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ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEACHING FL SEGMENTAL PHONOLOGY IN POLISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A PILOT STUDY

Abstract. In this pilot study, 113 EFL teachers in Polish public schools (both primary and secondary level) were asked two types of questions: attitude questions concerning segmental phonology – orthography problems, and testing questions examining teachers' knowledge of the English phonological system and grapheme-phoneme correspondence. The responses show that even though teachers are (declaratively) aware of the problems, they think the problems can either resolve spontaneously or are not that relevant. The responses also show greater focus on orthography over segmental phonology in their teaching practice. Such attitudes coincide with teachers' poor knowledge of the phonological system and grapheme-phoneme correspondence. The results of the pilot encourage the use of a teacher attitude survey (TAS) together with a teacher knowledge survey (TKS) in a future study. This would allow performing a comprehensive statistical analysis of the results and finding possible correlations between teacher's knowledge and their attitude towards teaching segmental phonology.

Keywords: pronunciation teaching, segmental phonology, grapheme-phoneme correspondence, native language interference.

1. Phonology and orthography in an FL classroom

In recent years, in the context of foreign language (FL) learning, pronunciation issues have attracted growing interest, as reflected in a sharp increase in the number of books, research articles, conferences, and teaching materials published on the subject (Nagle et al., 2019). This is also confirmed by the fact that the creators of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is considered the main reference point for foreign language teaching in Europe (Martyniuk, 2008), among the few changes to the updated version of this document, decided to expand and clarify the section on phonology.¹

The Polish national curriculum for FLs (Podstawa, 2017), which is the main document defining goals for FL teaching/learning in Poland, does not specify requirements pertaining to the mastery of the sound side of the language in subsequent stages of education. However, in accordance with the CEFR, it defines FL mastery with respect to the control of linguistic means – phonological (phonetic) and orthographic, among others. It can be deduced from the document that the level of control for both means is expected to be the same, i.e., phonological (phonetic) control should be developed in parallel with orthographic control.

Also, the national curriculum makes reference to the CEFR levels expected from students in subsequent stages of FL education (Podstawa, 2017). Thus, as far as phonological control at, e.g. A1 level, according to the CEFR descriptors, students should be able to “reproduce sounds in the target language if carefully guided” (CEFR, 2020, p. 135).

However, from the very beginning of the learning process, the achievement of goals defined for phonological control is hampered by two fundamental problems whose existence learners are usually unaware of, namely:

- 1) that the FL is different from his/her native language (NL) not only in the repertoire of letters it utilizes (incompatible spelling systems)², but first and foremost in the repertoire of sounds (incompatible phonological systems);
- 2) that the grapheme-phoneme correspondence is different for the two languages (which may be particularly confusing for students whose NL writing systems are relatively shallow, i.e., the grapheme-phoneme correspondence is close to 1:1).

The two problems are aggravated by the fact that both systems (orthographic and phonological) are usually introduced simultaneously in the FL class. And even though familiarising oneself with a new alphabet (letter inventory) is a relatively simple task, learning the grapheme-phoneme correspondences is not possible without mastering the phonemic inventory. This task, however, is cognitively much more challenging, because it requires from the student establishing new perceptual categories for non-native sounds (Best & Tyler, 2007; Flege & Bohn, 2021).

Even though the influence of orthography on the acquisition and development of L2 phonology is a relatively new research area, it has already been relatively well investigated. Its overview was presented in (Hayes-Harb & Barrios, 2021). The research done for various NL-FL pairs points mainly to a negative influence (Bassetti et al., 2022; Cutler, 2015; Hayes-Harb et al., 2018). The indications of positive effect have been identified for the phoneme-grapheme correspondences that are overlapping in the NL

and FL systems (Nimz & Khattab, 2020; Showalter & Hayes-Harb, 2015; Welby et al., 2022).

Thus, for example, a Polish learner of English, unfamiliarized with the phonological system of English, will read English <cat> as /kat/ or /kæt/ (or even – much less commonly – /tsat/³ if he/she is not familiar with a well-known realization of the letter <c> in English) instead of /kæt/. Of the three segments in the written word, <t> will be the least problematic to identify, as it has the same grapheme-phoneme mapping in Polish and in English. It will be followed by <c>, whose grapheme-phoneme correspondence is different for the two languages, but whose production does not require establishing a new phonological category for the phoneme /k/ as both language systems include it. The most difficult of the three is <a>, which requires both the awareness of different grapheme-phoneme mappings for the languages as well as the establishment of a new category for the phoneme /æ/.

Similar examples can be given for other language pairs. An inexperienced Polish learner of German, for the same reasons as those stated above, will pronounce <ich> as /ix/, or in a more informed way /iç/ instead of /ɪç/. Similarly, a Polish learner of Italian will pronounce <gli> in the crudest variant as /gli/ or, in a more informed way, as /li/ instead of /ʎi/. All these mispronunciations will be the result of the lack of cognitively formed perceptual categories for non-native phonemes in the learner's phonological repertoire and an immediate need to replace them with those of his/her NL.

2. Attitudes towards teaching FL phonology

Since in an FL classroom it is the teacher's role to make students aware of any potential problems they may encounter and help them find solutions, it is crucial to look at teachers' attitudes towards teaching segmental phonology and see how they approach the above-mentioned problems in their teaching practice. In particular, it is necessary to answer the following research questions (RQs):

- RG1. What is teachers' general attitude towards segmental phonology-related problems and the influence of the orthography?
- RQ2. Do teachers assign equal value to the teaching of orthography and segmental phonology?
- RQ3. Is teachers' knowledge of FL segmental phonology as well as grapheme-phoneme relations sufficient to address the segmental phonology-related problems?

The focus of the existing research on teachers' attitudes towards teaching phonology/phonetics both in the international context (Couper, 2017; Foote et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2012; Szpyra, 2015) as well as in the Polish context (Baran-Łucarz, 2022; Gozdawa-Gołębiowski et al., 2024; Pawlak & Szyszka, 2018; Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2017; Szyszka, 2017; Waniek-Klimczak, 2013; Wrembel, 2002) is on general phonology-related problems, with smaller attention given to such aspects as developing phonological categories or the influence of orthography. Also, the research seems to be focused on the productive aspect of phonetics/phonology (segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation) rather than the receptive.

Common themes running through the research are the following:

- 1) teachers consider pronunciation an important element of linguistic competence (e.g. Foote et al., 2011;
- 2) this, however, is not reflected in their courses (for various reasons) (e.g. Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2017);
- 3) teachers receive insufficient or inadequate training in phonetics teaching techniques (e.g. Henderson et al., 2012).

What is also important, as far as teachers' knowledge of phonology/phonetics, is that the existing research relies mainly on their self-evaluation and does not actually test their competence in the field. It would thus be useful not only to ask about their attitudes and feelings, but also to include an element of testing to evaluate their actual competence.

3. Methodology of the study

To find out the answers to the three RQs defined above, a pilot study was conducted among Polish teachers of English as a foreign language. The study employs an online structured questionnaire, which allowed for a higher rate of responses and anonymity. To facilitate responses, the questionnaire was formulated in Polish as it was directed to Polish respondents.

3.1. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire consisted of 9 single-choice attitude questions and 4 single-choice testing questions. Since the study is a pilot and no in-depth statistical analysis was planned, the usual attitude questions (5-point scale, how-far-you-agree questions) were abandoned in favour of simpler to analyse yes/no types of questions. The testing questions were single-choice questions. However, an additional answer "not sure" was added to both types of questions to allow teachers not to take a stance in case they, for various reasons, were not ready to do so.

The first three attitude questions referred to RQ1 and aimed to establish in a relatively direct way the teachers' general attitude towards segmental phonology-related problems the students might experience, as well as the negative impact of orthography on developing phonological awareness for English. Thus, the following questions were asked:

- RQ1.1 *Do your students have problems with the perception and production of English sounds?*
- RQ1.2 *Do problems with the perception and production of English sounds disappear spontaneously in the course of learning?*
- RQ1.3 *Can contact with written language have a negative impact on the perception and production of (some) English sounds?*

It was expected that teachers would be aware of the problems as well as the negative impact the written language can have in this respect. It was also expected that teachers would understand the need to address the problems in their teaching practice and would not think that they would resolve spontaneously.

The second set of six attitude questions referred to RQ2 and concerned the problem of assigning equal value to the teaching of the two systems: orthographic and phonological. The questions were designed in a way that suggests equal priority given to the teaching of the two systems, i.e., identical questions were asked first about an aspect of teaching the orthographic system and next about the phonological system. Thus, the following three pairs of questions were asked:

- RQ2.1 *Is it important that students have a good knowledge of the letter inventory (alphabet) of English (are able to distinguish visually and to write down the letters)?*
- RQ2.2 *Is it important that students have a good knowledge of the sound inventory of English (are able to distinguish aurally and to pronounce the sounds)?*
- RQ2.3 *As a rule, should students' incorrect spelling of one letter in a word be generally tolerated (not corrected) if this does not prevent identification of the word (e.g., cat as <kat>)?*
- RQ2.4 *As a rule, should students' incorrect pronunciation of one sound in a word be tolerated (not corrected) if this does not prevent identification of the word (e.g., cat as /ket/)?*
- RQ2.5 *Can you name the letters in the English alphabet?*
- RQ2.6 *Can you name the sounds in any of the varieties of English pronunciation?*

It was assumed that when asked directly (questions RQ2.1 and RQ2.2), teachers would (declaratively) assign equal value to the teaching of the two systems. However, for the other two pairs of questions (from RQ2.3 to RQ2.6), it was expected that the answers would reveal a bias towards the importance of orthography, i.e., they would be less likely to tolerate spelling mistakes than pronunciation mistakes, and their (still declarative) knowledge of the letter inventory would be better than their knowledge of the sound inventory.

It must be stressed that such a design of the questions does not suggest that teaching the alphabet is the same as teaching the sound inventory, or that teaching the spelling and the pronunciation of the word *cat* are comparable in terms of approaches or complexity of the processes. Also, it does not suggest that the processes should be regarded independently of each other. The design of the questions was only meant to show whether teachers approach selected aspects of teaching the two systems (how they treat students' mistakes and how well they know the inventories) in a comparable manner.

The formulation of the last pair of questions (RQ2.5, RQ2.6) requires a separate explanation as they could be perceived as misplaced or biased. Firstly, one could claim that they can hardly be called attitude questions as they seem to test teachers' competence rather than enquire about their attitudes. This is true if one considers their form. However, if one considers their content in the context of RQ2, it should be clear that through the test of competence, the questions aim to verify the attitudes declared in the previous questions and reveal actual attitudes. If teachers consider teaching the two inventories equally important, they should be equally willing to familiarise themselves with both. The discrepancy between these two positions would reveal an important inconsistency in teachers' attitudes, and this is why questions RQ2.5 and RQ2.6 were labelled as attitude questions.

Secondly, the two questions may be interpreted as biased as they may seem unequally difficult to answer, i.e., it seems much less difficult to name the letters in the alphabet than to name the sound inventory of a language. But such a position is already a sign of an attitude that favours orthography over phonology, and it is precisely what the questions aim to reveal. Provided that one treats both systems as equally important and approaches learning/teaching them in a systemic way, one should not experience any more difficulty with remembering the 44 phonemes of English (in its RP variety) than with remembering the 26 letters of the English alphabet, even if the numbers are nearly two times different.

The four testing questions referred to RQ3 and were designed to selectively test teachers' knowledge of the English phonological system and grapheme-phoneme correspondence. They read as follows:

- RQ3.1 *Without any help, can you tell how many sounds the English word "courageous" is made up of?*
- RQ3.2 *Without any help, can you identify which of the following English words – kiss, his, mix, bits, mice – does not contain the sound [s]?*
- RQ3.3 *Without any help, can you identify which of the following English words – bread, red, beard, head, said – does not match the others in terms of pronunciation (does not rhyme with them)?*
- RQ3.4 *Without any help, can you identify where the sound [ð] is articulated (labio-dentally, post-dentally, inter-dentally, palatally), as in the word "the"?*

The first three questions aimed to test practical rather than theoretical knowledge and consisted of basic tasks: counting numbers of phonemes/sounds (RQ3.1), identifying the lack of a phoneme (RQ3.2), and identifying indirectly a phoneme (RQ3.3). The last question (RQ3.4) was a little more theoretical (i.e., referring to teachers' knowledge in a more direct way) as it concerned naming a distinctive feature of a phoneme. However, the formulation of the question required practical rather than theoretical knowledge, and as such it was more related to phonetics than phonology. Taking into consideration the fact that the question concerned a sound with a very characteristic place of articulation which poses a challenge for many Polish users of English, and that the example word (the most frequent word in English – *the*) was provided, it was also assumed that the question should not be too problematic.

The words chosen for the test belonged to English core vocabulary according to Longman (2014), and all of them were high-frequency words (3000 most used words) except for *courageous*, which was low-frequency but still core vocabulary (9000 most used words). Thus, it was assumed that the questions should cause little problem to an advanced user of English (not necessarily a teacher of English).

3.2. Research group and analytical tools

The research group (N = 113) consisted of teachers of all types of schools in the primary and secondary level of education in Poland: primary school (50% of respondents), general secondary school (15%), technical secondary school (24%), vocational school (9%), and other types (3%). The respondents work in public schools of the Podlaskie Voivodship in Poland in

cities of various sizes: up to 10 000 inhabitants (35%), between 10 000 and 100 000 (24%), and over 100 000 (41%). Most of the teachers hold a master’s degree (94%) and have taught English for over 10 years (83%) or for 3–10 years (13%).

The survey was conducted through an online form (created in Microsoft Forms) and distributed electronically to the email boxes of public schools in the voivodship. The teachers were free to decide whether they wanted to participate in it. The responses were collected between September and November 2023.

A preliminary statistical analysis was performed on the obtained data to see whether there was any correlation between the number of correct answers to the testing questions and the distribution of answers to the attitude questions. For this purpose, contingency tables were created, showing the distributions of the analysed variables, and the Chi-square test of independence was applied. Since one of the variables (answers to the attitude questions) had nominal values (*yes, no, not sure*), it was not possible to calculate the correlation coefficient, and only statistical significance (p-value) was calculated. When verifying the hypotheses, a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was adopted. Excel and Statistica 13 were used for the calculations.

4. Results and discussion

The results of the survey will be presented and discussed with reference to the three RQs separately. Table 1 shows responses to the three questions pertaining to RQ1.

Table 1
Responses to questions within RQ1: What is teachers’ general attitude towards segmental phonology-related problems and the influence of the orthography?

	yes	no	not sure
RQ1.1 Do your students have problems with the perception and production of English sounds?	85%	10%	5%
RQ1.2 Do problems with the perception and production of English sounds disappear spontaneously in the course of learning?	38%	30%	32%
RQ1.3 Can contact with written language have a negative impact on the perception and production of (some) English sounds?	50%	23%	27%

The majority of the teachers (85%) acknowledge the presence of segmental phonology problems and the negative impact the written language can have in this respect (50%). However, a considerable portion of them (38%) think the problems resolve spontaneously. Thus, it can be inferred that they do not attach great importance to developing students' command of segmentals in their teaching practice.

It is also worth noting that nearly one-third of the respondents are not sure whether such problems should be addressed (32%), or whether written language can have a negative impact in this respect (27%). Again, this could suggest that they have not given the issues enough attention, which signals that they do not attach significant importance to them.

Such an attitude of relative neglect for phonology among teachers is reflected (and perhaps reinforced) by the design of FL coursebooks, especially at the beginner's level, which often lack explicit phonetic/phonological instruction (see, e.g. Kusiak, 2011). The presentation of phonemic inventory or the discussion of grapheme-phoneme correspondences is missing from general FL teaching materials. However, the need for explicit instruction in this respect seems obvious, as every language has its own specificity pertaining to phonology and orthography.

What is more, the neglect is particularly troubling if one considers the fact that the development of learners' FL phonology is most considerable at the very beginning of learning, i.e., during the first six months to a year in the case of intensive language courses or exposure to FL (Flege, 1988; Munro & Derwing, 2008). Failing to take advantage of this window of opportunity may result in significant perception and production problems at later stages of FL proficiency.

Additionally, phonological awareness directly influences the development of reading and writing (Krasowicz-Kupis, 2004; Nithart et al., 2011; Piasecka, 2011), i.e., the skills which are taught in an FL classroom simultaneously with listening comprehension and speaking, from the very beginning of the process. It must be added that acquiring the skills of reading and writing differs depending on the orthography and is dictated by the features of the language (Awramiuk, 2006; Seymour et al., 2003), which may further complicate the process for FL learners. For example, the problems can be easily observed in the case of Polish learners of English who approach the notoriously deep English orthography influenced by Polish orthography, which is moderately shallow and in which the situation where one letter represents one sound is much more common (Wolańska, 2019).

Table 2 shows responses to six paired questions pertaining to RQ2.

Table 2

Responses to questions within RQ2: Do teachers assign equal value to the teaching of orthography and segmental phonology?

	yes	no	not sure
RQ2.1 Is it important that students have a good knowledge of the letter inventory (alphabet) of English (are able to distinguish visually and to write down letters)?	82%	6%	12%
RQ2.2 Is it important that students have a good knowledge of the sound inventory of English (are able to distinguish aurally and to pronounce the sounds)?	90%	5%	5%
RQ2.3 As a rule, should students' incorrect spelling of one letter in a word be generally tolerated (not corrected) if this does not prevent identification of the word (e.g., cat as <kat>)?	15%	75%	10%
RQ2.4 As a rule, should students' incorrect pronunciation of one sound in a word be tolerated (not corrected) if this does not prevent identification of the word (e.g., cat as [ket])?	31%	58%	11%
RQ2.5 Can you name the letters in the English alphabet?	98%	0%	2%
RQ2.6 Can you name the sounds in any of the varieties of English pronunciation?	46%	9%	45%

The percentages for the first pair of questions (RQ2.1 and RQ2.2) confirm that the teachers treat the two systems as equally important (the importance of the phonological system has even received 8% more positive answers). In fact, one can wonder what motivated the negative answers (6% and 5%) for both systems, as there seems to be a consensus among both teachers and learners that the two realisations of a foreign language – written and spoken – should be taught. Perhaps the respondents thought of wholistic approaches to teaching spelling and pronunciation that ignore the segmental level and begin with the level of words.

However, the predominantly positive answers to the first two questions remained only on a general level. When it comes to specific questions about an aspect of teaching (RQ2.3 and RQ2.4) and teachers' competence (RQ2.5 and RQ2.6) concerning the two systems, as expected, a bias towards orthography could be noticed.

Firstly, the respondents are more willing to tolerate pronunciation mistakes than spelling mistakes (2 times more positive responses), which can be interpreted as a sign of attaching lesser importance to spoken than to written language. Secondly, they are two times more likely to be familiarised with the letter inventory than with the sound inventory of a given variety of En-

glish, which necessarily is a sign of attaching smaller importance to teaching segmental phonology (one cannot teach something they themselves are not familiar with). It is worth noting that only 46% of the respondents declared that they were able to list a sound inventory, and 45% were not sure whether they could do it, which might mean that they did not study the sounds in a systemic way.

It must be highlighted once more that the parallel questions were not meant to equalise the two systems in terms of their complexity or the level of difficulty when they are learnt or taught. Learning or teaching spelling is certainly a different task from learning or teaching pronunciation, though it is also difficult to separate these two processes. Similarly, naming the letters in the alphabet is not the same as naming the sound inventory. A beginning user of English can recite the alphabet in its rhymed-sung version that is so popular among learners of English, and yet no student-friendly version of the sound inventory was proposed in EFL instruction.

However, even if one cannot list the sounds, it does not have to mean they are not familiar with them, just like the inability to recite the alphabet cannot be equated with the inability to spell correctly. One could, for example, recognise FL sounds among sounds of other languages or produce all of them when prompted in some way. The inability to list the sounds only means one has no overall view of the system.

Thus, the responses to the questions do not so much inform us about the teacher's strategies or abilities as they show a certain attitude. If the teachers attached more importance to segmental phonology in their teaching practice, they would surely be more inclined to familiarise themselves with the sounds in a systemic way. Similarly, one could expect they would also be more sensitive to pronunciation mistakes.

Table 3 shows responses to testing questions aimed at establishing whether teachers' knowledge of FL segmental phonology as well as grapheme-phoneme relations is sufficient to address the phonology-related problems mentioned in the beginning (RQ3). The expected answers are marked with rectangles.

Of the four tasks, the first one, in which respondents had to count the number of syllables in the word, proved most difficult, with only 38% of correct answers and the highest rate of "not sure" responses (25%). The easiest task was the indirect identification of a phoneme (which word does not rhyme), with 86% of correct answers and the lowest rate of "not sure" answers (8%). The additional difficulty in the task was a similar spelling of two words (*beard* and *bread*). However, it resulted in only 3% of (incorrect) responses.

Table 3

Responses to questions within R3: Is teachers' knowledge of FL segmental phonology as well as grapheme-phoneme relations sufficient to address the phonology-related problems?

	7	8	9	10	not sure
RQ3.1 Without any help, can you tell how many sounds the English word "courageous" is made up of?	38%	19%	4%	15%	25%

	kiss	his	mix	bits	mice	not sure
RQ3.2 Without any help, can you identify which of the following English words – kiss, his, mix, bits, mice – does not contain the sound [s]?	1%	49%	13%	7%	8%	22%

	bread	red	beard	head	said	not sure
RQ3.3 Without any help, can you identify which of the following English words – bread, red, beard, head, said – does not match the others in terms of pronunciation (does not rhyme with them)?	3%	1%	86%	0%	3%	8%

	labio-dentally	post-dentally	inter-dentally	palatally	not sure
RQ3.4 Without any help, can you identify where the sound [ð] is articulated, as in the word <i>the</i> ? ⁴	18%	24%	42%	4%	13%

It is also worth noting that for the four tasks, on average, in 17% of the cases, the respondents were not ready to take a stance on a problem. This suggests that in general they do not feel too confident with respect to the segmental phonology of English, which confirms the existing research on teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation instruction (e.g. Baran-Łucarz, 2022).

Table 4 shows percentages of respondents with a particular number of correct answers. 5% of respondents (N = 6) did not provide any correct answer, and 11% (N = 12) of respondents were always correct. The most frequent result (33%) was 2 correct answers. In all four tasks, the respondents answered 54% of the questions correctly. The average result was 2.1 out of 4.

Table 4

Percentages of respondents with a particular number of correct answers

	% of respondents
0 correct	5%
1 correct	24%
2 correct	33%
3 correct	27%
4 correct	11%

Considering the relatively low level of difficulty of the four tasks pertaining to RQ3, the results achieved by the teachers are rather poor, especially because the tasks tested practical (expected from a learner) rather than theoretical (expected from a trained teacher) knowledge of the English phonological system. It is also worth remembering that the participants self-selected to take the survey. Thus, it can be assumed that those more interested in the issues of phonology were more likely to complete the questionnaire. Otherwise, the results might have been even poorer. This signals that the teachers' knowledge of FL segmental phonology as well as grapheme-phoneme relations might not be sufficient to address the phonology-related problems their students experience.

Such results confirm earlier research on teacher training concerning teaching pronunciation. For example, a significant study by Henderson et al. (2012) among 635 EFL teachers from different European countries found that teachers do not feel they received adequate training in this area. At the same time, they consider pronunciation teaching as rather important among other language skills, which, in a way, is reflected in this study in replies to RQ1.1. in which students' phonology-related problems are considered important by most of the teachers.

A preliminary statistical analysis was performed on the data obtained in this study. It showed a statistically significant correlation only for two of the attitude questions: RQ1.2 and RQ2.4. The respondents who answered "Not sure" to RQ1.2 (*Do problems with the perception and production of English sounds disappear spontaneously in the course of learning?*) had a significantly lower number of correct answers in the test than those who answered "Yes" ($p = 0.01$) and those who answered "No" ($p = 0.04$). Also, the respondents who answered "Not sure" to RQ2.4 (*As a rule, should students' incorrect pronunciation of one sound in a word be tolerated (not corrected)*)

if this does not prevent identification of the word (e.g., cat as [ket])?) obtained a significantly lower number of correct answers in the test than those who answered “No” ($p = 0.04$).

However, no other statistically significant correlations could be established for other attitude questions. Statistical significance, however, could appear if there were more participants in the survey and/or the number of test items was higher and/or the range of answers in the questionnaire was on a five-point, not three-point scale. These methodological changes should be considered in a future study.

5. Conclusions

Curricula set educational standards and aims for teaching school subjects. Teachers are responsible for implementing them in everyday classroom practice. When it comes to FLs and teaching segmental phonology, the aims include the gradual development of phonological control. Aside from the natural difficulty of forming phonological categories for an FL connected with the interference from the NL, the process is further complicated by the clash of the written and spoken realisations of language that are introduced simultaneously in FL classrooms.

Even though the problems are recognised by teachers, their reaction to them seems inadequate. The pilot study showed that the teachers are likely to underestimate them, or they lack sufficient preparation to address them.

Given the format of the study, no conclusive remarks should be formed. Nonetheless, the obtained results encourage a more comprehensive insight into attitudes towards teaching segmental phonology – one that would include the use of more precise tools, i.e., a teacher attitude survey (TAS) with Likert-type items and a five-point scale for responding (strongly disagree to strongly agree), followed by a teacher knowledge survey (TKS). This would allow a comprehensive statistical analysis of the results and the formulation of more firm conclusions.

Such an analysis would allow us to see whether teachers’ attitudes are influenced by their level of knowledge of phonology, i.e., whether inferior phonological preparation (worse test results) correlates with attitudes towards teaching pronunciation. The obtained results seem to point in this direction; however, this needs to be verified empirically.

Yet another topic that is worth investigating in this context concerns the reasons for the bias towards the written language and the disregard for sound accuracy in an FL classroom. One of the reasons could be the way

the command of an FL is formally tested, and the small value given to phonetic accuracy during various exams. This, however, is obviously a topic which requires separate consideration.

N O T E S

¹ A new scale of descriptors was developed for this element of linguistic competence, and the number of subcategories describing the competence was expanded from one general (phonological correctness) to three more specific ones. And so, the categories of vocal articulation and prosodic features were added to the category of phonological correctness which was left in place but reformulated (CEFR, 2020).

² This paper is written from the perspective of languages whose alphabets are based on the Latin alphabet, though some points made in it will hold true also for other languages utilizing alphabetic writing systems.

³ The grapheme <c> corresponds to the phoneme /ts/ in Polish.

⁴ As already signalled in 3.1, judging from the number of responses (24%), the option “post-dentally” might have misled some of the respondents, as it is possible that under this term they meant dental place of articulation. If this was the case, their choice would mean that they possess practical knowledge concerning the pronunciation of the sound, and only lack the theoretical knowledge of the proper term.

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