



## ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TEACHING IN NNS SETTINGS: A RE-CONSIDERATION OF CONCEPTUAL & METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGMS

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### Abstract

For many decades, the conceptualization of English language teaching as well as the methodologies adopted for the teaching of English pronunciation to non-native speakers has been largely native-speaker centered. The major implication of this is the promotion of native-speaker speech norms as the target norm for pronunciation for the NNS, while the attendant effect is the derivation of the entire pronunciation teaching content from the native speaker linguistic and socio-cultural environment. However, native-like competence in English pronunciation has remained largely unattainable for the non-native learner, but despite this ineffectiveness, there has been continued insistence on native-like performance targets in the NNS pronunciation classroom. In this paper, the outcomes of various intelligibility studies which examined the level of understanding of inner-circle speech are presented. These speech intelligibility tests have concluded that native-speaker speech is not inherently intelligible as non-native speakers find aspects of NS speech incomprehensible. Why then do we have the continued insistence on native-speaker-like performance as the target and why is the pronunciation teaching content still solely derived from the NS linguistic and socio-cultural environment? This paper explores the political and economic benefits of this insistence and suggests that given the results of these intelligibility studies and given other salient considerations, the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) which incorporates elements from the non-native learner's linguistic milieu in its teaching content is a viable alternative to the current NS-centered approaches and techniques.

Keywords: English Pronunciation Teaching, Conceptual & Methodological Paradigms.

### Introduction

Pronunciation teaching is an integral part of English language teaching and a contingent relationship also exists between ELT concepts/approaches as well as ELT methodologies, curricula and techniques. A historical survey of the conceptualization of English language teaching/pronunciation teaching over the years shows a largely traditional notion which looks towards the native speaker as the ideal speaker-hearer. These notions are founded on what Kachru (1983) has termed a "monomodel" for teaching, implying homogeneity of both language and functions of language, as well as what Brown has referred to as "Northern or "developed," in terms of country of orientation.

### Approaches in the teaching and learning of English Pronunciation

ELT approaches such as the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, Audiolingualism, the Silent Way, Counselling Learning, Suggestopaedia, Total Physical Response (TPR), the Language Experience Approach, the Natural Approach, the Communicative Approach, the Freirian approach, the Eclectic Approach etc. are all representative of this idealisation of the native speaker. Detailed discussions of these approaches can be found in Richards and Rodgers (1986) and Kumaravadivelu (2003) where it is clear that priority is given to an ape-like imitation of the native speaker with regards to the teaching of pronunciation. Apart from this, a recurrent theme in all of them is the primacy of place given to the native speaker as the ultimate performance target. Some of them are discussed below:

The Direct/Natural method was developed by the US military during the cold war period and in this method, the mother tongue is not used at all, rather, teachers who were native speakers or who had native-like fluency were employed. Being able to communicate with a native speaker "without difficulty" is the major objective of this method (Richards and Rodgers, 1986, 158). Priority was given to oral proficiency in the Audiolingual method as well and intensive oral drills and dialogues were adopted to teach correct pronunciation. Contextualizations of the teaching content was solely provided by native speaker cultural milieu, based on the assumption that:

the meanings that the words of a language have for the native speaker can be learned only in a linguistic and cultural context and not in isolation. Teaching a language thus involves

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teaching aspects of the cultural system of the people who speak the language. (Richards and Rodgers 1986, 51).

The teacher's role is to model the target language thereby aping the native speaker while in a similar vein to the Direct Method, the long range objective of Audiolingualism is the use of language "as the native speaker uses it" (1986, 52).

Total Physical Response was popular in the 1970s and was focused on second language learning through language comprehension (the development of advanced listening skills) before the oracy and literacy skills. This was done through the use of imperative sentences to elicit an action/response from the learner. Developed by John Asher, it aims to "produce learners who are capable of an uninhibited communication that is intelligible to a native speaker" (Asher, 1981, 61).

The Communicative Language Teaching Approach which is also known as Notional-Functional or Functional is structure/function centered. Though it is not overtly native-speaker based in its methodology because it incorporates some elements of the learner's local environment through the use of translation, it does suggest native speaker precedence in its mandatory in-course assessment of learner-motivation in which respondents have to make a selection from items on a 5-point scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Agree' based on their level of motivation for studying English. The responses to the question "why study English?" include:

1. I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.
2. One needs a good knowledge of English to gain other people's respect.
3. It will enable me to think and behave like English-speaking people. (Richards and Rodgers 1986, 78)

Besides the implications of dominance given to English in this assessment, it has been suggested that the approach strongly represents a western ideology, albeit indirectly. Kazmi (2004) for example, raises concerns about the projection of inner-circle values and norms as 'modern' and therefore superior in this approach. This view is also in congruence with Brown's conclusion that the ELT approaches listed earlier originated from the advanced northern hemisphere and serve to maintain Western modernistic values and norms (Brown 1990).

In the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, ELT deviated only slightly from the earlier course of acceptance of the native speaker as the ideal speaker-listener. From approaches such as the functional-notional syllabi to the English for Academic Purposes curriculum, the view remained largely the same. However, Constructivism and the Ecological Approach offer a slightly different viewpoint through the inclusion of local content in the design of the English teaching syllabi. McGroarty in pushing for a Constructivist approach (1998) establishes the crucial role played by the learners' cultures in language teaching and concludes that effective teaching results will only occur when the social context is brought into the classroom. This conclusion seems to confirm the current state of ELT in which there is only a minimal inclusion of the linguistic dimension of the learners' social environment in the curriculum.

### **Intelligibility Research and Pronunciation teaching in NNS environments**

Calls for the expansion of the ELT methodology and curriculum to include learners' social milieu have been made by various scholars. They argue that the participation of the language teacher as well as the student in the creation of the syllabi will create an inclusionist framework which will solve the language learning problem. These scholars also believe that the incorporation of localised innovations and teacher flexibility in the choice of methods will achieve maximum productivity in the language learning process. Other authors such as Bohn (2003) add that the focus on inner circle English has created a power differential in ELT such that rather than a synergy of opinions and plans, there are two discrete groups namely, "those who craft the method and those who employ it". (Bohn, 2003, 70)

Other scholars go beyond expressing concern over the exclusion of the learners' socio-cultural contexts in ELT to drawing associations between this disregard for the multiplicity of the socio-cultural contexts of English usage and the persistent intelligibility problems which plague conversational interactions between speakers of different varieties of English. McKay criticises this mono-model approach which gives primacy of place to the native speaker and does not recognise the central role that intelligibility plays in the delineation of a "comprehensive theory of teaching and learning English as an International language". She points out that the locus of language use should define the teaching content in order to reflect the cross-cultural reality of real-life communication.

The view of intelligibility scholars is in tandem with these critics as they cite numerous instances of intelligibility breakdowns which are traceable to what they refer to as "lack of cross-cultural intelligibility". Thus, intelligibility plays a pivotal role in communication and one of the first advocates of intelligibility

research, Catford (1960), provides a broad definition of intelligibility as “level of understanding”, while he also recognises three levels within intelligibility as follows:

1. word/utterance recognition;
2. word/utterance meaning; and
3. meaning behind word/utterance.

Our concern is the first category - word/utterance recognition - which is related to pronunciation and correspond to the phonological level of language study while the other two categories involve other levels of language study which roughly correlate with semantics and pragmatics respectively. Phonological intelligibility is the area of intelligibility testing which involves the use of particular vowel or consonant sounds and particular rhythmic, intonational and other prosodic features. It also includes the structural and systemic interrelationships between these features and the phonological representations of the rules governing the relations between all these features of an individual or a group’s pronunciation. These pronunciation features constitute the “accent” which could be a native speaker accent such as RP or a non-native/L2 speaker accent such as the Nigerian accent of English.

Agreeing with the views expressed by Bohn, McKay, Kazmi and Kachru (op.cit.) on the connection between intelligibility and social context, Catford (op. cit) iterates the crucial role of linguistic and situational contexts in the attainment of intelligibility. Linguistic context is defined as “the given form of a word which consists of the words or other linguistic forms with which it is associated or surrounded,” while situational context is, “everything else in the situation which is relevant to the speech act” (1960, 34). By ‘everything else’, he refers to the speaker and the hearer, their relative positions and actions at the moment of making the utterance, as well as the hearer’s linguistic background, her experiences and her educational and cultural background etc.

Interest in intelligibility studies soared in the 1960s with the spread of English beyond native speaker settings and the subsequent emergence of non-native accents of English. The first intelligibility tests were based on the conceptualization of intelligibility as a notion which may be examined only from a native speaker perspective. This traditional view of intelligibility engages in a hierarchical ordering of the communication process with subtle implications of the linguistic superiority of native speaker English accents over non- native English accents.

Bansal’s study of the intelligibility of Indian English is one of the first major tests of intelligibility. It was a pioneering effort which set the trend for several others in terms of the perspective that non-native language varieties are in some way deficient compared with native varieties. For example, Bansal identifies the necessity of carrying out the study as due to:

the emergence of a wide variety of foreign dialects of English ... these foreign dialects... differ so much from native English that sometimes they do not sound English at all and are hardly intelligible (1969, 6).

In order to achieve this aim, an objective approach of intelligibility testing was adopted. It involved twenty four educated Indian speakers of English from different mother tongue backgrounds and 178 listeners of varied nationalities including the UK and the US. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of assessment of intelligibility were employed. This involved attaching a numerical value to the Indian speakers’ utterances correctly identified by the listeners and this was then followed by phonetic analysis of the instances where the responses were incorrect. The main conclusion was that the average intelligibility level of Indian English to speakers of Received Pronunciation is 70% with intelligibility scores for individual speakers ranging from 53% to 95%. From the analysis of the speech of the least intelligible Indian speakers, the major causes of intelligibility failure were identified as follows:

A large number of divergencies in the distribution of vowels and consonants, and in word stress, sentence stress and intonation. What makes these speakers less intelligible is the frequency of the divergences from the normal patterns of the distribution of vowels and consonants and the patterns of stress and intonation in RP (1969, 147).

These conclusions of the intelligibility of Indian English, a non-native variety, endorse the assumption that native speaker phonology is inherently superior to non-native speech, hence, the recommendation to the Indian learners of English was that “the correct distribution of English consonants and vowels should be learnt by the constant use of a pronouncing dictionary” (1969, 173). This view is supported by the recommendation that approximation of native speaker speech norms should be the target of the second language learner as Bansal maintains that:

“among the Indian speakers, the best speakers of English are...who consciously tried to imitate the BBC accent, and...who tried to change his pronunciation by attending a practical

course in spoken English... The less efficient speakers were those who have not made any effort to conform to any minimum standard of English pronunciation based on British RP (168).

Several other tests of NNS speech followed Bansal's, all in the same vein and all based on the same premise. Some of them include Elalani (1968) on the intelligibility of Jordanian English, Strevens (1965) and thereafter Brown (1969), both on the intelligibility of Ghanaian English and Tiffen (1974) on the intelligibility of Nigerian English. The findings and conclusions of these studies were identical to Bansal's with the consensus that NNS speech is deficient compared to NS pronunciation as any deviation from NS speech norms was judged to be erroneous or incorrect. On Jordanian English, Elalani (1968) finds that:

...defective pronunciation and inadequate language selection..., were the major causes of unintelligibility. Problem areas for the Jordanian speakers which constituted problems for the British listeners were the consonants and vowels, lack of weak forms and differing stress and rhythmic patterns.

Brown (1989) assessed the intelligibility of Ghanaian English and forms the opinion that "it seems an inescapable conclusion, on the basis of these figures that Ghanaian pronunciation is a less efficient means of communication" (120). Tiffen (1974) also studied the intelligibility of Nigerian English to British speakers and identified the study's impetus as follows:

...it is important that the type of English used should keep within *certain norms*, (emphasis added) if speakers are to be mutually intelligible. If English should become so distorted - and there is some evidence that this is already happening

- as to become incomprehensible both within and outside Africa, one of the main purposes for which it has been learnt will have been thwarted (1974, 13).

The use of the pejorative word "incorrect" is recurrent in all the NNS speech tests reports. There is collective criticism of non-native speech norms and they are labelled as mere 'errors', simply because they are different from NS speech and therefore not intelligible to the native speaker.

In contrast to these studies which investigated intelligibility from a native speaker perspective, parallel studies from a reverse viewpoint were soon carried out. Smith and Rafiqzad (1979) as well as Major et.al. (2005) investigated the intelligibility of the speakers of Standard American English, Smith and Bisazza (1982) studied both RP and Standard American English, Munro and Derwing (1995) examined RP speech, Gupta (2006) also studied RP, Atechi (2004) investigated the intelligibility of both the Standard American English and RP while Adedeji (2011) investigated the intelligibility of the Standard British English accent to Nigerians. All were done from a non-native speaker perspective, involving both English as second language and English as foreign language speakers as listeners and assessors of the intelligibility of the speech of Americans and Britons.

1386 Asians and Americans were involved in the first of these studies which spanned 11 countries and involved nationals of Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, The Phillipines, Sri Lanka, USA, Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Thailand. The percentage scores were derived from the number of items which the listeners could correctly identify after listening to the speakers and were rank-ordered as follows: Sri Lanka 79%, India 78%, Japan 75%, Malaysia 73%, Nepal 72%, Korea 68%, Philippines 61%, United States 55%, Hong Kong 44%. The scores showed that the native speaker (United States 55%) was almost the least intelligible speaker – appearing in the second to the last position – while Asian non-native English speakers from Sri Lanka, India, Japan etc. were the most highly intelligible. This is clearly stated in the final paragraphs: "since native speaker phonology does not appear to be more intelligible than non-native phonology, there seems to be no reason to insist that the performance target in the English classroom be a native speaker" (Smith and Rafiqzad, 1979, 380).

Major, Fitzmaurice, Bunta and Balasubramanian also attempted to measure the intelligibility of a native speaker accent to non-native listeners. The research was done because "it is widely believed that listeners understand some dialects more easily than others, although there is very little research that has rigorously measured the effects" (1979, 37). The research participants consisted of 180 potential takers of TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) who were all enrolled at either pre-degree courses or were undergraduates at various American colleges and universities. They comprised Chinese, Japanese and Spanish second language speakers of English as listeners and 60 undergraduate and postgraduate native speakers of Standard American English from U.S. universities as speakers. Statistical analysis showed that 'both native and non-native listeners are affected by a speaker's dialect and for non-native listeners, there were no significant differences between Standard American and South American speakers' (1979:58). The results demonstrate that the native speaker accent does not have any peculiar speech features or characteristics that may make it more easily understood than a non-native speaker accent.

Atechi's 2004 study was motivated by the concern that the emergence of non-native varieties around the world would – like the Romance languages – lead to the eventual devolvement of English into mutually unintelligible varieties. Involving African speakers of English from Cameroon as well as British and American speakers of English, it assessed intelligibility of the following groups:

Speakers and Listeners	Intelligibility scores in %
Cameroonian speakers to British listeners	62.9
Cameroonian speakers to American listeners	59.7
British speakers and Cameroonian listeners	58.7
American speakers and Cameroonian listeners	53.9

An important inference can be drawn from these figures: the Cameroonian accent of English which is a non- native accent was found to be even more intelligible than the British and American accents which are native speaker accents. Another significant achievement of the research is the identification of the features of American and British native speaker accents which affected intelligibility to the Cameroonians. The study revealed that the suprasegmental level was the most problematic area of native English speech for the Cameroonian listeners as it led to the highest number of intelligibility failures (46.5%) while the segmental level (40.2%), phonotactic differences (11.8%) and lexical differences (01.5%) were less problematic. These conclusions are in line with previous findings on the intelligibility of native speakers of English, which generally deduce that native speaker speech presents problems to non-native listeners.

The results of Adedeji (2011) which investigated the intelligibility of the Standard British English accent (RP) to Nigerians is comparable to Atechi's research in terms of the degree of intelligibility of native speaker accents relative to non-native accents. One of the major findings of the study conducted by Adedeji is that the average intelligibility level of the Received Pronunciation (RP) to Nigerians is 62.2%. The figure was based on the calculation of the number of items correctly received by the Nigerians who assessed the speech of the Britons in a continuous speech test. This result corroborates earlier assertions that native speaker phonology is not inherently intelligible. In line with this several features of RP were observed to determine the intelligibility of its speakers to Nigerians; thus limiting the understanding of the Nigerians to about sixty percent of the utterances made by the RP speakers. The features of RP which were observed to influence intelligibility are as follows: smoothing, schwa absorption, schwa suppression/monophthongization, ð- reduction, nasal relocation, t-alteration, r-intrusion t-glottalling & glottal reinforcement, and large drops in volume and salience. Furthermore, it was observed that intelligibility can be said to occur in a cline ranging from high intelligibility to low intelligibility depending on certain speaker and listener factors. This is evinced by the fact that seven of the RP speakers scored lower than the average score while nine scored higher than the average score of 62%. The features of RP speech which led to intelligibility problems for the Nigerian listeners are discussed below.

Smoothing: "Smoothing" is the term used to represent instances of the monophthongal realization of certain sets of diphthongs and triphthongs in a prevocalic environment. It was observed that whenever smoothing occurred in the speech of the RP speakers, there was no movement of the articulators from the first to the second element of the diphthong. Instead, there was a monophthongal realization which is similar but not identical to the starting-point of the underlying diphthong. For example, one of the RP speakers produced *poor area* as •p•:e•ri• and none of the Nigerian listeners wrote the correct response. But a few who attempted to respond wrote '*pouring*' indicating that it was the monophthongal realization of the diphthong which led to intelligibility failure.

Schwa Suppression: Schwa Suppression is the term used to represent a context-free process of monophthonging which was observed to affect the diphthongs. Schwa Suppression involved the incorporation of a schwa into a neighbouring vowel of a more peripheral nature. The schwa was usually assimilated by the neighbouring vowel causing the vowel to be perceived as totally absent and it led to instances of intelligibility failure. Examples are: *say about* which was produced as •se•ba•t• by MRP4 and *curry a lot* which was produced as •k•ri:l•t• by a male RP speaker. These utterances elicited responses such as 'say down', 'say ban', 'carry lot', and 'carry not'.

Schwa Absorption: The term "schwa absorption" is used to describe cases where something else in the vicinity of a schwa takes on its syllabic property but the resulting realization does not have the openness of a vowel, i.e. the sound that is left has the articulatory qualities of a consonant but the syllabic qualities of a vowel. Many instances of this occurred in the speech of the RP speakers and led to intelligibility breakdown.

Examples of instances involving this category include: *people and* which was realized as • pip • n • and *general* produced as • d • enr • • by the RP speakers. Responses by the Nigerians include: 'people in' 'then run', and many instances of question marks and omission marks showing lack of comprehension.

Nasal relocation: This term is used to refer to the process of nasality which was observed with the phonological sequence VNC (vowel + nasal + consonant), especially where the final consonant was a voiceless stop. The phonetic reflex produced by the RP speakers was a nasalized vowel + consonant. Phrases such as *and I think my* was produced as • ɛ̃ aθ̃ma • • and all ten listeners failed to write anything in response.

ð-reduction: This term is used for the process whereby initial [ð] in words such as 'the, this, that' became assimilated to a previous alveolar consonant. Several phonetic realizations were observed among the RP speakers, ranging from moving dental to alveolar place of articulation and also including a variety of voicing characteristics such as voicing assimilation, manner assimilation and complete assimilation. The phonetic realizations also included a lengthened alveolar or a double consonant process referred to as 'degemination'. These variations led to a lot of confusion among the Nigerian listeners. Examples include *from the* produced as • f • • mn • • and *all this* produced as • • : l • s ] by two male RP speakers. Responses include 'from now' and 'honeys' respectively.

Final • t • alteration: Final t-alteration is the term used to refer to several phonetic variants of /t/. It was observed that word final or syllable final /t/ led to many instances of lack of intelligibility because this consonant seemed very prone to change in the sense that it was usually realized in a variety of forms or totally elided in the speech of the RP speakers. Examples include 'night-life' which was produced with the [t] elided as • na • t' laɪ f • by an RP speaker and 'quite steep' produced as • kwai t' sti:p • by another RP speaker.

Glottalized /t/ and glottally reinforced /t/: This term is used to refer to the switching of /t/ from an alveolar to a glottal articulation. This switch was observed to have affected the intelligibility of the RP speakers to Nigerians. Examples include *right (into)* which was produced as • raɪ ? t • by an RP speaker.

R-liaison: This term is used to refer to linking-r and intrusive-r processes which occurred in the speech of the RP speakers. Linking-r refers to instances where there is an <r> in the spelling while intrusive-r or r-Sandhi refers to cases in which there was no spelling-induced <r>. Example include: *sore elbows* which was produced as • sɔ :relbə v z • .

Large drops in volume and salience: This phrase was used to describe a progressive drop in volume which was observed in the utterances of the male RP speakers. It caused parts of the utterances to be almost inaudible. This speech characteristic caused the Nigerian listeners to find the speech of the male RP speakers very difficult to understand. Most of the listeners responded with devices such as space and omission marks.

To conclude this section of our review, it is pertinent to state that the current focus of accent intelligibility studies seems to be the intelligibility of native speakers of English (usually speakers of either RP or Standard General American) to non-native speakers. This current re-orientation is not only crucial but timely because as argued by Rajadurai, "there is need for a reconsideration... as empirical research has raised doubt about the intelligibility of Inner Circle speech worldwide... the Inner Circle speaker was always found to be among the least intelligible, showing that L1 phonology is not always inherently the most intelligible" (2007:95). A re-consideration of the conceptual and methodological approaches to the teaching of English as suggested by Rajadurai (2007) must necessarily include an appraisal of the changing roles and functions of English in NNS milieus across the world. The development of English into a world language resulting in a higher population of non-native speakers compared to native speakers should result in a shift in the balance of power between the two groups of speakers. Evidence from Crystal as at 2003, put the ratio of NNS to NS as 3:1. Such huge population figures should translate into teaching methods which puts their socio-cultural environments into consideration (Crystal 2003).

### **English as a Global Language**

From a relatively uncertain future in the pre-1990s, English has attained the status of a global language (Graddol 1998, Crystal 1997, McArthur 1998). A global status implies that the English language has now developed a special role that is recognized in every country, moving from a mother tongue in the USA, Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and several Caribbean countries to an official language role in over 70 countries including Nigeria, Ghana, India, Singapore and also to a foreign language status in over 100 countries. The current global status implies the wielding of 'soft' power with the attendant political, cultural, and economic domination which this confers on its exporting countries, particularly the UK, its country of origin. That English dominates the global landscape in the following

different spheres of life is sufficiently established in the literature.

**Politics:** The adoption of English as a Lingua Franca in the erstwhile League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations has led to the accrual of political power to the language. Of the 12,500 international organizations in the world, 85% of them use English, besides the fact that English plays an official or working role in the proceedings of major international political gatherings such as the Association of South East Asian Nations, the Commonwealth, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the OPEC and the European Free Trade Association. (Crystal 2003).

In addition, London and New York, two of the largest financial and investment capitals of the world are inner circle countries. The New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) is the largest while the London Stock Exchange is the third largest in the world ([www.theeconomist.com](http://www.theeconomist.com)). After the second world war, English was adopted as the language of air traffic control. Though with a restricted vocabulary and fixed set of sentence patterns, Airspeak is undeniably English. Seaspeak, the maritime equivalent is also English.

**The Media:** The overwhelming influence of the media in this century is underscored by its centrality in every individual's life. The different forms of its expression: the television, radio, advertising and newspapers are pervasive in modern societies all over the world. Estimates of the influence of individual newspapers provided by Crystal show that the top five newspapers in the world are written in English; three American-based – The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal – and two British papers, The Times and The Sunday Times (Crystal, 2003).

Many products which have become household names are also advertised in English – Coca Cola, Ford, Kodak and Kellogg's. Crystal also reports that only three of the world's top thirty advertising agencies are not US-owned. Besides this, the official language of international advertising bodies such as the European Association of Advertising Agencies is usually English. Of worthy mention is the worldwide impact of the BBC, VOA and CNN which all broadcast in English.

**Education:** English is the medium of most of the world's knowledge with 80% of the world's electronically stored information in English. Data compiled from Internet World Stats shows that English is the most dominant language on the internet having 27%, while Chinese is second with 24% ([www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm)). Scientific and technological organizations also use English extensively, even those within Asia and the Pacific, as Crystal reports that a third of them use English only, including scientific organizations such as the African Association of Science Editors.

The ubiquitous nature of English naturally has financial implications for the native speaker countries, especially the UK and the US. Correlations between growth in number of L2 and FL speakers and the economic benefits accruing to the UK have been analyzed by the British Council in a report with the following figures: Mother tongue or first language speakers were 400 million speakers, second language speakers were 400 million and the number of those learning English as a foreign language was one billion as at 2010. The total number was 1,600,000, and this is about a quarter of the world population. Projections were made by Graddol (1998) of the likely number of English speakers as at 2016. The projections were based on figures previously published by the British Council. Graddol put the number at 2 billion. Graddol's model also presented the following projected figures of ESL speakers:

Year 2020: 870 million

Year 2030: 1050 million

Year 2050: 1.2 billion

British Council 1997 estimates of the number of speakers across the various settings are as follows: 400 million first language speakers, 400 million second language speakers and 1 billion foreign language speakers.

The financial economics of these huge numbers in the two prominent native speaker countries – the UK and the US – in terms of returns on the teaching and the learning of the language in addition to the learning materials is as huge as the population of learners. The large number of people who are or who will be learning English need dictionaries, grammar books and teachers. Livre Hebdo reports in 2015 that in 2017, the group of 5 UK academic publishers made up of Pearson, Reed Elsevier, Informa, Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press accounted for 12.024 billion euros, representing about a quarter of total worldwide publishing revenues.

According to a British Council report, of each year, 600 000 people go to do a short English language course in the UK and in 2011 alone, this group contributed the lion's share of the country's 17.5 billion pounds education-related export market. Projections of this value for year 2020 and 2025 are 21.5 billion pounds and 26.6 billion pounds respectively. The English language teaching (ELT) industry in the UK which contributes about 2 billion pounds to the economy every year is expected to contribute about 3

billion pounds in the year 2020. Finally, the potential economic benefit of English to the UK has been valued by a consultancy firm, Brand Finance at 405 billion pounds.

The English language in numbers

L2 Speakers in 2010	1 billion
L2 Speakers in 2016	2 billion
World Population as at June 2018	7.6 billion
Value of UK academic publications in 2017	12.024 Billion Euros
Total Value of worldwide publishing revenues in 2017	44.488 billion Euros
Annual attendance at English language short-term courses (UK)	600,000
Value of UK's education-related export market	17.5 billion pounds
Value of the ELT industry in the UK (annually)	2 billion pounds
Estimated economic benefit of English to the UK	405 billion pounds

### The LFC: A more NNS-centred approach.

Jenkins (2007) suggests an alternative which is inclusive of the NNS environment and also considers international intelligibility of spoken English. The Lingua Franca Core (LFC) presents a style of English as it is used not just in NS contexts but as used in all geographical domains. Based on a review of both native speaker and nativized pronunciation features and how these features affect intelligibility, the features of English pronunciation that are essential for international intelligibility are thereafter identified by Jenkins. Core features are those which are highly significant for intelligibility and must be included in any pronunciation course while the non-core features are not crucial for intelligibility and may be excluded without any negative impacts on intelligibility. The table below presents the features of the LFC.

Core Features	Non-Core Features
All RP and GA consonant sounds EXCEPT the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/	The dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/
RP intervocalic /t/	Simplification of final consonant clusters

Aspiration [ <sup>h</sup> ] following /p,t,k/ in initial position in a stressed syllable	Exact quality of vowels except /• : /
Initial and medial consonant clusters	Vowel reduction i.e. the use of /•, i, u/
The exact quality of the central vowel /• : /	Stress-based rhythm
Vowel quantity (the distinction between long and short vowels)	Complex pitch movements in various intonation patterns
Placement of nuclear stress in utterances	Consonant substitutions such as /θ/ for /t/

Evidence in favour of the workability and effectiveness of the LFC in ESL teaching has been provided by teachers in India and China where it has been adopted. The LFC proposal has been reported to be 'practical, achievable and fun' (Deterding 2010). Another form of confirmation of the efficiency of this proposal is as it relates to the use of full vowels rather than reduced vowels. Lack of vowel reduction is a ubiquitous feature of non-native accents of English with international figures such as the late Nelson Mandela as well as Kofi Annan tending towards the use of full vowels in their speech. They are still considered to be exceptionally articulate by their international audiences.

### Conclusion

While current trends in ESL pronunciation teaching do suggest a movement away from total dependence on native speaker norms of usage, the performance target still largely remains the native speaker or at best the highly sophisticated non-native speaker whose speech approximates that of the British or American native speaker. This remains so even after intelligibility studies centered on the intelligibility of native speaker speech have found the native speaker to be less intelligible than the non-native speaker, demonstrating that native speaker phonology is not inherently intelligible. However, there are inherent political and economic benefits of this dependence accruing to the two most prominent inner



circle countries in particular. With the advantages of the diplomatic soft power and the billion-dollar language teaching market, the response to the puzzling question of why the performance target continues to be the native speaker is plain. However, if the major goal of pronunciation teaching – which is intra-national and international intelligibility – is to be achieved, an expanded and more inclusive teaching programme which takes sufficient cognisance of the learner’s environmental context and accent features must be adopted. It is hoped that in the foreseeable future, ESL and EFL teachers will reduce focus on inner-circle norms, re-evaluate their priorities and embrace a more realistic and achievable pronunciation curriculum.

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