the best way to get a promotion

Stigma



Historical stigma against regional forms of English (See *Punch!*)

Despite change occurring in the media since 2008, students are still picking up this stigma. Familiarity with only a prestige accent doesn't help.

Students may vocalise a preference for one accent over another, but they can rarely tell the difference.

The hunt for justification

I wanted to know once and for all ...

1. Why I should teach an RP model/ material to students ...

- who can't identify it
- who are living and studying in locations like Glasgow where its presence is negligible, even said to be 'phantom' (Daniels, 1995)
- which can be met with hostility?

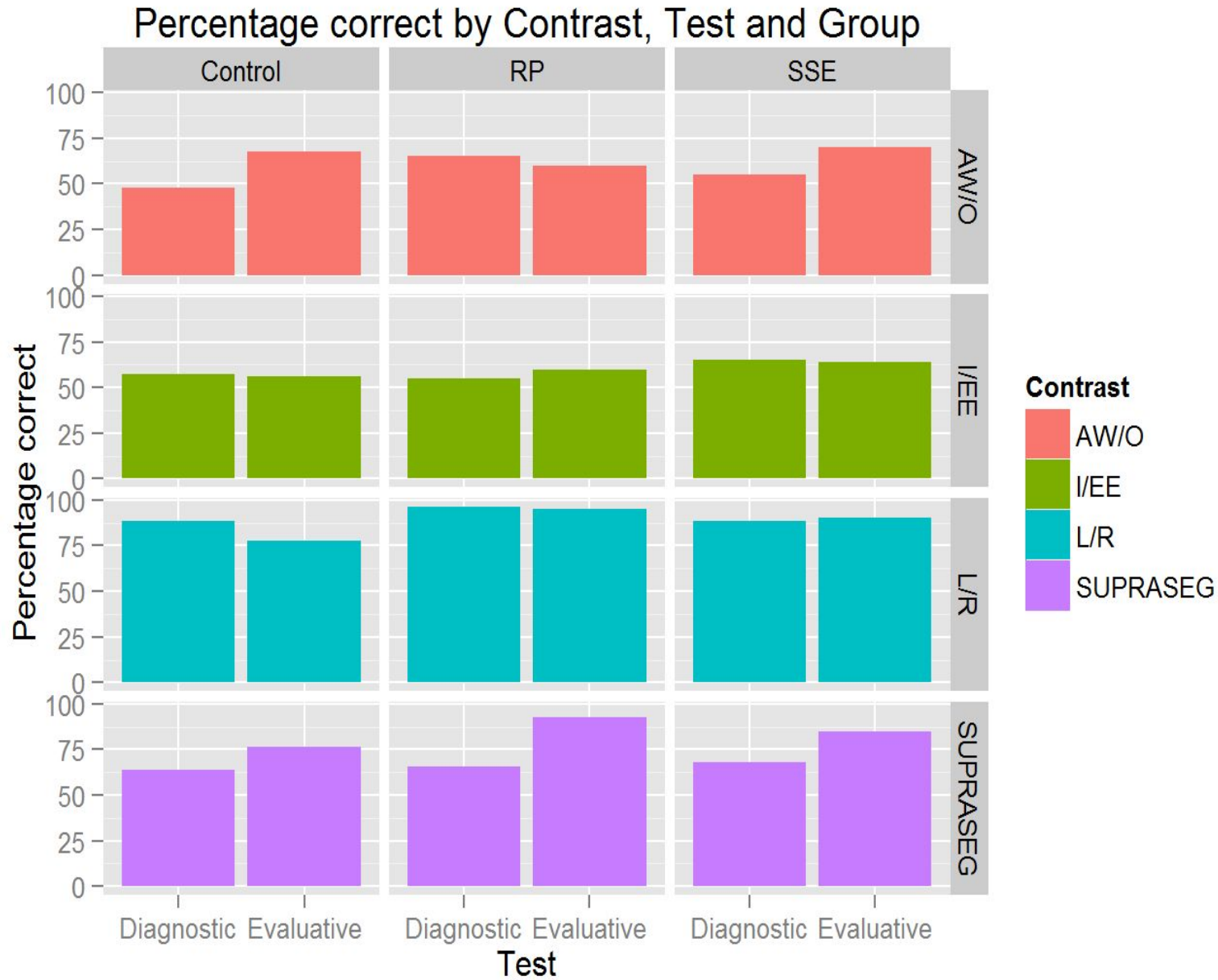
2. If the students' preference was right – that RP truly supported their perception and production better than other accents.

The 5-week study (Archer, 2018)

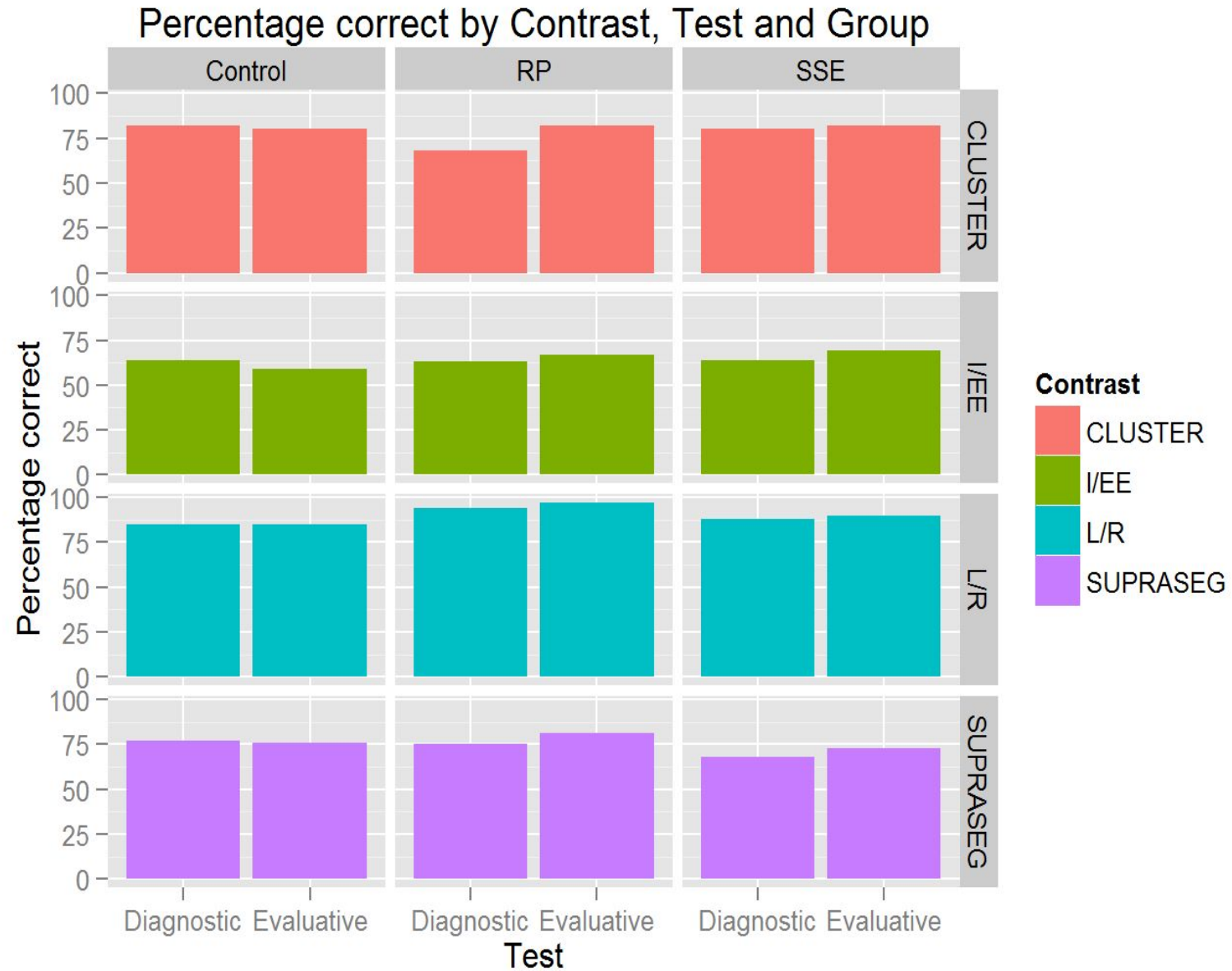
RP model group	SSE model group	Particulars
16 volunteers Teacher: Gemma	16 volunteers Teacher: Gemma	All enrolled on 21-hour/week pre-sess. programme. L1: Mandarin, Cantonese, Thai, Korean Age: 21 -37 years Sex: 90% female
✓ Diagnostic test <u>+ 5-week course</u>	✓ Diagnostic test <u>+ 5-week course</u>	Tested ss' perception and production
✓ Evaluative test	✓ Evaluative test	Tested ss' perception and production
Control Group	✓ Diagnostic test	Tested ss' perception and production
22 volunteers *(particulars – as above)	✓ Evaluative test	Tested ss' perception and production

Course and test features: influenced by the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000) and Functional Load Theory (Catford, 1987).

Results: perception



Results: production



Discussion

- » **Familiarity:** unfamiliar pronunciation can affect listeners' comprehension/ speed of comprehension (Adank & McQueen, 2007)
Most of these students had spent up to 10 years studying English/ completing Cambridge exams and had limited familiarity with anything other than controlled, prestige models.
- » **Attitude:** students' feelings about the model they were using influenced motivation and participation.

Outcome:

Which model, from a choice of two, RP or SSE, best supports international students' perception and production of English while studying in Scotland?

Neither model fits perfectly.

Takeaway: Do pronunciation models matter to students?

No:

- » I feel that 5 weeks of explicit tuition in any standard accent has the potential to improve students' perception and production.

Yes:

- » Students' familiarity and attitude towards it may influence how receptive they are towards any 'deviance' from prestige models!

Concluding Recommendations

1. **Keep working on suprasegmentals** in class – practice does make perfect!
2. **Pronunciation models: provide options and allow for comparison** to help support students listening comprehension, providing strategies to deal with English as it is truly spoken.
3. **Turn model resistance into ‘teachable moments’** raising awareness of the pros/cons of familiarity with just one model.

4. The golden rule:

All voices are of value in the ELT classroom, don't be afraid to use yours!

Great resources for pron-phobes!

- » <http://international.okanagan.bc.ca/pronunciation/> (free)
- » <http://hancockmcdonald.com/> (free)
- » Pron Pack (Hancock McDonald) for exercises beyond listen and repeat
- » *Clear Speech* (Gilbert, 2014) for introducing stress/ prosody
- » The Prosody Pyramid (Gilbert, 2008)
<https://pronsig.iatefl.org/Info/Gilbert-Teaching-Pronunciation.pdf> (Free)

Thank you!



gemma.archer@strath.ac.uk



speakout@IATEFL.org



GL_archer



Gemma Archer

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