Teaching English Pronunciation to Polish Speakers in the Netherlands

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Introduction

Problem

Everyone learns a language at least once; their mother tongue. Across the globe, most people also learn an additional, second language. Some learn this by themselves; others learn the second language in an academic setting. Learning an additional language can have great economic value. This was one of the reasons why in 2002 the European Union stated that all Europeans must learn at least two additional languages. Effectively, they are trying to make the inhabitants of the member states not bilingual but tri- or multilingual. The first foreign language taught in Dutch schools has been English since 1986. However, the Netherlands is home to many different nationalities, which means that there has been an increase in the number of children of different linguistic backgrounds that go to Dutch schools. This would indicate that the Netherlands is a multilingual country, with multilingual classrooms. From this perspective one would expect that teaching should take place from a multilingual perceptive, not a monolingual one. This also applies to (English) language teaching. However, there is no indication that this is the case in the Netherlands, since Dutch is still the language of instruction in all Dutch schools. Children in Dutch schools whose native language is not Dutch have no choice but to learn Dutch before they can learn English in the Netherlands. Subsequently, when they are taught English, this language is not necessarily the first foreign language for them. In addition, this new foreign language is taught through the medium of their first foreign language. This is the case for Polish children in Dutch schools. Polish migrants are currently the largest migrant group in the Netherlands (Nicolaas 33). This begs the question as to how Polish children in the Netherlands acquire English, the third language, and what problems may surface.

Importance

It is important to realise that the multilingual society in the Netherlands means that Dutch is not always the first and English in not automatically the second language children in the Dutch educational system come in contact with. However, when considering language learning in an academic setting, this paper needs to consider two other important topics: pronunciation and the English norm.

Teaching pronunciation is important since good pronunciation is needed for mutual understanding. In the speech act theory, Grice's conversational maxims indicate that, in the maxim of manner, clarity is always to be adhered to (Ross 40). If the production of speech is not clear – grammatically, semantically or phonetically – the listener may not understand the speaker. However, speaking without a foreign accent may not always be achievable for everybody. Nevertheless, speaking English with a foreign accent will not always work in favour of the speaker. According to Dinnes, "most accents are charming, interesting and distinctive. Unfortunately, some accents are distracting, irritating and penalizing" (1). Problems occur when more attention is paid to the speaker's accent than to what is said. In the workplace, accents can hamper performance, interfere with career goals and advancement and may be a source of concern and embarrassment (Dinnes 1). English native speakers are used to encountering foreign accents of their mother tongue. However, if a language learner comes across as unclear to both native and non-native speakers, this might possibly harm (business) relationships. This is not the best start of an international career. Consequently, pronunciation is also important for the teaching of English, or the teaching of any other language. However, it is generally thought that pronunciation is not explicitly taught in Dutch schools. In the multilingual classroom pronunciation teaching may be even more important, since not all

accents are mutually intelligible to every listener. Removal of the accent will provide for more mutual understanding.

In the Netherlands, it is alleged that English is mostly taught for international communication and from the British or American standard. However, some researchers have claimed that there is no need for schools to focus on either a British or American (pronunciation) standard (Cook 1999, 2002; Firth and Wagner 289). In addition, some argue this is because this standard does not take the learners' different cultural backgrounds into account (McKay 73; Preisler 263), while others claim this native speaker-standard is unattainable to second language learners and a standard that is attainable should be taught (Kirkpatrick 81; Tan et al. 80). It is understandable that schools in the Netherlands should teach English for international communication. However, this leaves the question as to which variety of English should be chosen; which variety is the most mutually intelligible, not only for all people learning English in the Netherlands, but for all interlocutors the Dutch citizens will encounter during their international communications.

Expectations

Since Polish is a very different language than both Dutch and English, the latter two both being Germanic languages and the former a Slavic language, it can be expected that numerous pronunciation difficulties will be present. However, Dutch native speakers have particular pronunciation difficulties too when it comes to speaking English. Nevertheless, expectations are that the problems that Dutch speakers will encounter are different to these of Polish speakers. However, since the Polish speakers learning English in the Netherlands learn English as a third language, it can be expected that their problems are not as clear cut as those of the Dutch speakers. The problems that Polish speakers will have when learning

English pronunciation in the Netherlands may be due to phenomenon linked to third language acquisition rather than those present in second language acquisition. In this light, this paper aims to gain a better understanding of third language acquisition through the study of pronunciation problems of Polish native speakers learning English in the Netherlands.

Chapter 1 – English: an International Language

This chapter is designed to discuss which variety of English should be taught, particularly in the setting of Dutch schools. This is important since the variety influences the norms that are perceived as correct. These norms are needed to study to what extent the production of language learners differs from the norm.

There is no denying that English is a language which is important to international communication (Rubdy and Saraceni 5). Nowadays the number of people who use this international language, but who have a different mother tongue, outnumber the native speakers of English (Rubdy and Saraceni 5). However, English, unlike other international languages, is not a standardised language. In other words, it lacks an official body setting and prescription of the norms (Rubdy and Saraceni 5). Since the English spoken by Danes, Germans and Italians are systematically different due to interference from the respective native languages, many different Englishes are created (Preisler 265). According to Rubdy and Saraceni it is pointless to make an extensive description of the use of English (6), although, some description of language use is needed in language teaching (Rubdy and Saraceni 6). However, due to the lack of any standard and norms (Rubdy and Saraceni 5), English language teaching is necessarily reduced to manageable classroom models (Rubdy and Saraceni 6). Rubdy and Saraceni discuss three models of English language teaching in their book "World Englishes", in which different varieties of English are taken into consideration. These models are: the Standard English model (often British or American English), English as an International Language or as a Lingua Franca (EIL / ELF) or World Englishes (also known as the nativized model) (Rubdy and Saraceni 6). The Standard English model is designed for mainly written communication and uses the native speaker variety of

English to teach in academic settings (Rubdy and Saraceni 6). The EIL or ELF model is designed to free speakers with a different mother tongue than English from the native speaker norm. This model is used mainly by non-native business people and international travellers to communicate and the variety taught is based on a shared code (or language features) by these speakers (Rubdy and Saraceni 8). The World Englishes model is designed for countries where English has taken a firm hold as the major language and, consequently, local forms of English have emerged (Rubdy and Saraceni 7). The new nativized norms are taught to alleviate teachers and learners of the norms imposed on them from outside (Rubdy and Saraceni 7). Often the choices for a certain model or norm are political or practical in origin (Kirkpatrick 71).

Kirkpatrick argues that the nativized model should be adopted to help teachers, since they are often uncomfortable with speaking a language that is not their own mother tongue. However, at the same time Kirkpatrick argues that this model is not useful for countries in which the English language has no historical roots or had a historical influence on the native language (76). Neither the Netherlands nor Poland have been colonies of the British Empire and, consequently, have no historical connection with the English language. Although it can be argued that the Netherlands has a long history of trade relations with England (Jardine). Kirkpatrick also makes a case for English as a Lingua Franca, for the reason that it has no "correct" norms (Kirkpatrick 81). However, he does argue for a description of English as a Lingua Franca at the same time (81). Jenkins also believes in the strength of ELF and suggests some core elements (or norms) which should be taught. She argues that this core approach is better able to promote both intelligibility and regional appropriateness among EIL interlocutors, as well as being more teachable, than either of the two most commonly adopted classroom models; Received Pronunciation and General American (Jenkins 2000).

This model should be useful for teachers who want to teach English for international communication. Since the norm consists of simplified elements which maintain the intelligibility, but reduce difficult, language specific, non-essential elements, the teachability to learners from different language backgrounds should become easier too. However, this Lingua Franca Core (LFC) eliminates the native speakers of English as part of the international communicating community (Szpyra-Kozlowska 152). In addition, it can be questioned whether an artificially created (pronunciation) model can help achieve the goal of international intelligibility better than the natural native speaker model (Szpyra-Kozlowska 150-151).

Some researchers argue that the native-speaker norm is unethical to teach because of the implied superiority (Kirkpatrick 72, McKay 117). McKay even states that speaking in this norm can be seen as snobbish in some communities (119). However, this often applies to the communities where English has long been seen as the language of the oppressor. This is what gives the language such a negative connotation. This argument is not applicable to the Dutch or Polish situation. Nevertheless, the ethical dilemma should be taken into consideration when choosing a norm. In addition, native speakers will not give up the fight to keep other English teaching models other than the Standard English one aloof (Tan 87-8). Understandably, native speakers have no intentions to learn a new and different version of their own language in order to communicate within the international community.

It seems that the other models will allow for variation, while the native-speaker one will not, which makes “the model … impossible to achieve” (Kirkpatrick 74). However, the attempt to achieve this model is important. Through teaching the Standard English model learners will be enabled to achieve near native competence. When everyone aims to achieve this standard, learners will become more mutually intelligible as their proficiency increases.

Mutual intelligibility will be achieved through imitation of the native speaker's grammar and phonology and with a little leniency from the listening interlocutors. Consequently, it can be argued that the Dutch and Polish should opt for teaching English from the Standard English model and with either the British or American norms, although it would seem that Dutch and Polish learners would benefit more from the EIL or ELF model being taught to them, since this model teaches English primarily for international communication.

It will be the British Received Pronunciation (RP) with which the Standard Dutch (ABN) and Standard Polish will be compared to discover the possible problematic phonological issues for Polish speakers when learning English in the Netherlands.

Chapter 2 – The Polish Situation

This chapter discusses the Polish situation in the Netherlands: some general information, some information about Polish children and some information about (these children in) the Dutch educational system. This information is needed in order to have a better understanding of the attitudes of the Polish, especially towards language learning. Sociological factors can have an influence on the way the second language (Dutch) and third language (English) are acquired and produced.

Residence numbers

From 2004 to 2010 the number of Polish living in the Netherlands has more than doubled (Nicolaas 33). According to the CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands) 87,323 Polish lived in the Netherlands on first of January 2011 (Nicolaas 33). This number includes only the people who registered with municipalities. Registration indicates that they have the intention to live and work in the Netherlands for at least four months. There is an estimate of one hundred thousand additional Middle and Eastern Europeans who are unregistered in the Netherlands. Most of these are Polish, Bulgarians and Romanians (Nicolaas 33).

Before 2004 Polish migrants largely consisted of women. These were "Polish brides" who came to the Netherlands to marry a Dutch man. Since Poland became a member of the European Union in May 2004, the number of migrant Polish men has surpassed the women. This group of men come mainly for work, are between twenty and forty years old, often unmarried and with no children (Nicolaas 34). Before the EU membership, about a quarter of the Polish migrants were couples with no children and ten percent were couples with children. Since 2004 the percentage of couples with children has fallen slightly (Nicolaas 34).

It is likely that most Polish migrants will eventually return to Poland. Expectations are that sixty percent of the Polish migrants who arrived between 2000 and 2009 will migrate from the Netherlands (either back to Poland or to Germany or Britain). The Polish migrants who are not registered will have to leave within four months anyway. However, if these were also taken into account the percentage would be much higher (Nicolaas 34-35). Other research has indicated that half of the Polish migrants intend to stay in the Netherlands for less than five years (Nicolaas 35). Fifteen percent indicates they want to stay permanently (Nicolaas 35). However, unmarried Polish migrants are more likely to immigrate back to Poland than couples. In addition, when children are involved, only thirty percent indicate that they would want to immigrate back to Poland (Nicolaas 35). Nicolaas concludes that there is no question of family reunification yet (35).

Of the approximately eighty-seven thousand Polish people living in the Netherlands, three quarters were born in Poland, the rest are second generation Polish. The second generation are mostly children of whom seventy-five percent have a mixed Polish-Dutch parentage and twenty-five percent have two Polish parents. In 2011 11,060 Polish children attended school in the Netherlands (Swanenberg 202). In 2009 this number was estimated at roughly eight thousand (Korf 48). The percentages of couples with children who migrate to the Netherlands seem to be in decline (Nicolaas 34). However, this may seem to be the case since the amount of other categories of Polish migrants has risen so enormously. In addition, the number of children born to Polish parents in the Netherlands might be expanding, even though Swanenberg’s data currently shows that still at least seventy-five percent of the children are born in Poland. Korf confirms this latter analysis (48).

Polish children

The Polish migrants and their children live in a situation in which Polish might be spoken at home, but the community speaks Dutch. Even if their immediate surroundings also speak Polish, they will come in contact with the Dutch language at a certain point during their stay. Especially the children who go to Dutch schools will have a lot of encounters with the Dutch language, since the language of instruction is Dutch. Given the language barrier, this begs the question how the Polish migrants and their children in particular, view language learning and how they go about it. Recent research by Swanenberg (2012) has indicted that, although Polish migrant's children still feel very much in touch with their Polish identity, they have a positive attitude towards (learning) the Dutch language.

There are currently fifteen institutions in the Netherlands that want to implement the Polish language and culture to these children. This is done, in the first place, in order to teach them something that has no place in regular Dutch education. In the second place, these institutions are in place to help the migrant children to keep up with the acquisition of skills and knowledge that are taught in regular schools. Some of the institutions prepare their children for the return to Poland. Other institutions wish to keep the children in touch with the Polish language and culture, but do not explicitly focus on a possible return to Poland (Swanenberg 202-203).

Swanenberg questioned seventy-two Polish children between ten to nineteen years old about how pupils of Polish educational institutes cope in the Netherlands. Slightly more than half of those questioned had lived in the Netherlands for less than three years; the remainder, four years or more. Only four of those were born in the Netherlands. For most children both parents were Polish. Six children had Dutch fathers and two indicated that their fathers had a different nationality. Twenty-eight percent of the children went to an

international school in which the English language is the language of instruction and Dutch language classes are taught approximately once a week (203-204). This last group was sometimes not taken into account in the data of Swanenberg's research since the nature of the question was not always relevant to them.

To the question of which language was mostly/preferably spoken, both Dutch and Polish were almost equally used/preferred. Children who had been living in the Netherlands the shortest spoke more Polish and sixty percent of older children (fifteen to nineteen year olds) indicated to use Polish more than younger children (ten to fourteen year olds) (Swanenberg 205). Polish is used with almost all interlocutors; father, mother, siblings, other family members, Polish friends in- and outside of school. However, the standard deviation was larger when father and siblings were concerned (Swanenberg 205). Dutch was mostly learned through special Dutch language classes in primary schools when Dutch pupils had their own Dutch language classes. The vast majority of children questioned indicated that learning the Dutch language is important to them for further education, employment and/or communication in their current social environment, but the Polish language was also deemed important (Swanenberg 205).

In examinations, the average grade for Dutch language was an average of 7.8 out of 10. Primary school children scored the highest with an average grade of 8.3 (Swanenberg 205). This should not be surprising since they could be dubbed sequential bilinguals (Montrul). Secondary school children scored an average of 7.8 for the highest educational level (vwo), 7.5 for the middle level (havo) and 7.4 for the lowest educational level (vmbo) (Swanenberg 205). When asked to indicate whether the children felt more Polish or Dutch, both identities were chosen, though Polish had the upper hand (Swanenberg 205). To the

question about which culture the children preferred, they indicated to prefer Polish. However, the Dutch culture was chosen nearly as often as the Polish one (Swanenberg 206).

Although the children questioned are often in contact with Dutch children, they also keep contact with other Polish children both from the Netherlands and from Poland (Swanenberg 206). Approximately one third goes to Poland on holiday at least twice a year. Forty-six percent of the children go more than three times a year (Swanenberg 207). Though half of the correspondents expected their parents to return to Poland, they are not sure about what the future holds for them; one third indicated no wish to return to Poland, nearly a quarter express the wish to do so, and 47 percent does not know (Swanenberg 206).

Swanenberg concludes that the Polish children feel at least welcome in the Netherlands, though are not sure whether they would want to stay forever. They indicate that they feel more Polish than Dutch, but have a positive attitude towards the Dutch language and feel a connection with the Netherlands and its inhabitants. Although present data indicates that most Polish migrants only reside in the Netherlands temporarily, more than one third of all Polish migrants express a wish to stay permanently, especially those whose who indicate that their living conditions are more than satisfactory (208). Swanenberg's study shows that the positive attitude towards the Dutch language and society (amidst migrant children) may help the Polish migrants integrate.

Education

If a child is of school age (from four to eighteen years old), they are compulsory to go to school in the Netherlands. This holds for every pupil, whether they are Dutch native speakers, learn an additional language at home, or come to the Netherlands at a later stage in their life. Not all children will to go to a Dutch school. There are numerous international

schools in the Netherlands. Pupils who go to this sort of school often have at least one parent who is not of Dutch descent or parents who migrate a great deal for their work, putting their children in international schools all across the globe to teach their children the language(s) of international communication.

Of the seventy-two children interviewed in Swanenberg's research twenty-eight percent attended an international school (203). If this is a good representation of the normal distribution of the percentage of Polish children that go to an international school, the total number of Polish children of school age going to Dutch schools is 7,963.

Of the 7,963 Polish children that go to Dutch schools, most will be placed in an international transition class ("internationale schakelklas") for the first year. There are a few requirements that the children have to adhere to before they are allowed to follow this special year of education. First of all they ought to be no younger than six years old and, secondly, have stayed in the Netherlands for no longer than a year. After a year of this special programme, in which they learn Dutch among other things, they will continue their education in the normal Dutch educational setting (Korf 49).

Swanenberg showed in his study that Polish children still very much use the Polish language, although they are willing and eager to learn the Dutch language as well (see also Korf 49). However, some extracts from his interviews in his paper suggest that the language is not fully acquired yet. Korf also illustrates that the Polish children who have arrived at approximately four years of age speak poor Dutch in the beginning (48). Polish institutions are there to help the Polish children keep up with Maths and History, but not other subjects like English. If they are still in the process of learning the Dutch language, how will these children fare when they have to learn the English language?

The European Union declared in 2002 that all Europeans must learn at least two additional European languages. In the Netherlands the first foreign language to be learned at school is English. It was already legislated in 1986 by the Dutch government that this language is compulsory from the age of around ten, when pupils are in their prefinal year of primary school. Some primary schools start earlier, and although this is becoming more the norm, it can be expected that the average pupil in the Dutch educational system will start learning English at ten years of age.

In Poland, although it is compulsory by European rules and regulations that two languages in addition to the mother tongue should be taught from an early age, the first foreign language taught in schools is not automatically English. Of the forty-three percent of student who developed linguistic skills in two languages in 2006, English was the dominant foreign language learned by eight-three percent of them. Since 2007, the Polish government made it compulsory for the teachers of the lower grades in primary schools to have a good command of at least one foreign language, preferably English. As a result, the popularity of this language has soared. Since Polish children start school at the age of seven, and it is compulsory to start learning one modern foreign language at stage 2 (years four, five and six of primary school), Polish children generally start learning English at the age of around ten (Education in 2008-2009 51); the same as Dutch children.

Where pronunciation is concerned, the Dutch education allegedly does not explicitly teach this aspect in foreign language learning, while Polish teachers of English supposedly spend more time on this subject. However, because children in both countries start learning English at around the same age, it cannot be expected of all Polish children in the Netherlands that they have already been taught English. Nor can it be expected that their command of this language is greater than that of the Dutch children. Approximately, around

7,963 of Polish children will first start learning English in the Dutch educational system – the number of Polish children currently in Dutch schools. Although the number might vary according to a number facts which need to be taken into consideration. These are the fact that sixty percent of Polish migrants will stay in the Netherlands for less than ten years (Nicolaas 34), forty percent will stay in the Netherlands longer, couples with children are more likely to stay (longer), that new Polish children might arrive in time to learn English in the Dutch educational system, Polish children might leave before they are ten years old (and consequently also before they come in contact with English in the Dutch educational system), that younger children becoming of school age will take part in the educational system and of which approximately twenty-eight percent will go to an international school.

In order to answer the question what problems can be expected to occur for these Polish children learning English in the Netherlands, a closer look will be taken at language acquisition and the differences of the three respective languages.

Chapter 3 – Language Acquisition

This chapter is set up in order to get a better understanding of language acquisition. All three types of language acquisition are discussed for an overview of the differences and similarities between first, second and third language learning. This is important since learning English as a third language is the topic of this paper.

First language acquisition

There are numerous theories about language learning. Of all the theories there are two profound ways of looking at how language is acquired. The two schools of thought to which all theories can be divided are: Behaviourism and Mentalism (Huijbregts). The former states the idea that the first language (L1) is learned through the experiences obtained in the environment (Huijbregts). The child learns a language via imitation and statistical analysis of the input. Dutch children for example can deduce from the speech they hear around them that multiple consonants in the onset of a word are possible, for example "top" and "stop" are possible in Dutch. However, there are languages which operate in a strict consonant-vowel sequence in words. By analysing the statistics (input) children can learn these language specific features (Saffran et al.). The name most associated with the Behaviourism idea is Skinner (Huijbregts). The Mentalism idea is that there is a Universal Grammar (UG) that is innate to everyone. This Grammar has to be merely switched to the right settings through the input that the child hears in order to learn the complexities of language. The name most associated with this idea is Chomsky (Huijbregts). Within this theory, there is the opinion that there are parameter settings which are switched to either one of two options when learning the first language. Different settings for different parameters will cause for

different languages to surface (Zonneveld). However, a different opinion states that there are no universal parameters, but universal constraints which are ranked differently to account for different languages (Kager).

Second language acquisition

Within second language (L2) acquisition the Mentalistic view is that the learner has either direct, indirect or no access at all to UG. In the first scenario, L2 acquisition is done in much the same way as L1 acquisition. In the second situation, the learner may transfer its knowledge of the first language to acquiring the second one. The explanation of errors made in L2 acquisition has often contributed to the idea that the learner has no access to the UG anymore. The theories in this school of thought are often dependant on age of acquisition, amount of input and several other factors (Zonneveld). The Behaviourism view of L2 acquisition is that, like in L1 acquisition, learning is done through imitation and statistical analysis of the input. Errors are explained by interference of the L1. This is often related to what is called the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Sawani).

Although all theories try to explain all aspects of language learning not all of them are (directly) applicable to phonology. Some major theories in second language speech production are:

Critical Period Hypothesis; which states that there is an ideal period of time to acquire language if there is sufficient input. After this period language acquisition gets more difficult and effortful. Also, not all aspects of language have the same critical period. Phonology, for instance, is perceived to have a younger critical age than, for example,

syntax. However, there are many exceptions to the statement that starting younger is better in the long run (Chen 8)

Flege's Speech Learning Model; which declares that there is no critical period and that similar sounds in the L1 and L2 influence each other. This means that sounds that are present in the L2, but not in the L1 are easier to acquire since the sounds are perceived as different (Chen 9).

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis; which compares the phonological systems of the L1 and the L2 to be able to predict the learner's difficulty with learning the L2. The strong claim of this hypothesis is that the more similarities exist between the L1 and the L2, the easier it is to learn the L2 and the more different the two languages are the more difficult it will be to learn the second language. However, research has shown that learning difficulties exist even when there are no differences found between the two languages. Thus a weaker claim for this hypothesis is that the differences are necessary to explain the difficulties in second language acquisition, but these explanations are not sufficient on their own (Chen 10-11)

Eckman's Markedness Differential Hypothesis; hinges on the idea what some aspects of language are more marked, that is to say less prominent, than other aspects. Subsequently, the areas of the L2 that are different in the L1 are more difficult to learn, since those same aspects in the L1 are less frequent and thus more marked (Chen 12).

Prince and Smolensky's Optimality Theory; forms of language arise from interaction between constraints. These constraints are based on markedness and faithfulness ideas (Chen 14). All languages have the same markedness and faithfulness constraints. However, different hierarchies (of different languages) cause different outcomes. When learning a second language the initial state is to transfer all the constraint rankings from the L1 to the L2. Bit by bit, as they learn more about the foreign language, they change things so that in

the end they have correctly acquired the constraint rankings for the second language (Kager). However, as with other (grammatical) theories involving transfer, the sequence of changes and how these are changed is still a huge debate.

To summarise, there are two profound ways of looking at language acquisition. Within these two schools of thought there are a lot of different theories about how a language is actually learned. All of them try to explain first and second language acquisition in their own way. However, these theories are based on different phenomena in language learning. Consequently, not all theories are directly applicable to all language features. From the phonological theories discussed here, it can be concluded that if two theories claim that the L1 and the L2 influence each other, the way in which this is evident in the output can be very different within the different theories. If some phonological features exist on one language, but not the other, it is either easier or more difficult to learn depending on the theory. In addition, language-learning difficulties may also occur due to individual learners' differences such as age of onset. Almost all theories discussed here follow the idea that the L1 and the L2 influence each other.

Third language acquisition

However, the Polish children learning English in the Netherlands are not simply learning a second language, but learning a third one through the L2. The five different theories mentioned above illustrate that researchers do not yet fully understand how the brain acquires a second language, let alone why certain aspects are more difficult to learn. Learning a third language then becomes even more intriguing. According to De Angelis studies beyond L2 acquisition are mostly missing, making our understanding of language learning partial and incomplete (4). It is generally thought that bilinguals are better at

learning an additional language since they are more linguistically aware (De Mulder; De Angelis 120-124, 137). However, in the work of many scholars in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), it is not uncommon to read statements that the learning of the second language is no different than the acquisition of the third, fourth or fortieth language. There is a tendency to overgeneralise the word "second" to refer to any other non-native language that is being acquired (De Angelis 4-5). In addition, the term "bilingual" is not very unambiguous either (De Angelis 5). Research into second language acquisition already showed that the first language can influence the output of the second language. Prior linguistic knowledge will play a role in the task of learning a new language too (De Angelis 7).

De Angelis distinguishes a few factors which should be taken into account when studying language influences in third language (L3) acquisition. First of all, transfer is more likely when the two languages concerned are closely related (De Angelis 22). For instance, a L1 English learner of Spanish (the L3) might rely on his or her prior knowledge of French (the L2) since Spanish and French are related languages. However, this type of language interference is more likely in the early stages (De Angelis 33). In addition, the proficiency in the languages should be taken into account (De Angelis 33). Evidence suggests that proficiency threshold levels are quite low and knowledge obtained by one or two years of formal teaching could affect target language production (De Angelis 34). Furthermore, the order of acquisition is connected to the amount of interference that can occur (De Angelis 39).

Where pronunciation is concerned, it often reveals the learner's place of origin and background (De Angelis 50), even when other aspects of the (second) language are nearly fully acquired. Researchers studying transfer in L3 pronunciation have claimed that the reliance of the L1 is a basic constraint, whereas the reliance of the L2 is a copying strategy

when the phonetic forms of the target language are still too unfamiliar. As the proficiency in the L3 increases, the latter type of influence is abandoned (De Angelis 52, Wrembel 88). The crucial role of language distance surfaces more strongly in pronunciation (De Angelis 53). For example, some English vowels are replaced by Spanish native speakers with French vowels which are closer to their native language. In addition, research has pointed out Turkish native speakers replacing the French (L3) /v/ for the English (L2) /w/. Since Turkish has no /w/, but does have /v/, the researchers argued that the subjects created a direct phonetic influence from English to French (De Angelis 54). Other features may cause for the learners to produce sounds which can be analysed as somewhere in between one (native) language and the target language (Llama et al. 43).

However, these factors are not unambiguous themselves. For example, Llama et al.'s definition of relatedness in phonology is not based on how related two languages are according to the language family tree, but by specific features present in languages. Thus, in their research of L1 English or French learners of Spanish (L3) with knowledge of L2 French or English, French and Spanish are more closely related with regards to the Voice Onset Time (VOT), which refers to the time interval from the release of a stopped speech sound (/p, t, k/ and /b, d, g/) until voicing of a vowel production begins (Llama et al. 41-42). In addition, learning a language via formal teaching one day a week for one year or five days a week for two years could result in a difference of proficiency. Lastly, there needs to be a distinction between third language learning from the perspective of the L1 and third language learning through the medium of the L2.

To summarise, third language acquisition is not just the interaction between the L1 and the L3, but the interaction between all the languages which the learner has acquired. There are numerous factors which contribute to the extent to which the languages interact

and influence each other. Whereas second language acquisition is already difficult to explain and needs carefully thought out research as to precisely show the workings of the brain, third language acquisition is even more intricate. Both L2 and L3 research need to be careful in avoiding ambiguous terms and overgeneralisations.

In addition, where pronunciation is concerned, theories and research should stress that perceiving the right pronunciation is also important in order to be able to produce the right pronunciation. Although, when the right perception is present, it does not necessarily mean that the learner will also automatically produce the right pronunciation (Chen). As previously mentioned, the Contrastive Analyses Hypothesis aims to predict the learner's (pronunciation) errors by comparing the (sound) inventories of both languages. Being aware of the differences can help perceiving and acquiring the right pronunciation. Consequently, awareness should play an important role in pronunciation teaching. Van den Doel reasons that "learners will not be able to modify their pronunciation unless they have become explicitly aware of dissimilarities between the sound systems of the L1 and the L2" (2012). Thus, by making a Contrastive Analysis students should be able to become more aware of the differences between their two languages. In terms of third language acquisition it may help them in becoming aware of the differences between the second and third language too.

In this light, this paper will analyse the possible errors made by Polish learners of English by comparing the two languages using the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, after which a small prediction will be made as to the possible language interferences from Dutch.

Chapter 4 – Contrastive Analysis

This paper will make use of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis to predict the possible errors Polish speakers will make when learning English and how these differ from the phonological problems Dutch speakers experience when speaking English. This is needed in order gain a better understanding of the pronunciation problems from the perspective of the second language learner. Following this, predictions can be made as to the pronunciation problems for third language learners. After a brief explanation of general phonetics, this chapter will discuss by the phonetic systems of each of the three languages in which Polish and Dutch will also be compared to English (the contrastive analysis).

General phonetics

All languages consist of sounds. These are called phonemes. A phoneme is identified by the contrast it has to other phonemes. To find out whether a phoneme is different, minimal pairs are made. If one sound is different and the word itself has a complete different meaning, there is contrast and the different sound is a phoneme. For example, *pan* and *ban* is a minimal pair in that /p/ and /b/ sound different and the words in which they are contained mean different things too. Different languages can have different phonemes. From all the phonemes in the world at least two clear distinctions are generally made: A phoneme is either a consonant or a vowel.

In order to identify a single consonant three features need to be distinguished. One is the place of articulation, the other the manner of articulation and the last the energy of articulation. These features are again divided into the various places and manners of articulation and given either a strong or weak contrast.

The place of articulation can range from the utmost front of the mouth (bilabial) to the far end (glottal). The manner of articulation is further divided from plosives to nasals and some other manners in between. Whether the consonant is strong or weak depends on whether the phoneme is pronounced with vibration in the larynx or not. If it vibrates the phoneme is voiced. Voiced phonemes are said to be weak, since it requires less energy to produce. If the larynx does not produce vibration the phoneme is voiceless and strong, since it requires more energy to produce this sound. Since languages can have different phonemes, the presence or absence of a particular place or manner is language specific (McMahon 26, Collins et al. 7).

Vowels are distinguished by other features. These features are based on articulatory and auditory criteria (Collins and Mees 2008). There are two kinds of vowels: monothongs and diphthongs. The former are the sounds that are articulated in the same place, without movement. Hence they are also known as steady-state vowels. The diphthongs are the sounds that are made possible by a gliding movement of the tongue. Due to this movement the sound changes, yet it is identified as one phoneme. Since the diphthongs have a gliding movement, they are also known as vowel glides (Collins et al 38). Monothongs are further divided into checked and free vowels. Checked steady-state vowels are short and often represented by a single symbol. Free steady-state vowels are long(er) and represented with an additional length mark next to a symbol (Collins and Mees 2008).

The first way to distinguish a vowel (whether a monothong or a diphthong) can be described as being pronounced in either the front or the back of the mouth. Front vowels are produced with the front of the tongue raised towards the hard palate (McMahon 69). Back vowels have the back of the tongue raised towards the soft palate of the velum (McMahon 70). There are also vowels that are neither front nor back. There are called

central vowels. These are produced by raising the body (central part) of the tongue towards where the hard and soft palates meet (in the middle of the palate) (McMahon 70).

In addition to this front/back distinction there is also the high/low distinction needed to identify vowels. High vowels are produced by raising the tongue towards the roof of the mouth (McMahon 70). This differs from the “raising” of the front and back vowels in which the movement is done in a rather more horizontal way. The low vowels do not raise the tongue at all; rather the tongue is lowered compared to its resting position (McMahon 71). Again there is also an intermediate state between high and low. Vowels in this category are called mid vowels. These can be subcategorised as high mid or low mid depending on which side they lean towards (McMahon 71). Instead of high/low the alternative name for these categories are close and open, and mid-close and mid-open for the mid vowels, as in the position the mouth appears to be.

The last feature distinguishing different vowels is length. These are vowels, such as in *ship* and *sheep*, which possess the same categories from the features mentioned above (front, close). However, they are very much different phonemes in some languages, as these two English words exemplify. Although the vowel in *sheep* is slightly higher and fronter than the vowel in *ship*, it is difficult to reflect this in the categories of the features as mentioned above. To change these categories is not an option as no vowel is produced at exactly the same place, but a different manner, or visa versa. However, a natural feature is that these two words differ in length. Generally, long vowels are more articulated than the short vowels (McMahon 72-73). Figure 1 shows how all these features, excluding length, are represented in a chart.

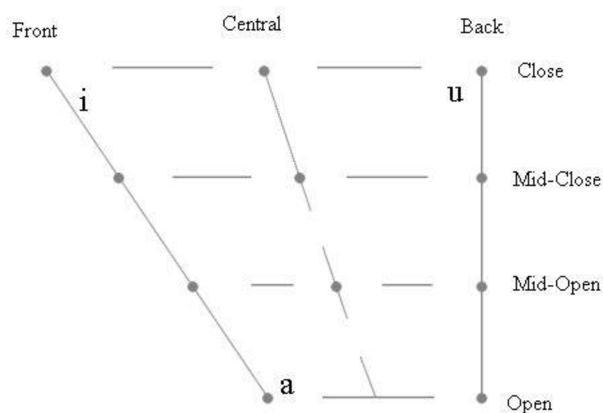

Figure 1: visual representation of the vowel system with the three most common vowels.

English system

The variety of English to which Polish and Dutch will be compared in Received Pronunciation (RP). This variety has forty-four phonemes. Twenty of these are vowels; the other twenty-four are consonants. The place of articulation and the manner of articulation for the English consonants are shown in Table 1. Where there are pairings of two phonemes the first phoneme is the strong one. Table 2 shows the English vowels. Figures 2 to 5 show these vowels placed in the visual representation of the vowel system.

Place / Manner	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Approximant: Central	w			r		j		
Approximant: Lateral				l				

Table 1: English consonant table (Collins and Mees 2003)

Checked		Free steady-state		Diphthongs	
KIT	/ɪ/	FLEECE	/iː/	FACE	/eɪ/
DRESS	/e/	GOOSE	/uː/	GOAT	/əʊ/
TRAP	/æ/	PALM	/ɑː/	PRICE	/aɪ/
STRUT	/ʌ/	THOUGHT	/ɔː/	CHOICE	/ɔɪ/
LOT	/ɒ/	NURSE	/ɜː/	MOUTH	/aʊ/
FOOT	/ʊ/			NEAR	/ɪə/
bonUs	/ə/			CURE	/ʊə/
				SQUARE	/ɛə/

Table 2: English vowels (Collins and Mees 2003)

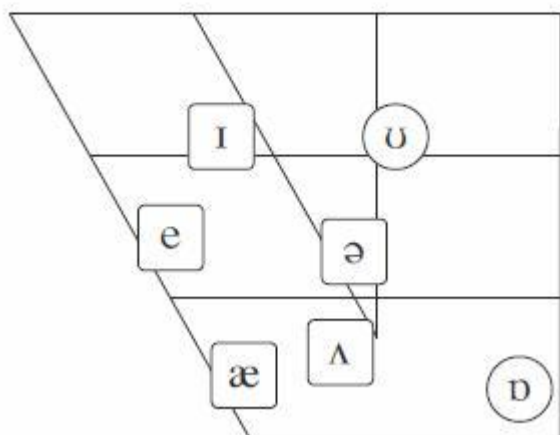

Figure 2: English checked vowels (Collins and Mees 2003)

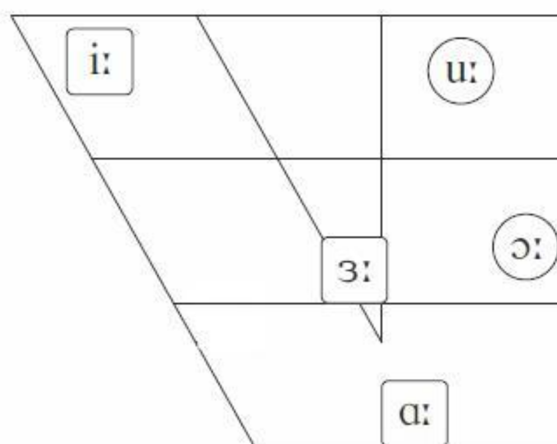

Figure 3: English free steady-state vowels (Collins and Mees 2003)

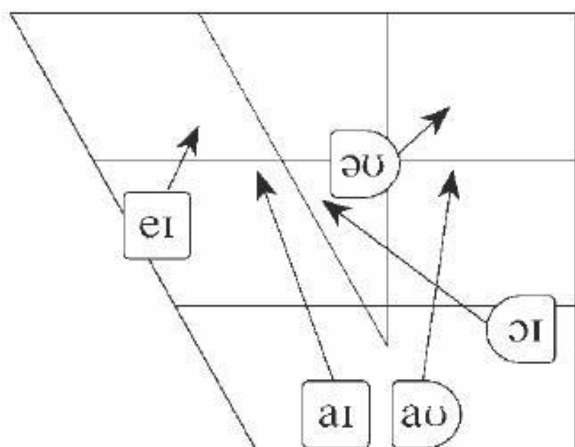

Figure 4: English front and back diphthongs (Collins and Mees 2003)

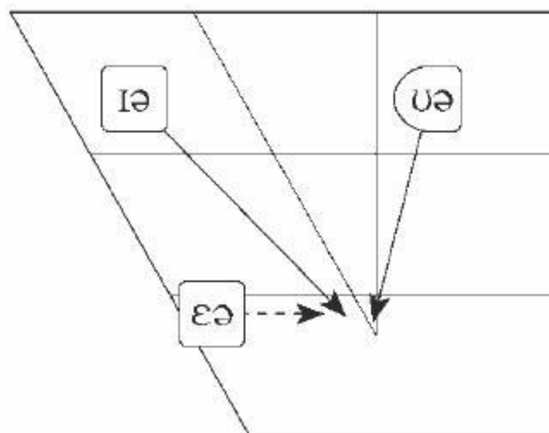

Figure 5: English central diphthongs (Collins and Mees 2003)

Polish system

The Polish variety which will be compared to RP is the standard variety taught in schools. The Polish language has thirty-seven phonemes. Six of these are vowels and the remaining thirty-one are consonants, which is a very different division than English. The place of articulation and the manner of articulation for the Polish consonants are shown in Table 3. Again, where there are pairings, the first one is voiceless.

	Labial	Labiodental	(Post)dental	Alveolar	Alveolo-palatal	Palatal	Velar
Plosive	p b		t d			c ɟ	k g
Fricative		f v	s z	ʃ ʒ	ɕ ʑ		x
Affricate			ts dz	ʧ ʤ	ʨ ʥ		
Nnasal	m		n		ɲ		ŋ
Lateral			l				
Flap/Trill				r			
	Front			Back			
Approximant	j			w			

Table 3: Polish consonant table (Jassem 103)

The Polish have no sound similar to the dental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/) of English. Although it appears that the Polish /s/ and /z/ are pronounced in much the same way and place, this is not the case; /s/ and /z/ being pronounced in the post-dental place or articulation. However, Polish speakers will often replace the dental fricative /s/. The phonemes /t/ and /f/ may also replace the English dental fricatives, without any consistency (Szpyra-Kozlowska 155). Polish also lacks the glottal fricative /h/. Learning this phoneme is difficult for learners whose native language contains a velar, but no glottal sounds (Szpyra-Kozlowska 157-8). The /w/ is pronounced more at the back of the mouth in Polish, but this should not cause any articulatory problems. Neither should the /r/, which is pronounced as a single tap in Polish and as a trill in English (Collins en Mees, forthcoming), but a /r/ sound

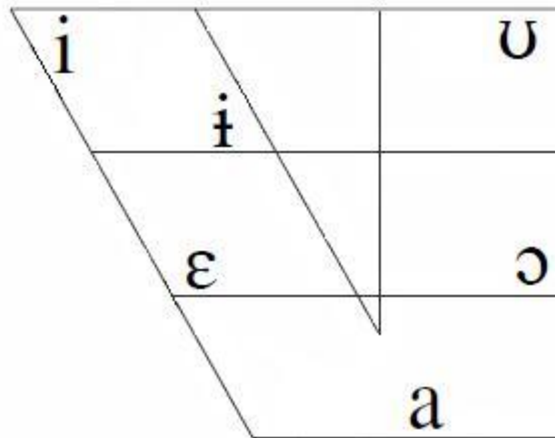

Figure 6: Polish vowels (Sobkowiak 131)

nonetheless. Since Polish has such a large range of consonants, it will hardly be a problem to find a sound which has a similar English counterpart, with the exception of the English dental fricatives and the /h/.

Figure 6 shows the vowels of Polish. The Polish language has an "economic" vowel system, consisting out of merely six short steady-state sounds. It has no long vowels (Collins and Mees, forthcoming), which means that Polish speakers have no contrast between *ship* and *sheep*. The Polish language has no real diphthongs either, although the vowels /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ have nasalized and diphthongized allophones (Collins and Mees, forthcoming). The Polish language has a much stronger letter-to-sound correlation than English (Szpyra-Kozlowska 153). Consequently, they are more likely to pronounce every single vowel as it is spelled. However, English uses the schwa vowel (/ə/) often to replace other vowels in vowel reduction especially during connected speech. However, Polish speakers have no schwa, and will pronounce the sound associated with the spelled letter in the English word instead of the schwa (Szpyra-Kozlowska 153). The common English vowel the ash (/æ/) is not present in the Polish vowel system either. Polish speakers often replace this vowel for either the /ɛ/ or the /a/ without any clear rules (Szpyra-Kozlowska 163). The /ɜː/ is often replaced by /ɛ/

(Szpyra-Kozlowska 164). Kozbail gives a good overview of which English vowel is replaced by which Polish vowel as shown in Figure 7.

In connected speech Polish will have problems with not applying voice assimilation in English. In Polish words like "football", the last plosive, fricative or affricative (collectively called obstruents) of the first syllable (/t/ in this case) is under influence of the following obstruent. Is the latter voiced, the previous one will turn voiced too and idem ditto for voiceless obstruents. The Polish pronunciation for *football* will therefore be foo[db]all (Szpyra-Kozlowska 160). In addition, although Polish have the /ŋ/, it only occurs before a velar plosive (/k/ or /g/). In this observation it will be difficult for Polish learners of English to produce words such as *singer* and *sing* correctly. They will often add an /k/ or /g/, producing si[ŋg]er or si[ŋk] (Szpyra-Kozlowska 161). Some other problems might occur with allophones. The Polish language has only a clear /l/, whereas in English a dark /l/ occurs before a consonant or a pause (Collins en Mees, Practical 70). In addition, English is full of voiceless plosives which are often aspirated and glottalised, whereas the Polish language does not have this feature (Collins en Mees, forthcoming). In addition, at the end of a word, the Polish language applies final-devoicing; all voiced obstruents will become voiceless. This feature is not present in the English language (Myers 2). As a matter of fact, "in English the strong/weak contrast is very important and has to be clearly distinguished all the time" (Collins et al. 7).

	English	Polish
Close vowels	iː ɪ ʊ uː	i ɨ ʊ
Mid vowels	e ə ɜː ɔː	ɛ ɔ
Open vowels	æ ʌ aː ɒ	a

Figure 7: English vowels and their Polish replacement (Kozbial 3)

Dutch system

The variety of Dutch chosen to compare with RP and the Standard Polish variety is Standard Dutch, known as *Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands* (ABN). The Dutch language has thirty-four phonemes. They comprise sixteen vowels (Collins en Mees 2003, 127; Booij 4) and eighteen consonants (Collins en Mees 2003, 189-194; Booij 7). The place of articulation and the manner of articulation for the Dutch consonants are shown in Table 4. Again, where there are pairings the first one is voiceless. The Dutch vowels are given in Table 5 and Figures 8 to 11.

Place / Manner	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Alveolo-palatal	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d			k		
Affricate								
Nasal	m		n			ŋ		
Fricative		f	s z			x		h
Approximant: Central		ʋ	r		j			
Approximant: Lateral			l					

Table 4: Dutch consonant table (Collins and Mees 2003)

Compared to the English consonants the Dutch consonants have a less stable strong/weak contrast. This is evident in the fact that /f/ has no counterpart. Most speakers of standard Dutch do not make a pronounced f-v distinction in connected speech (Collins and Mees 2003). The words “fee” (fairy) and “vee” (cattle) are pronounced almost the same. In addition to the /w/ being pronounced as labio-dental instead of bilabial, native speakers of English have difficulty perceiving /f – v – w/ distinction in Dutch native speakers (Collins et al 106). Furthermore, Dutch has no palatal-alveolar (af)fricates (/tʃ/, /ʃ/, /dʒ/ and /ʒ/). These sounds are present in Dutch, but are registered as allophones of the Dutch phonemes /s/ and /z/, since these sounds mostly occur in loanwords or assimilation between /s/ and /j/

(Collins and Mees 2003). Moreover, English possesses a voiced and a voiceless dental fricative (/ð/ and /θ/), which the Dutch language does not have; nor does Polish. There is no alternative sound or a similar sound in the Dutch language for these English phonemes. The /θ/ is often replaces for /t/ or /s/, and the /ð/ for /d/, /z/ or devoiced to /t/ or /s/ (Collins et al. 102). In addition, like Polish, the Dutch language has the final-devoicing feature at the end of words, which is not present in the English language (Myers 2).

Although some Dutch vowels have a similar English counterpart, Figures 8 to 11 show that the pronunciation does not entirely overlap compared to Figures 2 to 5. The English *kit* vowel, for example is more open and back than the Dutch /ɪ/. In addition, whereas English has both an /e/ and an /æ/, the Dutch language has one vowel which sounds somewhere in between the English two; /ɛ/. Because of its spelling the *strut* vowel (/ʌ/) is often confused with the *lot* vowel (/ɒ/), in either case the Dutch pronunciation of *nut* (/ʉ/) or *zot* (/ɔ/) is used. The English /ʊ/ is also often confused for /uː/ by Dutch speakers (Collins et al. 104-6).

In connected speech the Dutch language makes use of voice assimilation much in the same way as the Polish language (Collins et al. 91-2). English does not possess this feature (Myers 2). In addition, both English and Dutch use elision in connected speech. However, the Dutch language allows for elision where double consonants occur. English does not possess this feature (Collins et al. 94).

Checked Steady-state		**Free** Steady-state		**Free** Potential diphthongs		**Free** Essential diphthongs	
ɪ	ZIT	i	ZIE	eː	ZEE	ɛi	MEI
ɛ	ZET	y	NU	øː	BEU	œy	LUI
ɑ	ZAT	u	MOE	oː	ZO	ɑu	KOU
ɔ	ZOT	aː	LA				
ʉ	NUT						
ə	werkɛlɪʝk						

Table 5: Dutch vowels (Collins and Mees 2003)

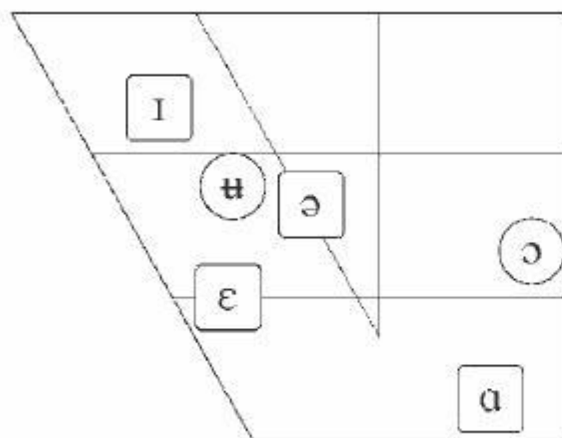

Figure 8: Dutch checked vowels (Collins and Mees 2003)

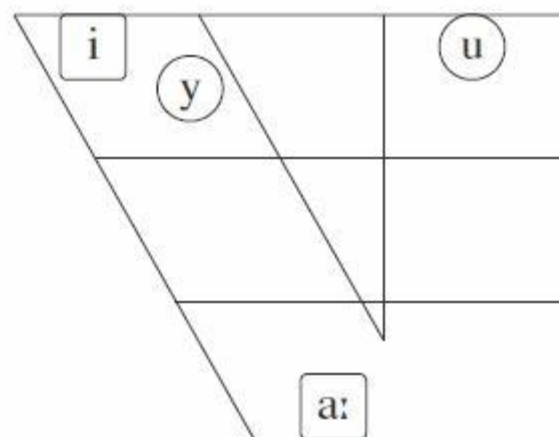

Figure 9: Dutch free steady-state vowels (Collins and Mees 2003)

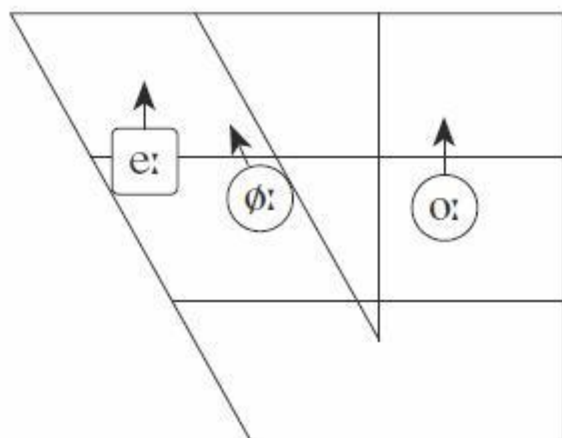

Figure 10: Dutch potential diphthongs (Collins and Mees 2003)

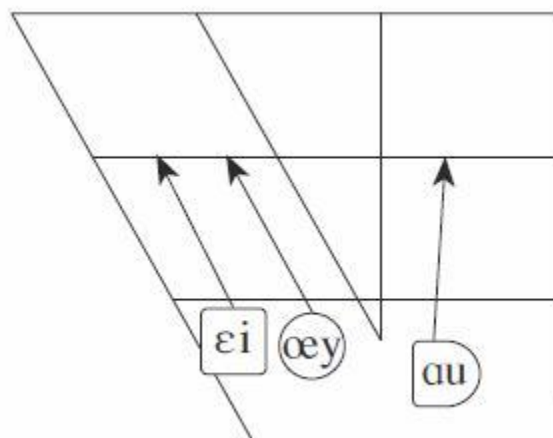

Figure 11: Dutch essential diphthongs (Collins and Mees 2003)

Chapter 5 - Hierarchy of Errors

This chapter discusses the hierarchy of errors according to the L1. This is important in order to have a better understanding of the impact of the errors made in English pronunciation. Since the topic of this paper is concerned with third language acquisition, some predictions not only on the expected errors for Polish native speakers with English as the L2, but also for Polish native speakers with Dutch as an L2 and English as an L3 will be discussed.

Establishing a hierarchy of errors is not as simple as it may seem. According to Van den Doel "the gravity of an error is … not simply based on intelligibility" (2006) and "attempts to establish a hierarchy of error may be further complicated by the possible effect of other variables" (Van den Doel 2006). These variables, which can influence the assessment of an error include "irritation, acceptability, generality and frequency" (Van den Doel 2006). Thus, it is established that different factors need to be considered when constructing a hierarchy of errors (Van den Doel 2006). However, in reviewing the different research into this subject Van den Doel states that "given the differences between the experimental design, the different L1 and L2 languages concerned and the types of error under examination, it is hardly surprising that these hierarchies cannot be reliably compared" (2006). In other words, one hierarchy of errors is not the same as another and different factors are included in the establishment of such a hierarchy, making comparisons difficult. However, Munro and Derwing found a correlation between strongly accented speech and a lack of intelligibility (qtd. in Van den Doel 2006). In addition, Van den Doel reasons that "the degree of native speakers' irritation with strongly accented speech may be partly dependent on their ability or inability to understand the message" (2006). However, a strong accent does not necessarily result in unintelligibility as stated by the fact that "native speakers may be

perfectly capable of processing certain L2 errors whilst simultaneously considering these unacceptable" (Van den Doel 2006). In the hierarchy of errors by Collins and Mees (2003) the importance of "distraction/irritation on the part of the native-speaker listener" is considered. This begs the question as to how important the part of the native-speaker listener is in the context of this paper. Especially, since the aim of English teaching in the Netherlands is international communication, not purely native speaker communication. However, since it is argued in this paper that the Dutch and Polish should opt for either the British or American norms, the assessment of pronunciation errors by native speakers (British ones in this case) is a good indication of how proficient the language learners are in the target language. In this light, a hierarchy of errors is established according to the theory of error assessment by Collins and Mees (2003) using the data from the Contrastive Analysis and difficulties of pronunciations as stated by Collins et al. and Szpyra-Kozlowska.

According to Collins and Mees (2003), three categories could be distinguished when establishing a hierarchy of errors:

> Level 1 – For the <u>most significant errors</u> that cause a breakdown in intelligibility and which often involve the loss of a phonemic contrast.
>
> Level 2 – For the <u>significant errors</u> that involve a distortion of sound which are sufficient to cause distraction, irritation or amusement on the part of the native speaker.
>
> Level 3 – For the <u>least significant errors</u> which are easily detectable, but which do not distract, irritate, or amuse the native speaker.

This would mean that for Polish speakers and Dutch speakers the hierarchy of errors would be:

Polish

Level 1 – dental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/, /h/ (Szpyra-Kozlowska 161), final devoicing (Kozbial 13-14) and most, if not all, vowels; specifically, /æ/ (Szpyra-Kozlowska 163, Kozbial 2) and /ɪ/ (Kozbial 4) and long vowels.

Level 2 – all English open vowels, namely /æ/, /ʌ/ and /aː/ (Kozbial 15), /ə/ in non-stressed syllables, voice-assimilation and /ŋ/ in final position.

Level 3 – aspiration (Kozbial 13), dark /l/ (Szpyra-Kozlowska 156) and /r/ (Szpyra-Kozlowska 153).

Dutch

Level 1 – dental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/, final devoicing, /e/ and /æ/ vowels (Collins et al. 104), *strut* versus *lot* vowel (Collins et al 104 and 106)[1] and /f − v − w/ distinction (Collins et al. 106).

Level 2 – diphthongs with the exception of /eɪ/, /aʊ/ and /əʊ/, /ʊ/ versus /uː/ vowel (Collins et al 104-106)[2] and voice-assimilation.

Level 3 – palatal-alveolar fricatives and affricate – /ʃ/, /ʒ/ and /tʃ/, /dʒ/, respectively –, /r/, diphthongs /eɪ/, /aʊ/ and /əʊ/ (Collins et al. 105) and elision.

[1] Here spelling is the cause of confusion between the *strut* and the *lot* vowel; if spelling is taken out of the equation, the errors made by Dutch speakers when pronouncing these two vowels will fall to level 2.

[2] Again; spelling is the cause of confusion between these two vowels, but the confusion is less common than the ones between the *strut* and *lot* vowels, and more often replaced by the Dutch alternative (Collins et al. 104-105). Therefore the error is placed in level 2.

Expectations

By the contrastive analyses of English and Polish and English and Dutch it can be expected that Polish learners of English will have problems mainly with the dental fricatives, final devoicing, the /h/ and most vowels. Dutch speaker's problems, on the other hand, will mainly reside in dental fricatives, final devoicing, /e/ and /æ/ vowels, /strut/ and /lot/ vowels and /f – v – w/ distinction. This comparison shows that both Polish and Dutch speakers will both have problems with the dental fricatives, final devoicing and the /æ/ vowel, but differ in the other pronunciation problems.

Since Polish children in Dutch schools will learn English as their third language it can be predicted that these learners might possibly make mistakes in correctly distinguishing between /f/ and /v/ in English, as an overgeneralisation of their acquired Dutch knowledge, which lacks a clear contrast; even though both Polish and English do have a clear distinction between these phonemes. In addition, Polish speakers may produce a /w/ which cannot be categorised as either Polish, Dutch or English, since language acquisition research has indicated that language learners may produce sounds which can be analysed as somewhere in between one (native) language and the target language (Chen; Llama et al. 43)

Polish speakers of English in the Netherlands might sound like the Dutch do when pronouncing the English vowels /ɔː/, pronouncing it too short for correct English. The same might be expected for /ʌ/, which is replaced by /ɛ/ in both Polish English and Dutch English, although the interference might originate directly from the Polish native language. The same can be expected for /æ/, predicting that Polish speakers will pronounce *bed*, *bad*, *bet* and *bat* the same, like the Dutch do when speaking English. Lastly, since Polish has only short vowels and no diphthongs, these speakers will have to learn these when acquiring Dutch. As

a consequence, according to third language acquisition, Polish speakers might make the English diphthongs such as /aɪ/ and /ɔɪ/ longer, since Dutch often replace these phonemes for the Dutch phonemes in *saai* and *mooi* and Dutch could influence the production of English for Polish speakers. This type of error would be an overgeneralisation of the lengthening of vowels.

However, with regards to the /h/ either one or two predictions can be made. First of all, Polish learners can be expected to correctly pronounce the /h/ in English since they have to learn to use this phoneme in the Dutch language too. They might even overextend this newly learned phoneme to the /g/ as discussed with the /w/ sound for Turkish learners in the previous chapter. However, it can also be expected that they do not correctly pronounce the /h/, either because their proficiency in the Dutch language is not high enough yet and, consequently, they have not yet learned to lengthen vowels in Dutch too or because the transfers comes from the L1, not the L2, replacing it instead with the nearest phoneme /g/.

Chapter 6 – Practical Implications

This chapter aims to find out what the real situation is in terms of the pronunciation errors of Polish speakers learning English in the Netherlands. This is important in order to test the hypothesised error hierarchy that is based on literature of second and third language acquisition.

In order to find out whether the error hierarchy constructed in chapter four occur in practice, interviews were held with English teachers. The schools were approached with help from the Polish school in The Hague. This is one of the fifteen institutions in the Netherlands which is meant for children between seven and nineteen years of age, with a Polish nationality. The school was founded in 1998 on behalf of the children of Polish diplomats residing in the Netherlands. Children take lessons there in addition to their regular education in either Dutch or international schools. From the ages of seven till twelve, the children are taught arithmetic, reading and writing. The children between the ages of thirteen and nineteen receive lessons in mathematics, (Polish) history and geography (Haags gemeentearchief). The Polish school in The Hague was so kind as to give out an extensive list of names of all schools in which their students attended their normal education. From this list five schools were selected: four secondary schools, and one primary school. These schools were chosen for the reason that they either had more than three Polish children attending or had an Early Bird programme. This programme aims to teach children English while playing games and singing songs instead of providing them with lessons. Furthermore, this happens from around their second year at primary school at the age of six up until they leave for secondary school (Birdie). Four schools were based in the The Hague area, whereas one secondary school was based in the Rotterdam area. Through personal connections a

sixth school was added to the list; a secondary school based in Amsterdam. All schools, with the exception of the one in Amsterdam, received an e-mail explaining the focus of the paper and the question whether an English teacher was willing to be interviewed for approximately thirty minutes about the pronunciation problems of Polish learners. In addition, two international schools in The Hague were contacted by e-mail. Furthermore, the schools were also contacted by phone a week later. A total of three Dutch schools and one International school replied; either by e-mail or telephone. After an initial call the name of the person best suited to answer the questions were written down and contacted at a more convenient time. Some questions were written down prior to the interview so these were not forgotten. These included questions about the interviewee, the school and the Polish pupils and their spoken production of English. Answers were scribbled down as the telephone interview took place, mostly in short sentences and with a few arrows to indicate connections with previous questions or answers. The e-mails were quite general and designed to come in contact with someone at the school who would be willing to be interviewed. However, the e-mails did not always result in an (telephone) interview. Schools who did not partake in a telephone interview stated why they were unable to do so in a reply e-mail. Nevertheless, all contacted interviewees gave their consent to use their statements.

The International school replied that the five Polish pupils in their school were in different multilingual classes. The school's Head of the Learning Support Faculty stated that since the nature of international schools implies that they had over eighty different nationalities attending their school, it would be impossible to be aware of all individual pronunciation problems of about eighty languages. Put differently: there is no focus on pronunciation difficulties for the Polish native speakers in particular or any other language group (Hebden). However, the Head of Learning Support did declare that "we correct

individually when pupils make mistakes of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation but do not have particular strategies or approaches for particular groups" (Hebden).

Even if the International school was able to reveal more about the pronunciation problems of Polish learners of English, their pupils do not quite fit the profile of the Polish learners examined in this paper. This international school, like most international schools, allegedly teaches Dutch for approximately one hour a week. This questions the Dutch proficiency of the students attending. In addition to the fact that the language of instruction is English in these type of schools, the Polish learners would have had English as their second and Dutch as their third language; whereas this research is interested in Polish learners with Dutch as their second and English as their third language.

All Dutch schools had an international transition class ("internationale schakelklas") as described in chapter two, where students whose mother tongue was not Dutch learned that language and other subjects for at least one year. Communications with the schools were always with teachers who taught English in these types of classes, however, it is unsure whether some of them taught Dutch students as well. Two interviewees had little experience with the international classes; they stated that they had only been teaching this type class for less than one year. One interviewee reported that she had experience teaching in these types of classes for "merely" four years. The secondary school with the most Polish students, according to the headmistress at the Polish school in The Hague, was unwilling to help due to the little experience of the Head of the department of English and the strain he would have to put on his co-workers in order to be able to answer the questions. Even after persuasion, the school was unwilling to respond any further.

The head of the Early Bird department stated that their children in the international transition class could get an extension of six months if the school felt the child was not

capable yet of participating in a Dutch class. In addition, English is taught to all children in all classes. However, the head of the department of the “schakelklassen” stated that no explicit attention was paid to pronunciation; children are encouraged to speak English, but the focus lies on vocabulary and grammar (Khemai). When the head of the department was asked whether there are pronunciation problems with the Polish children when speaking English, she commented that she had not encountered these as of yet. She was under the impression that their English language skills developed in much the same way as their Dutch language skills (Khemai). Nonetheless, the (Polish) children are always very enthusiastic about learning, whether it was English, Dutch or any other subject (Khemai).

An English teacher from the secondary school in Amsterdam stated that there was approximately one Polish student per class in her school. None of them had been in the Netherlands for long and were between thirteen and seventeen years of age. Subsequently their Dutch was still poorly. However, she noted that their Dutch was making good progress due to the special attention paid to this language in the international transition classes. Their progression in the English language was not as fast, but this was hardly surprising since students in these classes only received two to three hours of English a week, whereas the Dutch receive between five to ten hours (Rhein). She believed that the Polish children had not learned English in Poland before they came to the Netherlands (Rhein). The school is aimed at students who follow the lowest level of education (vmbo) in the Netherlands. When asked whether Rhein felt that the Polish students were performing to their full capacity or whether they were held back due to the language barrier she commented that they were smart students, but did not perform to their full capacity due to the fact that they were being typical teenagers who can be rather lazy at times. Nevertheless, their educational level corresponded well to their learning capacities (Rhein). On the subject on

pronunciation she remarked that she thought that they sounded rather like Dutch students. However, she could not point out any specific pronunciation problems by either Polish or Dutch students. A colleague had told her that Polish students tend to replace the /h/ with /χ/ or /g/ (Rhein). In addition, Rhein had noticed the grammatical tendency to drop the articles in speech. In comparison with other students in the international transition class the pronunciation of the Polish students when speaking English was lagging behind. However, she later revealed that most of the other students in these classes were from countries from the former British colonies. Rubdy and Saraceni describe these countries as the Outer Circle and have English strongly embedded as a major language (7). In addition, Rhein declared that she found it difficult to motivate teenage students for (correct) pronunciation since there were already so many other issues which were focussed on, such as grammar and vocabulary.

The last interviewee was also an English teacher at a school specializing in the lowest level of education (vmbo) in the Netherlands. She herself teaches the upper forms: the last two years of secondary school (Hardon). In the examination class of the regular Dutch education she has six Polish students; these have been living in the Netherlands for more than two years at least. Overall Hardon proclaimed that she had no idea whether most Polish students had been living in the Netherlands for a long or a short time. Of their situation she thought that most Polish parents were not highly educated and that they were socially neglected. Furthermore, the school is situated in a poor part of The Hague and many students are of migrant families and from a low socio-economic background (Hardon). However, Hardon also expressed the thought that most Polish (parents and children) are actively taking precautions to change their situation. To the question whether Hardon thought that the Polish students were performing to their full capacity or whether they were

held back due to the language barrier she commented that some individuals are restricted by their linguistic knowledge of the Dutch language and this is only noticeable when they suddenly flourish in their final exams. However, most Polish students at the school are at the right educational level for their learning capacities (Hardon). In addition, she noted that the Polish students had much affinity with the Netherlands. From colleagues she understood that Dutch language acquisition of those (Polish) students in the international transition class greatly improved because of the focus on reading. She has implemented this method into her English lessons and found that their English improved significantly too. However, the only problem that she encounters is that Polish students tend to answer in Dutch to English questions, both on paper and in speech production (Hardon). Hardon, self reportedly, focuses a great deal on pronunciation and finds that her Polish students have the same pronunciation as Dutch speakers. However, she could not point out any specific errors either by Polish or Dutch native speakers. In comparison with other migrant children she noted that the English pronunciation of the Polish students is much better. She argues that this is because the other migrant groups (mostly of Turkish and Moroccan decent) tend to be focussed on their own language when watching television and listening to the radio and music, whereas the Polish are much more integrated in to the Dutch society and subsequently listen to more English (Hardon). Lastly, she expressed a great enjoyment in the fact that her exam class, with the six Polish students, did very well in their English examinations; even better than the students at so-called white-schools (Hardon).

To conclude, the picture painted of the Polish situation by the interviewees resembles that of Nicolaas, Swanenberg and the CBS; the Polish have a positive view on (Dutch) language learning and have a great affinity with the Netherlands. However, the interviews also affirm

the belief that pronunciation is not a part of language learning in schools. One teacher noted the inability to pronounce the glottal sound /h/, which is indeed a level 1 pronunciation error of Polish speakers learning English, and was a possible error in this case of L3 acquisition. Others only expressed the conviction that the Polish students sounded Dutch in their pronunciation of English. This might be explained by the similar results found in research in third language acquisition and the predicted errors made for these L3 learners of English as discussed previously. Nevertheless, none of the English teachers could give specific pronunciation errors of Polish speakers learning English. This could indicate Dutch secondary school teachers of English are still largely unaware not only of (the importance of) pronunciation and phonology, but also of the issues that should be addressed in a multilingual class. More extensive research should be conducted about the phonetic abilities of teachers in order to discover whether the inability to perceive (in)correct pronunciation would result in different answers to those asked in the interview. Additional research could also indicate to what extent pronunciation teaching is desirable. The students' ability to perceive (in)correct pronunciation could also be researched in order to discover to what extent they are aware of different pronunciations and whether their pronunciation may be affected by sociolinguistic factors.

Chapter 7 – Discussion

This study set out with the aim of assessing the problems Polish speakers might have when learning English in the Dutch educational system. Firstly, a case was made for British English to be taught in Dutch (and Polish) schools, after which the answer to the question was sought through the examination of the current situation of Polish people in the Netherlands, theories about language learning, the phonological systems of English, Polish and Dutch languages with an error analysis and the existence of the these errors in reality. It was hypothesized that Polish learners of English in the Netherlands need different approaches to acquire good pronunciation.

The results of this study are still very much inconclusive and speculative. However, it may lead to a tentative conclusion that Polish speakers generally make the same mistakes in their English pronunciation as Dutch speakers, besides from producing a /g/ instead of a /h/. In other words, contrary to expectations, this study did not find many differences between the Polish and Dutch pronunciations of English. The present findings seem to be consistent with research in third language acquisition, which found that interference from the L2 in phonological production is not uncommon in the initial stages of L3 acquisition (De Angelis 50-54; Wrembel 88; Llama et al. 52). One condition is that there should be some proficiency in the L2 already, although a threshold of one or two years of formal teaching could already be sufficient (De Angelis 34). Since the Polish children in Dutch schools are placed in international transition classes for at least one year if they are no younger than 6 years of age and have lived in the Netherlands for no longer than one year, and are taught the Dutch language in those classes (Korf 49), the argument of the proficiency threshold also seems a plausible explanation for the Dutch influence on English pronunciation. In addition, Wrembel argues in her research about English (L3) pronunciation of L1 Polish learners with L2

knowledge of German that L2 influence may be caused by different factors including the typological relatedness of English and German; both being Germanic languages (88). This may also be the case for Polish learners of English in the Netherlands; both English and Dutch are Germanic languages. The findings also accords with earlier observations by Swanenberg and Nicolaas, which showed that Polish migrants in the Netherlands are eager to learn a new language and feel a strong bond with the Netherlands. However, this might be an indirect cause of the Polish learners of English sounding Dutch in the pronunciation. Another possible explanation for L2 influence of L3 phonology is that it can be argued that the Dutch interference of L3 English in Polish learners might be due to insufficient input of correct native speaker speech. These learners might just be imitating their Dutch teachers and fellow Dutch students. However, supporters of the Mentalistic school of thought of language acquisition would argue that mere imitation cannot result in the infinite amount of possibilities of language and that it needs to be explained how learners can make mistakes which are not in the input (Huijbregts), as for example replacing the /h/ with /g/.

It is somewhat surprising that no difficulties were noted by teachers of English for the vowel length as illustrated by the *ship*/*sheep* contrast in English. Especially since this contrast is notoriously difficult for Polish speakers (Szpyra-Kozlowska 162), and the contrast occurs in the Dutch language too. This fact is also surprising since the replacement of the glottal /h/ for the velar /g/ is still present, indicating that the level 1 errors for features which occur in both Dutch and English are still present. Possibly some features are not yet (fully) acquired during Dutch language acquisition. This also illustrates that there is still a presence of L1 interference. However, as discussed in chapter five, Dutch secondary school teachers of English hardly teach pronunciation and might not be aware of the correct pronunciation of English to be able to identify certain aspects of the speech produced by their Polish (or

Dutch) students that are flawed. Polish speakers might make the hypothesised mistakes, but these go undetected due to the inexperience of the teachers. In addition, since there appears to be no direct pronunciation teaching, students are not made aware of pronunciation differences that are deemed so important in being able to change pronunciation (errors). This might cause for some second language errors to resurface.

Nevertheless, L1 interference in L3 production is not unheard of either (De Angelis 132). The results of Llama et al.'s research are an illustration of the L3 phonological system consisting of a balance between the L1, L2 and the L3 (51). In addition, De Angelis describes the term *combined cross-linguistic influence* (CLI) as: "a type of transfer that occurs when two or more languages interact with one another and concur in influencing the target language, or whenever one language influences another, and the already influenced language in turn influences another language in the process of being acquired" (qtd. in Llama et al. 51); which might be taking place in the L3 English phonology of these Polish speakers with L2 Dutch knowledge. However, Wrembel states that the learners' L1 plays an important role in the development of their L2, although the strengths of the influences differ depending on the stage of L3 proficiency (85), since her results show that beginner and elementary Polish speakers of English rely more on their L2 German phonological knowledge (83). This would indicate that the interference of the L1 is a sign of a good English proficiency for the Polish learners in the Netherlands.

If this is the case, it may be that these students benefited from the exposure to English in Dutch society. Since people in the Netherlands hear English around them on a regular basis (De Angelis 104). In addition, prior language knowledge and learning experience have a positive effect on third language learning, due to the increased metalinguistic awareness (De Angelis 137). Furthermore, it is believed that passive

bilingualism facilitates third language learning, whereas active bilingualism slows down the acquisition process (De Angelis 97). These Polish learners of English in the Netherlands can be expected to have a more passive understanding of the Dutch language, since it is the language of instruction at school, but Swanenberg pointed out that they still largely use and speak Polish (205). However, the data presented by the interviewees must be interpreted with caution because it is mainly anecdotal evidence and there is insufficient knowledge of the (linguistic) backgrounds of the teachers and the students.

Further research should be done to investigate the pronunciation problems of English language learners in the Netherlands by Polish native speakers. This would be important to contribute to the research of third language acquisition, but also to gain a better understanding of the problems third language learners experience with language learning in the Dutch classroom. The research should take into account the linguistic background of the Polish students, including their age of onset for L2 Dutch, amount of L2 input, age of onset for L3 English, amount of L3 input, any other languages of which they might have prior knowledge (such as the possibility of Russian or German L2 knowledge), setting in which the languages are learned (via immersion or academic setting), interlocutors which with the L1, L2 and L3 are used, proficiency in all three languages, in addition to other possible variables such as, age, sex and socio-economic status.

Ideally, the research should investigate the effects on language interference of the following factors as stated by De Angelis (132-137): the influence of the L1 on both the L2 and the L3, the influence of the L2 on the L1 and the L3 and the influence of the L3 on the L1 and the L2, the language distance between the three languages, language proficiency in all three languages, the frequency of use in all three languages, length of residency (in the

Netherlands in this case) and exposure, order of acquisition, the processing load of the test for the subjects and, lastly, metalinguistic awareness.

In addition, further research could study the importance of pronunciation teaching. Teachers and students could be asked to fill in a questionnaire asking about how many varieties of English (and Dutch) they are aware of, which variety they would want to learn/teach, which one they perceive as the most correct form, how important they deem correct pronunciation, whether they would want to teach/learn correct pronunciation, whether they think they already teach/learn correct pronunciation, whether they could teach/learn more, whether it is the students their own responsibility to learn correct pronunciation or whether the school should add it into the curriculum. In addition, the teachers should be tested on their phonological perception of (correct) English. This is important in order to gain a better understanding of the proficiency of the teachers and the knowledge of language teachers about phonology. In addition, this could also reveal some sociolinguistics aspects of language teaching, which are important to the students. The affinity with the languages and the willingness to learn a new language may influence the language proficiency. In addition, this would also test the perception of the correct pronunciation of both the teachers and the students to a certain extent.

Perception also needs to be tested by means of a test that asks the subjects to merely make a decision about certain sounds, not producing it themselves. This could be achieved in a test that contains two words and asking the subject whether they sound the same. For example, the subjects should hear the words *tree* and *three* and would be asked whether they think the two words sounded the same. This would prove whether language learners can perceive the different sounds. As stated before, the perception of correct

sounds does not automatically mean that one could produce the right sounds too (Chen), or that they could teach others the difference between these sounds.

The topic of this paper is the possible influence of Dutch on both the English perception and production by Polish native speakers. Consequently, a possible research set-up should ask the Polish students to fill in an extensive questionnaire to examine their linguistic background as discussed in the abovementioned paragraph. In addition, they would be tested on their proficiency of Dutch and English (assuming that they are Polish native speakers), by means of a standardised vocabulary test (Unsworth et al. 7). The test would consist of a Picture Description Task (PDT) as to illicit spontaneous speech, but control the content to a certain extent. The pros of spontaneous speech are that it is a natural flow of language in which the subject is free to do anything it likes. Consequently, errors made in second (or third) language acquisition are a good way to show what the brain thinks is possible. However, spontaneous speech may cause subjects to stick to formulas that they know and/or are comfortable with using and may not contain that which needs testing. In addition, the chances of all subjects saying exactly that which needs testing are low, making comparisons difficult or impossible. Illicit speech tasks will eliminate these problems. Wrembel's research indicates that spontaneous speech may increase (unconscious) L2 influence (84). The PDT would be tested in both English and Dutch. The Dutch test is needed to check the Polish errors in their L3 English to the Polish errors in their L2 Dutch. Dutch learners of English (L2) would also be asked to take the English PDT.

All tests should be careful to activate the right linguistic mode beforehand. In other words, the participants should have their English knowledge indirectly activated when starting the test. This is important so that the test tests all knowledge, not just that which is readily available or used more frequently. This can be achieved by instructing the subjects in

the language that is tested, as Llama et al. illustrate (45-46). The speech production of Polish and Dutch learners would be presented to expert judges formed of native speakers of English and non-native speakers with near native proficiency (most likely to be (university) lecturers of EFL teaching). The native or non-native status of the judges should not have any effect on the identification of correct pronunciation, as illustrated by Wrembel (86). These judges would listen to the recordings of the subjects and asked to identify the L1 of the speaker and assess the foreign accent in a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 indicates a strong presence of accent in the target language (English) and 10 a strong (near-) native accent of English. Possibly, the judges could also be asked to identify any errors in samples of spontaneous speech. With this data, almost all factors as discussed by De Angelis could be examined, and a more conclusive answer could be found to the question what problems Polish speakers have when learning English in the Netherlands.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to show what the pronunciation problems are for Polish native speakers learning English in the Netherlands. The evidence given by the interviewees suggest that for lay people the Polish learners of English in the Netherlands sound Dutch in their pronunciation of English. Considering the literature available on third language acquisition and the investigation into the Polish situation, these results can be explained to a certain extent. This study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of third language learning of (Polish) migrants in the Netherlands.

There are a number of important limitations which need to be considered. The data is based largely on anecdotal evidence, namely that which comes forth from the interviews. The data from second and third language acquisition and that from the Polish situation in the Netherlands are based on empirical research. The available literature is sufficient to predict certain errors, but more extensive empirical research should indicate whether these errors occur also in practice. This should primarily take into account both the perception and the production of the English language by Polish native speakers in the Netherlands. Research into the need for and application of pronunciation teaching and the ability of language teachers in Dutch education to perceive certain errors should also be interesting. In addition, a future study could investigate the answer to the question whether L1 errors in L3 speech is due to an increased proficiency in the L3, as stated in the literature (Wrembel 83-85; De Angelis 132), or whether other factors are at play.

Lastly, based on the findings suggested by the interviews with English teachers, it could be suggested that some changes have to be made in the Dutch educational system. First of all,

the Dutch government and/or schools need make a well-considered decision about which type of model should be used in the Dutch educational system and which variety of English should become the norm. The multilingual situation needs to be taken into account here too. In addition, the importance of pronunciation teaching should be made aware. Subsequently, when English pronunciation teaching is applied in the multilingual classroom, special attention should be paid to the pronunciation of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, the differences between the /æ/ and the /e/ vowels and final devoicing for the benefit of both Polish and Dutch student alike. For the Polish speakers specifically, special attention should be paid to the pronunciation of the /h/, the contrast between long and short vowels and to a lesser extent the final /ŋ/, whereas Dutch speakers need to be made aware of the /f – v – w/ distinction and the difference between the /ʌ/ and the /ɒ/ vowel. Since vowels generally are more difficult for both Polish speakers who have so few and Dutch speakers whose vowels often differ ever so slightly from the English ones, a multilingual class would profit from more extensive pronunciation teaching and focus on the vowels than on the consonants. Once final devoicing is addressed, expectations are that voice-assimilation will also occur to a lesser extent, after which level three errors such as elision and aspiration could be addressed. Additional focus on specific English phonemes should be dependent upon the other languages present in the classroom.

These changes would not only benefit Dutch speakers of English, but the Polish native speakers learning English in Dutch schools too. This is important for the multicultural classroom in the Dutch educational system. After all, the goal is mutual intelligibility between speakers with a different mother tongue and English is taught with the means to achieve that goal.

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