

Accent and Identity Prejudice and Insecurity

IXth International Conference on Native and Non-native Accents of
English University of Łódź
December 2015

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About me

I am

a teacher, author, blogger

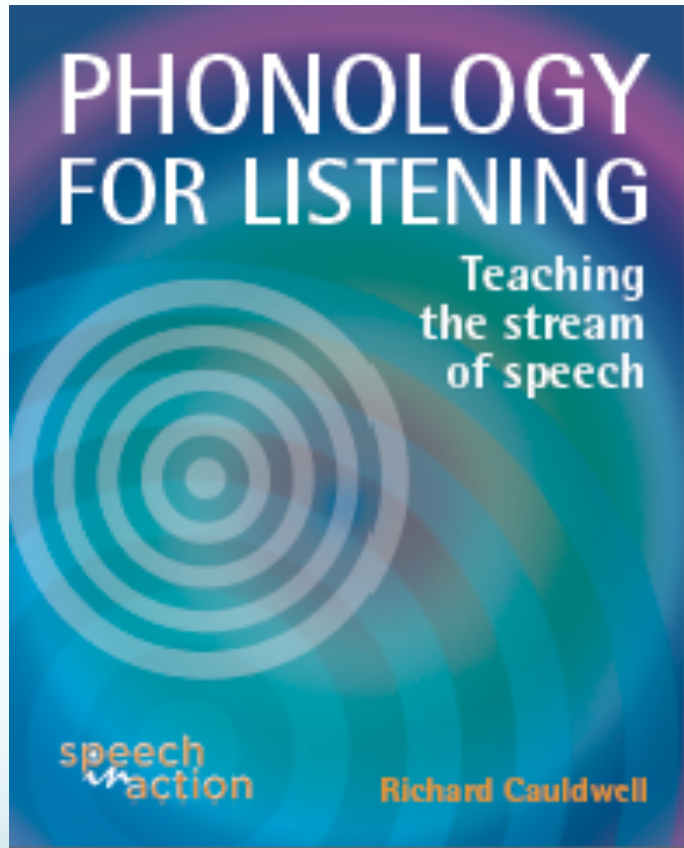
a spontaneous speech enthusiast
with expertise in Discourse Intonation

I am passionate about teaching
listening and pronunciation

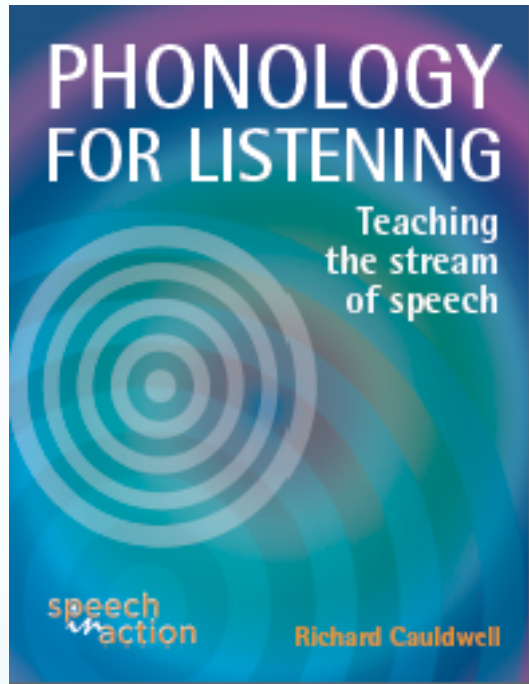
About me

Though not an academic
I 'have history' with accents and prejudice
Both in the sense
living through periods of time
And
I have 'previous',
'disreputable past'
I have (had) prejudices

Phonology for Listening

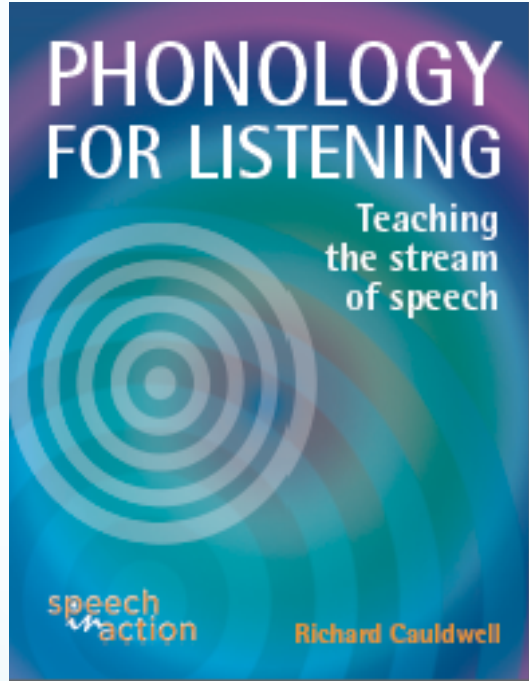


Phonology for Listening



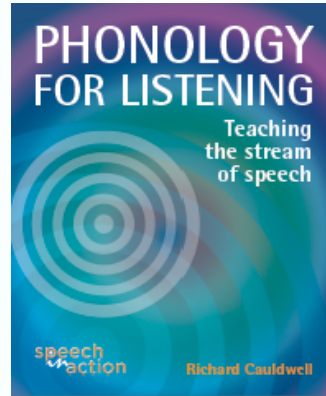
(It didn't win)

Phonology for Listening



(But the judges said it is 'Ground-breaking work which could really help listening and ELT practice')

Phonology for Listening



- Part 3 – Identity and Emotion
 - 11 British English, American English
 - 12 Accents of Britain and Ireland
 - 13 Accents of North America
 - 14 Accents of Global English
 - 15 Emotion in Speech
- <http://www.speechinaction.org/ebooks//>

Outline

1. Definitions
2. Biography
3. Prejudices – a confession
4. Accents, identity, change, variation
5. Accents as reference models
6. Thriving with non-standard accents
7. English as a Lingua Franca – ELF
8. Final thoughts



1 Accent

An accent is a flavouring or colouring to your voice which – within the same language and dialect – sounds different in some consistent rule-governed way from another given accent.

1 Prejudice



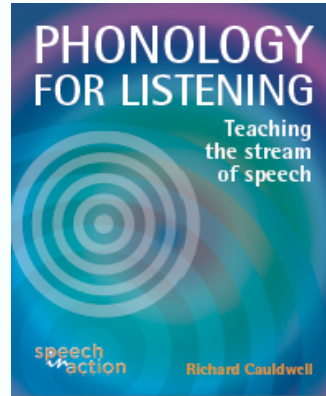
- <http://users.telenet.be/vdmoortel/dirk/Stuff/Prejudice.html>

1 Prejudice



- ‘an unreasonable dislike of, or preference for a person, group, custom, etc especially when it is based on their race, religion, sex, etc.’ (OALD 8)
- an unreasoned judgement made in the absence of evidence
- a feeling which becomes a judgement

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1 Prejudice – Lord Rant



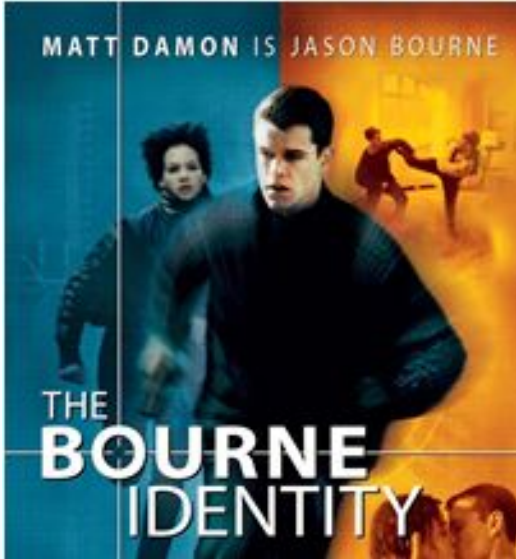
- The English language is like his stately home
 - pictures of presiding deities on the wall - Shakespeare, Dickens, Dr Johnson, and Queen Elizabeth II
- He believes that
 - the fabric of English is unchanging, but it requires policing and maintenance, to be handed down pure and intact to succeeding generations.
 - because he is a native speaker, he is an authoritative source of information on the rules of English. He and people like him are owners of English.
 - He has no conception of the idea that English is a global language, and is changing, as it always has been changing (cf. Crystal, 2004).

1 Prejudice – Lord Rant



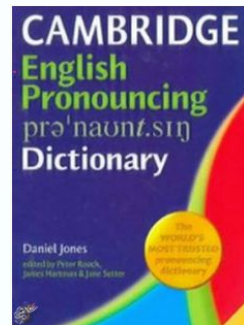
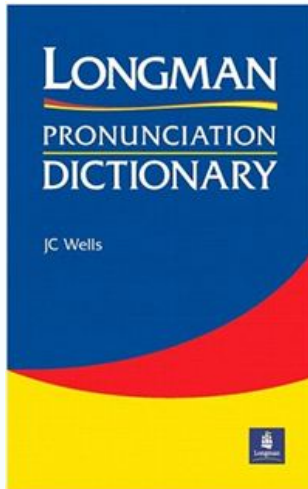
- Lord Rant ‘knows’ why there are regional accents in Britain:
 - the geographic factor
 - the medical factor
 - social class
 - the moral factor
- Dr Johnson spoke of his dissatisfaction with Scots people who go most of the way towards eliminating their accents, but give up too soon:
- ... certainly a man who conquers nineteen parts of the Scottish accent, may conquer the twentieth. But, sir, when a man has got the better of nine-tenths he grows weary, he relaxes his diligence, he finds he has corrected his accent so far as not to be disagreeable, and he no longer desires his friends to tell him when he is wrong; nor does he choose to be told.

1 Identity

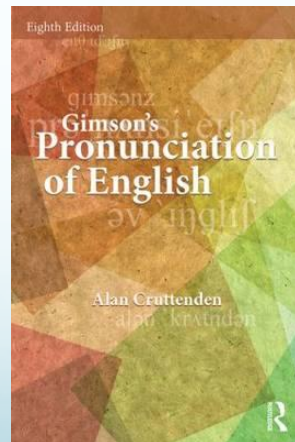
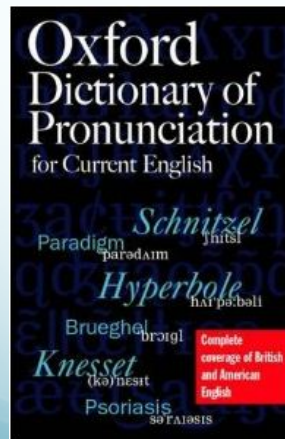


- Identity – ‘a person’s sense of themselves as an individual in relation to other individuals and groups whose values give them a sense of belonging and self-worth’.

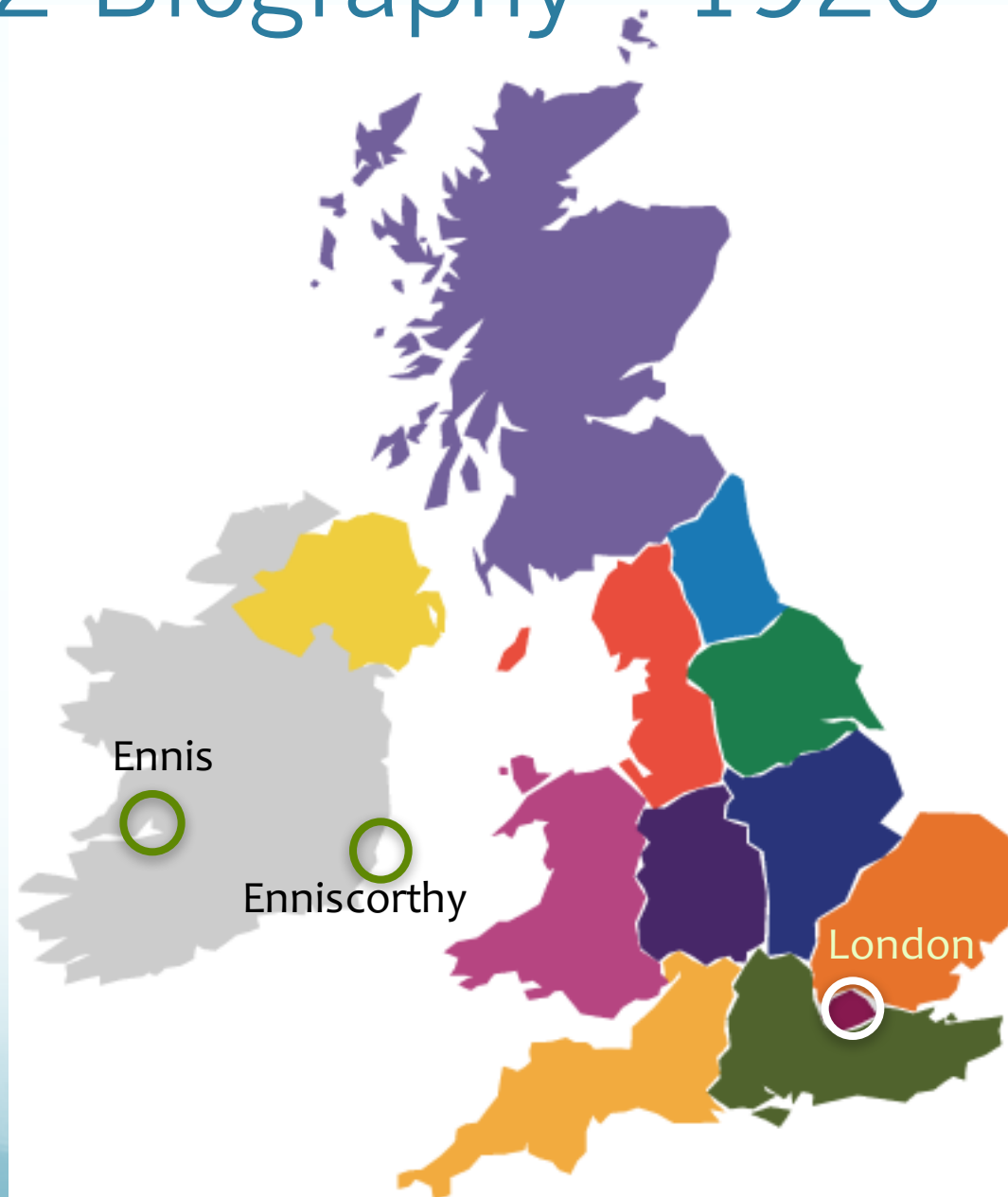
1 Reference Models



- Received Pronunciation
- General British English
- BBC English



2 Biography - 1926



2 Biography - 1952



2 Biography - 1955



2 Biography - 1963



2 Biography - 1972



2 Biography - 1989



3 Prejudice League Table

 	“Best”	Received Pronunciation	
		Educated Scottish English	
		Educated Welsh English	
		Northern English	
		West Country	
		Newcastle (Geordie)	
		London (Cockney)	
		Liverpool (Scouse)	
		Glasgow (Glaswegian)	
	“Worst”	Birmingham (Brummie)	

3 Prejudice in 19th Century



■ Birmingham. 'The parent of a boy at a day school in Birmingham was warned by the headmaster of the danger of his acquiring a 'vicious pronunciation' and a 'vulgar dialect' outside school hours.' (Honey, 1989, p. 23)

3 Prejudice in 21st Century



- Birmingham. My son aged four scolds his parents:
- ‘It’s plastah, you say plohistoh – it’s not plohistoh it’s plastah.
- Twenty years later ...

3 Prestige accent



A Lloyd James Reader
in Phonetics
University College
London. Secretary to
BBC Advisory
committee on Spoken
English. 'Talk on
English Speech' 1
Linguaphone LJE
(1931)

- ☀ 'there is supposed to be a representative English Pronunciation a type to be aimed at as an ideal' ...
- ☀ It is suitable for national broadcasting 'without fear of any considerable body of hostile criticism'

3 Prestige accent



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Linguaphone LJE
(1931)

- ☀ 'A man's pronunciation is often the surest guide to his social status and to his education'
- ☀ [if one pronounces 'County Council' in a local London accent] 'I must not be surprised if I am told that I am a cockney, that I am not as well-educated as I ought to be perhaps'
- ☀ ... 'certainly no business to teach the pronunciation of the English language to foreigners'

3 Prestige accent



It is spoken by those often very properly called the best people but also because it has two advantages that make it intrinsically superior to every other type of English speech - the extent to which it is current throughout the country and the marked distinctiveness and clarity of its sounds. (Wyld, 1934, p. 605)

3 Prestige accent



- The 'clarity of its sounds'
- But you could argue that Karen's Welsh accent on the word 'delapidated' makes the syllables much clearer than in the prestige accent.



3 Responses to prejudice



- Brian Dakin, BBC Voices – his father's voice
- 'When you go to grammar school you gotta drop your 'dohs' you gotta drop your 'cors' because you cor speak like that in grammar school'
- Note the change in strength of accent as he quotes his father ...

BBC (2005b). BBC Voices: West Midlands, Dudley, Brian Dakin. [Accessed 16th Feb. 2011]
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/recordings/individual/wm-dudley-dakin-brian.shtml>

3 Responses to prejudice



- Brian Dakin his own voice
- ‘And you did experience for a time that until you realised well why am I doing this? You know, I’m I’m a council boy and I speak like this and I’m proud of it and then you just reverted back to your Bla... And they just took it or left it as far as we were concerned, you know.’

BBC (2005b). BBC Voices: West Midlands, Dudley, Brian Dakin. [Accessed 16th Feb. 2011]
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/recordings/individual/wm-dudley-dakin-brian.shtml>

3 Responses to prejudice



■ Gary O'Dea

■ These blokes weren't thick at all – they was anything but. It it was just something that ... perhaps it was a bit of the class thing that that...

BBC (2005d). BBC Voices: West Midlands, Dudley, Gary O'Dea. [Accessed 16th Feb. 2011]
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/recordings/individual/wm-dudley-odea-gary.shtml>

3 Responses to Prejudice



■ Gary O'Dea

■ It's about time ss... people recognised the fact that it's a dialect that's that's spoken, it's not an infliction ...



BBC (2005d). BBC Voices: West Midlands, Dudley, Gary O'Dea. [Accessed 16th Feb. 2011]
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/recordings/individual/wm-dudley-odea-gary.shtml>

3 Responses to Prejudice



- Chamonix, BBC Voices
- ‘We were singing out once with er with the school when we were in primary school and our teacher was ...’
- ‘Don't talk like that, don't talk like yer from Liverpool,’ she said because we'll lose marks ... (BBC, 2005c)
- ‘with the school’



BBC, (2005c). BBC Voices: Merseyside, Garston, Chamonix. [Accessed 16th Feb. 2011]
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/recordings/individual/merseyside-garston-removed-chamonix.shtml>

3 Responses to Prejudice

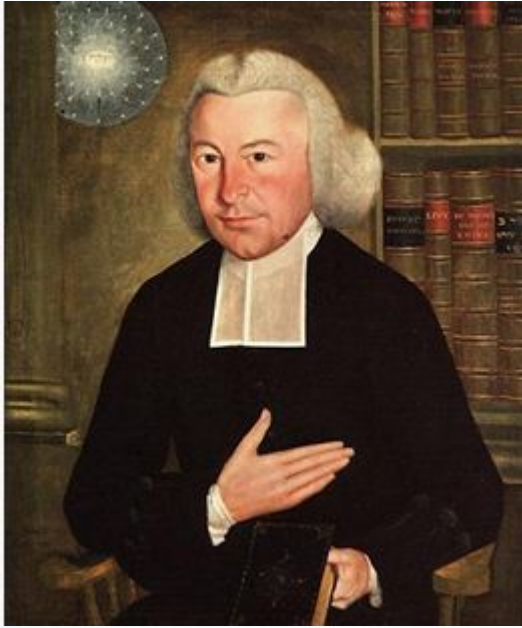


★ Chamonix, BBC Voices

★ Megan, Chamonix's sister, adds the comment 'It felt like she was ashamed of, of who we are and we shouldn't be ashamed of like, what our accent is or somethin.'

BBC, (2005c). BBC Voices: Merseyside, Garston, Chamonix. [Accessed 16th Feb. 2011]
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/recordings/individual/merseyside-garston-removed-chamonix.shtml>

3 Prejudices – self loathing



- ★ Someone who moved from Northern England to work as a congregationalist minister in the South at the end of the eighteenth century
- ★ ‘as I had lived entirely among the lower class my pronunciation was miserably uncouth and repulsive’.... (Honey, 1989, p. 34)

4 Identity – self image



...sometimes I feel frustrated because I look stupid here, just because I can't speak ... fluently or ... or speak with those, ... mm preferred ... pronunciation ... sometimes people are just impatient. (Golombek & Jordan 2005)

Identity



4 Identity – self image



4 Identity – self image



4 Identity – self image



4 Identity – self image



4 Identity – self image



4 Identity – self image



4 Identity – foreign language syndrome

- Linda Walker from Newcastle



- 'I was just devastated. I've lost my identity, because I never talked like this before. I'm a very different person and it's strange and I don't like it (BBC, 2006)
- ...Italian ...Slovakian...
French Canadian ... Jamaican ...

4 Identity



Harriet Harman's accent moved from being 'cut-glass' to being less posh - in order to fit in better with her left of centre, pro-trade union political party.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jan/29/harriet-harman-accent>

4 Identity

I began to change my accent at secondary school ... since moving further south I have modified even more ... Like most people, I slip back into my natural accent very easily when talking to family or friends from childhood.

4 Accents vary - Leeds



☀ My mate's gran had a caravan in the **farm**

☀ ... was a **farm** at the end of the street

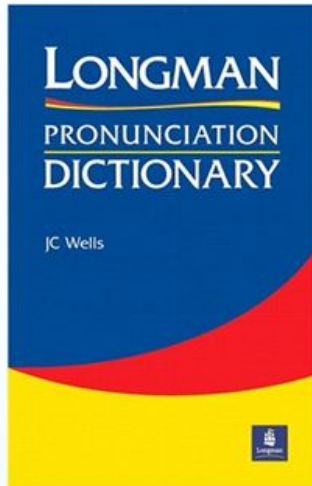
☀ I wanted to be at the back of the house because I missed the **farm**



5 Accents as Reference Models

- Embarrassed discussion around definitions
- Received Pronunciation (Received at Court)
- BBC English
- General British English

5 Received Pronunciation



- John Wells blog 24 November 2010
- the implicitly agreed model of good BrE speech?
- a codification intended mainly for EFL pedagogical purposes?
- or an objective description of how people at the top of BrE social stratification actually speak?

5 Received Pronunciation



- For example, Stuart-Smith (1999: 204) reports that ‘RP has little status in Glasgow, and is regarded with hostility in some quarters’

5 GBE vs Glasgow



Kelly: What was the story about you calling Blackburn the people's champions?



Kenny: Well they were weren't they?

Kelly: Why did you say it?



Kenny: Because they were the people's champions they're they're down to earth club weren't they there's a ... don't ... it's not even a city is it?

5 Accents in the family

Tim



Are you going to go to the store?
You ready to bounce to the store?
You finnin to roll to the store?

Philadelphia/North Carolina

Kirkpatrick, A. (2007) World Englishes. Cambridge University Press.

5 Received Pronunciation



- Jacob Rees-Mogg campaigning as a Conservative politician in Fife in Scotland provides evidence of similar hostility: ‘I gradually realised that whatever I happened to be speaking about, the number of voters in my favour dropped as soon as I opened my mouth’ (Rees-Mogg, 2012)

5 Received Pronunciation



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5 Received Pronunciation

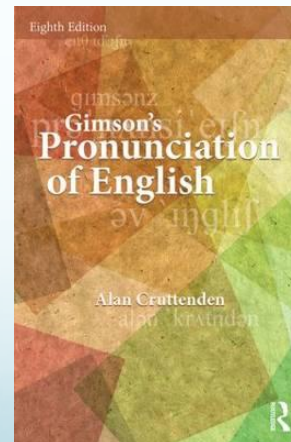
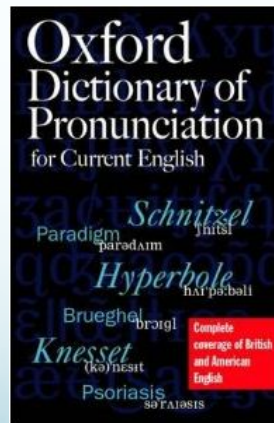
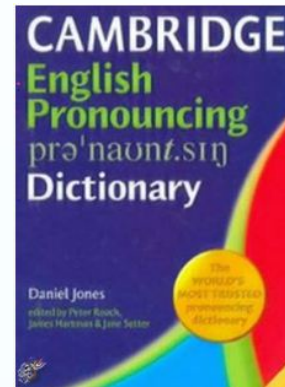
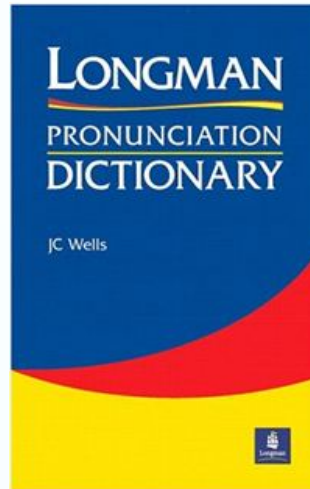


What we studied in Poland it was mainly at school, **very RP and formal**, so when I started working in a call centre, well, obviously I could speak English but my friend said that I couldn't and what he meant was that my E was not natural, it was what I call 'bookish' E, so I lacked this fluency and this natural flow and now it has improved so much.

Ewa Waniek-Klimczak (2015)

Accents in non-native speakers of

5 Not Attainment models



6 Thriving in English - Hector



6 Thriving in English - Hector



- Hector from Venezuela
- Then I realised that it wasn't enough money for me to be able to live in such a city [OK] and then and go to a school so I decided to leave



- To live
- To leave
- Money



6 Hector and Dan



☀ To live

☀ To leave

☀ Money



☀ To make people feel more comfortable

6 Thriving in English - Caroline



- Caroline from France
- My secondary school was maybe I don't know twenty minutes away from my home and I had to go back for lunch. So I took this old bike and cycled to my school.
- Secondary school
- For lunch
- to my school



6 Thriving in English - Anke



■ Anke from Germany

■ ... my parents had only one car and my Dad uh had the car for going to work so so often we could only use a bus ...

■ Had



■ Bus



■ http://www.speechinaction.net/SPARC_ELF.htm

6 Thriving in English - Ulises



■ Ulises from Argentina

■ So at the end of the secondary school I had in biology and health matters a teacher who was a doctor who was a surgeon and he has this strong personality some surgeons have and he was very charismatic and very influential.



http://www.speechinaction.net/SPARC_ELF.htm

6 Thriving in English - Andrzej



☀ Andrzej from Poland

☀ But I guess that there are some minor climate changes because winters in Poland these days are not as harsh as they used to be.



☀ These days



http://www.speechinaction.net/SPARC_ELF.htm

6 Thriving in English - Dorota

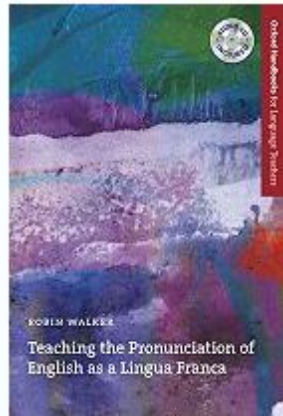
■ Dorota from Poland

■ And it was a special grammar school with um German which meant I had probably twice as many ah hours ...of...a foreign language which was German in my case than any other school and also I had chemistry in German which was a an absolute nightmare.

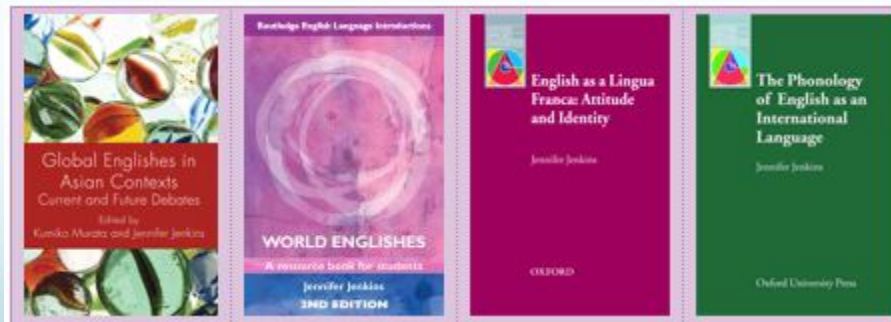


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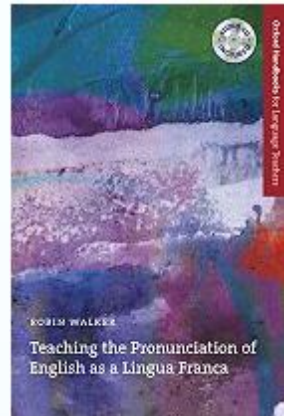
7 English as a Lingua Franca



- English is not ours
- Reference models are very useful – but they are not what people speak
- ELF movement can help us identify attainment models



7 English as a Lingua Franca



- ELF can remove the sense of professional inadequacy improve sense of self-worth
- Add power to the 'protest of nobodies'



7 ELF – academic power



We do need ...[researchers] ... to arouse the public awareness since people tend to prefer expertise to the protest of nobodies (Golombek & Jordan 2005)

8 Final thoughts

- No such thing as a 'good accent' for all circumstances
- Everyone carries around a bag of prejudices which familiarity slowly removes
- Some prejudices will always remain – but they can be controlled

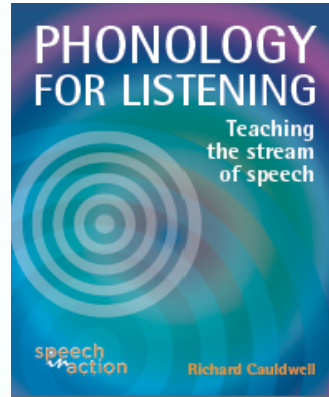
8 Final thoughts

- People are multi-accented they speak with a number of voices.
- The Prestige Accent is something of an embarrassment.
- The Prestige Accent has too many roles, it is only suitable for one
- A Reference model, not an attainment model
- We are surrounded by voices of people who do not speak the reference model, the prestige accent
- They thrive!

8 Final thoughts

- Use the prestige accent as a reference model
- Not as an attainment model/achievement target
- Not as a measure of professional expertise
- Not as a generator of professional insecurity
- Not as a moral touchstone
- Listen, observe, and become familiar with all these other accents ...
- People have a repertoire of identities
- People have a repertoire of pronunciations & accents

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