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ADVANCED LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR TARGET LANGUAGE PRONUNCIATION. A STUDY WITH POLISH STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

The article explores the attitudes of Polish students of English towards their target language pronunciation. The data collected through a questionnaire are analyzed in correspondence to two major grouping variables: specialization (teacher vs. translator) and the level of studies (BA vs. MA level). In particular, the paper reports on five aspects of advanced learners' opinions and beliefs about L2 pronunciation: concern for pronunciation accuracy, self-efficacy beliefs about pronunciation learning, attitudes to pronunciation instruction, pronunciation learning goals as well as strategies. Additionally, comments are made regarding the respondents' attitudes to their target language accent and to the presence of native features in their English pronunciation.

1. Introduction

Pronunciation is an aspect of foreign language learning that seems to be disregarded by learners and that “is still not a priority for most L2 researchers or teachers” (Deng et al. 2009: 11). Probably, an average learner would admit that it is important to practise target language pronunciation, particularly in its native version. Yet, many would equally likely argue that if one's speech can be understood, striving for perfection may but does not have to be their goal of learning. In consequence, as Waniek-Klimczak (2015: 76) claims, learners often treat pronunciation “as something unneeded to pass major language exams” and add that accuracy in it “may seem not needed”, “not worth the trouble”. These arguments, perhaps, would willingly be picked up by quite a few teachers whose main concern is rather to teach grammar and vocabulary, or to relegate pronunciation teaching “to a subsidiary role of broader language performance skills such as speaking and listening” (Barrera Pardo 2004: 6). Added to that is the dissatisfaction felt with own pronunciation skills, which often bothers the

former but also the latter, whose other distress is lack of appropriate training in phonetics and pronunciation teaching (see e.g. Henderson et al. 2012 and 2015). This, at least, seems to be the case in Polish schools where, as Lipińska (2016: 18) notes, the status of pronunciation teaching “is still very low” and “learners are critical not only of their own pronunciation skills but also of their teachers’ abilities to speak correctly”.

Researchers, on the other hand, seem to find it problematic to undertake studies on a phenomenon the true nature of which is hardly perceptible with ordinary instruments of investigation. Actually, Murphy and Baker (2015: 36) contend that “there is little direct evidence of pronunciation teaching practices for most of the modern era of English language teaching”, partly because “prior to the second half of the twentieth century”, “classroom research reports tended to focus on areas other than pronunciation teaching”. The complexity of pronunciation becomes even more daunting once the scholars realize how many variables interfere with it, such as age, aptitude, motivation, experience or mother tongue influence (e.g. Pawlak 2010b; Gilakjani and Ahmadi 2011; Trofimovich et al. 2015). Unfortunately, as Baran-Łucarz (2012: 300) suggests, “it is not easy to conclude which learner variables are the strongest predictors of success” in foreign language pronunciation accuracy.

In fact, the situation with pronunciation-related matters at an academic level seems to be somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, overviews of pronunciation research, such as Nowacka’s (2012) review of questionnaire-based studies, Henderson et al.’s (2012, 2015) reports on English pronunciation teaching in Europe or Deng et al.’s (2009) analysis of academic journals concerning the interest taken in this area of language, indicate that quite a lot has already been done. On the other hand, the frequent conclusion that these articles come to is that “the study of pronunciation has been marginalized”, and therefore “teachers are often left to rely on their own intuitions with little direction” (Derwing and Munro 2005: 379). Such an impression is reinforced considering that, as Murphy and Baker (2015: 55) report, many previously unresolved research topics started to be addressed as late as around the beginning of the twenty-first century and a journal devoted to L2 pronunciation, the *Journal of Second Language Pronunciation*, appeared for the first time in 2015. Therefore, it seems that any attempt to add to the knowledge of this somewhat neglected area of foreign language research may prove valuable.

With a view to the above, the present paper reports the findings of a questionnaire-based study designed to investigate the attitudes of 180 Polish university students of English towards their target language pronunciation. The data are analyzed to determine the beliefs held about such facets of L2 pronunciation as concern for pronunciation accuracy, self-efficacy beliefs about pronunciation learning, attitudes to pronunciation instruction, as well as pronunciation learning goals and strategies. In addition, attention is devoted to the students’ opinions about their target language accent and the native-like character of their English pronunciation. The specific perspective adopted in this study involves the ex-

ploration of the results in correspondence to the participants' level of studies (BA vs. MA) and specialization area (teacher vs. translator). Overall, it is hoped that since learners' attitudes and beliefs "are an important source of teachers' critical reflection on the aims, methods and results of the courses which they offer, as well as of the didactic process on a macro scale", the present study will provide new insights into foreign language pronunciation pedagogy as well as contribute to the existing literature on this matter (Sobkowiak 2002: 177-178).

2. An outline of previous research on learners' attitudes towards L2 pronunciation

Pronunciation, encompassing various aspects of the oral production of language, constitutes an essential component of active language skills that enable learners to express themselves in the foreign language. Therefore, the discussion centred on this matter should, according to Remiszewski (2008: 307), "embrace the attitudes and beliefs of the learner", especially that "a more thorough analysis of learners' motivations and beliefs can cast some new light on the discussed problem". Indeed, learners' judgements about the process of foreign language learning are assumed to have a strong impact on their behaviour in the classroom, and thus indirectly also on teachers' performance. Pawlak et al. (2015) provide an interesting review of studies which show how diverse facets of foreign language teaching and learning are influenced by learners' beliefs. Interestingly, these are not only individual characteristics of language learners, especially those correlated with language learning success, that can be positively or negatively affected by what goes on inside their heads (see e.g. Kalaja and Barcelos 2013). Actually, as Incecay and Dollar (2011: 3394) maintain, "studying learners' beliefs can help teachers extend their repertoire of teaching strategies and develop greater flexibility in their applications". Worth noting, thus, is that even though general L2 pronunciation research appears to some scholars as relatively unsubstantial (e.g. Brown 1991; Deng et al. 2009), it seems that Remiszewski's appeal for studies recognizing the importance of learners' opinions about teaching and learning pronunciation has been partly responded to, both in Poland and abroad.

A comprehensive overview of pronunciation studies based on questionnaires has been provided by Nowacka (2012), who focuses her attention on the international scene as well as on the Polish one. Interesting is also Alghazo's (2015) review of studies on the value of learner beliefs about pronunciation instruction. In short, as regards research conducted abroad, learners' opinions have been sought on diverse aspects of pronunciation education, for example, perception of foreign accent by native and non-native speakers (Vishnevskaya 2008) pronunciation preferences for phonological variation among linguistically trained and untrained respondents (Benrabah 2010), beliefs about pronunciation teaching held by advanced Dutch learners (Simon and Taverniers 2011), pronunciation identity constructions of learners and speakers among Croatian

students (Smojver and Stanojević 2013), to mention a few recent ones. Interesting is also Saundz Survey (2015) conducted by the research team that developed an innovative curriculum based educational software program intended to help non-native speakers to learn the sounds of American English. The study focuses on the perspective that students from various countries adopt on the importance of English pronunciation, including also their opinion on whether pronunciation skills are actually developed in the classroom.

As for the Polish context, Pawlak (2010b: 169) comments that in recent years there has been “a considerable growth of interest in empirical investigations exploring various aspects of teaching foreign language pronunciation at different levels of instruction in Poland.” Researchers have concentrated on diverse aspects of phonetic education, including also teachers’ and learners’ beliefs (for an overview see e.g. Pawlak 2010b, Nowacka 2012, Pawlak et al. 2015, Waniek-Klimczak et al. 2013 and 2015, Waniek-Klimczak 2015), though, as Pawlak et al. (2015) argue, in the latter case scholars’ interest has been surprisingly low. It seems that popular foci of exploration based on learners’ beliefs, held mainly by those enrolled in higher education institutions, have been the importance of pronunciation in comparison with the other foreign language subsystems (e.g. Krzyżyński 1988, Sobkowiak 2002, Waniek-Klimczak 2011, Lipińska 2014), the overall importance of achieving good English pronunciation (e.g. Nowacka 2012, Waniek-Klimczak et al. 2013, 2015; Lipińska 2014), students’ attitudes towards native speaker models (e.g. Waniek-Klimczak 1997, Waniek-Klimczak and Klimczak 2005, Janicka et al. 2008, Waniek-Klimczak 2011, Nowacka 2012, Lipińska 2015, Waniek-Klimczak et al. 2015), the usefulness of pronunciation instruction (e.g. Waniek-Klimczak 1997, Pawlak et al. 2015). Worth mentioning are also studies on pronunciation conducted among secondary school learners of English. Researchers devoted their attention, for instance, to students’ preferences regarding the English pronunciation model (Szpyra-Kozłowska 2004), the level of English classes and competences of teachers in Polish secondary schools (Szpyra-Kozłowska 2008), learners’ changing attitudes towards learning English pronunciation (Lipińska 2014), the effectiveness of a holistic multimodal pronunciation teaching among secondary school students of English (Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak 2016).

Notwithstanding the diversity of research signalled above, it still seems that, as Baker and Murphy (2011: 40) indicate, limited attention is devoted to learners’ beliefs of L2 pronunciation teaching and thus additional “studies that target students’ perceptions in a range of EFL instructional contexts would certainly be welcome”, especially in places other than “Canada, New Zealand, or the US”. Such a claim serves as a relevant motivation to add to this apparently underexplored aspect of foreign language learning by undertaking a study that examines learners’ attitudes towards English pronunciation from a somewhat different perspective than has been adopted in other investigations of this kind. The particular approach taken here involves the analysis of students’ beliefs about various aspects of their L2 pronunciation in correspondence to the level of

education (BA vs. MA) and specialization area (teacher vs. translator). Actually, it seems that until now, at least in the Polish context, only the former grouping variable has been attended to by selected researchers (see Waniek-Klimczak et al. 2013, 2015). Yet, given that “particular learner variables (...) might enhance or hinder progress in learning another language”, it is tentatively expected that both these factors may prove to have an effect on students’ pronunciation opinions (Dreyer and Van Der Welt 1994: 91).

3. The study

3.1. Aims

The study aims to explore the attitudes of Polish university students of English towards their target language pronunciation. Contrary to the popular belief that communicating at all in a foreign language is more important than being correct, also in terms of pronunciation, the present study is motivated by the conviction that learners’ opinions may prove to be quite the opposite. Indeed, as Baran-Łuczarska (2012: 290) maintains, “pronunciation is an aspect that foreign language (FL) students usually show great concern for, irrelevant of their level, age and educational background.” In an attempt to probe the validity of the presented quotation, the data gathered for the study are analysed taking into consideration two major grouping variables: specialization (teacher vs. translator) and the level of education (BA vs. MA level).

The reason behind the choice of such two variables is that basically most of other studies investigating the beliefs of Polish students of English to target language pronunciation adopted a more general perspective. Specifically, the data were not explored in correspondence to any grouping variables. A notable exception here might be the study conducted by Waniek-Klimczak et al. (2013) on affective dimensions in SL pronunciation, in which factors such as gender, age, learning experience, place of study and school type of the participants are considered. Worth mentioning is also a later study carried out by the same researchers (Waniek-Klimczak et al. 2015) on the attitudes of English majors towards ‘Polglish’, in which the results are analyzed across the level of education and gender of participants. As for the former variable, which has as well been selected for the present study, it seems that educational experience, possibly also because it increases with the students’ age and thus self-awareness, influences foreign language learning and performance expectations. For instance, Waniek-Klimczak et al. (2013, 2015) report that graduate students are more tolerant of the degree of pronunciation correctness, often seen as nativeness, they would like to achieve. Regarding the other variable, namely the participants’ specialization area, it has been assumed here that given the differing professional purposes for which future teachers and translators need English, the impact of this factor on the collected data may prove revealing. Indeed, Gilakjani and

Ahmadi (2011: 76) mention several studies which show that “having a personal or professional goal for learning English can influence the need and desire for native-like pronunciation.”

3.2. Participants

The participants were 180 full-time students of English at a Polish state university who could be characterized as rather proficient learners with a reasonable amount of background in pronunciation training and descriptive grammar (i.e. phonetics and phonology). 99 were enrolled in a 3-year BA program while 81 were enrolled in a 2-year MA program. During the first year of study the BA students take general courses intended to develop their foreign language awareness and linguistic competence. At the end of the first year they declare the preferred specialization: teaching or translation, and continue their education for the remaining two years, deepening the knowledge of English as well as acquiring skills relevant to future profession. Considering that specialization is one of the variables selected for the present study, the BA freshmen students were excluded from participating in the research. As for the MA level, the answers of all students were considered since the candidates choose their specialization upon enrolling in the university.

At the time the study was conducted, 169 (93.89%) of the participants were in the 20-25 age group and the remaining 11 (6.11%) were aged 26 and above with the exception of one person aged 19. The majority of respondents were females: 138 (76,67%), which is around three times as many as males: 42 (23,33%). This is not surprising given that in Poland around twice as many women as men prefer such fields of study as Humanities, Education science and teacher training (*Kobiety w Polsce* 2007: 117). Regarding the ratio of the BA students (55%) to those at MA level (45%) as well as the proportion of translator trainees (52.78%) to teacher trainees (47.22%), in both cases it was around one to one, with a slight advantage of the former subgroup of students over the latter one in each respective comparison. Table 1 presents the distribution of the participants by specialization and level of studies. Details concerning the gender of participants at the BA or MA level or within a particular specialization are not provided as this variable is not taken into account in the study.

Table 1. Distribution of the participants by specialization and level of studies

		<i>Specialization</i>		Total
		Translator trainees	Teacher trainees	
<i>Level of studies</i>	BA	44	55	99 (55%)
	MA	51	30	81 (45%)
Total		95 (52.78%)	85 (47.22%)	180 (100%)

3.3. Data collection instrument and procedure

In this study, the data were gathered by means of an anonymous questionnaire adapted from Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI) devised by Elliot (1995). Elliot used the PAI as one of the instruments to examine various aspects of pronunciation acquisition of a group of students studying Spanish. Therefore, the test had to be slightly modified to serve the present purpose which involves a focus on the English language.

The questionnaire was worded in English and comprised background questions about gender, age, year of studies and specialization as well as main survey questions. As for the latter ones, the body of the survey consisted of 12 statements about pronunciation relating to five aspects in terms of which the subjects' attitudes to L2 pronunciation would be discussed further in the study. Specifically, six statements (Q 1, Q 4, Q 5, Q 9, Q 11, Q 12) referred to the participants' concern for pronunciation accuracy, two (Q 2, Q 6) pertained to self-efficacy beliefs about pronunciation learning, two (Q 7, Q 8) concerned pronunciation learning goals, one (Q 3) revealed attitudes to pronunciation instruction, and one (Q 10) informed about the students' inclination to use selected pronunciation learning strategies. The statements followed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'always or almost always true of me' to 'never or almost never true of me'.

The questionnaire was administered to the participants during the classes. The procedure took around 10 minutes. The results were analyzed with respect to the number of students choosing a particular answer in relation to their specialization (teacher vs. translator) and level of education (BA vs. MA). In particular, before and after the decomposition of the data was performed, each item was analyzed by calculating the frequencies of the five Likert scale responses, computing their percentages as well as mean and standard deviation.

4. Findings and discussion

Before examining closely the results for the specific Likert-scale statements and the aspects in terms of which the students' attitudes to L2 pronunciation are discussed in the study, attention should be devoted to the general results of the questionnaire computed for all participants and summarized in Table 2. Descriptive statistics encompass the mean values, standard deviations as well as minimum and maximum values obtained for each statement from the whole of respondents ($N = 180$).

As can be seen from the table, all respondents replied to every single statement. Moreover, all items had the maximum value of five – 'always or almost always true of me'. However, such consistency was not observed for the minimum value of one – 'never or almost never true of me'. For instance, in the case of Q 1, the lowest possible value was three – 'somewhat true of me', which indicates that none of the participants thinks in an absolutely negative way about this question.

A similar situation was observed for Q 2 and Q 3 which were not rated lower than two – ‘usually not true of me’. The remaining questions scored the minimum and maximum value on the five-point scale. Furthermore, Q 2 has the highest mean value of $M = 4.61$ ($SD = 0.60$), which shows that the participants closely adhere to the belief that they can master their pronunciation skills in English. Interestingly, Q 6, which has the lowest mean rating of $M = 2.20$ ($SD = 1.07$), has been formulated as a negative and thus its low mean value actually reflects well on what it implies about the students’ opinions on their pronunciation of English. This is also partly the case with Q 12 with the mean rating of $M = 2.97$ ($SD = 1.08$). Hence, it seems that the statement rated the least favourably by the participants, considering obviously the ones formulated in a positive manner, is actually Q 5 with the mean score of $M = 3.78$ ($SD = 1.03$). Details concerning the possible implications of what has been briefly signalled above are presented further in the study.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the statements calculated for all participants

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
1	Acquiring proper pronunciation in English is important to me.	4.60	0.60	3	5
2	I believe I can improve my pronunciation skills in English.	4.61	0.60	2	5
3	I believe more emphasis should be given to proper pronunciation in class.	4.26	0.86	2	5
4	I want to improve my accent when speaking English.	4.44	0.85	1	5
5	I’m concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English.	3.78	1.03	1	5
6	I will never be able to speak English with a good accent.	2.20	1.07	1	5
7	One of my personal goals is to acquire proper pronunciation skills and preferably be able to pass as a near-native speaker of the language.	3.91	0.96	1	5
8	I’d like to sound as native as possible when speaking English.	4.25	0.94	1	5
9	Sounding like a native speaker is very important to me.	3.93	1.04	1	5
10	I try to imitate English speakers as much as possible.	3.81	1.05	1	5
11	Communicating is more important than sounding like a native speaker of English.	4.00	0.98	1	5
12	Good pronunciation in English is not as important as learning vocabulary and grammar.	2.97	1.08	1	5

Generally, in the discussion that follows the students' responses revealing their attitudes to L2 pronunciation are presented in Tables related to the different areas of interest explored in the study. Specifically, Tables 3, 4 and 5 show the participants' concern for pronunciation accuracy, Table 6 presents self-efficacy beliefs about pronunciation learning, Table 7 provides information on pronunciation learning goals, Table 8 reflects attitudes to pronunciation instruction, and Table 9 informs about the students' inclination to use selected pronunciation learning strategies. In each case, the percentages of responses to the Likert-scale items in the 'never or almost never true of me' (1), 'usually not true of me' (2), 'somewhat true of me' (3), 'usually true of me' (4), 'always or almost always true of me' (5) categories are given, along with the mean (M) and the value of standard deviation (SD) for each statement. These values are provided separately for the grouping variables of specialization (teacher vs. translator) and tertiary education level (BA vs. MA) selected for the present study. Additionally, next to a specific statement there is supplied the mean and standard deviation calculated from the entire sample. Overall, in the sections that follow, the responses to each question are analyzed and the main patterns that emerge from the data are presented, also with regard to the significance of between-group differences, which was assessed using two-sample Welch's unequal variances *t*-tests ($\alpha = 0.05$).

4.1. Statements referring to concern for pronunciation accuracy

The opening set of statements relates to the participants' concern for pronunciation accuracy. Some of the six questions discussed below are general in nature, others concentrate more exclusively on what the students actually regard as the correctness of pronunciation. Specifically, the first two statements adopt a general approach to the problem of pronunciation accuracy. Q 1: *Acquiring proper pronunciation in English is important to me* explores the level of importance placed on learning good English pronunciation. By comparison, Q 5: *I'm concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English* attempts to determine the extent to which the participants care about making progress in L2 pronunciation.

As illustrated in Table 3, in the case of Q 1 the mean score across the sample is high $M = 4.60$ ($SD = 0.60$), actually, it is the second highest mean value obtained for the questionnaire items from the whole of respondents. This indicates that the students find the acquisition of good English pronunciation an important issue. Such responses come as no surprise in view of similar declarations obtained from students in several previous studies. Among some recent ones are, for example, Saundz Survey (2015) conducted on the international scene, Nowacka (2012) who surveyed students both from Poland and abroad as well as Waniek-Klimczak et al. (2013, 2015) and Lipińska (2014) in the Polish context.

Table 3. Attitudes of the participants to pronunciation accuracy: statements 1 and 5

1) Acquiring proper pronunciation in English is important to me.						$M = 4.60, SD = 0.60$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	0	0	7.07	26.26	66.67	4.59	0.62
MA level	0	0	4.94	28.39	66.67	4.61	0.58
teachers	0	0	4.70	20.00	75.3	4.70	0.55
translators	0	0	7.37	33.68	58.95	4.51	0.63

5) I'm concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English.						$M = 3.78, SD = 1.03$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	4.04	7.07	26.26	35.36	27.27	3.74	1.06
MA level	3.70	6.17	18.52	46.92	24.69	3.82	0.99
teachers	1.18	5.88	18.82	45.88	28.24	3.94	0.90
translators	6.31	7.37	26.32	35.79	24.21	3.64	1.11

Interestingly, the participants' general attitude to the correctness of pronunciation proves to be somewhat ambivalent in the context of the results obtained for Q 5. In particular, when it comes to the students' concern about their progress in target language pronunciation, here the mean rating across the sample is at the level of $M = 3.78$ ($SD = 1.03$). As a matter of fact, this makes Q 5 the least favourably rated one from among those formulated in a positive manner. However, such inconsistency in the general approach to the problem in question is not so significantly reflected in the responses produced by individual participants for the distinct Likert-scale categories. Regarding Q 1, it should be noted that none of the students marked it by choosing the two most negative categories of the scale, which suggests a fairly unanimous opinion on the high degree of importance that is attached to proper English pronunciation. In contrast, the views on Q 5 of individual participants are more divided, since all five Likert scale response categories were selected by them. Indeed, this is reflected in the relatively high standard deviation of $SD = 1.03$ obtained for the statement across the sample.

When it comes to the results calculated separately for the two main grouping variables, Table 3 shows that in the case of Q 1, the correctness of English pronunciation proves to be almost equally important across the level of studies [$t(174) = 0.2231$, $p = 0.8237$], with MA students scoring marginally higher ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 0.58$) than BA students ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.62$). Interestingly, comparable results were obtained by Waniek-Klimczak et al. (2013: 132), who howev-

er reported slightly more concern for the importance of pronunciation on the part of BA students ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 0.51$) than the MA ones ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 0.47$). When viewed across specialization groups, the mean values obtained for the two groups of participants considered differ significantly [$t(177) = 2.1601$, $p = 0.0321$]. In particular, teacher trainees, whose mean rating of $M = 4.70$ ($SD = 0.55$) was the highest calculated for any questionnaire item, presented themselves as the most attentive to the acquisition of proper pronunciation in English. Actually, as many as 75.3% of them selected the maximal positive category of five for this statement. Translator trainees, in turn, whose mean score was $M = 4.51$ ($SD = 0.63$), appeared as the least concerned about correct pronunciation.

As for Q 5, the results included in Table 3 indicate that the participants pay somewhat restrained attention to their progress in English pronunciation. This is quite surprising or even confusing, especially that they simultaneously attach considerable importance to learning proper pronunciation, as reflected in the responses to Q 1. Based on this, it can be tentatively postulated that what the students focus more on is the end result of the pronunciation learning process than the practices through which it is achieved. Specifically, with reference to the level of education, MA students attached slightly more importance to the matter in question ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.99$) than BA students ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.06$), yet the difference proved to be statistically insignificant [$t(174) = 0.5224$, $p = 0.6020$]. By comparison, the mean values obtained across specialization groups were more diverged, with teacher trainees expressing greater concern about their progress in target language pronunciation ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.90$) than translator trainees ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.11$). The significance of the difference was further supported by the t -test results [$t(176) = 2.0000$, $p = 0.0470$].

Turning now to the next two statements, Q 4: *I want to improve my accent when speaking English* concentrates on whether the students consider good accent to be an important condition for their target language pronunciation. In turn, Q 9: *Sounding like a native speaker is very important to me* is focused on revealing how important for the participants is the ability to sound like a native speaker of English.

As can be seen from Table 4, the students declare their firm belief that the ability to speak English with a good accent is indispensable. This is indicated by the mean value of $M = 4.44$ ($SD = 0.85$), which was obtained for Q 4 across the sample. Such an attitude to the matter is actually verified with the responses produced for Q 6 (see Tables 2 and 6) in which the participants objected to the suggestion they would never be able to speak English with a good accent. Regarding now Q 9, which is reflective of the degree of importance that the students place on native-like features in their pronunciation, the mean rating of $M = 3.93$ ($SD = 1.04$) appears as moderately high in comparison with the other mean values. Indeed, this somewhat restrained enthusiasm for considering nativeness an important condition for the correctness of pronunciation is corroborated by almost the same mean value obtained for Q 7 (see Tables 2 and 7) in which the participants were not quite willing to make the discussed factor their personal goal.

Table 4. Attitudes of the participants to pronunciation accuracy: statements 4 and 9

4) I want to improve my accent when speaking English.						$M = 4.44, SD = 0.85$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	2.02	1.01	8.08	21.21	67.68	4.51	0.84
MA level	1.23	2.47	9.88	32.10	54.32	4.35	0.85
teachers	2.35	1.18	4.70	21.18	70.59	4.56	0.83
translators	1.05	2.11	12.63	30.53	53.68	4.33	0.85

9) Sounding like a native speaker is very important to me.						$M = 3.93, SD = 1.04$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	4.04	2.02	20.20	37.37	36.37	4.00	1.01
MA level	3.70	7.40	22.22	33.34	33.34	3.85	1.08
teachers	1.18	3.53	22.35	41.18	31.76	3.98	0.89
translators	6.31	5.26	20.00	30.53	37.90	3.88	1.16

When it comes to the results computed separately for the two main grouping variables, Table 4 demonstrates that in the case of Q 4, the students find a good English accent valuable. In particular, considering the results obtained across the level of studies these are BA students who have a more positive attitude in this regard ($M = 4.51, SD = 0.84$) in comparison with the more sceptical MA students ($M = 4.35, SD = 0.85$). Surprisingly, the difference between the two groups, though seemingly large, only approached statistical significance but failed to reach it [$t(170) = 1.2083, p = 0.2083$]. Looking now at the values obtained across specialization groups, more favourably disposed to the matter are teacher trainees with the mean rating of $M = 4.56 (SD = 0.83)$, whereas the intention of translator trainees to improve their target language accent is less definite ($M = 4.33, SD = 0.85$). Actually, the difference falls only marginally short of statistical significance [$t(176) = 1.8350, p = 0.0682$]. An additional comment here might be that in each distinct group of participants there were individuals whose reaction to the statement was different than that of the majority of their colleagues. As a result, each category of Likert scale response was selected at least once.

With reference to Q 9, the results included in Table 4 indicate that the students do not really see a close link between pronunciation accuracy and the ability to sound like a native speaker of English. The least convinced about such a relationship were MA students with the mean score of $M = 3.85 (SD = 1.08)$. By comparison, BA students, whose mean value of $M = 4.00 (SD = 1.01)$ was the highest obtained for this statement, the most firmly declared that the native-

like features of English pronunciation are important for them. Turning now to the mean scores calculated across specialization groups, it can be noticed that the differences in the participants' attitudes were more subtle. Specifically, teacher trainees scored slightly higher ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.89$) than translator trainees ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.16$). Still, their mean values were included within the range established by the results obtained across the level of education. Moreover, when tested with the t -test, the differences both across the level of studies [$t(166) = 0.9543$, $p = 0.3413$] as well as across specialization groups [$t(174) = 0.6526$, $p = 0.5149$] proved to be statistically insignificant.

As for the final two questions reflective of the participants' concern for pronunciation accuracy, Q 11: *Communicating is more important than sounding like a native speaker of English* aims to determine whether the students value more intelligibility or the native-like character of their English pronunciation. By comparison, Q 12: *Good pronunciation in English is not as important as learning vocabulary and grammar* is meant to examine whether more importance is attached to acquiring proper pronunciation or to developing grammar and vocabulary.

Table 5. Attitudes of the participants to pronunciation accuracy: statements 11 and 12

11) Communicating is more important than sounding like a native speaker of English.						$M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.98$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	2.02	5.05	26.26	28.29	38.38	3.95	1.01
MA level	0.00	7.40	18.52	35.80	38.28	4.04	0.93
teachers	1.18	1.18	24.71	29.41	43.52	4.12	0.91
translators	1.05	10.54	21.05	33.68	33.68	3.88	1.03
12) Good pronunciation in English is not as important as learning vocabulary and grammar.						$M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.08$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	5.05	26.26	37.37	22.22	9.10	3.04	1.02
MA level	13.59	22.22	33.33	23.46	7.40	2.88	1.13
teachers	10.59	22.35	37.65	22.35	7.06	2.92	1.07
translators	7.37	26.32	33.68	23.16	9.47	3.01	1.08

It can be noted from Table 5 that the students are not very strongly inclined to agree that the mere ability to communicate in English is more valuable than a fair measure of nativeness of their pronunciation. This conclusion can be

drawn based on the moderately high mean value of $M = 4.00$ ($SD = 0.98$) obtained across the sample for Q 11. By comparison, the overall score of $M = 2.97$ ($SD = 1.08$) for Q 12 testifies to the participants' undecided opinion as to which aspect of target language is the most important for them to acquire and improve in the learning process. It thus seems that, according to the students, equally close attention should be devoted to correct pronunciation as to grammar and vocabulary. Indeed, such an attitude on the part of those striving to become fluent in a foreign language is not surprising especially that, as Harpham (2013: 57) claims, "there is no single way of determining which aspect of language is logically prior to or more fundamental than the others".

Looking now at the results calculated separately for the two main grouping variables, Table 5 illustrates that in the case of Q 11, the students choose communicating over the ability to sound like a native speaker of English, but their choice is not so definite. Interestingly, Baran-Łucarz (2015: 43) in her examination of willingness to communicate in a foreign language reports that only 6% of the students "declared their goal to be communicative English" and as many as 89% demonstrated a clear preference for approximating native-like pronunciation of English. The results obtained in the present study, when viewed across the level of studies, reveal that MA students opted for communicating more ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.93$) than BA students ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.01$), which however proved statistically insignificant [$t(163) = 0.9871$, $p = 0.3251$]. Interestingly, even though the mean value for MA students was not the highest of those obtained for the statement, they were more uniform in selecting the positive categories of Likert scale. This is indicated by the detailed results included in Table 5 which visualize it clearly that none of these students marked the statement as 'never or almost never true of me'. By comparison, the results obtained across specialization groups differ more significantly [$t(177) = 1.6597$, $p = 0.0987$], since teacher trainees with the mean rating of $M = 4.12$ ($SD = 0.91$) expressed the greatest conviction that communication is what really matters. The least likely to sympathize with this belief proved to be translator trainees, with the mean score of $M = 3.88$ ($SD = 1.03$).

As regards Q 12, Table 5 demonstrates that the mean scores calculated for the distinct groups of participants were close to the median on Likert scale, which is category 3. This indicates that the students are unable to definitely point to the aspect of language which they value the most. Specifically, as for the level of studies, BA students put slightly more emphasis on grammar and vocabulary ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.02$) than MA students ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.13$), yet the difference fails to reach statistical significance [$t(175) = 0.6213$, $p = 0.5352$]. This partly correlates with the results reported by Lipińska (2014: 163) for third-year students of English philology, by Sobkowiak (2002) for university students as well as by Krzyżyński (1988) for English majors, for whom grammar and vocabulary are more important than pronunciation, which they nevertheless consider as relatively significant. Also Waniek-Klimczak (2011) reports that English majors value pronunciation less than vocabulary, yet more than gram-

mar. Turning now to the mean rating computed across specialization groups, somewhat more sceptical about giving priority to pronunciation over the other aspects of target language were translator trainees ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.08$) than teacher trainees ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.07$), though the difference was not statistically significant [$t(176) = 0.5609$, $p = 0.5756$]. Worth noting is also the fact that the values of standard deviation obtained for the different groups of participants are over 1.00. This actually indicates that there was substantial individual variation in responses to this questionnaire item, which may be partly due to the fact that it was formulated as a negative.

4.2. Statements referring to self-efficacy beliefs about pronunciation learning

The two following questions were posed to reveal the students' self-efficacy beliefs about pronunciation learning. Self-efficacy generally refers to "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura 1997: 3). In the present study, the concept is used in reference to the participants' level of determination behind their effort to master target language pronunciation. Specifically, Q 2: *I believe I can improve my pronunciation skills in English* explores self-evaluation of whether the students can actually perfect their pronunciation of English. By comparison, Q 6: *I will never be able to speak English with a good accent* aims to discover the students' opinion about the possibility of attaining a correct English accent.

Table 6. Self-efficacy beliefs of the participants about pronunciation learning

2) I believe I can improve my pronunciation skills in English.						$M = 4.61$, $SD = 0.60$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	0.00	0.00	4.04	25.26	70.70	4.66	0.55
MA level	0.00	2.47	2.47	32.10	62.96	4.55	0.67
teachers	0.00	2.35	1.18	24.71	71.76	4.65	0.62
translators	0.00	0.00	5.26	31.58	63.16	4.57	0.59
6) I will never be able to speak English with a good accent.						$M = 2.2$, $SD = 1.07$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	39.40	30.30	14.14	15.15	1.01	2.08	1.11
MA level	24.69	30.86	29.63	14.82	0.00	2.34	1.01
teachers	38.82	35.30	14.12	11.76	0.00	1.98	1.00
translators	27.37	26.32	27.37	17.89	1.05	2.38	1.10

As can be seen from Table 6, there is a significant difference between the mean scores for statements two ($M = 4.61$) and six ($M = 2.2$) obtained both across the sample and by each respective group of students. The reason behind this is probably that Q 6 has a negative overtone. Hence, the fact it has the lowest mean rating in the questionnaire actually indicates that the majority of the participants do not agree with this statement, and instead are deeply convinced they can be successful at speaking English with a good accent. The difference between the two questionnaire items is also noticeable in the standard deviations calculated for them from the responses given by the full sample of participants. The standard deviation obtained for Q 6 is $SD = 1.07$, which is quite large in comparison with the $SD = 0.60$ obtained for Q 2. Additionally, detailed information about the results for each Likert-scale category shows clearly that in the case of Q 6 the students' responses are more diverged than those produced for Q 2. These findings seem to suggest that the participants are in more agreement with one another when it comes to the high judgement of their own capabilities for a general improvement of pronunciation skills in English (Q 2). Still, they are not so unanimously optimistic about perfecting their target language accent to the extent that it will be free from any foreign influence (Q 6).

When it comes to the results calculated separately for the two main grouping variables, it can be seen from Table 6 that in the case of Q 2, the students' perceptions of their ability to improve English pronunciation are highly positive. In fact, as regards the level of studies, both BA students ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 0.55$) and MA students ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.67$) provided very similar rating, with a slight advantage of the former group over the latter. The difference tended toward significance but failed to fully reach it [$t(154) = 1.1863$, $p = 0.2373$]. Almost the same values were obtained across specialization groups [$t(173) = 0.8842$, $p = 0.3778$], with teacher trainees scoring slightly higher ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.62$) than translation trainees ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.59$).

Subtle differences can be detected only when examining the individual results received from the different groups of participants for the five categories of Likert scale. As for the level of education, BA students seem to have more confidence in their abilities to make English pronunciation perfect, as none of them reacted to the statement by choosing the two most negative categories of the scale (i.e. 1 and 2) and as many as 70.7% selected the maximal positive value (i.e. 5). In the case of MA students the attitudes are marginally less favourable, since 2.47% of them declared that the statement is usually not true of them, which corresponds to one of the negative categories of the scale (i.e. 2), and 62.96%, which is less than two thirds, stated that the statement is always or almost always true of them. Turning now to specialization groups, these are teacher trainees among whom certain individuals have more doubts about their own capabilities to improve English pronunciation, since 2.35% of them selected one of the negative categories of the scale (i.e. 2). This, however, was not observed among translator trainees who are more unanimous in the choice of

the positive categories of the scale (i.e. 3, 4 and 5) even though their overall belief in own capabilities is slightly less firm in comparison with teacher trainees ($M = 4.57$ vs. $M = 4.65$).

With reference to Q 6, the results included in Table 6 testify to the participants' disagreement with what this item says, which means they generally believe in developing their ability to speak English with a good accent. Indeed, such a conviction of the respondents is not surprising, given the favourable responses produced for Q 4 (see Tables 2 and 4) in which they declared that a good accent is an important condition for their target language pronunciation. In particular, regarding the level of studies, the BA students' mean rating of $M = 2.08$ ($SD = 1.11$) indicates that they more likely admit the statement is never or at least usually not true of them. By comparison, MA students with the mean value of $M = 2.34$ ($SD = 1.01$) expressed less confidence in their future success as the speakers of English with a good accent. However, this finding was not statistically significant [$t(175) = 1.6431$, $p = 0.1022$]. Therefore, it cannot be conclusively determined whether with age the students become aware that "when it comes to L2 pronunciation, it is not always the case that the more experience L2 learners have with the language, the better the outcomes of L2 pronunciation learning will be" (Trofimovich et al. 2015: 361). As for specialization groups, these were teacher trainees who appeared as more optimistic with the mean value of $M = 1.98$ ($SD = 1.00$), whereas translation trainees were less confident, since their mean score was $M = 2.38$ ($SD = 1.10$). Actually, when tested with the t -test, the difference proved to be statistically significant [$t(177) = 2.5554$, $p = 0.0114$].

Differences can be also seen when studying the individual results received from the different groups of participants for the five categories of Likert scale. Generally, the data show that BA students and translator trainees were less unanimous in their reactions to the statement. Specifically, in both these groups there was one individual who answering the question selected category five on the scale, which means 'always or almost always true of me', declaring in this way a relatively low self-efficacy judgement of their perceived success in learning good English accent. This was not observed in the groups of MA students and teacher trainees, respectively, among whom there were no individuals whose self-confidence in mastering English accent would be comparably low.

4.3. Statements referring to pronunciation learning goals

When it comes to the questions reflective of the views on pronunciation learning goals, their aim is basically to explore the extent to which the participants would like to learn and perfect their English pronunciation to an almost native-like level. Q 7: *One of my personal goals is to acquire proper pronunciation skills and preferably be able to pass as a near-native speaker of the language* adds importance to the learning objective in question by referring to it

as one's personal goal. By contrast, Q 8: *I'd like to sound as native as possible when speaking English* turns the task of acquiring a near-native pronunciation of the target language into a mere wish, which seems to be less definite than somebody's personal goal.

Table 7. Views of the participants on pronunciation learning goals

7) One of my personal goals is to acquire proper pronunciation skills and preferably be able to pass as a near-native speaker of the language.						$M = 3.91, SD = 0.96$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	2.02	3.03	25.26	40.4	29.29	3.91	0.92
MA level	2.47	8.64	16.05	41.98	30.86	3.90	1.01
teachers	1.18	3.53	21.18	42.35	31.76	4.00	0.88
translators	3.16	7.37	21.05	40.00	28.42	3.83	1.02
8) I'd like to sound as native as possible when speaking English.						$M = 4.25, SD = 0.94$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	1.01	3.03	17.17	23.23	55.56	4.29	0.92
MA level	1.23	4.94	16.05	16.05	50.62	4.20	0.97
teachers	0.00	2.35	16.47	29.41	51.77	4.30	0.83
translators	2.11	5.26	16.84	21.05	54.74	4.21	1.04

As illustrated in Table 7, in the case of Q 7 the mean score across the sample is moderately high $M = 3.91$ ($SD = 0.92$), which suggests that the students are somewhat reluctant to attach so much importance to learning native-like pronunciation that they would make it their personal goal. This actually is in line with what the participants declared in response to Q 9 (see Tables 2 and 4) in which they expressed restrained enthusiasm for the significance of nativeness to target language pronunciation. Instead, they rather prefer to tone down their attitude and relegate the matter to the sphere of wishful thinking. Such a conclusion can be drawn considering that Q 8 has the mean rating across the sample at the level of $M = 4.25$ ($SD = 0.94$), which is higher in comparison with item Q 7. Overall, it seems that the participants would like their English pronunciation to become as native as possible. Yet, their enthusiasm for making it one of their ultimate goals probably meets head-on with the mundane thought that such a purpose may actually prove unattainable.

Turning now to the results computed separately for the two main grouping variables, Table 7 demonstrates that in the case of Q 7, the students' strive for

perfection in English pronunciation is not so strong that they would perceive it as one of their primary objectives. Specifically, as for the level of studies, both BA students ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.92$) and MA students ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.01$) provided very similar rating [$t(163) = 0.0688$, $p = 0.9453$]. Somewhat different values were obtained across specialization groups, with teacher trainees intending more readily to make the acquisition of proper pronunciation in English their personal goal ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.88$) in comparison with translator trainees ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.02$). Yet, this difference failed to reach statistical significance [$t(177) = 1.2002$, $p = 0.2317$].

Still, subtle differences both across specialization groups as well as the level of education can be noticed when analyzing the individual results received from the different groups of participants for the five categories of Likert scale. Generally, MA students show a greater tendency to choose the negative categories of the scale: 2.47% of them selected category 1 in comparison with 2.02% of the BA students and as many as 8.64% selected category 2 in comparison with 3.03% of the BA students. Similarly, less optimistic also proved to be translator trainees, since 3.16% of them chose category 1 in comparison with 1.18% of the teacher trainees and as many as 7.37% opted for category 2 as compared to 3.53% of the teacher trainees.

As regards Q 8, the results included in Table 7 indicate that most of the participants quite firmly intend to speak as native-like English as possible. Such a conclusion stems from the fact that the mean values calculated separately for the different groups of respondents considered here exceed 4.19. In particular, as for the level of studies, BA students scored slightly higher ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.92$) than MA students ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.97$). A similar difference of 0.09 was noticed between the mean ratings calculated across specialization groups, with teacher trainees expressing their desire for near native pronunciation of the target language more openly ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.83$) than translator trainees ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.04$). Nevertheless, when tested with the *t*-test, these differences proved to be statistically insignificant, regarding both the level of education [$t(167) = 0.6338$, $p = 0.5271$] as well as specialization [$t(177) = 0.7452$, $p = 0.4572$].

It should also be pointed out that teacher trainees were the only participants who did not react to the statement by choosing the most negative category 1 on the Likert scale. Hence, it seems that future teachers are more unanimous in their intention to sound native when speaking English than the other groups of students, which is actually reflected in their mean rating of $M = 4.30$, the highest of all computed for this statement. "One of the reasons for these aspirations", as Baker and Burri (2016: 2) suggest, "may be attributed to cases of employment discrimination" which may be experienced especially by teachers if their pronunciation is not accurate enough. Translators, by comparison, can limit their professional activity to written texts, in the case of which native-like pronunciation is not needed.

4.4. Statements referring to attitudes to pronunciation instruction

The next item to be considered is Q 3: *I believe more emphasis should be given to proper pronunciation in class*. It explores the participants' expectations relating to the importance that is attached to appropriate pronunciation during classes. Actually, this issue can be tentatively interpreted as the students' perceptions of the role of correction or teacher intervention in class. Commenting upon this matter in a study devoted to attitudes about L2 pronunciation seems reasonable, especially that "there has been surprisingly few empirical investigations that would have attempted to tap learners' or teachers' beliefs and preferences concerning pronunciation teaching" (Pawlak et al. 2015: 5).

Table 8. Attitudes of the participants to pronunciation instruction

3) I believe more emphasis should be given to proper pronunciation in class.						$M = 4.26, SD = 0.86$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	0.00	7.07	12.12	33.33	47.48	4.21	0.91
MA level	0.00	0.00	20.99	24.69	54.32	4.33	0.80
teachers	0.00	2.35	7.06	32.94	57.65	4.45	0.73
translators	0.00	5.26	24.21	26.32	44.21	4.09	0.94

As can be seen from Table 8, the students are fairly convinced that proper pronunciation should be given more emphasis in class. This is indicated by the mean score across the sample at the level of $M = 4.26$ ($SD = 0.91$). It thus seems that even though pronunciation is often "one of the least favourite topics for teachers to address in the classroom", language learners themselves feel that it "can play an important role in supporting" their "overall communicative power" (Gilakjani et al. 2011: 81). The participants also proved very consistent in their positive reaction to the statement, as none of them marked it by choosing the negative category of 'never or almost never true of me'.

Turning now to the results calculated separately for the two major grouping variables, worth noting is the fact that the mean values differ very significantly across specialization groups [$t(174) = 2.8850, p = 0.0044$] and less markedly across the level of education [$t(177) = 0.9409, p = 0.3480$]. Specifically, MA students attached only slightly more importance to the matter in question ($M = 4.33, SD = 0.80$) than BA students ($M = 4.21, SD = 0.91$). Additionally, MA students were increasingly unanimous in their positive reaction to the statement as all of them selected exclusively the positive categories of Likert scale (i.e. 3, 4 and 5). By comparison, translator trainees ($M = 4.09, SD = 0.94$) appear as the group of participants who are the least concerned about having emphasis placed on proper English pronunciation in class. Quite an opposite at-

titude was demonstrated by teacher trainees ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.73$) whose mean rating was the highest obtained for the statement.

4.5. Statements referring to pronunciation learning strategies

The final issue analyzed in connection with the views of Polish students of English on their target language pronunciation generally concerns the strategies they employ when learning this skill. Additionally, Q 10: *I try to imitate English speakers as much as possible* reveals something about the participants' desire to achieve native-like speech patterns. In other words, it can be tentatively suggested that the closer the mean score to the maximal one (i.e. category 5 on the scale), the more positive was the attitude of a particular group of participants to acquiring native-like pronunciation by imitation.

Table 9. Inclination of the participants to use selected pronunciation learning strategies

10) I try to imitate English speakers as much as possible.						$M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.05$	
Variable	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
BA level	2.02	5.05	23.23	37.37	32.33	3.92	0.97
MA level	7.40	6.17	23.46	38.28	24.69	3.66	1.14
teachers	2.35	3.53	21.18	42.35	30.59	3.95	0.93
translators	6.31	7.37	25.27	33.68	27.37	3.68	1.14

It can be noted from Table 9 that the students are somewhat reluctant to indicate the imitation of English speakers as one of their pronunciation learning strategies. Indeed, the statement was the second rated least favourably from among the ones formulated in a positive manner, with the overall score of $M = 3.81$ ($SD = 1.05$). This would suggest that the participants do not particularly value the strategy in question, which seems to be the case, as Nowacka (2012: 50-51) reports in her study of European students' views on their English pronunciation. Only 56% of her informants marked imitating authentic speech as a factor contributing to phonetic progress and as many as 88% emphasized the role of listening to authentic English. Such an approach is not surprising, considering that pronunciation learning strategies can be seen as "deliberate actions and thoughts that are consciously employed, often in a logical sequence, for learning and gaining greater control over the use of various aspects of pronunciation" (Pawlak 2010a: 191). It seems that greater control over target language pronunciation can hardly be achieved by simply copying how somebody else pronounces the words of a language, especially that not all English speakers set a good example to follow.

As for the results computed separately for the two major grouping variables, interesting is to note that the mean scores differ quite markedly both across specialization groups as well as across the level of education. However, when tested with the *t*-test, in the former case the difference almost reached statistical significance [$t(176) = 1.7481$, $p = 0.0822$], and only tended toward it in the latter [$t(157) = 1.6266$, $p = 0.1058$]. In particular, MA students proved to be less inclined to imitate English speakers ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.14$) than BA students ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.97$). Similarly, a less favourable reaction to the statement was received from translator trainees ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.14$) than from teacher trainees ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.93$). Accordingly, this scepticism about imitating authentic speech is also reflected in the more frequent choice of the negative categories of Likert scale (i.e. 1 and 2) on the part of MA students and translator trainees. As a matter of fact, altogether 13.57% of MA students selected the two lowest options of the scale (category 1: 7.4%, category 2: 6.17%) in comparison with only 7.07% of BA students (category 1: 2.02%, category 2: 5.05%). Interestingly, individual translator trainees were even more negatively disposed to the learning strategy in question even though their overall mean value for the statement was slightly higher ($M = 3.68$) than that of MA students ($M = 3.66$). Specifically, as many as 13.68% of the former selected the two lowest options of the scale (category 1: 6.31%, category 2: 7.37%) in comparison with only 5.88% of teacher trainees (category 1: 2.35%, category 2: 3.53%).

5. General discussion

The picture that emerges from the above findings is quite complex and sometimes confusing to interpret. Actually, the most consistent trend throughout the questionnaire is that teacher trainees more closely adhere to all general attitudes towards the aspects of L2 pronunciation focused on in the study in comparison with translator trainees. The latter group of students generally prove to be somewhat indifferent to the significance of this target language subsystem. Therefore, in the discussion that follows, the results observed for the whole group of respondents should be also considered as more reflective of the attitudes adopted by prospective teachers than translators, who share these opinions but to a lesser degree. In fact, quite a few of the differences between the two specialization groups either proved to be statistically significant (Q 1, Q 5, Q 3, Q 6) or fell short of significance (Q 4, Q 10, Q 12). However, such consistency of approach to the questions is not reflected across the level of studies. As a matter of fact, when tested with the *t*-test, the differences between BA and MA students did not quite reach statistical significance, though a certain trend toward significance was observed in three cases (Q 4, Q 6, Q 10).

The general trends noticed for the participants' concern for pronunciation accuracy show that they are increasingly convinced about the importance of learning good English pronunciation (Q 1, global mean 4.60), however, seem

to care more about the final effect than about the progress made in the process of pronunciation learning (Q 5, global mean 3.78). Yet, the students cannot decide if they value pronunciation accuracy more than learning grammar and vocabulary (Q 12, global mean 2.97), but are slightly more inclined to prioritize communicating over the native character of their pronunciation (Q 11, global mean 4.00). Interestingly, limited importance is also attached to sounding like a native speaker (Q 9, global mean 3.93), even though the participants generally aspire to have a good English accent (Q 4, global mean 4.44). The discussed trends seem to be more prevalent in the group of MA students in the case of Q 1, Q 5 and Q 11. As for Q 12, the tendency to stress the vital role of pronunciation is also slightly stronger among MA students, and teacher trainees as well. By contrast, the participants' attitudes revealed in the answers to Q 9 and Q 4 tend to be more widespread among BA students.

The significance of proper pronunciation to the participants, again stressed slightly more at the MA level, is further corroborated by their attitude to pronunciation instruction, as the majority admit, though somewhat reluctantly, that more emphasis should be given to proper English pronunciation in class (Q 3, global mean 4.26). Actually, the fact that the students attach so much importance to the acquisition of proper pronunciation in English may prove beneficial to becoming perfect in this regard, as proven by Elliot (1995) in his study on pronunciation accuracy among a group studying Spanish as a foreign language. When it comes to the remaining three aspects in terms of which the students' attitudes to L2 pronunciation are discussed in the study and summarized below, the beliefs manifested by the whole of respondents seem to be somewhat stronger among BA students than the MA ones.

As for the participants' self-efficacy beliefs about pronunciation learning, they are highly optimistic about own ability both to improve English pronunciation (Q 2, global mean 4.61) and to speak the language with a good accent (Q 6, global mean 2.20). This inner conviction about becoming successful in the acquisition of L2 pronunciation seems to be at least partly generated by their attitude to pronunciation learning goals. Actually, the students readily admit they would like to sound as native as possible when speaking English (Q 8, global mean 4.25). Yet, they simultaneously declare that near-native competence in pronunciation is not that important as to make it a personal goal (Q 7, global mean 3.91). Also, they are not really inclined to imitate English speakers (Q 10, global mean 3.81). Similar results were obtained by Waniek-Klimczak (2011: 123) who surveyed Polish students of English and discovered that although "74% of the respondents would want to achieve native-like pronunciation", "when asked to name the most important goals that they want to achieve in learning speaking", they valued fluency, ease of communication and comfortable intelligibility over nativeness.

From the trends presented above, there also emerge clear-cut conclusions about the participants' attitudes to two other important aspects in terms of which L2 pronunciation may be discussed. First, the results received for questions Q 4

and Q 6 show the students' attitudes to their target language accent. Specifically, both the willingness to achieve perfection in accent (Q 4) and the faith placed in the possibility of educational attainment in this respect (Q 6) are generally high. Breaking down the data for the level of studies reveals that especially BA students seem to identify with this opinion. When viewed across specialization groups, the results point to teacher trainees as those who are more positive about this matter, which, as has already been mentioned above, is the case in respect of all the questionnaire items.

Second, the results received for questions Q 7, Q 8, Q 9, Q 10 and Q 11 reveal what the students think about native features in their pronunciation of English. Overall, they show a predilection, though moderately high, for achieving pronunciation maximally approximate to a native-speaker standard, which is particularly evident among teacher trainees and seemingly also among BA students. Such a conclusion can be drawn based on the fact that once the mean values for these statements obtained from the whole of respondents are calculated, the overall mean for the combined set is $M = 3.98$, which is considerable but not excessive considering the five-point range of the Likert scale used here. Yet, the students' general attitude to sounding like a native speaker of English can be described as positive, which, as Kang claims (2010: 106), is not surprising, given that "among ESL learners (...), there still seems to be a tendency to set inner-circle standards for their own speech". The fact that perfectly native pronunciation is valued by foreign language learners has been confirmed by several studies conducted both outside Poland, for example, Timmis (2002), Derwing (2003), Scales et al. (2006) or Saundz Survey (2015) as well as in the Polish context, for instance, Waniek-Klimczak and Klimczak (2005), Janicka et al. (2008), Waniek-Klimczak et al. (2015), Waniek-Klimczak (2011), Nowacka (2012) or Lipińska (2015).

Yet, as regards the present study, it seems that the degree of enthusiasm fluctuates depending on the viewpoint from which the students look at the native character of target language pronunciation. Hence, when it comes to assessing how important the nativeness principle actually is (Q 9), also in terms of establishing it one of personal goals (Q 7), then the enthusiasm is not excessive. It becomes even weaker if the native-speaker standard is to be achieved by imitating authentic speech (Q 10). Actually, the students, especially the MA ones, are somewhat more willing to admit that what they value more is communicating (Q 11). It thus seems that contemporary English Studies majors acknowledge the fact that today's world is a universe of many Englishes, where "the whole mystique of native speaker and mother tongue should probably be quietly dropped from the (...) set of professional myths about language" (Ferguson 1982: vii). Still, when the declaration about becoming native-like in pronunciation takes the form of a wish (Q 8), then the students' attitude becomes more noticeably positive.

6. Conclusions

This paper aimed to explore the attitudes of Polish students of English towards selected aspects of their target language pronunciation. The results reveal that most students attach high importance to proper pronunciation, which they believe should be emphasized in class, want to improve it and are convinced about own success, to which imitating native speakers does not contribute much. Still, they generally cannot decide whether to value pronunciation more than other aspects of language, which is possibly why they do not really care about their progress in English pronunciation but are more focused on the final effect of learning. Also, the attainment of native-like model is declared as significant, yet moderately rather than largely, especially when it comes to setting it as somebody's personal goal. These findings are particularly reflective of what teacher trainees think about L2 pronunciation, and less strongly indicative of the opinions of translator trainees. It can be thus tentatively concluded that the latter ones are somewhat indifferent to what "lies at the core of oral language expression", to what is "central to language use in social, interactive contexts", to what "embodies the way that the speaker and the hearer work together to establish and maintain common ground for producing and understanding each other's utterances" (Trofimovich et al. 2015: 353).

As can be seen above, the professional purposes for which English is studied by each respective specialization considered in the present study seem to have a growing influence on the beliefs held about target language pronunciation. The same, however, cannot be said with regard to the students' level of education, as none of the two examined groupings of students developed such a consistent approach to all the questionnaire items. Moreover, only in three cases the between-group differences showed a weak trend in the direction of statistical significance. Without a doubt, pronunciation is important both at the MA and BA level. Still, it cannot be conclusively determined whether the former group of students, who are more experienced learners, seem to both care more about own progress and believe that teachers should put emphasis on this skill, are definitely less positive about becoming successful in this regard. Also, it cannot be unequivocally stated whether the MA students, when compared with the BA ones, actually attach less importance to the native-like features of their speech than to its communicative value, which also includes a preference for good pronunciation over learning grammar or vocabulary and unfortunately moderate willingness to improve their English accent. Such differences were observed between the students across the level of studies but none of them fully reached the level of statistical significance.

Overall, given that "a great deal of previous studies have probed learners' opinions and beliefs about language learning in general (...), studies focusing on one specific aspect of language learning, such as grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary are much rarer", it is hoped that the present paper has contributed to extending knowledge in this field (Simon and Taverniers 2011: 3). Targeting different facets of L2 pronunciation, it has focused on the differences in Polish English major students' views on that matter, as evidenced for the grouping

variables of specialization (teacher vs. translator) and the level of studies (BA vs. MA level). The clear implication that arises from the above discussion is that the teaching and learning of pronunciation should no longer remain a supplementary activity either in classroom or as an object of study. Regardless of the subtle differences between the students' reactions to particular questionnaire items, the overall impression is still that they do care about this target language subsystem and the doubts they have most probably stem from the general neglect given to it by all parties involved in the process of foreign language education. Therefore, what has been reported here on how, why and what learners think about this "essential component of communicative competence" should probably be seen as a request for specific pronunciation teaching practices which needs to be responded to (Morley 1991: 488).

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