SAIL 23

e-ISSN 2610-9557
ISSN 2610-9549

Accents and Pronunciation
Attitudes of Italian University Students of Languages

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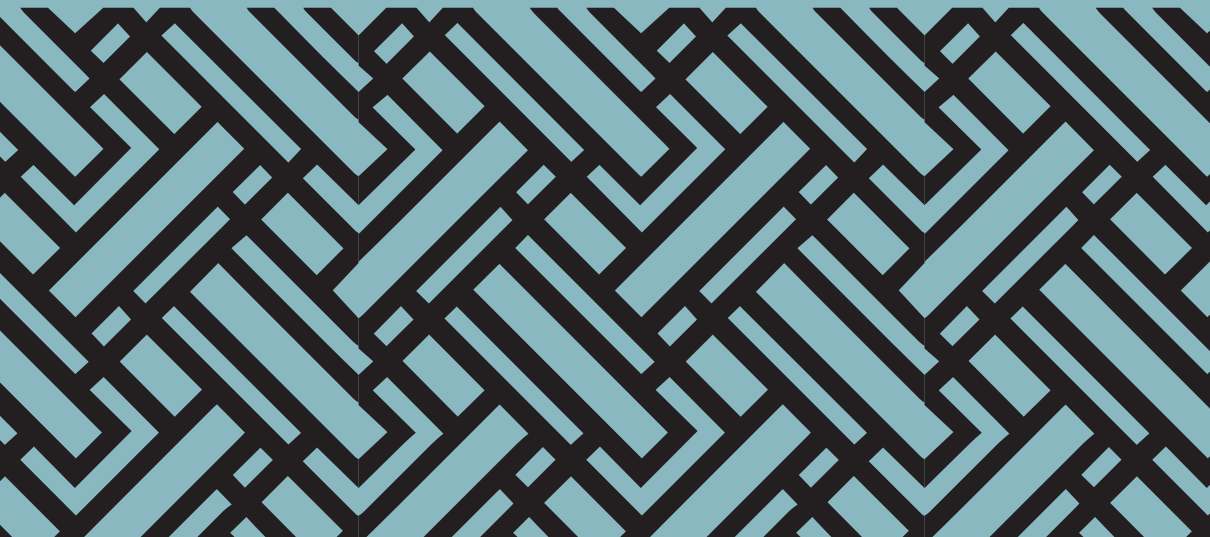
David Newbold and Peter Paschke

Edizioni
Ca'Foscari



Accents and Pronunciation

SAIL
Studi sull'apprendimento
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Serie diretta da | A series edited by
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23

Edizioni
Ca'Foscari

SAIL
Studi sull'apprendimento e l'insegnamento linguistico

e-ISSN 2610-9557
ISSN 2610-9549

URL https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/collane/sail/

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Venezia
Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Venice University Press
2022

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Edizioni Ca' Foscari
Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari | Dorsoduro 3246 | 30123 Venezia
https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/ | ecf@unive.it

1st edition July 2022
ISBN 978-88-6969-628-2 [ebook]
ISBN 978-88-6969-629-9 [print]

Accents and Pronunciation. Attitudes of Italian University Students of Languages / David Newbold and Peter Paschke (edited by) — 1. ed. — Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2022. — xviii + 158 pp.; 23 cm. — (SAIL; 23). — ISBN 978-88-6969-629-9.

URL https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/libri/978-88-6969-629-9/
DOI http://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-628-2

Abstract

In recent years, endorsed by the updated (2018) version of the Common European Framework, intelligibility has replaced native-like pronunciation as a primary objective in foreign language teaching. But accent and pronunciation continue to be central issues for university students of languages. This volume presents the results of an investigation into the attitudes of some 370 first-year students at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the first such study in Italy, involving students of 13 languages, the principal ones being English, Spanish, French, German and Russian. The survey investigated the importance given to pronunciation in the foreign language, the motivation students have to improve it, and the possible conflict of identity which the acquisition of a 'foreign' pronunciation might incur. Students were invited to reflect on the quality and variability of their pronunciation in the two foreign languages they were studying, on their ability to assess it, on affective aspects linked to pronunciation, and on their awareness of phonetic features. They were also asked for their opinions about the pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and about Italian when spoken with a foreign accent. The contributions in this volume describe the linguistic background of respondents, present and analyse the attitudes which emerge, verify the role of some independent variables (gender, plurilingualism, motivation for enrolment, languages studied, level of proficiency), and (in the case of ELF) report the findings of a follow-up study of master's level students. The result is an overall picture likely to be of interest to anyone working in the field of university language teaching and who wishes to have a better idea of what students think about foreign language pronunciation.

Keywords Second language acquisition. University language learners. L2 pronunciation. Foreign-accented speech. L2 Intelligibility. Native-like accent. Language Attitudes. Learner motivation. Language learner identity. Self-perception and evaluation of L2 pronunciation. English as a Lingua Franca.

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Introduction

David Newbold
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Accent is a loaded, non-technical, and ambiguous term. It can be used as a synonym for 'focus' or 'emphasis', it can refer to diacritics in a writing system, or, in the more familiar sense in which we use it here, it has to do with the perception of pronunciation. In this last sense it is typically bipolar: it is identified in terms of proximity to, or distance from, the pronunciation of a particular group of people, and may be adopted as a target model in a foreign language class. As such, accents can be perceived as 'good' or 'bad', and as such they attract value judgements.

Politicians speaking a foreign language in an international setting may be praised, if their accent is perceived to be good,[1] or, more likely, held up to ridicule if they are heavily influenced by their mother tongue.[2] In Italy, and very probably elsewhere, a near native accent when speaking a foreign language seems to be universally admired. In the 2020 European football championship,[3] Italian media discov-

1 For example, the 'Whatever it takes' speech given in 2012 by the then President of the ECB Mario Draghi.

2 A number of videos showing Matteo Renzi's difficulties with English went viral on the Internet when he was *Presidente del Consiglio*.

3 Postponed because to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ered a new talent: Federico Chiesa. Not only did he score the goals which took Italy into the final against England, it also turned out that he could speak English fluently with a near native speaker accent.[4] This seemed to rub salt into English wounds after the match which had been hyped up in the British media with the ubiquitous slogan 'Football's coming home' and which gave rise to a rejoinder in a banner held up by Italian fans at Wembley Stadium 'And all roads lead to Rome'. It was as if Italy had beaten England twice at their own game.

But in the context of foreign language learning, how important are accents? Should proximity to a native speaker accent be the default target for teachers in a foreign language class? Is it a realistic or even a useful target? What do students of languages think about accents – their own, and those of other people? What attitudes have they acquired from their own language background – since attitudes are learned, not intuitive (Garrett 2010, 22). Does motivation play a part in the acquisition of accents?

These are some of the questions which are addressed in this large scale and wide-ranging background study of student attitudes to accents and pronunciation. With no such study currently existing for the Italian context, as far as the authors are aware, it comes at a timely moment. The year 2018 saw the publication of the *Companion Volume* to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Learning, Teaching Assessment*. This new volume radically revises its description of pronunciation competence and levels. In the original, 2000, version of the Framework there is a single holistic scale for "phonological control". At lower levels on the 6-point scale it refers to a "foreign accent" as a negative feature of the learner's pronunciation, and the amount of "effort" which a native speaker has to make to understand it.

Commenting on the need to revise the *Framework*, Piccardo writes

> a new sensibility has been emerging in the applied linguists' scholarly community when it comes to re-evaluating the traditional idea of the 'native speaker' as a model or perception of the norm in pronunciation. This is especially visible in English considering the movement towards 'global Englishes' or 'English as a Lingua Franca', but similar considerations have been applied to all languages. (Piccardo 2016, 6)

In the revised version, the single scale is replaced by three: "overall phonological control", "sound articulation" and "prosodic features". The term "foreign accent" has disappeared as a yardstick for measuring lack of success; so too has the reference to "native

4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkZotPh2_6w.

speakers", and the effort they might have to make to understand the speaker. Instead, the new scales refer to "accent retained from other language(s)", and to the "interlocutor". This is an interesting new direction for the *Framework*, for at least two reasons: it recognises that international communication is not necessarily between non-native (L2) speaker and native (L1) speaker, but may sometimes, and, in the case of English, usually, involve two L2 speakers, for neither of whom the language of communication is the mother tongue. Secondly, the reference to an "interlocutor" underlines the fact that the listener is also a participant, and that communicative success is the result of speaker and listener together co-constructing meaning.

In this way the revised *Framework* reflects an increased interest in pronunciation acquisition, teaching, and assessment, from a perspective of intelligibility. The notion of *intelligibility*, first proposed in 1985 by Smith and Nelson (Smith, Nelson 1985) as part of a three-part paradigm of *intelligibility*, *comprehensibility*, and *interpretability*, was reformulated by Levis (2005) as the *Intelligibility Principle* for pronunciation teaching, in contrast with the *Nativeness Principle*. It is an area which has been extensively researched by (among others) Munro and Derwing (Munro, Derwing 1995; Derwing, Munro 2009 etc.) and, more recently, examined from an assessment perspective by Isaacs and Trofimovich (2017).

This, together with work in the area of student attitudes towards pronunciation, including motivational factors (Dörnyei, Csizér, Németh 2006) provides the research background which informed the study we report on in this volume. The immediate stimulus however, which led to the project, was the recognition by the Italian Ministry of Education of the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultures (DSLCC) at Ca' Foscari University of Venice as one of Italy's 180 'Departments of Excellence' for the quality of its research, which led to a range of new research projects for the period 2018-22, and of which the one presented here is an example. A wide-ranging survey of first-year undergraduate students across the department seemed an appropriate response to the award: Ca' Foscari offers the highest number of foreign languages (currently more than forty) of any university in the country and every year counts one of the highest numbers of language graduates. An investigation of incoming students' attitudes, and expectations, offered an opportunity for a collaborative multi-lingual project and the possibility to inform choices for university language curricula.

In the end, researchers from the 'big five' languages of the department – English, French, German, Russian, and Spanish – joined forces to create a six section, eighty-one item Google Forms survey which made use of a five-point Likert scale for statements with which respondents were invited to agree or disagree, and open-ended questions, usually at the end of the sections. The questionnaire was tri-

alled with 93 students in May 2019, after which minor revisions and adjustments were made. The final version was structured as indicated in table 1.

Table 1 Structure of questionnaire

Section	Topic	Questions
A	Personal details and language background	24
B	Opinions and attitudes towards foreign accents and the importance of good pronunciation	15
C	Accent issues in the students' first foreign language	15
D	Accent issues in the students' second foreign language	15
E	The pronunciation of English lingua franca	7
F	The pronunciation of Italian	5

This might look like a rather weighty questionnaire, which we calculated would take students around half an hour to complete. However, we also reckoned there would be considerable interest and motivation to do so; after all, these were incoming students who had chosen a particular university degree course, in which oral communication, and hence pronunciation, was a fundamental feature, arguably the most fundamental feature even in an academic setting; and here was a survey in which they were invited to reflect, perhaps for the first time, on their own opinions, attitudes, and experiences as language learners, and how these might contribute to the learning process itself. 372 students, mostly Italian L1 speakers, who had enrolled for courses in thirteen languages, rose to the challenge.

The individual chapters of this volume report and analyse the results obtained in the various sections of the questionnaire. The first chapter, by Marie-Christine Jamet, is devoted to Section A of the questionnaire, which focuses on personal details and on the linguistic background of the respondents, i.e., gender, age, school attendance in Italy and abroad, acquisition of Italian as first or second language, bilingualism, languages studied at school, high school diplomas, foreign language and dialect usage in everyday life, motivations for degree course enrolment, and languages chosen as major subjects in the degree programme (including self-assessment of proficiency level). Jamet offers an overview of the answers and, by comparison with available general statistical data (age, gender, language choices), shows that the sample of 372 respondents can be considered representative of the entire population of students enrolling to the Venice bachelor's degree course in modern languages (Lingue, civiltà e scienze del linguaggio, LCSL). Thus, the teaching staff of the department may consider the responses as providing a reliable picture not only of the linguistic profile, but also of the opinions and

attitudes of their BA students towards L2 pronunciation. The author then goes into more depth on three aspects that could have an impact on the answers in the subsequent sections: gender, motivation, and multilingualism. With respect to gender there is, as is usual in such courses, only a small proportion of male students (11%), which means that they might not be typical of male language learners in general and possibly do not differ greatly from female students in their views and attitudes. Regarding the motivation for enrolment, Jamet illustrates the scheme used to assign a motivational coefficient (on the intrinsic/extrinsic axis) to each respondent, which (in the subsequent chapters) turns out to be a significant predictor of various surveyed attitudes. Finally, she discusses the responses linked to (different notions of) plurilingualism. Interestingly, almost 30% of the informants consider themselves as bilingual, although far fewer declare a first language different from Italian and/or a substantial school attendance abroad (7% each). 50% claim to speak at least one foreign language in everyday life and even more (54%) report an occasional use of an Italian dialect, especially with friends and family. Some of these variables, as well as the total number of languages learned at school, languages chosen as main subjects, and self-rated proficiency levels, displayed significant correlations with the answers in the remaining sections of the questionnaire.

In the second chapter, Pavel Duryagin and Elena Dal Maso report the answers to Section B, which aimed at identifying general attitudes towards foreign accent and pronunciation, and they examine possible correlations between these attitudes and the students' personal backgrounds (collected in Section A). Respondents were asked to rate 14 Likert-type items with statements about the desirability of an accurate (opposed to native-like or comprehensible) L2 pronunciation and the importance of spending time and effort to achieve it, about feelings of (dis)comfort in communication depending on L2 pronunciation, and about identity issues that arise while speaking with a native-like or foreign accent. These questions referred to foreign languages in general, i.e., respondents could think of any of the foreign languages they speak. It turned out that the vast majority of respondents consider the native accent as a fundamental point of reference and are willing to invest time in the classroom to improve pronunciation skills. Likewise, almost all students appreciate being mistaken for native speakers when speaking. On the other hand, some items highlighted the existence of different opinions: the importance of pronunciation in comparison with grammar and vocabulary, as well as comprehensibility or native-like pronunciation as the main goal of the students displayed controversial responses. Many students seem to aim at an accurate and/or comprehensible pronunciation, but realise and accept that they will never reach a native-like accent. The authors also tested possible correlations between the

students' answers and their personal background variables (gender; age of acquisition of Italian; self-declared bilingualism; the number of foreign languages studied at school; self-reported everyday usage of foreign languages; usage of Italian dialects; extrinsic/intrinsic motivations for enrolment to the degree course). As for gender, regression modelling did not show fundamental differences in attitudes; however, males tended to downgrade the importance of pronunciation compared to grammar and vocabulary and the influence of pronunciation quality on their confidence in communication. Daily use of foreign languages appears to be associated with greater pleasure and self-confidence in communication due to correct pronunciation, as well as to less discomfort in imitating a native accent. The dialect speakers seem to appreciate more than others the importance of pronunciation compared to grammar and vocabulary, but on the other hand feel less bothered by the fact that their foreign accent might reveal their origin. Finally, the authors found that intrinsically motivated students were more concerned about foreign-accented speech revealing their origins and, thus, more willing to dedicate time to pronunciation training in the classroom.

The third chapter, written by Ignacio Arroyo Hernández and Peter Paschke, refers to Sections C and D of the questionnaire. These two sections focus on attitudes and opinions linked directly to the two languages selected by students as major subjects of their degree course. Thus, the same series of 14 Likert items (plus 1 open-ended question) was presented twice: once in Section C referring to the first language of study, and once in Section D with reference to the other language chosen. However, if the student had not reported a proficiency level of at least A1, the corresponding section was skipped. For purposes of analysis, the responses of both sections were grouped together. The statements to be rated in Sections C and D by means of five level-Likert items belong to three areas of interest, including perceptive, affective and cognitive factors: (i) pronunciation accuracy and foreign accent of one's own L2 speech and the ability to distinguish good and bad L2 pronunciations in one's own or someone else's speech; (ii) the extent to which L2 pronunciation is experienced by respondents as enjoyment or vice versa as a demanding or anxiety-provoking activity as well as the emotional states that might affect their L2 pronunciation; (iii) the knowledge about individual L2 pronunciation problems and that of (other) Italian speakers. It turns out that, although a native-like accent is considered a landmark by students, they do not believe that a good L2 pronunciation must necessarily be accent-free. They are quite sure they can evaluate the pronunciation of other L2 speakers, but they display considerable uncertainty in the field of self-evaluation and of knowledge about their own pronunciation problems. In addition, for most respondents, L2 pronunciation is associated with pleasure. The authors also an-

alyse the role of predictors linked to target languages and individual background by means of regression analysis. As expected, the most important and robust predictor of responses is self-rated proficiency: students at higher levels are convinced that they pronounce more accurately and are better raters of pronunciation; they display more L2 pronunciation enjoyment and think that they have better knowledge about L2 phonetics and pronunciation difficulties. Target languages, or at least some of them, are also relevant predictors for all areas of interest. Compared to English, languages like German, Swedish and Russian often get lower self-ratings for pronunciation quality, evaluation ability and pronunciation knowledge. Pronunciation of German is also less associated with enjoyment, while the reverse is true for Portuguese and Spanish, for which the authors discuss possible reasons (phonological distance and/or language-related attitudes). Arroyo Hernández and Paschke also tested the role of personal background variables such as gender, first language (Italian or other), number of foreign languages studied at school, total years of language study, and the motivational coefficient linked to enrolment motivation. A higher number of foreign languages and a first language other than Italian were associated with better self-ratings for L2 pronunciation quality, perception and knowledge, suggesting the idea that plurilingualism (in its various forms) might promote L2 pronunciation. Finally, intrinsic (enrolment) motivation turned out to be associated with better self-evaluations of L2 pronunciation and, unsurprisingly, with high pronunciation enjoyment.

Chapter 4, written by David Newbold, concerns Section E of the questionnaire, which deals with the pronunciation of English as a lingua franca (ELF). The 7 Likert scale items of this section, administered to all informants, regardless of the languages chosen in the degree course, try to determine their attitudes towards non-native accents when English is used in an international context. Given that the majority of English-language communication is between non-native speakers, one might assume that students, as part of their "ELF awareness" (Sifakis 2014), rate the importance of a native accent lower and intelligibility higher compared to other foreign languages. The first-year undergraduate students did actually show some incipient awareness of the reduced importance of native accents in ELF contexts and, partly, conceded that a non-native accent might help intelligibility, but many seem to be annoyed by a marked foreign accent, including the Italian one. The role of accommodation strategies and intercultural and/or pragmatic factors in communication appears to fall outside their personal experience and tends not to be recognised. In a second stage of his research, Newbold administered the same survey to two groups of master's students, assuming that these, due to a more extensive communication experience in ELF, might exhibit different attitudes. MA students indeed turned out to be significantly

more tolerant towards a marked foreign accent than BA students, but surprisingly, they also showed a significantly lower ELF awareness when it comes to the adaptation of pronunciation to the interlocutor. In addition, Newbold found some significant differences within the MA group between English language and literature specialists and students of International Relations. Contrary to what one might expect, i.e., a more pragmatic, instrumentally motivated approach, the latter give more importance to a native-like accent in ELF communication, and are less likely to see communication breakdown as the result of cultural or pragmatic problems. Language specialists, on the other hand, are more convinced that non-native accents can support intelligibility. With some of the items, they seem to have a greater ELF awareness than their peers majoring in International Relations, but in the key issue of accommodation there is still no significant difference: both groups claim that adaptation to the interlocutor's pronunciation is not necessary for comprehension. The findings lead the author to a reflection on the usefulness of an 'ELF-aware approach' in English language courses in higher education in Italy and Europe.

The Appendix contains the questionnaire in its original Italian form, while English translations of the single questions are given in the various chapters of the book.

As there is no chapter for Section F of the questionnaire, dedicated to the pronunciation of Italian with regional or foreign accents, the main results will be summarised here. In Section F, the 372 informants were invited to rate the following statements:

F01. When a foreigner speaks Italian with a strong accent, it's hard for me to listen.
F02. I enjoy imitating a foreign accent in Italian, e.g. speaking like Laurel & Hardy.
F03. I enjoy imitating other regional accents, e.g. the Neapolitan accent.
F04. When I talk for a long time with people from another region of Italy, my accent changes.

F01 was rejected by more than two thirds (67%) of the respondents, with only a minority (14%) agreeing, thus highlighting a substantial tolerance towards foreign accents in Italian, partly interpreted (in the free comments) as a rejection of any discrimination of foreigners. Such a wide acceptance of foreign accents in the respondents' L1, while they aim for a native accent in their L2, is in line with studies that found more tolerance towards a foreign accent in other speakers compared to one's own L2 speech production (e.g., Dewaele, McCloskey 2015, 232). Foreign accent imitation in L1, sometimes suggested as a technique in L2 pronunciation acquisition (Rojczyk 2015), is enjoyed by 44% of the respondents when rating statement F02, while

38% express disagreement. A linear regression model[5] revealed a robust correlation ($p<0.01$) with enrolment motivation, i.e., more intrinsically motivated students reported a higher enjoyment of foreign accent imitation. A similar approach to L1 pronunciation appears to be coherent with the higher L2 pronunciation enjoyment displayed by intrinsically motivated students in Sections C and D (see ch. 3). A great majority of respondents (54%) also appreciates the imitation of regional Italian accents, while only half as many (27%) express disagreement. Finally, 50% of the respondents approve statement F04, i.e., they report accommodation effects when speaking with interlocutors from other Italian regions, while 31% disagree with the statement. As revealed by linear regression, gender is a significant predictor ($p<0.05$) in this case, as male students express more disagreement than females. This result confirms other studies in which women were more likely to accommodate to an interlocutor than men (cf. Namy, Nygaard, Sauerteig 2002).

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5 For discussion about the use of parametric statistics for Likert-items see § 4.1 of ch. 3.

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Learner Profiles and Attitudes Towards Accent in the Foreign Language
The Role of Language Backgrounds

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Abstract This paper is part of collaborative research investigating the attitudes of first-year university students in Italy towards foreign accents. It examines the first part of the survey which aims to define the students' identity and language profile. The analysis focuses on the characteristics of the group which are hypothesised to correlate with students' attitudes towards foreign accents examined in the other sections of the questionnaire. Factors that could have an impact are gender, motivation for studying languages, bi-/plurilingualism, the nature of the languages studied, the language repertoire and the background of its acquisition.

Keywords Second language acquisition. Language learner profiles. Foreign accent perception. University languages learners. Language backgrounds.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

SAIL 23
e-ISSN 2610-9557 | ISSN 2610-9549
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-628-2 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-629-9

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-03-23 | Accepted 2022-05-03 | Published 2022-08-03

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-628-2/001

1 Introduction

This chapter is part of a collaborative research project linked to the 'Project of Excellence' of the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies of Ca' Foscari University and specifically the branch of the project which deals with pluriligualism and socio-linguistics. Our specific research focuses on "Accents and Pronunciation. Attitudes of Italian University Students of Languages". It is a cross-linguistic research project because it brings together researchers of German, English, Spanish, French and Russian who have in common a homogeneous population of native or acquired Italian speakers enrolled in an academic language course. The shared focus of interest was the nature and perception of the 'foreign accent'. The originality of the project was to work on the perception that students who enter university to study languages have of foreign accents in general, both the accent of other people who speak their language – mainly Italian – or their own accent in the languages of their own repertoire in a process of self-evaluation. The researchers wanted to understand the importance given to pronunciation by learners, the possible existence of stereotypes, and the influence that the languages they are learning might have on representations of the accent. All responses were linked to the background of the respondents. The first task undertaken by the research team was to design a questionnaire that was submitted to two cohorts of students in 2019 and 2020. We refer to the article by Arroyo Hernández (2020) for a presentation and discussion of the questionnaire.[1]

In this paper, we analyse in more detail the nature of the survey sample based on the responses to the first part of the questionnaire (Section A). We check the representativeness of the sample in relation to the total number of students enrolled, we compile a picture of the linguistic biography of the students interviewed and we discuss the influence certain features of linguistic biography might have on the answers in other parts of the questionnaire: Section B about opinions on foreign language pronunciation and accent in general, Sections C and D about self-assessment and opinions about one's own accent when speaking the languages studied at university and Section E on English as a lingua franca. The other chapters in this volume will focus on the analysis of these sections.

I would like to thank other members of the research group *Accento straniero in studenti universitari di lingue straniere,* and in particular, Peter Paschke for his critical eye on my analysis and David Newbold for his patient linguistic proofreading.

1 In the same issue of *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata* were presented the results of the first cohort of students: Newbold (2021) on English as a lingua franca, Dal Maso and Miotti (2021) on the problem of identity, Paschke (2021) on perception and evaluation of L2 accent.

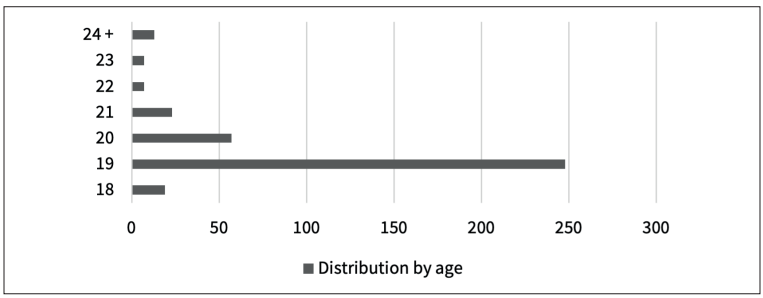
2 Description of the Sample and Its Representativeness

The homogeneity of the group lay in the fact that we addressed ourselves exclusively to students in the first year of the degree course in "Languages, Civilisations and the Science of Language" (Lingue, civiltà e scienze del linguaggio, LCSL) which has been taught for the past decade. We had no idea *a priori* how successful our undertaking would be. The two cohorts, in 2019 and 2020, had a total of 1,020 registered students, all of whom were potential informants. 437 students completed the questionnaire submitted in two consecutive years, 238 in 2019-20 and 199 in 2020-21. We retained only the 372 students actually enrolled in the first year of the LCSL course, excluding students who had access to the questionnaire although they were no longer in the first year (identifiable through question A03). This constitutes 36.5% of the total of 1,020 first-year students over the two cohorts. We now need to see whether this sample is representative. To do this, we examine the responses to Section A, regarding age, gender and languages studied, and compare them with data provided by the university for the cohorts as a whole.

2.1 Age

The question A02 was about age. As we restricted the group of respondents to first-year students (*matricole*), the age was quite homogeneous **[chart 1]**. We consider the difference between the year of birth and the year when they filled out the questionnaire to calculate the age, even though it is not perfect in terms of month of birth.

Chart 1 Distribution by age, 372 students in 2019 and 2020



Putting together the two cohorts, 81.9% of the participants were 19 or 20 years old, at the time of completing the questionnaire; 11.3% were either 18 or 21 years old – a small age difference. 6.7% were mature students, aged between 22 and 53 years old. The percentage of the main age classes (19-20 years old) is slightly lower in the entire group (80.8%). Also, the groups of 18- and 21-years-olds is some-

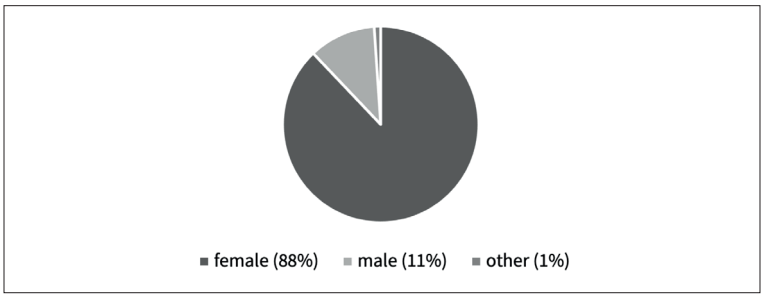
what less represented in the total population (9.9%), while the mature students make up a slightly larger proportion (9.3%). However, the (Pearson moment) correlation between sample and population across all age groups amounts to r=0.998, thus supporting the view that the sample can be considered representative.

2.2 The Declared Gender

The first question A01 was about gender. The predominance of females in this type of foreign language course emerges clearly if we look at the figures for the last ten years at Ca' Foscari: the average percentage of female students is 83.5%. This figure in Venice is in line with Italian universities generally, since the official 2017-18 ISTAT data available indicates that for Italy 81.7% of the more than 21,000 first-year students in language courses are females and 83.9% of language graduates are female.[2]

Thus an overwhelming majority of female students (327) responded to our questionnaire, together with 41 males and 4 'others' since provision had been made for this response in the questionnaire **[chart 2]**.

Chart 2 Gender distribution (rounded percentages)



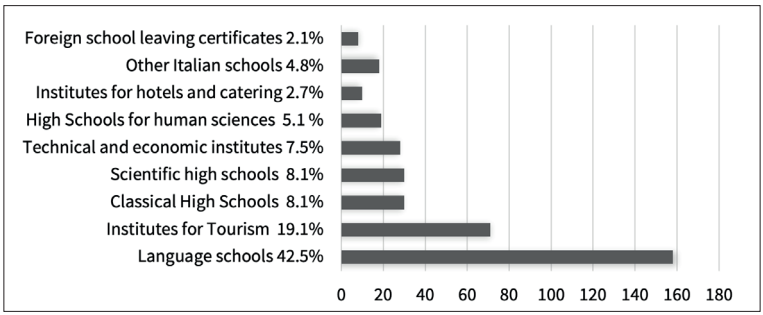
As we cannot draw conclusions from the small number of other gendered identities, we calculate the percentages here on the basis of the declared male/female opposition comparable with the data collected at the central level of university enrolment. Thus, 87.5% of females completed the questionnaire, slightly more than the 84.2% of all first-year students in the two years under review. Could it be that young females are slightly more diligent in responding to a request from their teachers for research purposes? However, the difference is small and so from this point of view our sample can be considered representative of the two cohorts together.

2 https://www.istat.it/it/files/2019/12/C07.pdf.

2.3 High School Education

Question A16 focused on the educational background of students. As expected, more than 60% of informants come from language high schools (*licei linguistici*, 42.5%) and tourism institutes (*istituti per il turismo*, 19.1%) where languages enjoy high priority **[chart 3]**. This percentage is higher compared to the same two schools in the whole group (35.2% and 16.5% respectively),[3] but the ranking of the different schools is the same: 1) language schools 2) institutes for tourism 3) classical high school 4) scientific high school 5) technical and economic schools. The Pearson moment correlation between the two distributions amounts to r=0.984. The questionnaire sample thus seems to be representative of the first-year students as a whole.

Chart 3 Distribution of high school educational backgrounds (question A16)



2.4 Languages Studied at the University

Four questions relate to this information: questions A21, A22, A23, A24. Students on the Venice undergraduate language course choose two languages which carry an equal number of credits (12 credits per year) and there is no academic difference between the two. Even though language A often seems to be considered the main one and will be the language chosen for the final dissertation and even though the declared level of proficiency is higher for language A than for language B (questions A22 and A24) we do not have any real evidence of significant differences. We can thus consider the two languages as equivalent. The five most popular Western languages in the two

3 Of the 1,020 enrolled first-year students, 66 did not give any answer regarding their high school diploma. So the percentage is calculated on the basis of the 954 students who answered the question and those 20 informants who had attended a foreign high school, for a total of 974.

cohorts 2019-20 and 2020-21 cover 89.32% of all students enrolled in the course, as follows (cf. also **tab. 1**):

- English and Anglo-American: 37% as language A or B with a very clear predominance of language A;
- Spanish and Latin American Spanish: 18.9% as language A or B (predominantly language B);
- Russian: 11.56%, as language A or B (slight predominance of language B);
- French: 11.5% as language A or B (predominantly language B);
- German: 10.28% as language A or B (predominantly language B).

Table 1 Distribution of languages reported in the year cohorts and among the students in our survey

	2019 Languages A & B	**2020 Languages A & B**	**Total**	**%**	**Our sample languages A & B**	**%**
English + Anglo am.	380	377	757	37.07	273	32.1
Spanish +Latin American Spanish	212	174	386	18.90	110	14.78
Russian	130	106	236	11.56	89	11.96
French	125	110	235	11.51	104	13.9
German	106	104	210	10.28	101	13.57
Italian sign language	49	41	90	4.41	23	3.09
Portuguese	37	25	62	3.04	20	2.69
Swedish	24	20	44	2.15	16	2.15
Modern Greek	2	3	5	0.24	1	0.13
Polish	3	2	5	0.24	2	0.26
Serbo-Croatian	4	1	5	0.24	1	0.13
Catalan	2	2	4	0.19	2	0.26
Albanian	1	1	2	0.1	-	
Romanian	1	0	1	0.05	2	0.26
Total	1,076	966	2,042		744	

In the group participating in the survey, the five major languages are confirmed, with a slight variation in their order: 1) English + Anglo-American: 32.1%; 2) Spanish + Latin American Spanish: 14.78%; 3) French 13.9%; 4) German: 13.57%; 5) Russian 11.96%, amounting to a total of 86.31%.

It can be seen that the percentage of our sample for Russian is in line with the overall enrolment; the first two languages (English and Spanish) have a slightly lower participation rate but remain in positions 1 and 2, while students of French and German have slightly higher percentages than in the general cohorts, placing them before Russian in our sample. These slight variations may correspond to con-

tingencies in the data collection (for example, one might think of a greater or lesser insistence of the teachers who promoted the questionnaire; or a greater fear of talking about the accent for Russian). However, they do not invalidate the representativeness of the sample.

2.5 Languages Studied at School

Questions A08 to A15 aim to check how many students studied one specific language and for how long before enrolling at the university. We will then compare these data and the languages chosen for the academic programme. Obviously, we observe higher percentages in correspondence with the school cycles: after 3 years (middle school), after 5 years (high school), after 8 years (the entire cycle of secondary school) or after 13 years (the primary and secondary school). We group the results between less than 5 years (that is, false beginners with a high probability of a temporal gap between the period in which they studied the language and the university), 5 years up to 8 years, and 9 to 13 years, a period which includes primary school.

The 30 students who studied ancient Greek correspond to those who attended a classical high school, plus one student who had studied Greek for one year and another for 3 years. For Latin, 59% of the students had studied it for at least 1 year, mostly for 2 years, and the percentage of those who had studied Latin for 5 years corresponds to the sum of students of classical or scientific high schools.

29 students mentioned other languages such as Chinese (38%), Japanese (20%), Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Portuguese, Modern Greek, Turkish, and Arabic.

For the 5 quantitatively more important languages taught at school and at the university, table **2** shows the number of students who had already studied the language, the number of students enrolled at university and the level declared at university.

Table 2 Number of students enrolled at the university compared to number of students who had studied these languages at school

372 students	Tot. number	Less than 5 years	5-8 years	9-13 years	Chose this language A or B at the university	Beginners and declared level A1	Declared mother tongue
English	372	1	39	332	273	1	-
French	209	84	124	1	104	32	1
German	240	47	181	12	101	3	3
Russian	74	31	43	3	89	50	2
Spanish	189	74[4]	115	2	110	22	1
	1,084	237	502	350	677	108	6

We can see that a large number of students who had already studied a major language do not continue with this language at university. Since beginners never studied the language at school, we can subtract their number from the number of those who chose language X and conclude that most of the other students continued the same language from school. The only students who have chosen to study language A or B without being beginners are mother tongue speakers of that language. It is also possible that they could have studied their language at school too. But there are not many such students, so the general trend is not affected.

With Russian, for example, if we have 50 beginners, 39 out of 74 who studied Russian before, or who are mother tongue speakers, continued at the university. We find the same phenomenon for French: a third of all students who choose it are beginners. Of the others, some have studied only at middle school and can be considered as false beginners. The first-year French class is thus highly non-homogenous.

Will the previous study of foreign languages influence students' perceptions of accent? This question will be addressed in the following sections of this volume. However, we observe, on the basis of our teaching experience, that students who studied at school often have difficulties in pronunciation because they have not been corrected well. But they are not aware of this fact.

4 Two students mentioned Spanish for 3 years as other languages. It might have been a third language. So we counted them with Spanish.

2.6 Final Comments on Section 2

The most common profile in our sample is female, 19-20 years old; students come from a linguistic or tourism high school, they are Italian, and mostly from the Veneto region. They have studied English from primary school. Nearly half of them chose other languages than those studied before taking advantage of the range of choice available. Our sample is coherent with the complete cohort of language students at Ca' Foscari by age, gender and choice of languages.

3 Language Biography and Research Questions

The questions in Section A are intended to compile a profile of the students who were asked to examine the influence this profile might have on reported attitudes towards foreign accents. For example, the impact of gender, the impact of the individual's bilingualism or plurilingualism, where this existed, the impact of students' language repertoires and process of acquisition, the impact of target language difficulty. We will examine these factors in the light of what the literature can tell us.

3.1 The Impact of Gender

3.1.1 Literature Review

Does the gender variable have an impact on the responses regarding students' perceptions of foreign accents? There is little research on the correlation between sex/gender and L2 acquisition. Rod Ellis, in his review of the literature, mentions generically that "females outperform males" (1994, 25) and, basing his observations on Labov's findings that women use new forms more often than men, he hypothesises that:

> women might be better at L2 learning than men as they are likely to be more open to new linguistic forms in the L2 input and they will be more likely to rid themselves of interlanguage forms that deviate from target-language norms. (Ellis 1994, 202)

In her 2008 article, Karen Feery provides an overview of research on gender in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) which was still comparatively rare, as there was still no real theoretical current on the subject. She mentions a publication by Kettemann (1998, cited in Feery 2008), in German, which summarises other research on gender-related performance in SLA. One study showed that girls perform better on tests in primary and secondary education in Europe, but in other activities this may depend on subjects which are more familiar either to girls or to boys; it may also depend on learning strate-

gies or attitudes towards language. While there is no consensus on a gender difference relating to learning strategies, in terms of attitudes, many studies converge in pointing out that they are more positive for females because there is a greater desire to learn other languages and to improve their knowledge. In particular, males would choose languages for practical reasons and females because of their intrinsic interest (research cited in Feery 2008, 38). A more recent study by Alonso-Herrero and Lasagabaster Herrarte (2019), on L2 English, cited by Arroyo Hernández (2020), confirms this same positive attitude of females, which would also be noted in the acquisition of the phonological component.

This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why females choose to study languages, as had already been pointed out in a 1989 study (Loulidi cited in Feery 2008, 41). This trend has continued ever since. Our observations of the Venice group point in the same direction, given the clear predominance of females in this field, even if other socioeconomic and social reproduction factors[5] may play a role in the choice of university studies. Thus, existing research on gender and SLA invites us to consider gender within a social context that involves a system of interacting factors. Piller and Pavlenko (in Pavlenko et al. 2001, 3) call for SLA research to become "more context-sensitive" and to treat gender as "a system of social relations and discursive practices whose meaning varies across speech communities" (cited in Feery 2008, 47).

3.1.2 Analysis of Responses in Questionnaire (Question A1)

For our study, given the differential between females and males who responded to the questionnaire, it will be difficult to establish correlations between gender – and the consequently different motivations towards language study (as shown before) – and opinions on foreign accents expressed in our questionnaire, unless the male responses all converge and are in some way kept distinct from the female responses. Questions to ask might be:

- if females have a greater desire to learn and do better in languages, will they be more demanding than males in seeking a pronunciation which is more native-like?
- If males are more inclined towards languages for practical reasons, will they favour communication over phonetic accuracy?

5 The socioeconomic factors which can explain the predominance of females in this kind of university course are the lesser paid jobs obtained at the end of their studies. The social reproduction factor, described by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in *La Reproduction* (1970) shows how education maintains models that favour dominant social classes. It can be extended to females because they tend to choose the same kind of studies or jobs, responding to implicit social pressure.

The analysis of motivations may help us to refine these research questions.

3.2 The Impact of Motivation

3.2.1 Review of the Literature

In any learning/acquisition process – and therefore in that of languages – motivation plays an essential role, as shown by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan who developed the Self-Determination Theory in the 1980s, opening the way to a humanist approach instead of the prevailing behaviourist approach. It is to Deci and Ryan that we owe the threefold distinction between *intrinsic motivation*, where the subject invests in the learning he chooses without any other reward than pleasure, *extrinsic motivation*, where the subject invests in learning for reasons external to him (duty, constraint, social pressure, identification of a future reward) and *a-motivation*, lack of motivation (Deci, Ryan 2002). At the same time, in Italy, since the 1960s, in the wake of Titone's (1966; 1977) holodynamic model, the Venice school of *glottodidattica* (language teaching) has been reflecting on these principles for language didactics and Freddi (1990; 1994) integrates the principle of motivation into his model of the teaching unit. Balboni (1994) synthesises three types of motivation: *duty*, *need*, and *pleasure*, and continues his reflection (2008) by showing that these three factors interact in a dynamic way: a duty or a need can evolve towards pleasure which is the major reason for success.

3.2.2 Analysis of Responses

One question in our survey (A19) allows us to reflect on the motivation for enrolling in a foreign language course. There were 13 options – presented at random – and several choices available, for which there were 1,634 responses, with some students limiting themselves to a single response and others choosing several (up to 9). Insofar as the students are at university and have freely chosen their language course, no *a-motivation* is possible and the probability of *extrinsic motivation* due to coercion by a third party or due to a system (e.g., a school imposes a language which is not the one desired), or due to some kind of duty, is almost nil, whereas it might be frequent in secondary education. In any case, the questionnaire did not consider this kind of extrinsic motivation among the 13 options offered and it did not appear in the open-ended comments (A20). Table **3** presents the results, which we will comment on.

Table 3 Motivations for language study. Distribution of responses for the whole sample and for the sample of male respondents only. Percentage inserted to two decimal places

		All responses (1,634)	%	Rounded %	Male responses (193)	%	Rounded %
A. Intrinsic reasons: "Raisons du cœur"	I am curious to know other cultures	238	14.56	**46**	26	13.47	48
	Languages are my passion	231	14.13		24	12.43	
	I like literature	114	6.98		17	8.8	
	I would like to teach languages	92	5.63		13	6.73	
	I am interested in linguistics	77	4.71		12	6.21	
B.1 Extrinsic reasons: Positive past triggers	I was good at school	182	11.13	**21**	25	12.95	23
	I had a good language teacher at school	90	5.50		13	6.73	
	Following a stay in a different linguistic context	67	4.10		7	3.62	
B.2.1 Extrinsic reasons: Lack	By exclusion (e.g., of scientific subjects)	33	2.02	**33**	3	1.55	29
	I never studied languages well at school	25	1.53		2	1.03	
B.2.2 Extrinsic reasons: Future needs	Good job prospects in a globalised world.	234	14.32		24	12.43	
	Foreign Languages give me the possibility to transfer abroad.	211	12.91		24	12.43	
B.2.3 Extrinsic reason: Present need	This degree programme is present in Venice, i.e., close to my home	40	2.44		3	1.55	

The division of options between intrinsic and extrinsic according to Deci and Ryan's (2002) model is not easy, insofar as some motivations are nuanced or some questions have implicit interpretations that blur a binary categorisation. For example, the reason "I was good at school" could be interpreted as the extrinsic desire to get good marks but also as the result of a personal passion which is intrinsic. In the same way the reason "I had a good language teacher" seems to be extrinsic, but also intrinsic if it refers to personal emotions related to the person. These two motivations in the next chapters will be treated as ambiguous and neutral.

However, let us start our reflection with a binary classification. On the one hand, we have the first group A comprising the five emo-

tional reasons, as evidenced by the affective vocabulary used ("I am curious about other cultures; "Languages are my passion"; "I like literature"; "I am interested in linguistics"; "I would like to teach") These motivations are clearly intrinsic and relate to the immediate pleasure of studying or the future gratification of fulfilling one's professional dream. The second group B display extrinsic motivations.

For this first categorisation, the relative percentages are as follows:

- *Intrinsic motivations*: 46%, fuelled by curiosity about other cultures (≃15%) and passion for languages (≃14%).
- *Extrinsic motivations*: 54%, fuelled by the two motivations concerning the future – job prospects (≥14%) and the possibility of going abroad (≃13%) – followed by academic success in languages (≃11%).

We notice a small majority for extrinsic motivations, but, as we can see in table **4**, the top four scores are balanced between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, the first one being intrinsic.

Table 4 Ranking of the top five motivations

	All students	**Male students**
I am curious about other cultures.	1	1
Good job prospects in a globalised world.	2	4
Languages are my passion.	3	3
Foreign languages give me the possibility to transfer abroad.	4	5
I was good at school.	5	2

However, we can refine the motivations initially listed as extrinsic by sub-categorising:

– Group B.1. Motivations linked to a positive past personal experience.
The trigger can be evaluated positively, i.e., "being good at languages"; "having had a good teacher"; "having made a trip abroad".
– Group B.2. Motivations that point to an analysis of needs and shortcomings:
B.2.1. Shortcomings arising from past experience: the fact that one has "not studied languages well" implies that one must study them, and the fact that one has chosen languages to the "exclusion of other subjects" is a choice forced by necessity.
B.2.2. Projected future needs: "I will have good job prospects in a globalised world" or "be able to transfer abroad";
B.2.3. Present need: proximity to the university.

If we classify these motivations differently by considering the ambiguous group B.1 on the side of intrinsic motivation, we have: A+B.1: 67% and B.2: 33%.

It appears that reasons linked to a positive dimension dominate over a pragmatic choice motivated by reason and even more in the male group.[6] The ranking of motivations is slightly different in the male group compared to the whole group: in position 2, we find the ambiguous reason "I was good at school" but separated by less than 1 point from the third motivation: "passion". These results are not congruent with what the literature reports and seem to demonstrate that males who chose a university programme in languages are highly motivated. Maybe findings would be different in language courses for non-specialists. However, this conclusion should be investigated with a higher number of males in different study programmes, to increase the limited research on the links between gender and language learning as seen in 2.1.

If, following the analysis of motivations, female and male students enrolled at university in a language programme approach their courses with similar kinds of motivation, with even a slight advantage for males in terms of intrinsic motivation, is this also the case with regard to the responses on the perception of foreign accents? The results presented here suggest that the gender factor will not be a determining one.

But some other factors could be correlated with intrinsic motivation, in particular: the pleasure of having a native-like accent, positive emotions when speaking aloud, positive feedback in communicative interaction, the feeling of having a new identity, and less stress management. These factors are related to questions asked in Sections B, C and D.

3.3 The Impact of Bilingualism

3.3.1 Review of the Literature

The definition of bi/plurilingualism is subject to variation. In common parlance, a bilingual is a person who has a perfect command of two or more languages, learned in childhood, to the point of always being identified as a member of each community. And it is the ability to express oneself orally, of which one of the signals is the accent,

6 We should have compared the male group to the female group. But the responses were open-ended and not easily accessible. The manual counting was easier for males, less numerous. But if the results show a better intrinsic motivation for the male students compared to the whole group of which they are part, *a fortiori* the gap with females is bigger.

that we spontaneously think of. Claude Hagège, a renowned polyglot, states that "to be truly bilingual implies that one can speak, understand, read and write two languages with equal ease" (1996, 218). He includes all the linguistic components of the language, from grammar to idiomatic structures, and makes the speed with which structures are accessed a discriminating factor. This idealistic view of bilingualism, seen as the sum of two monolinguals – themselves ideally interpreted – has been nuanced by numerous research studies in linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. We will quote two works, one dating from 1981, the other from 2015, which, by taking stock of the research, offer some interesting concepts for the present research. Francescato (1981, 21) reviews international research since the 1930s and distinguishes between spontaneous bilingualism – acquired in childhood – and bilingualism resulting from conscious learning – our case study for the most part – and focuses on the first typology. He differentiates between the concept of diglossia, introduced by Ferguson (1959), where the separation of languages is achieved in terms of registers according to the conditions of use (field of use and role of the speakers) and the concept of 'bilingualism' proper, where "the speaker's competence is such as to enable him to deal with any type of discourse, from the most informal to the most formal, regardless of the use of either code (L1, L2)" (Francescato 1981, 36; Author's transl.). However, he already posits this definition – which is in line with Hagège's later definition – as ideal and states that it is the exception, because the observation of practical cases shows bilinguals who will face certain situations with the L1 and others with the L2, and diglossia therefore falls within the definition of bilingualism. However, he does not go beyond a distinction of 'domains' interpreted in sociolinguistic terms as f (non-formal) and F (formal). More interesting is his conception of the "isolated bilingual" to which he devotes his book, i.e., individuals who share their L2 with the community in which they live while they are native speakers of an L1. The concept of mother tongue is also discussed, as a child raised in a multilingual family or growing up in a context where the L1 is in the family, and the L2 is readily available outside, may have an equivalent degree of proficiency, resulting from a unique cognitive development that integrates the two languages.

Almost 35 years later, Swiss psycholinguist François Grosjean takes stock of the situation in his book *Parler plusieurs langues* (Grosjean 2015). Deploring the fact that prejudices die hard, and that a strict definition of bilingualism excludes the vast majority of people who have several languages in their repertoire to varying degrees and who are not "monolinguals in one person", he starts from the simplest and broadest possible definition: "bilingualism is the regular use of two or more languages or dialects in everyday life" (Grosjean 2015, 16). This definition is in line with Francescato's ob-

servation of a distribution of languages/dialects within the individual, but it broadens as it encompasses more differentiated domains of use (close or distant family, work, study, home, shopping, leisure, administration, holidays, clothes, sports etc.), the existence of different communicative goals, the diversity of the channel (for example, oral skills in L1 and written skills in L2, or only oral skills in L1 and L2, e.g., among some migrants etc.). In addition, it includes the type of activities performed: counting, calculating, singing, praying, taking notes etc. In order to trace the linguistic profile of the individual, Grosjean formalises the "principle of complementarity" of situations, previously observed empirically by some researchers: he proposes a visual representation where each facet of life is indicated with its reference language and placed on the two axes of *knowledge* and *use*. He notes the interaction between the principle of complementarity and the knowledge/performance of languages at a given time, as a lesser-used language might also be less developed. Furthermore, he affirms the dynamic aspect of this principle, which evolves and adapts according to the circumstances of life, so that a language may be dominant for a time, then regress and be reactivated later. Finally, he rehabilitates *language transfer* in bilingual speech with code switching between subjects who share the same bilingualism, situating the competence of the bilingual speaker on a continuum between monolingualism (facing a monolingual interlocutor) and bilingual speech. He is therefore a proponent of a holistic view of the bilingual speaker.

As far as accent is concerned, Grosjean rejects the idea that a bilingual speaker necessarily has no accent. He dissociates knowledge of a language from the accent and mentions not only personalities who had a strong accent, starting with Napoleon or Marie Curie, but also people who have no accent because they learned the language in childhood, but no longer practice it, and are no longer fluent speakers: "It is time to do away with the 'accent' criterion of bilingualism" (Grosjean 2015, 39). It goes without saying that the people who speak with an accent had no problems of intelligibility and intercomprehension with the French-speaking world in which they lived. So the question of accent is part of a continuum and implies a threshold of social acceptability. Today's language teaching specialists, when assessing learners' performance, are moving towards "comfortable intelligibility" (Arroyo Hernández 2020) instead of imitation of a "native accent". Arroyo Hernández points out that recent research shows that learners' expectations are that they will progress towards a native-like accent. How, then, should this 'native-like accent' be defined? A student from an Italian region with Italian-German bilingual status raises the issue in her free comments in the questionnaire:

> A language can vary from one place to another, so how can you achieve 'native speaker-like pronunciation'? This is not a criticism of the (very good) questions, but a reflection on myself. I am a native speaker of German like most South Tyroleans, but our German is far (in pronunciation) from that of an Austrian or German. Can I therefore call myself a 'native speaker' even if my pronunciation is very different? (Stud0052; Author's transl. from Italian)

A native accent will be that of one of the sub-communities in which the mother-tongue child will grow up. The generic linguistic set – to which the name of the language is given – is subject to diatopic and diastratic variations which do not hinder intercomprehension between the speakers of the set. Therefore, our student from South Tyrol is a native speaker of German. But in the institutional teaching framework that is ours, the 'native accent' in the learners' representations will be the standard, neutral accent, that of the dominant media, selected for teaching/learning contexts because that is how it is taught. If French is taught in a non-French-speaking country of Europe, the model offered by the teaching materials for production tasks will be the standard accent of France (and not of Switzerland or Belgium). Similarly in Europe, the implicit model of textbooks for English remains standard British English, for Spanish the standard variant of the Iberian Peninsula, and for German the standard German of the German (not Austrian) media, while variation can be introduced in comprehensive tasks. Nevertheless, for French, things are different in Québec, the teaching materials and course books present the Québécois accent to English speakers studying French in schools or to newcomers. And in Europe, openness to variation is gaining ground, particularly with the development of the concept of Francophonie and the special case of English as a lingua franca. In relation to this phenomenon, the foreign accent will be the one which presents phonetic features which are not congruent with the set of features defining a variant. Sometimes it takes just a few words to be identified as 'foreign' by a member of the reference language community.

How will our learners fare? Will being Italian monolinguals influence their perception of foreign accents in their own language or in the languages they are learning? Will the bilingual individuals in the group have a different attitude?

3.3.2 Responses Concerning Bilingualism

Several items in the questionnaire aimed at defining the contours of a monolingual or bi/plurilingual student, by cross-referencing data of different types. We also tried to identify the associated degree of pluriculturalism which might change the perception of accent. In fact, a

bilingual dialect/Italian speaker has no significant different cultural background. We use the term 'mother tongue' in our questionnaire and not L1, because this is immediately comprehensible to students.

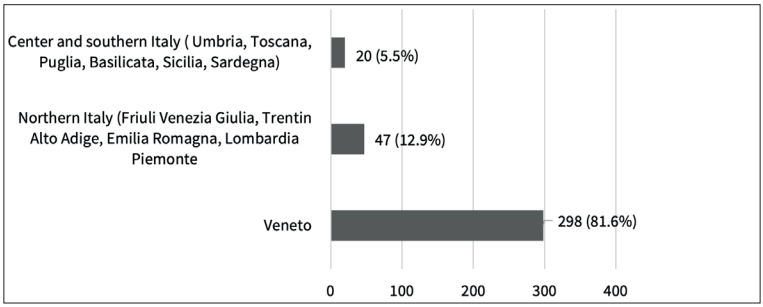
Questions A04 and A05 deal with schooling in Italy or abroad; question A06 investigates the acquisition of Italian (family or school influence); question A07 deals with exposure to the foreign language during childhood; question A17 explores the use made of foreign languages in everyday life, and question A18 includes in the panorama of bilingualism the use of dialects which are still very much alive in Italy. All of the questions, which can be cross-referenced, show the proportion of bilinguals or biculturals in our sample according to the different definitions mentioned above. We will present here the results for each question before the discussion.

3.3.2.1 School Attendance

Question A4. If you attended school in Italy (for at least 1 year), please indicate the prevailing region here.

Seven students did not give a response. All the other students had studied in Italy for at least one year. So the percentages in chart **4** are calculated on the basis of 365 students who had studied in Italy.

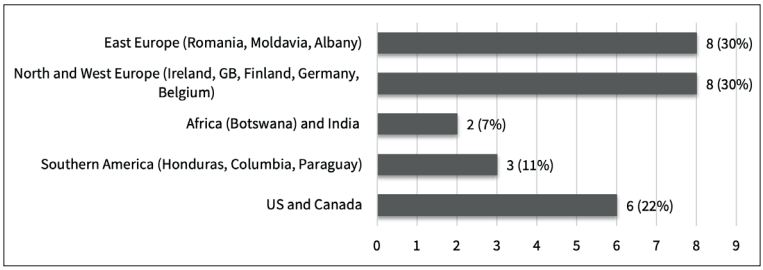
Chart 4 School attendance in Italy



Question A5. If you have attended school outside Italy (for at least 1 year), indicate the prevailing country.

Only 27 students responded, that is 7.3% of the entire sample, and of these only one never studied in Italy. One did not respond (Stud0086) but we could assume she studied abroad. The question does not make it possible to distinguish students who went abroad (with parents or with school programmes) from students from immigrant families or who came to Italy to study.

Chart 5 School outside Italy (rounded percentages)

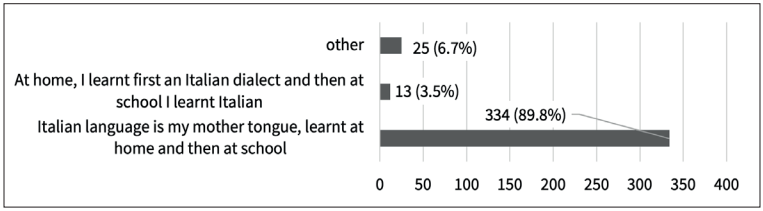


3.3.2.2 Italian Language

Question A06. Where did you learn Italian?

This question seeks to identify L1, Italian or dialect and foreign language. In chart **6** we can see that the vast majority have Italian as their mother tongue. Those who mentioned dialects only or dialect with Italian are counted with dialect native speakers. Among "others" we find: Romanian (6), Albanian (4), Russian (from Moldova) (5), Arabic (3), German (2), French (1), Spanish (1), Chinese (1), Slovak (1), plus one student from Trentino-Alto Adige who says she had also learnt a Germanic dialect.[7]

Chart 6 Acquisition of Italian language



7 Of the six students coming from Trentino-Alto Adige where four languages may be available (Ladin and Italian in the Romance family; Tyrolean dialect and German), four claim that Italian is their mother tongue, one that this is Ladin (counted as an Italian dialect) and one both Ladin and Tyrolean dialect, both of which she speaks. This student is classified as "other". Of these 25 students, three declared that they were not bilingual.

3.3.2.3 Bilingualism

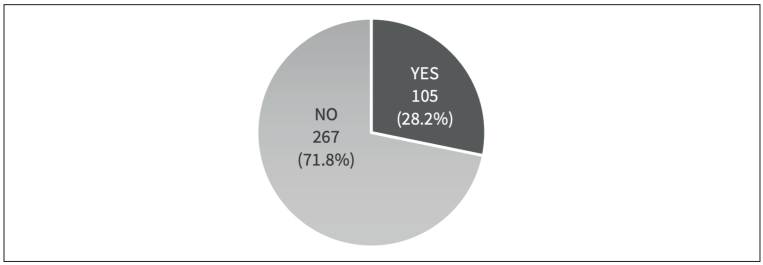
Question A07. As a child or teenager, did you learn another language, other than Italian, that you master (or mastered) at the level of your mother tongue or in any case with great spontaneity? If so, choose "other" and specify the language(s) and if you still use it.

The question attempted to identify those students who had another language in the first part of their life until 18 years old, from childhood to the end of adolescence. This choice is justified in order to be more inclusive. It includes students who spent time abroad during high school, or who learnt another language during infancy together with the children of immigrant families or bilingual families.

The title which appears in the questionnaire *Bilingualism* refers implicitly to students' self-perception at the moment in which they filled out the questionnaire, since bilingualism may be acquired from birth or later.

Of the 372 respondents, 105 replied 'yes' **[chart 7]**.

Chart 7 Bilingualism in childhood and adolescence



If, however, we cross-check with other responses, we should add three cases cross-referencing with the answer "other" to question A6 about Italian as mother tongue and with questions A22 and A24 about the proficiency level in the two languages of study. Three students answered "no" in A07 and they can be added to the list of those who had another language in childhood:

- Stud0086: native speaker of Russian, which is also her first language of study;
- Stud0146: born in Moldova, arrived in Italy at the age of 8, mentioned Russian as a language spoken every day;
- Stud1189: born in Moldova, arrived for high school in Italy.

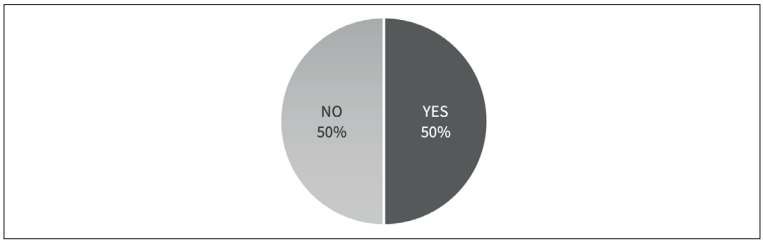
So we could count 108 bilinguals out of 372 students. But, as we will see in the discussion, the interpretation of 'bilingualism' is very different among the students and ranges from heritage language to family language to early learning language at school.

3.3.2.4 Use of Foreign Language in Everyday Life

Question A17. Excluding foreign language lessons, in everyday life, do you usually speak (or did you speak) a language other than Italian (e.g. at work, on social networks, during a school year abroad etc.)? If so, select "other" and specify the language(s) and usage situations.

The survey did not identify many bilinguals from childhood, while half of the sample say they use foreign languages every day, which seems to indicate a form of acquired bilingualism **[chart 8]**.

Chart 8 Use of foreign languages in everyday life

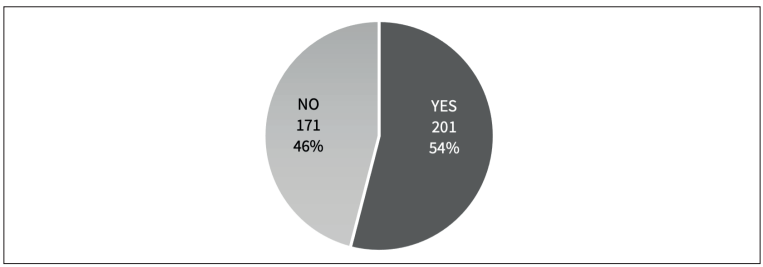


3.3.2.5 Use of Italian Dialects

Question A18. If you use (or used) an Italian dialect, indicate which one and in which situations.

The question aims to see how many students are already bilingual, not with a foreign language but with Italian dialects, in contexts in which we assumed there are not distinct cultures associated with the different languages. However, this variable means that the individual has a larger phonetic repertoire. A majority of students use a dialect in everyday life, essentially in informal situations in family or with friends **[chart 9]**. How significant will this turn out to be for our research?

Chart 9 Use of Italian dialects



3.3.3 Discussion

3.3.3.1 Italian Mother Tongue

Let's begin the discussion with the information given in the responses to question A06: "Where did you learn Italian?", to give an initial picture of the group. Nearly 90% of the respondents stated that they had learnt Italian at home and then at school and therefore consider Italian to be their mother tongue. We have a consistent and homogeneous group which will be easy to correlate with answers about foreign accent.

Only 6.5% of the students say they learnt a foreign language before Italian. Most of them are young people with an immigrant background (from Romania, Moldova, Albania, China, Slovakia, Colombia) having grown up in Italy or having arrived there as children. Few of them have also spent time at school in their country of origin. The only French speaker comes from Belgium, where she also studied, but has an Italian father. Among the two German speakers, one is from Trentino-Alto Adige, where the two official languages are Italian and German, and one moved from Germany to Italy to study Italy at the university.

3.3.3.2 Italian Dialects

Regarding dialect as L1, less than 4% claim to have a dialect as their mother tongue (one from Sicily, one Ladin, other dialects from Veneto region). A student comment, however, highlights a problem. She wrote that she had learnt "both Italian and dialect" from the beginning. This situation is probably the case for many students, but the alternative "both Italian and dialect" was not anticipated in the questionnaire. If we look at the answers to question A18: 54% of the respondents claim to use a dialect, with family, with friends, in the place they live. They demonstrate knowledge of the dialect learned through contact in childhood. And it is of course the dialects of the Veneto that dominate, since the majority of the students had grown up in Veneto (≃85%), as the responses to A04 question show. This dissymmetry between A6 and A18 simply points to the phenomenon of diglossia, where the dialect is no longer considered as a mother tongue, but as a secondary language. So in question A6 most students chose Italian as mother tongue even though they learnt a dialect at the same time.

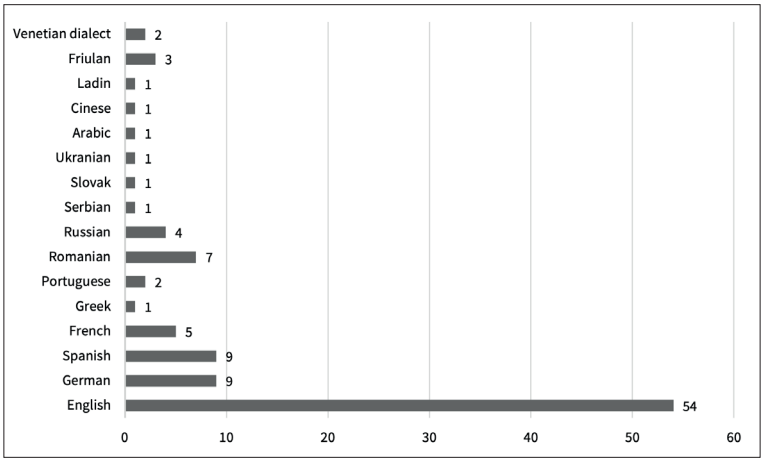
3.3.3.3 A Foreign Language in the Repertoire from Childhood to Adolescence

Another entry point for verifying bi/plurilingualism may be exposure to a foreign language during childhood, since studies have shown that a language learned during the period of brain plasticity is generally spoken without an accent, although it is wrong to think that there is no possibility of development after this critical period and in particular during adolescence.[8]

A larger number of students (108) declared they had another L1, even if only 7.3% said they had attended school outside Italy. Here we can find students from bilingual families (mother and father from different languages), students educated in another language from birth (those who attended an English school for example in Italy) or born in Italy to foreign families.

The 108 respondents who replied that they were fluent in a language other than Italian in childhood or adolescence are distributed as shown in chart **10** (some give more than one language, such as Romanian and Russian for a student from Moldova):

Chart 10 Other languages spoken fluently



Of these 108 people who claim to be bilingual, 40 have a heritage language (11%), six are from Alto Adige, and the others have a language learnt at school. 84 say they have Italian or a dialect as a mother tongue. Among them, we can distinguish different categories:

8 See Titone 1996 for a survey of the very many studies on this subject.

a. Six bilinguals with dialects. Only six persons consider the dialect as a "language" though many informants use dialect.
b. 20 bilinguals from family history. Clearly the heritage language is seen as secondary.
c. 58 bilinguals in the target language after learning it at school or during a period abroad, only for English, French, Spanish, or German.

However, the number of English speakers is surprising. Are there so many bilingual or English-speaking families living in Veneto?

3.3.3.4 The Perception of School Education in Language Teaching

Questions A04 and A05 on schooling, primary and secondary, in Italy or abroad, can help to provide an answer. The presupposition is that attendance at a school abroad is a factor in measuring either early learning or immersion learning of a foreign language. In both cases, the temporal indication "for at least one year" was added, in order to exclude short holiday or study abroad stays.

Almost all respondents had attended school in Italy, including 80% in the Veneto region, while only 27 had attended school in 15 different countries, as follows: USA (5), Moldova (4), Germany (4), Romania (2), Albania (2), Belgium (1), Botswana (1), Canada (1), Colombia (1), Finland (1), UK (1), Honduras (1), Ireland (1), India (1), Paraguay (1).

The reasons behind long stays outside Italy can vary considerably, e.g. country of origin before emigration, country of temporary stay for the family, country where the student had been on a school exchange. Actual cases in our study include:

- young people with an immigrant background from Romania and Moldova (the other Romanians and Moldovans who said they had another language in their repertoire had probably been born in Italy and therefore had not attended school in their parents' country of origin); a girl from Colombia;
- young people who had spent a year in Germany, Canada, Finland, Honduras, Paraguay and the USA. For the latter country these are all students whose L1 is Italian;
- young people who may have lived abroad probably with their families for a period of time: Belgium (French mother tongue), Botswana, United Kingdom (but there is no evidence of this other than the claim to be bilingual in English);
- a student from Germany (Stud1011) who had chosen to come to Italy to study.

Cross-checking with the other data, it can be seen that:

a. many young people who speak immigrant languages have not lived in their countries of origin (Arab countries, Albania, Romania, Moldova etc.);
b. in relation to English, if there was a high level of immigration from English-speaking countries, there would be more responses about attending school abroad.

The fact that almost all respondents attended school in Italy invites us to look at the data from questions A08 to A15. It can be seen that 280 students indicated 13 years of study of English, i.e., all the way from primary school (5 years), middle school (3 years) and high school (5 years), while 40 indicated between 10 and 12 years, reaching a total of 86% of all students.

Similarly for French, three of the informants were not native speakers, but felt that their 8 years of French medium education had given them bilingual competence. For German, on the other hand, three had been educated in Trentino-Alto Adige and two were mother tongue speakers.

This observation raises the question: if 86% of respondents had studied English since childhood in a school context,[9] why did only 54 students indicate English as a language they had mastered in question A07? In fact, it seems to depend on the students' self-assessment of their 'spontaneous fluency' in the language they have learned and their underlying conception of bilingualism. Some may have been induced not to come forward because of the term 'mother tongue'. This data could be cross-referenced with the levels achieved in the B2 English university entrance test, to test whether early institutional language teaching followed by an academic course of study would suggest a more cautious self-assessment when answering question A07.

Finally, question A17 considers bilingualism in relation to the regular use of a foreign language in everyday life (which is Grosjean's definition), outside the classroom. We find exactly 50% chose "yes", and 50% "no". Of the 50% who use other languages, isolated bilinguals (immigrant families) are included. English largely dominates and social networks are regularly mentioned. This is an interesting result which shows that young people are less linguistically isolated than they used to be in a homogeneous classroom learning situation in a country in which the languages being learned are not normally spoken.

9 A foreign language at primary school in Italy was introduced in 1990. Since 2003 (Moratti Law), English has been obligatory.

3.3.4 Final Comments on Section 3.3

What can we conclude about bilingualism in our sample?

The respondents formed a rather homogeneous group in terms of their origin, all of whom had completed their secondary education in Italy and almost 93% of whom had Italian as L1 or a dialect or regional language of the Peninsula with Italian acquired at school.

'Isolated' bilinguals (whose L1 is not spoken in the territory in which they live) were few in number. Those who indicated "other" for question A06 (6.5%) are part of the 11% who have a heritage language in their repertoire in question A07). Six students came from a bilingual territory (Trentino-Alto Adige).

On the other hand, it was noted that a number of respondents declared that they were bilingual because they considered that they had acquired the language at school – particularly English, Spanish, German and French – or because they had spent time abroad in countries where the language was spoken. But they are not as numerous as we could imagine. It is possible that others who had followed a similar curriculum at school may have had hesitations about claiming to be bilingual, because they had reservations about the meaning of the term 'mother tongue'. On the other hand, if we apply Grosjean's broad definition, all of our students who claim to use more than one language in their daily lives could be considered bilingual, insofar as they have studied foreign languages during their primary or secondary education and are all language students.

Can we then define correlations with the perception and preconceptions of foreign accent?

As with gender, the number of bilinguals by origin is rather small in relation to the entire group. However, it will be interesting to examine possible variations in accent perception. Not all bilinguals have chosen their own L2 as their language of study at Ca' Foscari and therefore they find themselves in a similar position with their peers.

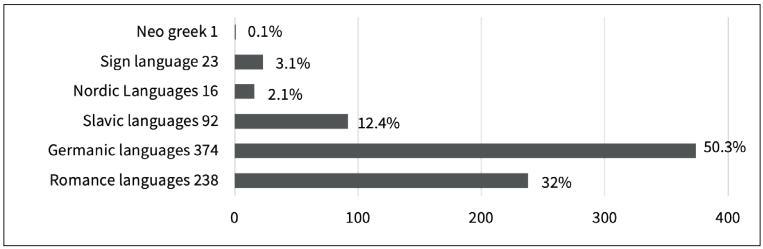
In any case, it might be expected that bilinguals are more tolerant of linguistic variation, used to handling several codes.

3.4 The Impact of the Languages Studied

The final factor which we looked at, and which could influence the perception of foreign accent is the difficulty of the language being learned. The difficulty of the foreign language may depend on its proximity to/distance from Italian. The notion of related languages could be an interesting way to investigate the perception of accent; chart **11** calculates the languages studied at the university gathered by language families. It could be an indicator. But we also know that

inside a family of related languages, such as Romance languages, French for example can be perceived as more difficult than Spanish for the higher number of vocal phonemes such as nasal vowels.

Chart 11 Languages studied at the university by language family



The following research questions arise:

a. if the languages being learned are close to Italian, and perceived as easier, such as Romance languages, will the attitude to accents be more relaxed, or will the opposite approach hold? Will there be a gradual scale of related languages (French perceived as more difficult than Spanish in the self-evaluation of the students in Sections C and D for example?
b. does the difficulty of the languages being learned (Slavic, Nordic or Greek languages) imply a greater tolerance of a foreign accent because they belong to other language families?
c. does the fact that many students have studied English since childhood have an impact on the perception of English as a lingua franca, and therefore, greater tolerance of variety?

4 Conclusion

At the end of this analysis of the answers to Section A of the questionnaire, we wanted not only to describe the sample – which may appear useful to build up a picture of a university language programme – but also to highlight how the answers could possibly be correlated with the results of the studies in the following chapters. Section B concerns opinions and attitudes towards foreign accents and the importance of good pronunciation, Sections C and D more specifically the accent issues in the student's first and second language studied.

Our sample of first-year students is quite homogeneous: a very large majority (88%) are females; almost 90% are of Italian mother tongue; those who first learned an Italian dialect have nevertheless heard Italian since birth. Those who first learned a foreign language are very few in number, and mainly come from first or especially second-generation immigration. So two characteristics might not be statistically significant,

the number of males and the number of students with a foreign connection. However, the calculated percentages may provide interesting information, although they need to be confirmed by more targeted studies.

Colleagues who worked on the other sections of our questionnaire, Dal Maso and Duryagin (ch. 2 of this volume) for Section B; Arroyo Hernández and Paschke (ch. 3 of this volume) for Sections C and D, provide some answers.

The first answer is that for the vast majority of our sample, the preferred model remains that of native speaker pronunciation.

Regarding the impact of gender, starting from the presupposition in the literature of a greater motivation towards languages among girls, we had two questions: a) if females are more attached to a native-like pronunciation, and b) whether males, more inclined towards languages for practical reasons, put communication in the foreground to the detriment of the quality of the accent. We had nuanced our research questions by observing motivation, because the males in our sample demonstrate a very high degree of intrinsic motivation and therefore apparently in contradiction with the more pragmatic motivations that have appeared in the literature among male language students in general (not necessarily in language courses). The gender impact could thus have been nil. Yet Dal Maso and Duryagin (ch. 2) find in their analysis of Section B that the male students in our sample give less importance to pronunciation accuracy and more to communication, and less importance to pronunciation when compared to the lexicon and to grammar.

As for the impact of the nature of the motivation on the attitudes towards the accent in the language studied, one's own or that of others, we wondered if an intrinsic motivation would imply attitudes where pleasure is an important variable, including pleasure of success (having a good accent, or communicating better), emotional and playful pleasure (having fun pronouncing aloud, feeling like someone else) and absence of stress. The results reported by Arroyo Hernández and Paschke (ch. 3) confirm this.

Plurilingualism – in all its forms – could also be considered as an important variable, and in particular we wondered if the fact of being bilingual would imply greater attention to perfection or, on the contrary, greater tolerance, given that plurilingual speakers are accustomed to using several codes. Dal Maso and Duryagin (ch. 2) show that the daily use of several languages – whether inherited languages in the family (foreign or dialectal), or languages learned later but often used – is associated with greater pleasure and greater self-confidence in the quality of pronunciation, which one might expect. Italian dialect speakers also value the importance of pronunciation over other language components to be learned such as grammar or lexicon, but at the same time show greater tolerance for variation. Similarly, Arroyo Hernández and Paschke (ch. 3) confirm that those

students who claim to be plurilingual evaluate themselves more positively in terms of accent (even in languages which are not their own and which they have been learning since childhood, such as English) and therefore demonstrate greater self-confidence.

Finally, the impact of the nature of the target language, and its proximity to the Italian language has been shown, since students of languages that are more difficult for Italians, because they are more distant, such as German, Swedish, and Russian evaluate themselves less well, and sometimes experience less pleasure (especially with German) (cf. Arroyo Hernández, Paschke, ch. 3 of this volume).

Our study can thus provide valuable indications which can inform teaching choices. For example: a) not only by teaching phonetics, but making students aware of all the implicit attitudes towards the accent both in terms of communication and pleasure; b) by underlining the value of dialect coexisting with a standard form of the language, for studying a foreign language, and c) by working on the affective attitudes for languages which are perceived as more difficult, in order to improve self-assessment and therefore the extrinsic motivation generated by confidence in success.

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Accents and Pronunciation
Attitudes of Italian University Students of Languages
edited by David Newbold and Peter Paschke

Students' Attitudes Towards Foreign Accents: General Motivation, the Attainability of Native-Like Pronunciation, and Identity Issues

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Abstract The study examined attitudes of 372 first-year bachelor Italian university students towards various aspects of foreign-accented speech. The data showed that the respondents have generally positive attitudes towards pronunciation teaching, while the most divisive statements regarded the relative importance of studying L2 phonetics and the sufficiency of comprehensibility in L2 communication. Correlations between these attitudes and the students' biographical data were discussed. The predictor that revealed significant effects most frequently was the students' extrinsic/intrinsic motivation in choosing foreign languages as their major.

Keywords L2 acquisition. Foreign-accented speech. Attitudes. Motivation.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

SAIL 23
e-ISSN 2610-9557 | ISSN 2610-9549
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-628-2 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-629-9

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-03-23 | Accepted 2022-05-03 | Published 2022-08-03

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-628-2/002

1 Introduction

In recent years, scientific production focused on foreign language learning has highlighted the existence of a very close link between students' attitudes[1] and their achievement of a more or less native-like phonological competence in foreign languages: as several studies point out (Elliot 1995a; 1995b; Moyer 2007; Verdía 2010), a positive opinion about the native accent in foreign language learning and, more in general, the foreign language itself and classroom pronunciation instruction, seems to support the fulfilment of a native-like pronunciation.

In addition to this, it is worth observing that learners' attitudes towards native and foreign accents play a key role in the teaching process by helping teachers to focus on their students' expectations and to include activities on pronunciation in their teaching programmes (Arroyo Hernández 2020). According to Moyer (2007, 502),

> Yet these days, teachers have little hope of finding a standardised approach to pronunciation instruction, and despite decades of research, contradictory findings have uncovered more questions than answers when it comes to explaining the pervasiveness of accent for late second language (L2) learners.

With the purpose of delving into the premises of teaching and learning foreign language pronunciation, the research group *Accento straniero in studenti universitari di lingue straniere* (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy) carried out a survey among Italian first-year students enrolled in a BA programme in foreign languages. The survey took place in 2019-20 and 2020-21 and provided the members of the research group with information concerning 372 first-year BA students of the Department of Linguistic and Comparative Cultural Studies (Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali Comparati, DSLCC). In particular, the data concern students' biographical pro-

This work was partly supported by the project 'Departments of Excellence' carried out at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. The authors would also like to thank other members of the research group *Accento straniero in studenti universitari di lingue straniere*, in particular, Peter Paschke for his general supervision of the research project and David Newbold for helping us work on the manuscript.

This work (conceptualisation, methodology, data collection and analysis) is the result of a collaboration between the two authors. Nonetheless, Elena Dal Maso wrote §§ 1, 5.1, and 6; Pavel Duryagin wrote §§ 2, 3, 4, and 5.2.

1 In agreement with Arroyo Hernández (2020, 8), in this paper we consider the term 'attitudes' as a general label that includes and summarises a great variety of notions: from objective knowledge to opinions, emotions or desires, including the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that lead a learner to study foreign languages. The notion of attitude is analysed in Ramos Méndez 2010 and Garrett 2010.

files and linguistic backgrounds (Section A of the questionnaire), as well as their opinions about foreign accents in general (Section B), foreign accents regarding the two languages they are learning at university (Section C and D), English as a lingua franca (Section E) and, finally, regional and foreign accents in Italian (Section F).[2]

Through the analysis of students' answers to the questionnaire, the Venetian research group aspires to contribute to the improvement of foreign language learning and teaching by providing data on university students whose L1 is Italian – which is little researched at the moment. Moreover, only a relatively small number of studies on attitudes towards foreign-accented speech (FAS) have investigated foreign languages other than English; most of the research carried out so far has been centred on English as L2/FL (Arroyo Hernández 2020, 12). In contrast with these studies, the Venetian survey examines students' attitudes towards 13 of the 15 curricular languages included in the BA in Language, Civilisations and Linguistic Sciences (Lingue, civiltà e scienze del linguaggio): Catalan, English, French, German, Greek, Italian Sign Language, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish and Swedish.[3]

The present study focuses on Section B of the questionnaire and aims at identifying general attitudes towards foreign accent and native pronunciation of foreign languages, as well as possible correlations between these attitudes and students' linguistic and socio-biographical profiles.

In the following section we introduce the state of the art concerning factors affecting general opinions about FAS and judgements of nativeness in pronunciation in foreign languages (§ 2). Later, we describe the methods and the data we used to test our hypothesis (§3), as well as the results stemming from our research (§ 4). Finally, we discuss the findings and implications of our research (§ 5) and infer some conclusions and food for thought for future investigations (§ 6).

2 Factors Affecting the Attitudes and Judgements on FAS. State of the Art

Most of the up-to-date research concerning judgements on foreign accents has investigated how samples of accented L2 speech are evaluated by native listeners within the dimensions of accentedness, comprehensibility and intelligibility (Munro, Derwing 1995). While linguistic proficiency of the speaker (which can be operationalised

2 For more information on the questionnaire, see Arroyo Hernández 2021.

3 No data have been collected on two of the languages on offer in the Department – Albanian and Czech – since none of the respondents were learning these languages.

as the number of phonetic errors per unit of time, speech rate, the diversity of the vocabulary, various measurements of prosodic accuracy etc.) naturally correlates with these measures, several individual and social factors tend to come into play when professional language instructors or non-expert speakers of L1 are asked to express their attitudes and evaluations of FAS.

On the speaker's side, various individual characteristics, including sex and age (Gallois, Callan 1981; Kraut, Wulff 2013; Thompson 1991) have been shown to interact with listeners' judgements. The speaker's nationality, or, more precisely, the status of the language that influences the accent, is also a potential source of bias (Dragojevic, Goatley-Soan 2020; Gallois, Callan 1981; Giles 1970; Kang, Rubin 2009; Lindemann 2003; 2005; Rubin 1992).

More importantly for the present study, it is well documented that the foreign accent in many respects lies in the eye and the ear of the beholder (Moyer 2013, 102). As Garrett points out, "If attitudes are learned, then some sources of learning are related to social group membership", as well as "our personal experiences and our social environment" (2010, 16). As a result, more and more studies in the field of FAS perception tend to treat the listener as a fully-fledged participant of communication rather than a mere tool for the evaluation of a given accent (Baese-Berk, McLaughlin, McGowan 2020).

The hearer's gender turns out to be one of these sources of biases. According to Nelson, Signorella, Botti (2016), male raters demonstrate a larger bias against Spanish accent in English than female participants, independently of the speaker's gender. A similar gender effect was found for the judgments on indigenous British accents collected by Coupland and Bishop (2007).

The degree of listeners' expertise affects their evaluations of foreign accents, too. Several studies in the field of language assessment show that trained language instructors tend to be more lenient in their holistic evaluations of accented speech than non-expert L1 speakers (Barnwell 1989; Bongaerts, Mennen, van der Slik 2000; Thompson 1991). The same effect was attested in ratings by undergraduate students with occasional teaching and tutoring experience (Kang 2012).

A large body of research is dedicated to the role of the hearer's familiarity with FAS in general and with specific accents. Since Gass and Varonis' pioneering paper (1984), several studies have investigated the complex effect of previous exposure to L2 speech. Bradlow and Bent (2008) showed that short exposure to excerpts of FAS produced by multiple speakers sharing the same L1 can help native listeners significantly improve their perception of this type of FAS. Baese-Berk, Bradlow and Wright (2013) further demonstrated that this sort of adaptation can be generalised and become accent-independent, since listeners in their experiment performed better in perceiving novel types of FAS after short exposure to multiple varying

foreign accents. Kennedy and Trofimovich (2008), too, found that experienced listeners understood FAS better; however, their ratings of comprehensibility and general accentedness of FAS did not differ significantly from those of inexperienced listeners, thus drawing an important line between intelligibility (the number of erroneously perceived words pronounced with foreign accent, often tested by means of an orthographic transcription task) and subjectively perceived degree of comprehensibility. However, in Kraut and Wulff's study (2013), the participants who reported low familiarity with FAS rated L2 speakers lower on all three parameters tested: the degree of accent, comprehensibility, and communicative ability.

Several studies have compared the evaluations of accented speech by native and non-native judges. Some evidence has been provided that non-native speakers evaluate accented speech more strictly than natives (Fayer, Krasinski 1987), though other studies did not find significant differences between the two groups (Brennan, Brennan 1981; Kim 2009; Major 2007; Zhang, Elder 2011) or observed the opposite effect of nativeness (Barnwell 1989). Gallardo del Puerto, García Lecumberri and Gómez Lacabex (2015) compared evaluations of FAS in English by non-expert native listeners and non-native trained raters and reached the conclusion that the two groups were largely similar in their evaluation of communicative effects of FAS (degree of irritation and comprehensibility) and the degree of the accent itself. The most notable differences were attested in comprehensibility judgements: trained raters who shared L1 with the speakers reported better comprehension of speech samples characterised by familiar accents. Accordingly, since the most familiar L2 accent for any L2 learner is their own, Mitterer, Eger and Reinisch (2020) were able to find evidence that German students rated their own production in L2 English (altered to render the voice unfamiliar) as more target-like than the speech of their peers.

Finally, the effect of listeners' personal traits on attitudes towards foreign accents have been investigated. The most extensively studied potential source of bias against accented speech is ethnocentrism, defined by Garrett as "the tendency to see the world mainly from the viewpoint of one's own culture" (2010, 228; see also Chakraborty 2017 for a review). Neuliep and Speten-Hansen (2013) demonstrated that higher individual ethnocentricity ratings of listeners correlate significantly with their negative evaluations of attractiveness, credibility, and homophily of speakers producing FAS. Recently, less straightforward effects of personality have been shown to come into play. A study conducted by Gaffney and Côté (2020) investigated the Big Five personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) of non-expert raters as independent variables affecting their evaluations of degree of accentedness in FAS. Three of the five traits were correlated signifi-

cantly with foreign accentedness ratings: the L2 speech samples were judged more harshly by raters with high scores of conscientiousness and low scores of extroversion and agreeableness.

To sum up, numerous studies concerning individual factors in perception and evaluation of accented speech, including the active role of both speaker and listener, underline their importance in authentic contexts, such as workplace, courtroom, and academic environment, where biased evaluations and attitudes may lead to harsh repercussions for the non-native speakers. Little is known, however, about how the details of native speakers' backgrounds, their linguistic experience, and personal traits, relate to their general opinions and metalinguistic notions about foreign accent in their L1 and L2. Most of the research on attitudes towards FAS demonstrate strong preference for native-like phonetics (Brabcová, Skarnitzl 2018; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, Smit 1997; Nowacka 2012); however, these studies rarely take into account the heterogeneity of the populations examined, i.e., the question of whether subgroups of language learners might significantly deviate from the general pattern.

One step in this direction was made by Waniek-Klimczak, Rojczyk, Porzuczek (2015) who tested the effect of gender and level of the studies (BA vs. MA) of English studies majors from Poland on their responses to four questions concerning attitudes towards FAS. They found two robust results for gender: female participants evaluated more critically their own pronunciation in English; in addition, they declared more concern about their foreign accent. As for the BA vs. MA differences, the study showed that more experienced MA learners of English claimed to care to a lesser degree about not having Polish features in their L2 English. Another paper in which the attitudes were consistently linked to the learners' background information was conducted by Dewaele and McCloskey (2015). The researchers asked a large sample of multilinguals to what extent they agreed with two statements about FAS: "People's foreign accents annoy me" and "It bothers me to have a foreign accent in a foreign language". The data showed that multilinguals reported being more irritated by their own accent than by others'. Additionally, a few significant effects on both agreement rates were revealed. Extrovert, emotionally stable and tolerant to ambiguity participants were less bothered by the FAS of others. As for the irritation towards one's own accent, only the effect of neuroticism was significant. Unexpectedly, the data revealed that the participants who knew more languages and were more proficient in them were more bothered by foreign accents, especially their own. In contrast, those respondents who reported having grown up or currently working in ethnically diverse environments were more tolerant towards foreign accents, as well as older and less educated participants.

In the present study we aim to follow up on this line of research by investigating general opinions and notions about FAS of a relative-

ly homogenous group of Italian first-year students enrolled in a BA programme in foreign languages. Based on the literature we have reviewed, we hypothesise that the variables reflecting the linguistic background of the respondents (nativeness/non-nativeness in Italian, which is the language of the questionnaire and their higher education; bilingualism; everyday usage of foreign languages; usage of regional varieties of Italian; the number of languages studied at school), as well as one personality trait (the prevalence of intrinsic or extrinsic motivations for choosing the foreign languages curriculum at the university), affect their opinions on FAS. We tested whether these variables correlate with their notions about general importance of striving for target-like pronunciation, relative usefulness of classroom instruction on L2 phonetics, attainability of native-like pronunciation, sufficiency of comprehensibility in L2 communication, negative consequences of pronunciation errors, and identity issues emerging when speaking with an accent or training to acquire target-like pronunciation.

3 Methods

To test our hypothesis, we used the data from Sections A and B of the Venetian questionnaire. In these sections of the survey, 372 first-year BA students of the Department of Linguistic and Comparative Cultural Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice were asked to provide information about their linguistic backgrounds (Section A) and express their (dis)agreement with 14 general statements about foreign accents (Section B). The statements in Section B **[tab. 1]** concerned the main fields of our inquiry: general importance of accent and commitment to correct pronunciation (B01-B04); attainability of native-like pronunciation (B05) and the sufficiency of comprehensibility in communication (B06); communicative benefits of correct pronunciation and negative consequences of accented speech (B07-B10); identity issues that arise while trying to achieve correct pronunciation in L2 (B11-B14). The statements were presented in randomised order in the format of five-level Likert items with numerical labels from 1 to 5 referring to the following options: "strongly disagree", "disagree", "uncertain", "agree" and "strongly agree". In addition, an open-ended question B15 was suggested to the respondents that allowed them to elaborate on their opinions about foreign accents in general or comment on previous statements, the analysis of which data lies outside the scope of the present paper.

To investigate the possible effect of students' background on their attitudes and opinions towards foreign accents, a series of ordinal logistic regression models was fitted in R (R Core Team 2020) by means of the *polr* function from the *MASS* package (Venables, Ripley 2002). For each of the 14 Likert items from Section B, a separate model was

fitted using the students' responses in the format of ordered factors as dependent variables and seven variables extracted from the background questionnaire in Section A as predictors: gender; age of acquisition of Italian; self-declared bilingualism; the number of foreign languages studied at school; self-reported everyday usage of foreign languages; usage of dialects; a coefficient for extrinsic/intrinsic motivations for enrolment to the degree course. No interactions between the independent variables were tested. We summarise below the information on how each of the predictors was coded based on the data from Section A of the survey.

1. Respondents' gender. Out of the total of 372 participants, 327 (87.9%) identified themselves as female and 41 (11%) as male. Four participants chose not to disclose their gender; these data were treated as missing values in regression modelling. Although the imbalance between female and male groups limits the reliability of conclusions about gender effects in our data, it should be noted that the prevalence of female participants is typical for online language surveys (Wilson, Dewaele 2010), and it also reflects the demographics of the students who choose foreign languages programmes in Venice.
2. Acquisition of Italian. The students were asked in question A06 how they had acquired Italian. Three options were offered: "Italian is my mother tongue, first acquired in family and then studied at school"; "In my family I acquired a dialect, and then at school I acquired and studied (standard) Italian"; "Other" (open-ended question). In the present chapter we do not distinguish between the vast majority of students who claim to have acquired the standard variety of Italian at home before school and the 11 respondents who claim to have acquired at home only a regional variety of Italian. We manually analysed the responses to open-ended questions to identify 25 students (6.7% of the general population) who did not speak standard Italian or any of the Italian dialects at least before school. In regression modelling we treat this predictor as binary, coded as "Italian" vs. "other".
3. Self-declared bilingualism. In question A07, the students were asked the following question: "As a child or teenager, did you learn a language other than Italian, that you speak (or used to speak) at the level of the mother tongue or at least with great spontaneity?" 105 respondents (28.2%) answered positively, and in our analysis we operationalise such responses as a self-declaration of their bilingualism in a broad sense.
4. The number of foreign languages studied at school. In sections A08-A15 of the background questionnaire respondents were asked what languages they had studied previously. We manually counted the sum of different languages reported for

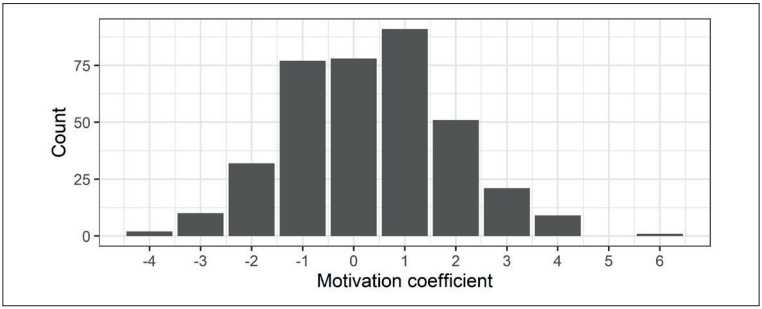
each respondent which varied from 1 to 6, with the median value of 4 languages studied by 160 students (43%).

5. Everyday usage of foreign languages. In section A17 the first-year students were asked: "Excluding foreign language lessons, in everyday life, do you usually speak (or did you speak) a language other than Italian (e.g., at work, on social networks, during a school year abroad etc.)?" 185 respondents (49.7%) answered the question positively. In our analysis we treat the responses to this question as a declaration of some experience in regular usage of foreign languages.
6. Usage of dialect. The question A18 was formulated as follows: "If you use (or used) an Italian dialect, indicate which one and in which situations". For the purposes of the present chapter, we manually coded all open-ended responses; as a result, 201 respondents (54%) were considered users of some regional variety of Italian (mostly referred to as "Venetian" by the participants), the rest of the respondents (171; 46%) did not report any usage of Regional Italian.[4]
7. Motivation for enrolling in a department of languages. In section A19 the first-year students were asked what the reasons for their choice of BA programme in languages and cultures were. Thirteen options were available for multiple choice, as well as a field for open-ended feedback. Based on closed-ended responses only, we determined a coefficient for the prevalence of extrinsic or intrinsic motivation in each student's decision to enrol at the DSLCC. The coefficient was calculated as follows: one point was added for the choice of each of the six motivations we considered intrinsic ("because I like literature"; "because I am interested in linguistics"; "because I am curious to know other cultures"; "languages are my passion"; "I'd like to teach languages"; "following a stay in a different linguistic context"), and one point was subtracted for the choice of each of the five motivations we considered extrinsic ("I was good at languages at school"; "by exclusion (e.g. of scientific subjects)"; "because this degree programme is present in Venice, i.e. close to my home"; "because foreign languages give me the opportunity to move abroad"; "good job prospects in the globalised world"). In other words, the greater the prev-

4 As Poggi Salani (2010) points out, the Italian linguistic landscape is characterised by the coexistence of numerous dialects and regional varieties of Italian, in addition to the so-called standard Italian, that is a "variety of language subject to regulatory codification, and which serves as a reference model for the correct use of the language and for school teaching" (Berruto 2010). Given the difficulty of establishing clear boundaries between these elements, in this work we consider, on the one hand, standard Italian and, on the other hand, dialects and regional varieties of Italian.

alence of intrinsic motivation in respondent's answers to A19, the more positive value has his/her coefficient (and vice versa for the negative values). As **[chart 1]** shows, the distribution of resulting coefficients is close to normal with the median value of 0 (no prevalence of extrinsic or intrinsic motivations was attested for 78 participants; 20.9% of the total).

Chart 1 The distribution of 372 observations of the 'motivation coefficient'

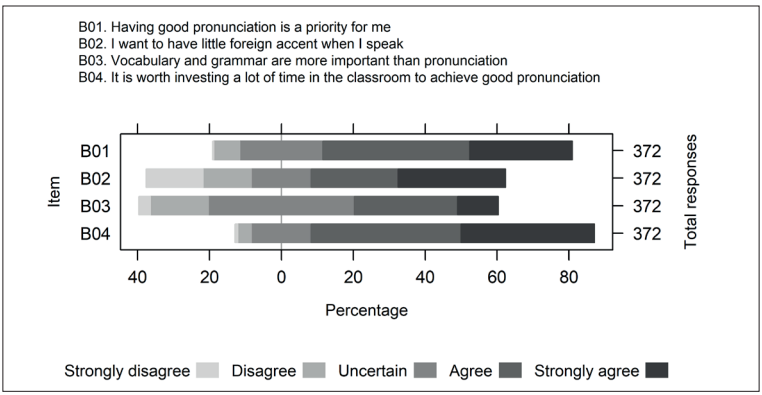


4 Results

The results for each of the 14 Likert items are presented in **[charts 2-5]**. We summarise the observed statistically significant effects in §§ 4.1-4.4 below and in **[tabs 1-4]** of the Appendix.

4.1 General Importance and Commitment to Correct Pronunciation (B01-B04)

Chart 2 Likert scaled responses to items B01-B04

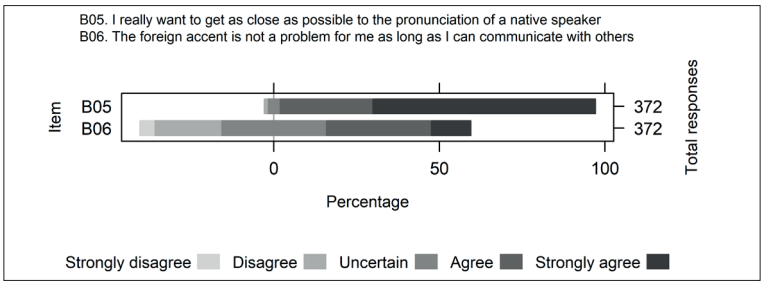


Most first-year students agreed (40.8%) or strongly agreed (28.5%) that having good pronunciation is a priority for them; fewer than 8% disagreed with the statement in B01. Regression analysis of responses showed no significant or marginally significant effects of predictors **[tab. 1]**. However, when asked whether they commit to having little accent when they speak (B02), the participants were less unanimous. Almost 30% of respondents admitted that they do not commit themselves to reducing accent when speaking foreign languages (13.4% disagree and 15.9% strongly disagree with the statement). The strongest effect found in the data **[tab. 1]** was the one referring to the number of languages studied ($p = .111$): the students who studied more different languages at school tended to claim that they committed to good pronunciation.

Items B03 and B04 were aimed at investigating students' opinions concerning the relative importance of studying pronunciation in language class. First-year students were highly uncertain (40.6%) when asked whether they consider vocabulary and grammar more important than pronunciation (item B03). Two robust effects are revealed by regression modelling **[tab. 1]**. First, male respondents tended to agree more than females that other aspects of language education are more important than phonetics ($p = .05$). In contrast, the students who claimed to use or have used regional varieties of Italian were more likely to disagree with the statement in B03 ($p = .052$), that is, the users of dialect are less likely to consider pronunciation inferior in importance to vocabulary and grammar. The item B04 ("It is worth investing a lot of time in the classroom to achieve good pronunciation") was similar to B01 in general agreement among the respondents: 41.6% of first-year students agreed and 37% strongly agreed that spending a lot of time on pronunciation training is worthwhile. One effect of the predictors studied reached the significance level **[tab. 2]**: more intrinsically motivated students tended to agree more strongly with the statement ($p = .031$).

4.2 Nativelikeness and Comprehensibility (B05-B06)

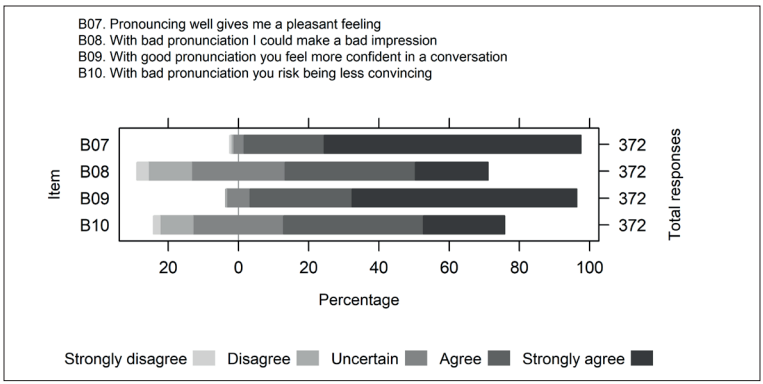
Chart 3 Likert scaled responses to items B05-B06



The purpose of item B05 was to find out whether the students consider achieving native-like pronunciation a valid objective in their learning of foreign languages. A vast majority of respondents share this aim: in total more than 95% of students agree (28%) or strongly agree (67.2%) with this statement (see the regression data with no significant effects in **tab. 2**). In contrast, the problem regarding the sufficiency of mere comprehensibility (B06) divided the participants into two comparably large groups. While 43.5% of first-year students do not consider comprehensible accented speech a problem, 24.5% disagree or strongly disagree with the statement in B06. However, regression modelling of these data (summarised in **tab. 2**) did not reveal any significant effect of the predictors.

4.3 The Benefits of Good Pronunciation and Negative Consequences of Accented Speech (B07-B10)

Chart 4 Likert scaled responses to items B07-B10



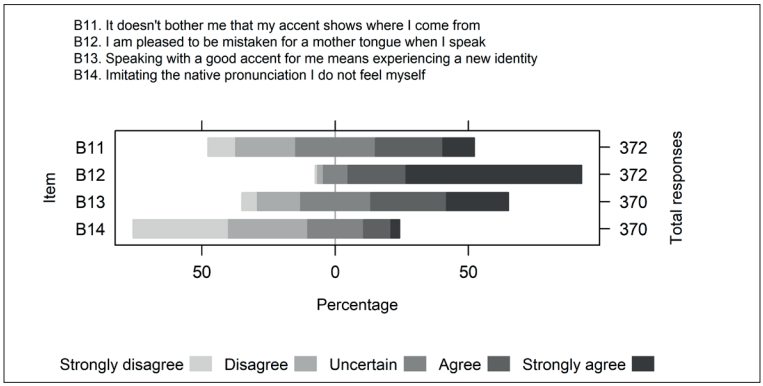
A large majority of respondents reported that they take pleasure in good pronunciation (B07): 22.8% agree and 73.1% strongly agree with the statement in B07. The regression model **[tab. 3]** indicates that those of the students who claimed to use foreign languages on a daily basis were significantly more likely to choose the option "strongly agree" than the others (p =.026). Very similar data were obtained in responses to item B09: the respondents mostly agree (29%) or strongly agree (64%), and once again students who report daily usage of a foreign language agree more with the statement (p =.028). For this item, an additional significant effect of gender is observed **[tab. 3]**: male respondents agree that good pronunciation makes them feel more confident in a conversation, but to a significantly smaller degree than female participants (p =.006).

As for the negative consequences of pronunciation errors on the impression that listeners at large may form of them, most students agree that it is a potential source of risk in communication: 37% of respondents agree and 20.7% strongly agree with the statement in item B08. The regression model reveals that the linguistic background of students might possibly influence their judgments in this case: both students who did not acquire Italian at home before school and those who claim to be bilingual agree less with the statement in B08 (p =.108 and p =.074, respectively). In addition, higher number of languages studied might correlate with stronger agreement on B08 (p =.098).

Item B10, similarly to B08, stated that pronunciation errors create a risk of being less convincing. Unsurprisingly, the distribution of responses is very similar to B08 (39.8% agree and 23.1% strongly agree with this statement). One marginally significant effect revealed by regression modelling is that students who studied more than one foreign language at school are more likely to agree that this risk exists (p =.071) **[tab. 4]**.

4.4 Foreign Accent and Identity (B11-B14)

Chart 5 Likert scaled responses to items B11-B14



Item B11 divided the respondents into two comparably large groups. While 37% of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, 32.5% report that they are bothered by the fact that their accent discloses their L1. Regression modelling **[tab. 4]** reveals a robust relationship between the use of dialect and the worry about the speaker's origin being discovered. Students who claim to use or have used regional varieties (dialects) of Italian respond more positively to item B11, claiming that they are not bothered by this kind of consequence ($p < .001$). Another predictor that correlates with the judgements of item B11 is the motivation coefficient: the prevalence of intrinsic motivations for the enrolment at the foreign languages programme correlates with the desire to avoid this kind of disclosure ($p = .025$).

The vast majority of respondents claimed that they would like to be mistaken for a native speaker of a foreign language (21.8% agree and 65.9% strongly agreed with the statement B12). A robust effect of the number of languages studied at school is found in the data: students who had had more experience of learning various languages at school were more likely to choose the option "strongly agree" ($p = .025$) **[tab. 4]**.

Responses to item B13 were mostly positive: most first-year students agreed that speaking with good pronunciation to them means experimenting with a new identity: 28.4% agree and 23.2% strongly agree. Regression analysis **[tab. 5]** did not reveal any significant effect of predictors on B13; the strongest positive effect was attested for the daily usage of L2 ($p = .11$).

Finally, item B14 elicited the largest number of negative responses compared to the other items. Respondents mostly refuted the statement that they "do not feel like themselves" when trying to imitate

native pronunciation: 35.4% strongly disagree and 29.7% disagree. A marginally significant effect of motivation is revealed by regression modelling (p =.077): intrinsically motivated students showed a lower degree of agreement. Another group of respondents who more strongly denied feeling "not themselves" were those who report daily usage of foreign languages (p =.047) (for the details see **tab. 5**).

5 Discussion

5.1 Students' Attitudes towards Foreign Accents

5.1.1 General Importance and Commitment to Correct Pronunciation (B01-B04)

The first four statements of Section B deal with students' opinions concerning the importance of pronunciation and their commitment to study pronunciation in language classes. As far as B01 is concerned ("Having good pronunciation is a priority for me"), 69.2% of respondents agreed (40.8%) or strongly agreed (28.4%), whereas only 7.4% disagreed and 23.1% were uncertain. In contrast to the high approval of B01, data concerning B02 show a more varied distribution of students' opinions: on the one hand, 53.9% agreed (24.1%) or totally agreed (29.8%) with B02 ("I want my pronunciation to have little foreign accent when I speak"); on the other hand, 16.6% were uncertain and 29.2% disagreed (13.4%) or strongly disagreed (15.8%). It seems, therefore, that a sizable number of respondents (about 30%) does not commit to reducing foreign accent when speaking, despite the widespread tendency, which clearly emerged in B01, to aspire to a good pronunciation. This inconsistency could be due to the meaning associated with the concept of 'good pronunciation' (see B01): indeed, many students could possibly identify a 'good pronunciation' with a pronunciation which is comprehensible but does not necessarily exclude foreign accent. Moreover, the large percentages of answers 1 and 2 could demonstrate that almost a third of the respondents considers the acquisition of a good pronunciation a difficult goal to achieve (partly due to a lack of phonetic training) and, as a consequence, prefers not to strain to attain a native-like pronunciation when speaking. For these students, to agree with B01 and disagree with B02 is not a contradiction. However, it is worth underlining that those learners who have previously studied languages and those who use a language other than Italian in everyday life are more likely to define a 'good pronunciation' as a native or native-like pronunciation; as a result, these students tend to strongly agree with B02.

As regards statement B04 ("It is worth investing a lot of time in the classroom to achieve good pronunciation"), 78.6% of students

agreed (41.6%) or strongly agreed (37%), while 4.5% disagreed and 16.6% chose option 3 ("uncertain"). In contrast to the broad consensus reached in B04, B03 ("Vocabulary and grammar are more important than pronunciation") showed great indecision: 39.9% of respondents agreed (28.7%) or strongly agreed (11.2%), while 40.5% were uncertain and 19.3% disagreed (16.1%) or strongly disagreed (3.2%). Therefore, it could be deduced that many students, while agreeing on the usefulness of teaching pronunciation in foreign language courses, recognise, more or less consciously (also through indecision), the importance of grammar and vocabulary. Taking into account these data, it could be hypothesised that in B04 at least a part of the respondents chose the two most 'politically correct' options, namely 4 ("agree") and 5 ("strongly agree"), in order to satisfy the expectations of the research group who carried out the survey. Alternatively, these data could be interpreted as a confirmation of the students' awareness regarding the need to introduce phonetics in linguistic courses, even if grammar and vocabulary are still considered important.

Furthermore, regression analysis showed that male respondents are more likely to consider grammar and vocabulary important, while those who use a dialect or declared that they were bilingual seem to be arguing that grammar and vocabulary are as relevant as (or less relevant than) pronunciation. However, data concerning gender and bilingualism need to be considered with caution, since male students and self-declared bilinguals make up only a small part of the sample. In the case of dialect speakers, it could be hypothesised that those who use a regional variety of Italian – Venetian dialect, in most cases – are more aware of the fact that speaking with a regional accent may lead some interlocutors – Italians from other parts of the country, but also listeners who speak a L1 other than Italian – to have a negative opinion of the speaker.[5] Unexpectedly, the number of foreign languages previously studied by respondents or the daily usage of one or more of these do not seem to affect their responses to B03. These data, together with those previously reported, could confirm, in our opinion, the hypothesis that binds dialect to the speaker's social image and the consequent desire to acquire a good pronunciation in order to avoid a negative public impression; while regression analysis highlights, in B04, that the fact of having learned Italian (as a second language) at school correlates with a high degree of ap-

5 It is worth recalling that until the first half of the past century most Italians were exclusively dialect-speaking and unable to express themselves in the national language. From the 1970s onwards, Italian spread as a means of communication in public and private communication, thanks to the reforms of the school system. However, it should be emphasised that many families, precisely because of the greater prestige of Italian as Italy's national language, chose to avoid the use of dialect even in familiar and informal contexts. For more data on this subject, see D'Agostino 2015.

proval towards the statement. Therefore, by grouping B03 and B04, it could be tentatively concluded that those students who use other linguistic codes – be it a foreign language or a regional dialect – attribute greater importance to pronunciation and, as a consequence, are more willing to commit themselves to the study of pronunciation in the foreign language.

5.2 Nativelikeness and Comprehensibility (B05-B06)

The next two statements move into the domain of nativelikeness and comprehensibility. Students' opinions concerning B05 ("I really want to get as close as possible to the pronunciation of a native speaker") reveal that 95.1% of the sample agreed (27.9%) or strongly agreed (67.2%), with only 4% uncertain and 0.8% disagreeing. In contrast with this trend, data from B06 ("The foreign accent is not a problem for me as long as I can communicate with others") are quite surprising: 43.5% of the respondents agreed, 24.4% disagreed and 31.9% were undecided. The apparent inconsistency between B05 and B06 could be explained by considering students' willingness to select the most expected opinion for an academic survey on phonetics. Another possible explanation could consist in the fact that students, while considering the native accented speech as a reference model, realise that they will hardly be able to achieve a native-like pronunciation. For this reason, many of them do not consider the foreign accent a problem as long as it does not hinder communication.

5.2.1 The Benefits of Good Pronunciation and Negative Consequences of Accented Speech (B07-B10)

The following statements delve into the personal and social benefits of a good accent (B07 and B09), as well as the negative consequences of accented speech (B08 and B10). As for B07 ("Pronouncing well gives me a pleasant feeling"), 85.9% of the respondents agreed (22.8%) or strongly agreed (73.1%), with only 3.2% declaring they were uncertain and 0.7% disagreeing. Similarly, in B09 ("With good pronunciation you feel more confident in a conversation"), 92.9% of the sample selected the options "agree" (29%) or "strongly agree" (63.9%), 6.7% were uncertain, and only 0.2% disagreed. In both cases, the daily use of one or more foreign languages has proved to be a factor that may affect students' attitudes, leading them to agree with both B07 and B09. Consequently, it could be hypothesised that the habit of frequently using other languages in addition to one's own L1 may generate a positive opinion about the native-like pronunciation of foreign languages (or, at least, about its imitation), which in

turn contributes to increase speakers' self-esteem and communicative effectiveness. In this case, respondents may have possibly associated good pronunciation and the act of pronouncing well with the idea of nativelikeness.

Questions B08 and B10, focused on the negative effects of the foreign accent, produced similar results. 57.6% of respondents agreed (37%) or strongly agreed (20.6%) with B08 ("With bad pronunciation I could make a bad impression"), while 26.6% were uncertain and 15.5% disagreed (12.3%) or strongly disagreed (3.2%). Similarly, 62.8% agreed (39.7%) or totally agreed (23.1%) with B10 ("With a bad pronunciation you risk being less convincing"), whereas 25.8% were undecided and 11.2% disagreed (9.4%) or strongly disagreed (1.8%). As a result, about two thirds of the sample associated foreign accents with possible negative social and communicative effects. The acquisition of Italian (as a second language) at school and self-declared bilingualism in B08, and the number of foreign languages studied in B08 and B10 seems to have led students to choose options 4 ("agree") and 5 ("strongly agree"). These data seem to confirm the greater importance attributed to pronunciation by respondents who use or can speak foreign languages; at the same time, they emphasise – as we have already hypothesised – that some students may have not agreed with B08 and B10 because they were aware of the fact that it is very difficult to achieve a native-like pronunciation and, consequently, to avoid the negative effects to which B08 and B10 refer.

5.2.2 Foreign Accent and Identity (B11-B14)

The final four statements of Section B focus on the relationship between foreign accent and identity (both individual and social). As for B11 ("It does not bother me that my accent shows where I come from"), 37% of respondents said that they are not bothered (25.2%) or not at all bothered (11.8%) by the fact that their foreign accent reveals their origin, whereas 30.3% were uncertain and 32.4% declared they were annoyed (22.5%) or very annoyed (9.9%). Regression analysis showed that students who do not report using dialect and those who have a higher coefficient of intrinsic motivation tend to be more bothered and, consequently, want to prevent their accent from revealing their origin. Similarly to B06, in B11 an interest in languages not determined by work expectations or practical results seems to produce in students a greater attention towards the achievement of linguistic skills. The role of dialect, on the other hand, could be explained by considering the idea, widespread in Italy, that some Italian regional varieties as not very prestigious.

In contrast with B11, the vast majority (87.5%) of respondents agreed (21.7%) or strongly agreed (65.8%) with statement B12 ("I

am pleased to be mistaken for a mother tongue when I speak"), with only 9.6% undecided and 3% disagreeing (2.5%) or strongly disagreeing (0.5%). This general tendency confirms, in our opinion, the attitude observed in B01 and B05, highlighting that for most students a native accent represents an unavoidable point of reference as well as a model to imitate and pursue when learning a foreign language. In this regard, it is worth emphasising that those who had previously studied more than one foreign language show that they are more in agreement with B12. On the other hand, the data from B11 and B12 could confirm that several students (a little less than 40%), while feeling flattered if in certain situations they are mistaken for native speakers, realise that their foreign accent will reveal their origins and, precisely because of this awareness, they do not feel bothered by B11. Finally, the responses to B12 could be explained by assuming that a part of the respondents may have selected options 4 ("agree") and 5 ("strongly agree"), as in the case of B04, to satisfy the expectations of the research group who carried out the survey.

The final two statements of Section B show some inconsistencies in the relationship between foreign accent and identity. Responding to B13 ("Speaking with a good accent for me means experiencing a new identity"), 51.5% of students agreed (28.3%) or strongly agreed (23.2%), 26.7% were undecided and 21.6% disagreed (16.2%) or strongly disagreed (5.4%). Thus, for about half of respondents the use of a foreign language with a good accent has positive effects on the speaker's self-image and seems to encourage the experience of a new social identity linked to a foreign language and culture.

On the other hand, only 13.4% of respondents agreed (10.2%) or strongly agreed (3.2%) with B14 ("Imitating the native pronunciation I do not feel myself"), while 21.3% were uncertain and 65.1% disagreed (29.7%) or strongly disagreed (35.4%). From these data it can be deduced that the majority of students do not seem to perceive differences in personal identity when speaking in a foreign language. However, this inconsistency between data concerning B13 and B14 could depend on a possible interpretation of B14 focused on the mood experienced rather than on identity: in fact, students may have associated the expression "I do not feel myself" with the idea of discomfort or shame that the imitation of an accent can cause. If this were the case, these data would confirm that almost all students do not experience negative feelings when imitating a native accent. In particular, learners with a higher intrinsic motivation coefficient, those who declared that they use foreign language(s) every day, or that they are bilingual, tend to disagree more with B14; this fact seems to confirm our hypothesis concerning students' different interpretation of B14, as focused on moods and not on identity issues.

5.3 Personal Background Factors Affecting the Attitudes

Turning now exclusively to the results obtained by means of regression modelling, we restate that the present study was also intended to ascertain the presence of correlations between the students' linguistic biographies (including their self-reported usage of L2 and regional varieties of L1, as well as their motivations for the choice of a foreign language curriculum at the university) and their attitudes towards FAS and explicit pronunciation instruction. Our data revealed several intriguing correlations that partly support the initial hypotheses.

Starting from the factors that resulted in a smaller number of significant correlations, gender did not robustly affect most of the responses, except for items B03 and B09. Male participants in our study generally did not differ from females in their evaluation of the importance of good pronunciation and the consequences of lacking native-like phonetics. Our findings do not confirm the existence of stronger biases among male listeners against accented speech occasionally attested in earlier literature (see § 1 in this paper). One possible explanation for the lack of such effects is the unequal distribution of male and female subjects in the sample which means smaller statistical power of the regression analysis which may reveal a smaller number of significant effects.

On the other hand, the data clearly indicate that male participants in the study were more likely to value grammar and vocabulary over phonetics, a finding that is in line with claims that female learners are more oriented towards native-like L2 pronunciation as an ultimate goal while males show greater tolerance towards accented speech (Chan 2018; McKenzie 2008; Polat, Mahalingappa 2010; Waniek-Klimczak, Rojczyk, Porzuczek 2015). In addition, male students differed significantly from females in their beliefs about the connection between target-like pronunciation and confidence in the communication process (B09). We can speculate that male students value the impact of other sources of confidence (supposedly, extralinguistic) more highly and are therefore less prone to attribute confidence and the lack thereof in interlanguage communication to L2 proficiency.

Another group of effects which, contrary to our predictions, rarely turned out to be significant in our analysis, were the factors regarding bilingualism. The students who claimed to speak no Italian before school and those who report speaking a foreign language at a level close to native since their childhood or adolescence ("self-reported bilinguals") did not differ significantly in their responses from the subjects who did not report being bilingual. The only item that elicited a particular reaction from self-reported bilinguals was B08, that is, the claim that non-native pronunciation can be a source of negative image. The data reveal a lower degree of support for this notion among bilingual respondents. Since it is highly improbable that the (self-reported) bilinguals are unaware of well-documented biases against

FAS, we interpret these data as a conscious rejection of this notion among university students. This is in line with several recent studies reporting no apparent downgrading of non-native speakers and even overcorrection tendencies among various groups of raters; see an overview of such findings in Roessel, Schoel, Stahlberg (2020, 90).

It should be noted that the results for sequential bilinguals, as well as gender effects, should be treated with caution, due to the fact that the distribution of subjects in these groups is highly unequal. We suggest that our findings regarding gender and bilingualism can be generalised to male and sequential bilingual students enrolled in university foreign languages curricula, a context in which they typically constitute a minority in the population, and not to the general populations of male and/or sequential bilingual L2 learners.

Conversely, the last two categorical variables considered in our analysis (the use of dialect and the everyday use of L2) divided the respondents into comparably large groups and revealed several significant correlations. As for the regional varieties of Italian, our data show that dialect users were less likely to give higher value to grammar and vocabulary compared to L2 pronunciation. This finding is not surprising given the fact that phonetic features constitute an immediately recognisable integral part of regional varieties of Italian. Another foreseeable finding is that dialect users were less reluctant to reveal their origin while speaking L2. The two results appear at first sight to be in contradiction: dialect users rate target-like pronunciation highly but at the same time are less bothered by the fact that phonetics inevitably reveal their non-nativeness. We suggest that for dialect users L2 phonetics can play a role similar to their L1 vernacular: they might consider it not a trait, but a tool that should be mastered and used not only for integration, but also for self-identification, if necessary.

As for the significant effects of everyday usage of L2 outside the classroom, two of them concern the benefits of good pronunciation. The students who reported speaking foreign languages on a daily basis were more likely to claim that good pronunciation gives them a pleasant feeling and boosts their confidence in communication. Another item that revealed robust differences between the two groups of the survey participants was B14 ("Imitating native pronunciation I do not feel myself"). As mentioned above, we suggest that the students interpreted this item not as regarding the new identity experience (as was initially conceived; see § 5.1.4), but as a declaration of discomfort and annoyance in the L2 phonetics class. Overall, the findings outlined in this section demonstrate a strong correlation between the positive mindset towards the efforts to achieve target pronunciation in L2 (pleasure, confidence, lack of discomfort) and frequent L2 practice outside the classroom.

The significant effects found for the total number of languages studied at school is harder to interpret. The data showed that re-

spondents who are familiar with a larger number of foreign languages were more likely to agree with the statement that they like being mistaken for a native speaker. This finding might be indicative that a higher degree of early exposure to foreign languages and FAS might correlate with the students' eagerness to experiment with their identities through L2. However, further investigations are needed to test this possibility. Two marginal effects attested for these predictors concern negative effects of FAS: the students who studied more languages at school seem to be more alarmed about the impression that strongly accented L2 speech does on listeners in general and, particularly, its convincingness.

Generally, however, we suggest that the mere number of languages studied at school (which might include classical languages) is not a reliable predictor of attitudes towards FAS. Instead, future studies should concentrate on considering proficiency levels of all languages spoken by the respondents.

Some of the most intriguing results to emerge from the data are the significant correlations between the responses to several items and the coefficient for the intrinsic/extrinsic motivation for enrolment in the foreign languages curriculum. First, the intrinsically oriented students claimed significantly more often that they were bothered by the fact that their non-target-like L2 phonetics might disclose their origins (B11). Second, they reported less discomfort in imitating L2 pronunciation (B14). Third and most importantly, students demonstrating the prevalence of intrinsic motivation were more likely to agree that dedicating a large amount of time to pronunciation training in classroom is worth its while. It should be noted that these data do not imply that extrinsically motivated students strongly reject the general importance of learning pronunciation (compare the lack of significant effects for the motivation coefficient in other items and the respondents' general positive bias towards pronunciation training), it merely shows a higher degree of willingness which is in correlation with intrinsic motivations for choosing the foreign languages curriculum.

Our findings are in line with studies of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation in L2 learning (Deci, Ryan 1985; 2002; Noels 2001; 2009; Noels, Clément, Pelletier 2001). This line of research suggests that intrinsic motivation is associated with more positive attitudes towards language learning, lower anxiety, and more effective performance in an L2 classroom. The data of our survey corroborate some of these findings demonstrating that the prevalence of external/internal orientation in the choice of foreign languages curricula by Italian university students is a robust predictor for the determination to work in class in order to achieve the target pronunciation. Whether the motivation coefficient would be a reliable predictor for the eventual proficiency and the objectively measured degree of accentedness in university students' L2 pronunciation, remains an open question reserved for

future studies. However, our findings firmly support the notion that promoting intrinsic motivation may facilitate active involvement of more extrinsically oriented students in pronunciation training and help avoid the anxiety often attested in the L2 phonetics classroom.

6 Conclusions

The study aimed to analyse Section B of the Venetian questionnaire in order to find possible correlations between the sociobiographical and linguistic profiles of the first-year Italian university students who participated in the survey and their attitudes towards foreign-accented speech and native pronunciation in foreign languages.

The data show that the vast majority of respondents considers the native accent a fundamental reference point and is willing to invest time in the classroom to improve pronunciation skills. Moreover, almost all students would like to be mistaken for native speakers when speaking. In contrast with these general trends, some items highlighted the existence of different opinions on some issues: the importance of pronunciation in comparison with grammar and vocabulary, as well as comprehensibility or native-like pronunciation as the main goal of the students and the relationship between participants' origins and foreign accent.

In addition, regression modelling revealed some interesting correlations between students' sociobiographical and linguistic profile and their attitudes: for example, factors such as the number of languages previously studied, the daily usage of foreign languages and the usage of dialects seem to determine greater attention and commitment to correct pronunciation. The predictor that produced significant effects most frequently was the respondents' intrinsic or extrinsic motivation for enrolment in the BA programme in foreign languages and cultures.

Our research contains several pedagogical implications: first of all, it reveals that motivation affects not only students' opinions, but also the aims they want to achieve during the BA programme. On this point, it could be important to rethink the teaching of pronunciation, taking into account the fact that extrinsic motivation does not tend to be oriented towards the acquisition of a native-like pronunciation; as a result, teaching programmes should aim at strengthening intrinsic motivation in students who enrol with mainly extrinsic motivation. It could also be useful to create differentiated BA programmes based on students' expectations and needs, as in part already happens in some Italian universities; beside courses focused on language learning per se, students should have the opportunity to enrol in courses which are more focused on the development of specific professionally or vocationally oriented skills.

Appendix. Regression Data

Regression results for the 14 Likert items are reported below in tables **1-5**. 95% confidence intervals are indicated in brackets below the odds ratios' values.

Table 1 Regression analysis summary for Likert items B01-B03

	B01		**B02**		**B03**	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	p	Odds Ratios	p	Odds Ratios	p
Intercept 1|2	0.01(0.00-0.01)	<0.001	0.50(0.28-0.90)	0.204	0.02(0.01-0.04)	<0.001
Intercept 2|3	0.15(0.06-0.37)	0.002	1.11(0.51-2.39)	0.852	0.16(0.07-0.38)	0.002
Intercept 3|4	0.86(0.54-1.37)	0.793	2.30(1.45-3.63)	0.128	1.07(0.67-1.69)	0.912
Intercept 4|5	4.94(3.98-6.12)	0.006	6.58(5.33-8.12)	0.001	5.70(4.59-7.08)	0.003
Gender [Male]	0.95(0.52-1.73)	0.863	0.64(0.35-1.16)	0.141	1.87(1.00-3.50)	0.050
Acquisition of Italian [It. L1]	0.87(0.36-2.05)	0.750	1.21(0.56-2.61)	0.622	0.69(0.30-1.64)	0.405
Bilingualism [Yes]	1.34(0.84-2.14)	0.215	1.15(0.73-1.82)	0.550	0.70(0.45-1.11)	0.134
Number of languages studied	1.16(0.94-1.44)	0.180	1.19(0.96-1.46)	0.111	1.08(0.87-1.34)	0.495
Daily usage L2 [Yes]	1.14(0.76-1.69)	0.531	1.34(0.90-1.98)	0.149	0.90(0.60-1.33)	0.587
Usage of dialect [Yes]	1.26(0.86-1.86)	0.234	1.05(0.72-1.52)	0.797	0.68(0.46-1.00)	0.052
Motivation coefficient	1.03(0.91-1.16)	0.619	1.07(0.96-1.20)	0.216	0.95(0.84-1.07)	0.372
Observations	367		367		367	
R^2 Nagelkerke	0.060		0.071		0.077	

Table 2 Regression analysis summary for Likert items B04-B06

	B04		**B05**		**B06**	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	p	Odds Ratios	p	Odds Ratios	p
Intercept 1|2	0.01(0.00-0.01)	<0.001			0.04(0.02-0.07)	<0.001
Intercept 2|3	0.03(0.01-0.08)	<0.001	0.01(0.01-0.03)	<0.001	0.27(0.12-0.62)	0.019
Intercept 3|4	0.20(0.12-0.31)	0.006	0.08(0.03-0.23)	<0.001	1.09(0.69-1.71)	0.881
Intercept 4|5	1.30(1.05-1.61)	0.653	0.84(0.49-1.44)	0.793	6.32(5.10-7.82)	0.001
Gender [Male]	0.70(0.38-1.31)	0.261	0.73(0.37-1.48)	0.377	1.56(0.85-2.86)	0.151
Acquisition of Italian [It. L1]	0.51(0.21-1.23)	0.139	0.89(0.31-2.37)	0.824	1.02(0.45-2.31)	0.968
Bilingualism [Yes]	1.07(0.68-1.68)	0.784	1.19(0.70-2.05)	0.531	1.08(0.68-1.69)	0.749
Number of languages studied	1.05(0.85-1.30)	0.626	1.18(0.92-1.51)	0.197	0.92(0.74-1.14)	0.442
Daily usage L2 [Yes]	1.06(0.71-1.60)	0.764	1.11(0.70-1.76)	0.656	1.11(0.74-1.65)	0.615
Usage of dialect [Yes]	1.17(0.79-1.73)	0.436	0.94(0.60-1.47)	0.791	1.07(0.73-1.56)	0.741
Motivation coefficient	1.14(1.01-1.29)	0.031	1.03(0.90-1.19)	0.664	0.93(0.83-1.05)	0.249
Observations	367		367		367	
R^2 Nagelkerke	0.064		0.048		0.046	

Table 3 Regression analysis summary for Likert items B07-B09

	B07		B08		B09	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	p	Odds Ratios	p	Odds Ratios	p
Intercept 1|2	0.00(0.00-0.01)	<0.001	0.10(0.05-0.18)	<0.001		
Intercept 2|3	0.01(0.00-0.03)	<0.001	0.59(0.26-1.34)	0.334	0.00(0.00-0.00)	<0.001
Intercept 3|4	0.05(0.03-0.10)	<0.001	2.41(1.50-3.86)	0.105	0.05(0.02-0.13)	<0.001
Intercept 4|5	0.52(0.40-0.68)	0.368	13.32(10.79-16.43)	<0.001	0.42(0.24-0.71)	0.175
Gender [Male]	0.87(0.43-1.88)	0.720	1.04(0.57-1.90)	0.887	0.39(0.20-0.76)	0.006
Acquisition of Italian [It. L1]	0.96(0.29-2.77)	0.943	1.94(0.87-4.39)	0.108	1.13(0.42-2.90)	0.796
Bilingualism [Yes]	1.21(0.68-2.23)	0.527	0.65(0.41-1.04)	0.074	0.85(0.50-1.46)	0.555
Number of languages studied	1.04(0.80-1.35)	0.785	1.19(0.97-1.47)	0.098	0.87(0.68-1.10)	0.240
Daily usage L2 [Yes]	1.76(1.08-2.93)	0.026	1.22(0.82-1.83)	0.335	1.68(1.06-2.68)	0.028
Usage of dialect [Yes]	0.90(0.56-1.45)	0.676	0.96(0.66-1.40)	0.831	1.08(0.70-1.67)	0.737
Motivation coefficient	1.03(0.89-1.19)	0.691	0.99(0.88-1.11)	0.898	0.96(0.83-1.09)	0.511
Observations	367		367		367	
R^2 Nagelkerke	0.061		0.089		0.085	

Table 4 Regression analysis summary for Likert items B10-B12

	B10		**B11**		**B12**	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	p	Odds Ratios	p	Odds Ratios	p
Intercept 1|2	0.07(0.04-0.13)	<0.001	0.08(0.04-0.14)	<0.001	0.01(0.01-0.03)	<0.001
Intercept 2|3	0.48(0.21-1.11)	0.194	0.34(0.15-0.78)	0.056	0.06(0.02-0.17)	<0.001
Intercept 3|4	2.28(1.43-3.63)	0.136	1.25(0.80-1.96)	0.684	0.35(0.21-0.60)	0.121
Intercept 4|5	13.66(11.01-16.95)	<0.001	5.80(4.70-7.15)	0.002	1.37(1.07-1.76)	0.634
Gender [Male]	0.95(0.52-1.72)	0.858	1.23(0.67-2.26)	0.509	0.59(0.31-1.15)	0.115
Acquisition of Italian [It. L1]	1.65(0.72-3.76)	0.236	0.65(0.29-1.49)	0.311	0.83(0.28-2.25)	0.722
Bilingualism [Yes]	0.93(0.58-1.47)	0.743	1.30(0.83-2.03)	0.253	1.03(0.61-1.79)	0.908
Number of languages studied	1.22(0.98-1.51)	0.071	0.90(0.73-1.11)	0.348	1.33(1.04-1.71)	0.025
Daily usage L2 [Yes]	1.18(0.79-1.78)	0.414	1.08(0.73-1.59)	0.698	1.46(0.92-2.32)	0.107
Usage of dialect [Yes]	1.22(0.84-1.80)	0.300	2.00(1.37-2.93)	<0.001	0.91(0.59-1.41)	0.684
Motivation coefficient	1.08(0.97-1.22)	0.170	0.88(0.78-0.98)	0.025	1.07(0.93-1.23)	0.325
Observations	367		367		367	
R^2 Nagelkerke	0.077		0.098		0.081	

Table 5 Regression analysis summary for Likert items B13-B14

	B13		**B14**	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	p	Odds Ratios	p
Intercept 1|2	0.09(0.05-0.16)	<0.001	0.29(0.16-0.54)	0.031
Intercept 2|3	0.46(0.21-1.02)	0.150	1.04(0.43-2.49)	0.951
Intercept 3|4	1.66(1.04-2.65)	0.341	3.66(2.29-5.84)	0.024
Intercept 4|5	6.15(4.99-7.58)	0.001	16.79(13.58-20.76)	<0.001
Gender [Male]	1.13(0.64-2.01)	0.671	1.04(0.56-1.93)	0.896
Acquisition of Italian [It. L1]	0.80(0.36-1.77)	0.583	0.61(0.26-1.48)	0.270
Bilingualism [Yes]	1.28(0.80-2.03)	0.305	0.71(0.44-1.13)	0.151
Number of languages studied	1.13(0.92-1.40)	0.238	1.03(0.83-1.27)	0.791
Daily usage L2 [Yes]	1.39(0.93-2.08)	0.110	0.67(0.45-0.99)	0.047
Usage of dialect [Yes]	1.12(0.77-1.64)	0.543	1.14(0.77-1.67)	0.516
Motivation coefficient	1.09(0.97-1.23)	0.142	0.90(0.79-1.01)	0.077
Observations	365		365	
R^2 Nagelkerke	0.095		0.072	

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Accents and Pronunciation
Attitudes of Italian University Students of Languages
edited by David Newbold and Peter Paschke

Perceptual, Affective and Cognitive Factors of L2 Pronunciation and Foreign Accent

A Survey with Italian University Students Majoring in Languages

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Abstract This contribution investigates the opinions of 372 first-year students from Ca' Foscari University of Venice about pronunciation and foreign accent in the languages chosen as main subjects. Although a native-like accent is highly valued, students do not simply equate good and accent-free pronunciation. They are confident in assessing the pronunciation of other L2 speakers but show considerable uncertainty about self-assessment and pronunciation deficits. L2 pronunciation is mostly associated with pleasure for them. The main predictor of responses is proficiency level, followed by target languages, linguistic biography and motivation for enrolling in the course.

Keywords L2 pronunciation. Foreign accent. Self-evaluation. Self-assessment. Self-awareness. Affective factors of L2 pronunciation. Italian university students. Language attitudes.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

SAIL 23
e-ISSN 2610-9557 | ISSN 2610-9549
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-628-2 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-629-9

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-03-23 | Accepted 2022-05-03 | Published 2022-08-03

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-628-2/003

1 Introduction

Attitudes have a significant role in language learning in general and in the learning of pronunciation in particular (Dörnyei, Csizér, Németh 2006). Empirical evidence has shown that attitudes can be the best predictor of phonetic accuracy (Suter 1976; Elliot 1995), and that positive attitudes result in better outcomes in pronunciation learning, partly due to the fact that motivation is stronger (Gao, Hanna 2016). L2 speakers who have greater confidence and more positive attitudes towards the target language (Moyer 2007) or who are more concerned with the pronunciation of L2 (Elliot 1995; Shively 2008; Nagle 2018) are likely to be judged as having less-accented L2 speech.

Despite the progressive increase in available research data on learners' attitudes and their importance, the activity of teachers, both in the classroom and in their lesson planning, continues to rely heavily on personal insights into the learning process (Derwing, Munro 2005; Levis 2005). This is a particularly problematic aspect, considering that several authors have reported the discrepancies between the beliefs of learners and those of teachers (Drewelow, Theobald 2007; Brown 2009; Hu, Tian 2012; Huensch 2019).

As Huensch (2019) recalls, most of the studies on linguistic attitudes, just like those on the teaching of pronunciation (Thomson, Derwing 2015), take into consideration almost exclusively English as a foreign or second language. There is a dearth of studies on attitudes towards pronunciation in a foreign language carried out in Italy, especially at university level. In order to gather first-hand information on the students of the Department of Linguistic and Comparative Cultural Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the research group *Accento straniero in studenti universitari di lingue straniere* developed a questionnaire for large-scale data collection relating to students' attitudes towards pronunciation in a foreign language and its learning, towards the pronunciation of Italian, and towards English as a lingua franca. The opinions of 372 freshers, mostly with L1 Italian and having a wide range of L2 as chosen main subjects (including English, Spanish, French, German, Russian and eight other foreign languages), were collected through a combination of Likert-type and open questions.[1]

The questionnaire consisted of six sections. Section A collected personal data and information on students' linguistic biographies;[2]

We thank Pavel Duryagin for his advice on statistical analysis and David Newbold for a thorough proof-reading of a prior version of this chapter. All remaining errors are our own.

1 For a more detailed overview of the survey cf. Arroyo Hernández 2021.

2 See the contribution by Jamet to the present volume (ch. 1).

Section B contained statements designed to elicit students' general attitudes towards foreign accent and pronunciation, and their feelings about their own accents;[3] Section E was dedicated to the notion of English as a Lingua Franca;[4] Section F elicited informants' opinions on the pronunciation of Italian;[5] finally, Sections C and D, on which this contribution will be focusing, gathered data (separately for the two chosen main subject languages) on some perceptive, affective and cognitive factors of L2 pronunciation, as perceived by informants.

Among other things we were interested in understanding how students self-rate their pronunciation quality and if they equate 'good' to 'accent-free' pronunciation. We also wanted to verify how they evaluate their ability to judge their own L2 accent and that of other L2-speakers and if they make any difference between the two tasks. Another group of questions points to the pronunciation-related feelings of the informants, assuming that pleasure should be a prevailing factor, as well as to the perceived influence of mood and physical condition on pronunciation. Finally, we explore the amount of knowledge about L2 pronunciation and foreign accent that students believe they possess.

Besides drawing a picture of these attitudes and self-evaluations, we explore how target language, proficiency level and a series of other learner variables (first language, amount of language learning, motivation) do influence responses. Proficiency level will prove to play a major role in explaining variance in students' answers, but also the language to which they refer, the amount of previous language learning, and their motivation for enrolment in the degree programme all have a certain importance.

A brief review of the research concerned with perceptive, affective and cognitive factors on L2 pronunciation (§ 2) is followed by a section (§ 3) introducing the main hypothesis orienting our research and several methodological premises; subsequently, results are first presented (§ 4) and then discussed (§ 5), before some concluding remarks are offered (§ 6).

2 Background

As Derwing and Munro (2009) recall, it is not impossible for an L2 learner to achieve excellent competence in the foreign language but aspiring to the acquisition of a native-like accent involves several

3 See the contribution by Dal Maso and Duryagin to the present volume (ch. 2).

4 See the contribution by Newbold to the present volume (ch. 4).

5 See the contribution by Dal Maso and Duryagin to the present volume (ch. 2).

risks and is an unrealistic goal for the average student. In recent years, in the field of pronunciation research, the idea has been gaining ground that the ultimate goal of the learner of a foreign language must be to achieve a comfortable intelligibility, which is socially acceptable, and no longer a native-like accent (Levis 2005; Steed, Delicado Cantero 2018; Mellado 2012, 18-19; for a recent review of the state of the art of research, see Jarosz 2019). Although this idea is progressively establishing itself among foreign language teachers, who are aware of the change of perspective in favour of intelligibility (Jarosz 2019; Huensch 2019), the results of questionnaire-based research on learners' attitudes continue to reveal a clear preference for the native accent (Nowacka 2012; Muñoz García, Contreras Roa 2019; Dao 2018 to name just a few studies).

The concept of 'foreign accent', commonly identified with the degree of phonetic difference that non-native speaker speech exhibits if compared to native norms, is not without complications. It is a perceptual phenomenon, since it requires a judgment by the listener, to the point that, for Saito, Trofimovich and Isaacs it can be defined as "rater's perceptions of the degree to which L2 speech is influenced by his/her [the speaker's] native language and/or colored by other nonnative features" (2016, 224). As Munro, Derwing and Morton recall, "[w]hen understanding or evaluating foreign-accented speech listeners are affected not only by properties of the speech itself but by their own linguistic backgrounds and their experience with different speech varieties" (2006, 111), which explains results such as those obtained by Scales et al. (2006) when analysing the perception of native and foreign accents among a group of university students: there was a clear lack of consistency in the results, since the informants expressed a decided *a priori* preference for native-like accents as the objective of their own learning, but subsequently they were not able to distinguish between native and foreign accents. According to the authors, this contradiction showed that the students had an idealised conception of what the native accent to which they aspired sounded like – which may be related to the fact that, as Nagle and Huensch (2020) point out, learners who are studying the L2 out of personal and/or professional interest may not come into contact with proficient L2 speakers other than their instructor during the first few years of foreign language study. Scales et al. (2006) found, however, an almost perfect correlation between the accent the students voted easiest to understand and the one that participants preferred; similarly, Derwing and Munro (2009) found comprehensibility to be the main factor guiding listeners' preferences for potential interlocutors, while accentedness appeared to be a less important variable, along with voice quality, fluency and others. It may be presumed, therefore, that for an accent to be judged as good or desirable by language learners there exist features other than the simple lack

of foreign accent. The interest declared by the students towards obtaining a good pronunciation and the preference for the native accent may lead one to think that they identify good pronunciation with the absence of a foreign accent. However, there are no studies that examine the extent to which this identification is actually established by learners, a gap that our research aims to fill.

When faced with the question of assessing pronunciation, accent strength, comprehensibility, and other dimensions such as intelligibility or irritability, it is ultimately what listeners perceive that matters, and judgment data, as Derwing and Munro put it, are the "gold standard" (2009, 478). Research on perception and assessment spans two groups of variables: on the one hand, those related to the evaluator – native vs. non-native, expert vs. non-expert etc. –; on the other hand, those relating to the subject evaluated, which may or may not coincide with the evaluating subject. When L2 listeners evaluate the intensity of the foreign accent in foreign language production, their observations usually agree with those of native judges (Munro, Derwing, Morton 2006; Derwing, Munro 2013; Lappin-Fortin, Rye 2014; Levis, Sonsaat, Link 2017), the convergence being greater the higher the level of competence of the L2 listeners. The situation changes when we talk about self-assessment, since there are divergences between the self-evaluations of the learners and the evaluations of external judges (Ehrlinger et al. 2008; Foote 2010; Schlösser et al. 2013; Mitterer, Eger, Reinisch 2020; Saito et al. 2020), even when the learners are advanced (Dlaska, Krekeler 2008).[6] As Gaffney (2018, 238) observes, few researchers have attempted to explain this mismatch, but several various potential causes have been suggested, such as the amount of L2 experience and feedback (Trofimovich et al. 2016), psychosocial factors (Dlaska, Krekeler 2008), and individual factors such as self-esteem (Tan, Teo, Ng 2011) or extroversion (Gaffney 2018). In contrast with this disparity of causes, probably interconnected, most divergences recorded in the various studies tend to be in line with the Dunning-Kruger effect (Kruger, Dunning 1999; Dunning et al. 2003), a cognitive bias by which the subjects with lower proficiency tend to overrate themselves, while those at the top of the scale tend to undervalue themselves. Mitterer, Eger and Reinisch (2020) hypothesised that L2 learners may perceive their own accent as more target-like than that of their peers because of a mere-exposure effect – by which repeated exposure to stimulus makes it more likeable –, or because of the comprehension advantage carried by their own voice.

Research requiring students to assess their pronunciation usually provides participants with recordings of their own productions (al-

6 For a more detailed overview of relevant research cf. Paschke 2021.

tered or not), which must be rated in terms of quality. To our knowledge, there are few exceptions to this approach. In order to examine the ability of Spanish-speaking subjects to accurately evaluate their own level of pronunciation proficiency in English, Hammond (1990) required participants to globally rate their own pronunciation according to five categories: Excellent, Good, Average, Poor, Very Poor. Using a similar method, Waniek-Klimczak, Porzuczek, Rojczyk (2013, 7) for Polish BA- and MA-English-students determined an average self-rating score of M = 3.26, i.e., between "good" (3) and "very good" (4). However, when asking the same population to self-rate the statement "I think that my pronunciation in English DOES NOT contain features characteristic for Polish pronunciation", Waniek-Klimczak, Rojczyk, Porzuczek (2015, 28-9) found their informants fairly hesitant with an average score of M = 2.8 on a 5-point Likert scale. Steed and Delicado Cantero (2018), researching attitudes of Spanish students in Australia, found that more than two thirds (68%) had a positive self-perception regarding their confidence pronouncing Spanish, an optimistic view in line with the high percentage of students who considered Spanish easy to pronounce. Muñoz García and Contreras Roa (2019), in their survey of French students studying English and Spanish, found that on a 10-point scale, students evaluated their pronunciation in English more positively (M = 6.89) than in Spanish M = 5.90). Baran-Łucarz (2011) investigated whether the actual level of FL learners' pronunciation and the pronunciation level perceived by students could be considered significant sources of anxiety. Both levels were found to be significant, with perceived level being more significant than actual level. It could, therefore, prove useful to ask students about their self-attributed competence.

It has been theorised that for the linguistic system to develop, L2 learners need to notice and then minimise the gap between the target linguistic system and the learners' own conception of it (Schmidt 2001). Consequently, to facilitate the acquisition of L2, it is interesting to determine if L2 learners can correctly assess their performance, and at what point in the learning process. The divergence between self-perceived competence and competence perceived by external subjects also deserves attention because it has behavioural consequences, affects trust and the desire to communicate in the classroom (de Saint Léger 2009; de Saint Léger, Storch 2009) and, more generally, the desire to use a foreign language (Baran-Łucarz 2014). Along with the intuitive idea that a faulty self-assessment can result in under-confident learners avoiding participating in foreign language interactions, we can suggest another one, perhaps less obvious: in the case of over-confident learners, insufficient self-assessment skills can encourage students not to take advantage of the opportunities that may arise to improve their pronunciation, whether in the classroom or outside (Gaffney 2018, 238). The question may

arise as to whether students consider their self-attributed assessment and self-assessment skills to be reliable – and to what extent. Yule, Damico and Hoffman (1987), in a study involving 56 subjects, found a complex interaction over time between simply identifying a sound contrast in English and being confident that the identification is accurate – that is, between accuracy level and self-monitoring skills. The study also found that teaching had a positive effect on developing self-monitoring skills, which, in turn, according to the authors, could place students in a much better position, when listening to a native speaker, to respond more quickly when they know their identifications are secure and to ask for repetition, confirmation, or clarification when they are aware that their identifications may be inaccurate (Yule, Damico, Hoffman 1987, 768). To our knowledge, no other research has yet dealt with this issue, which could have interesting potential implications: low and high self-attributed assessment skills may have a different impact on students' pronunciation learning progress, especially in terms of motivation.

In addition to making holistic judgments about their own phonetic competence, learners may be more or less able to introspectively identify weak points or concrete problems that negatively affect their competences and, more generally, to reflect upon their progress towards more native-like speech. Studies of pronunciation awareness[7] can differ in their operationalisation of 'awareness', and subsequently focus on whether students merely possess an understanding of the technical aspects of linguistic items, conceiving pronunciation as a system to be internalised (quantitative language awareness) or rather on whether they understand how these items can carry meaning and play a role in successful communication, thereby conceiving pronunciation as a way to understand and express meaning through interaction (Kennedy, Trofimovich 2010, 177; Kennedy, Blanchet, Trofimovich 2014, 90). Various researchers have found a link between self-awareness and phonetic competence. Kennedy and Trofimovich (2010), in a study developed within the framework of a pronunciation course in English as a Second Language, which focused on suprasegmental aspects of discourse, found that the informants' self-awareness, measured through volume and quality of the entries written in a weekly journal, significantly correlated with ratings of their pronunciation; students who received better evaluations in terms of accent, comprehension and fluency tended to show significantly more qualitative language awareness. Kennedy and Blanchet (2014) found

7 As Inceoglu (2021, 3-4) observes, there exists a variety of sometimes interchangeable terms by which to refer to the learner's language awareness of L2 phonology, including phonological awareness, metaphonetic or metaphonological awareness, phonetic or phonological sensitivity, and pronunciation awareness.

that the ability to perceive aspects of connected speech in French L2 was related to the quality of their language awareness. In a follow-up study with the same participants, Kennedy, Blanchet and Trofimovich (2014) examined the development of the pronunciation of intermediate French L2 students over a semester through the journal entries written by the students, finding, in line with previous studies, an association between qualitative awareness and a more accurate connected speech, better intonation, and greater fluency. Given the relationship between the quality of awareness and the competence of learners, researchers have wondered if it is possible to stimulate the development of awareness in the classroom, in a more or less explicit way. Chang (2006), working with L1 Mandarin English learners, showed that explicit teaching in conjunction with metalinguistic discussion can raise awareness of phonological form. Ramírez Verdugo (2006) found that fostering awareness can result in improved learners' intonation, and Couper (2011) linked explicit instruction aimed at developing awareness to an improvement in consonant clusters. In recent work with Australian learners of French L2, Inceoglu (2021) examined the relationship between explicit instruction, learner's pronunciation awareness and the development of competence in phenomena of connected discourse (*enchaînements* and *liaisons*). The author found a significant improvement in the production of connected speech features, analysed in oral recording of reading passages, and an effect of pronunciation (self-)awareness, measured through learners' reflective journal entries on pronunciation improvement. In light of these results, and the evidence that many L2 speakers cannot identify their own pronunciation deficits (Derwing, Rossiter 2002), we may assume with Mitterer, Eger and Reinisch "that external feedback may be essential for pronunciation training to highlight those aspects of the accent that should be improved" (2020, 10) and that in order to assess the need for this external feedback it is convenient to examine the quality of the (self-)awareness. To our knowledge, nevertheless, no research has yet explored the connection between student's quantitative and qualitative (self-)awareness and the will to increase this awareness. Volition is considered a core motivational element, but the link between proficiency and the will to acquire knowledge about pronunciation may be not so straightforward: Shively (2008), for instance, found that L2 speakers with extreme (i.e., the highest and lowest) concern for improving pronunciation scored more for accuracy than their peers.

A student of foreign languages will normally possess some knowledge regarding the typical pronunciation learning progress of speakers with whom she shares her L1: for instance, a Greek learner of English will not be completely unaware of what a typical Greek person studying English sounds like, or of the main difficulties which need to be faced by Greek learners. Parallel to the divergences between

assessment and self-assessment, the relationship between this kind of 'encyclopaedic' general awareness and self-awareness is a cognitive aspect which has not yet received attention.

Along with the cognitive and perceptual aspects outlined so far, a large body of studies has investigated affective issues and their relationship with pronunciation in L2. Pronunciation anxiety is perhaps the affective factor that has been most frequently linked to (lack of) proficiency. Broadly defined as the negative emotional reaction that a person experiences in a situation in which a language is used (Gardner, MacIntyre 1993), anxiety has been related to lower levels of linguistic performance, as shown in a recent meta-analysis of 97 studies (Teimouri, Goetze, Plonsky 2019). Research carried out by Zárate-Sández (2017), which analyses the relationship between personality and pronunciation in the foreign language, indicates that emotional instability (neuroticism), expressed through nervousness, anxiety and worry, was the strongest predictor of L2 accent. Baran-Łucarz has presented pronunciation anxiety as a multifaceted construct referring to the feeling of apprehension and worry experienced by non-native speakers in oral-communicative situations, due to negative self-perceptions of pronunciation, to a set of different beliefs related to pronunciation (such as its importance for successful communication or attitudes towards the sound of the target language) and to fears of negative evaluation (by classmates, teacher, native speakers or other non-native speakers), on the basis of pronunciation (Baran-Łucarz 2014, 453). Pronunciation self-efficacy (perceptions about one's inborn predispositions to acquire or learn a foreign language's phonological system) and self-assessment seem to play a crucial role in preventing or fostering anxiety (Baran-Łucarz 2014, 453). The student's self-assessment and self-awareness seem relevant if we consider findings such as those in Baran-Łucarz (2011), who investigated whether the actual level of FL learners' pronunciation and the pronunciation level perceived by students could be considered significant sources of anxiety. Both levels were found to be significant, with perceived level being more significant than actual level. Szyszka (2011) pointed out that the most anxious learners tend to give a more negative evaluation of their pronunciation, while the more confident and relaxed ones evaluate themselves more positively. Positive Psychology, as advocated for L2 pronunciation by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014; 2016), Dewaele et al. (2016), propose a holistic view on humans and the inclusion of L2 learners' positive emotions such as foreign language enjoyment (FLE). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) observed that the effects of positive emotions go beyond pleasurable feelings: they improve students' ability to notice things in the classroom environment and strengthen their awareness of language input which, in turn, fosters learning. Positive emotions, such as pleasure, a fundamental source of intrinsic motivation, also help

eliminate the lingering effects of negative emotions. Reiterer et al. suggest that "enjoying the melody of a new language might activate additional affective learning pathways in the learner's brain and support auditory memory" (2020, 199). Contrary to the overwhelming focus on negative emotions, a place for positive emotions should be found when dealing with self-assessment, self-awareness and ultimately pronunciation proficiency.

As far as we know, research into the interface between cognitive and affective factors, and more precisely into the extent to which affective factors can have an impact on pronunciation proficiency, has not yet addressed the subject from the learner's point out view, that is to say, examining how students themselves perceive affective factors as having a positive or negative effect on their pronunciation in the L2.

The studies we have reviewed so far report on empirical research which addresses issues related to the ones on which the present contribution is focused. Nevertheless, we have not found, in any previous research, questionnaire studies involving big numbers of informants sharing the same L1 but studying a wide range of different L2s and taking into account a varied amount of independent variables such as level of proficiency, type of motivation, or linguistic background, to name just some.

3 Method

3.1 Questionnaire Questions

In this paper we analyse the answers to a series of 14 5-point Likert questions (plus 1 final open question) which were presented twice, once for each of the two languages selected by the students as major subjects for the BA degree programme: in Section C of the questionnaire with reference to "language A", i.e, the first foreign language in their study programme (questions C01-C14), in Section D with reference to "language B", i.e, the second foreign language in their study programme (questions D01-D14). It should be remembered that all languages can be "A" or "B" and that there is no difference in study requirements (see ch. 1). The Likert questions are divided in thematic subsections here, but were presented to the students without subsection titles and in random order. In any case, the last question was always the open question (C15/D15), where students had the chance to write comments (for the original Italian version of all questions see the Appendix). Reverse scoring was applied to some questions in order to maintain the same 'meaning' of high/low scores within the same subsection. From now on, the (identical) questions of Sections C and D are numbered with the codes CD01, CD02 etc.

Self-assessment of pronunciation

CD01. I have a good pronunciation in this L2.

CD02. I have a strong foreign accent in this L2. [reverse scoring]

Variability of one's pronunciation

CD03. When I am nervous or tired my accent in this L2 becomes stronger.

CD04. When I am comfortable I can pronounce this L2 with a better accent.

Ability to (self-)evaluate the pronunciation quality

CD05. I do not understand how strong my foreign accent is in this L2. [reverse scoring]

CD06. Listening to others I can distinguish a good pronunciation in this L2 from a poor one.

Affective aspects of pronunciation

CD07. I like to read aloud in this L2, in class or even on my own.

CD08. I feel ridiculous when I imitate the pronunciation and melody of a native speaker of this language. [reverse scoring]

CD09. I enjoy pronouncing this L2.

CD10. It is a struggle to articulate this L2 well. [reverse scoring]

Knowledge about pronunciation

CD11. I know well what my pronunciation problems in this L2 are.

CD12. I would like to understand better what my pronunciation problems in this L2 are. [reverse scoring]

CD13. I know the pronunciation problems typical of Italians who speak this L2.

CD14. I can't explain what the typical Italian accent in this L2 consists of. [reverse scoring]

Final open question

CD15. Would you like to tell us something else about your accent in this L2, about the particular difficulties in pronouncing this L2, about how you feel pronouncing it or would you like to leave a comment on the questions in this section?

For each question (CD01-CD14) a 5-point Likert scale was provided:

1 = I strongly disagree
2 = I disagree
3 = I neither agree nor disagree
4 = I agree
5 = I strongly agree

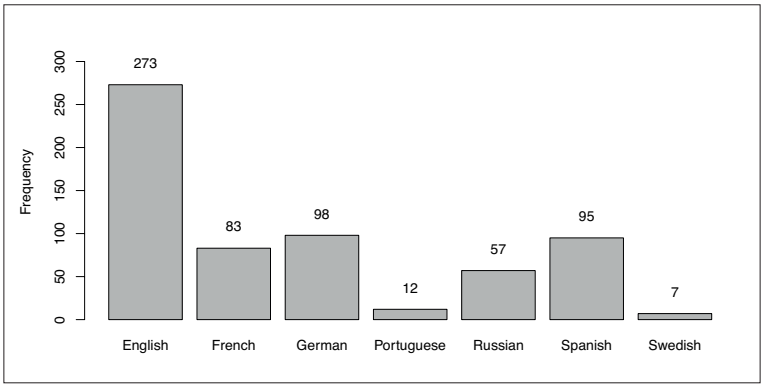
3.2 Participants and Answers

A total of 372 first-year students took part in the online survey: 199 in the first months of the academic year 2019-20 and 173 in the first semester of the academic year 2020-21 (see ch. 1 for details). All the answers given by the 372 participants in Sections C and D of the questionnaire were pooled for analysis, and labelled CD01, CD02 … CD15. If the self-attributed proficiency level in one of the two languages was "zero", no answers were collected. For this reason, the total number of answers is not (372 * 2 =) 744, but 640. Furthermore, we omitted 8 series of answers referring to a language in which the informants declared a native proficiency level, because the real status of this language might vary between a full native command (the case of South Tirolean students with German L1) and a heritage language used only in family contexts and without complete schooling (e.g., the case of students coming from Romanian families). Moreover, the majority of questions were not appropriate for respondents with a native command (CD01-05, 08, 10-12). Thus, we could not expect consistent answers. The remaining responses were 632 (given by 366 participants: 193 from the first cohort and 173 from the second).

3.3 Languages

The languages selected by students are one of our main predictors for the answers given to questions CD01-CD14. However, with very low numbers of answers per language one would not expect meaningful results. For this reason we omitted the answers for Catalan and Modern Greek which each had only a single informant. Moreover, we filtered 5 answers which referred to LIS (Italian Sign Language), because terms like 'pronunciation' and 'accent' are unlikely to be interpretable for LIS students. Finally, British and American English (it. *inglese*, *anglo-americano*) were put together in the category "English". In this way we ended up with 625 answers to Sections C and D of the questionnaire which are distributed by language as shown in chart **1**.

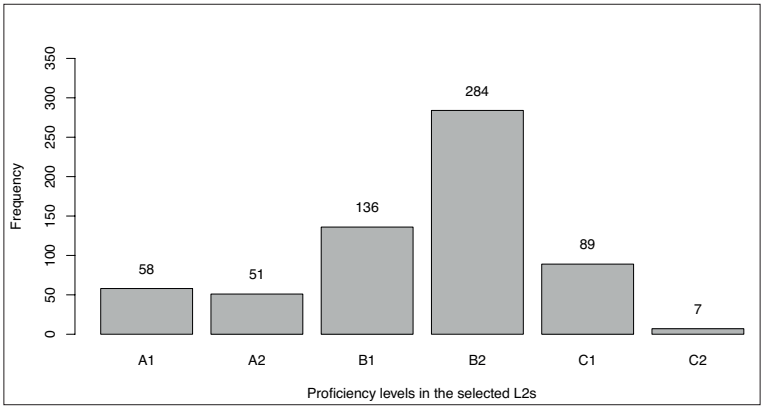
Chart 1 Distribution by language of 625 (series of) responses



3.4 Proficiency Levels

Our second main predictor for answers given in Sections C and D of the questionnaire is the self-declared proficiency level. The distribution by level of the 625 answers is shown in chart **2** in terms of the six levels of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001).

Chart 2 Distribution by proficiency level of 625 (series of) responses



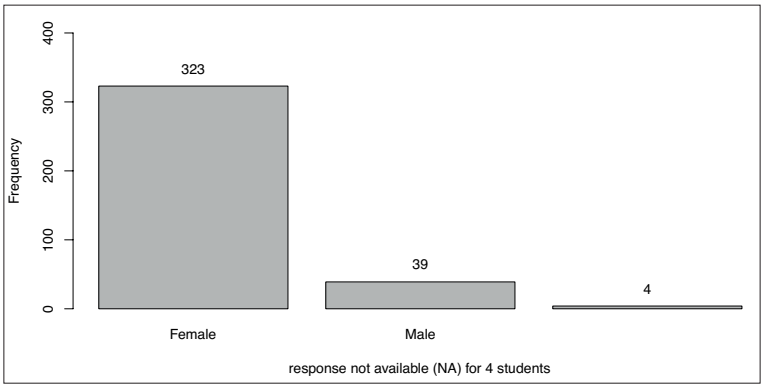
While languages and levels are specific for each of the 625 series of answers to questions CD01-CD14, the following independent variables are the same for the 2 answer series given by the same student (1 for the "A" language, 1 for the "B" language). The number of responses is equal to that of the remaining students, i.e. 366.

3.5 Other Independent Variables

3.5.1 Gender

The 366 students involved in the analyses were distributed by gender as shown in chart **3** (data missing for 4 informants).

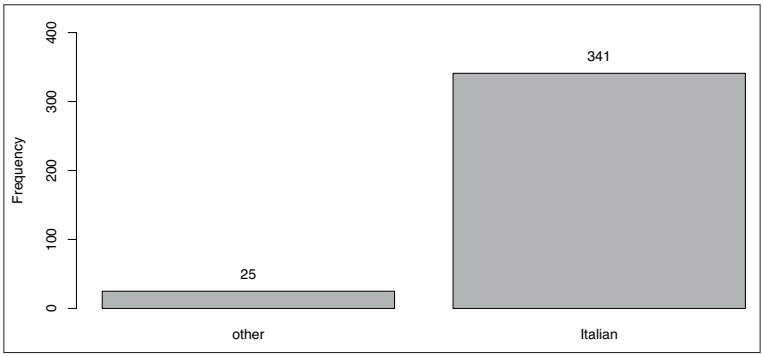
Chart 3 Distribution of respondents by gender



3.5.2 First Language

Among the 366 students who were the object of the analysis, 339 declared that Italian was their first language, acquired at home and then studied at school. This category included a few informants who started with an Italian dialect and then acquired standard Italian at school. We do not distinguish between the two groups because it is virtually impossible that these persons, growing up in Italy, in their early childhood were not exposed to standard Italian, in the first place by being exposed to TV programmes. 27 respondents chose the option "other" and recorded their specific situation. Many of these statements confirm that the first language was different from Italian (Arabic, Albanian, Moldovan/Romanian, Ladin, Spanish), while others indicated bilingual family contexts (Tyrolean dialect/Italian, French/Italian, Chinese/Italian, Slovak/Italian); some students simply state that they learned Italian at school (after arrival in Italy), but 2 respondents choose the option "other" because they had acquired both standard Italian and an Italian dialect in their families. These 2 informants (Stud0232, Stud1034) were included in the "Italian" group **[chart 4]**.

Chart 4 Distribution of respondents by first language



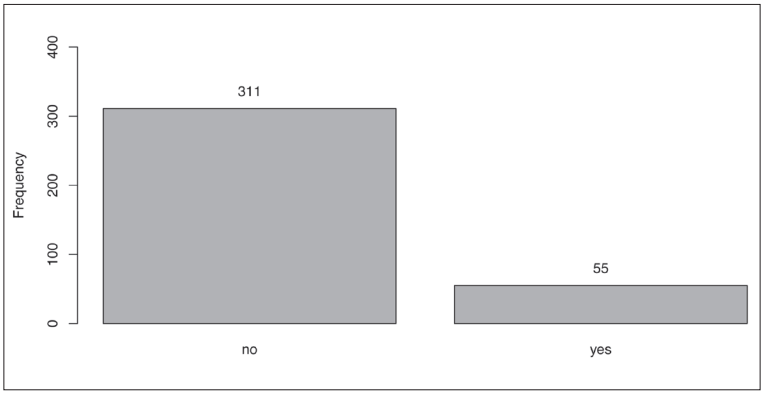
3.5.3 Pluricultural Experience

The first part of the questionnaire contained the following question about bilingualism: "A07. As a child or teenager, did you learn another language, other than Italian, that you master (or mastered) at the level of a native speaker or in any case with great spontaneity?". This formulation was intended to include not only simultaneous bilinguals (coming from mixed families), but also subjects who had acquired a second language later in their lives, predominantly because their families had immigrated to Italy. The students who answered "yes" had to specify the language(s) and if they still used it. Among the 366 respondents, 104 answered "yes", and 262 "no". The proportion of bilingual students (28%) seemed quite high. A closer look at the individual answers made it clear that a number of respondents declared themselves as bilingual because of the languages studied at school, especially English. Such a wide concept of 'bilingualism' is not excluded by the wording of the question and is also documented in the literature (cf. Paradowski, Bator 2016), but would be quite useless for our research because – in a wide sense – all of our respondents are bilingual. However, since 262 students did not consider themselves bilingual, it is clear that this item suffered from an inconsistent interpretation.

Moreover, there is evidence (Dewaele, McCloskey 2015) that attitudes to foreign language pronunciation – especially to foreign accent – are influenced more by substantial pluricultural experiences than simply by the number of languages that the subject knows. For this reason we established a new category of "Pluricultural status" which we defined for all participants based on the answers to different questions (native proficiency, a school year abroad, self-declared bilingualism justified by a language not taught in Italian schools, important intercultural experiences abroad). Based on this

method the pluricultural status of the respondents was distributed as shown in chart **5**.

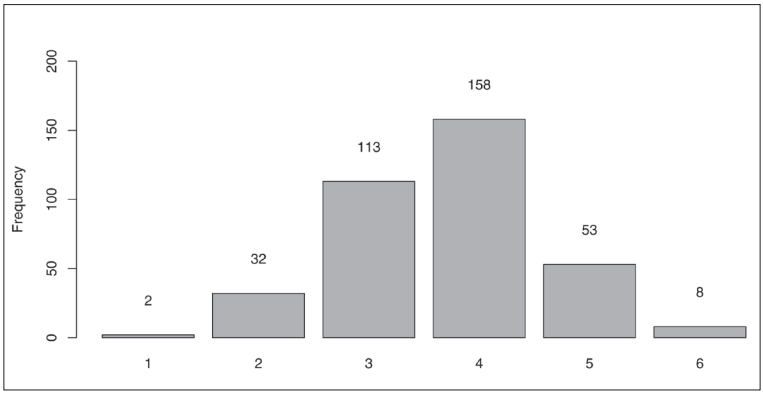
Chart 5 Distribution of respondents by pluricultural status



3.5.4 Number of Foreign Languages Studied at School

Another hypothetical predictor of pronunciation attitudes could be the extent of plurilingualism (in a broad sense, including low proficiency languages); this data was derived from the answers to questions A08-A15 about languages studied at school and presents the distribution shown in chart **6**.

Chart 6 Distribution of respondents by number of languages studied

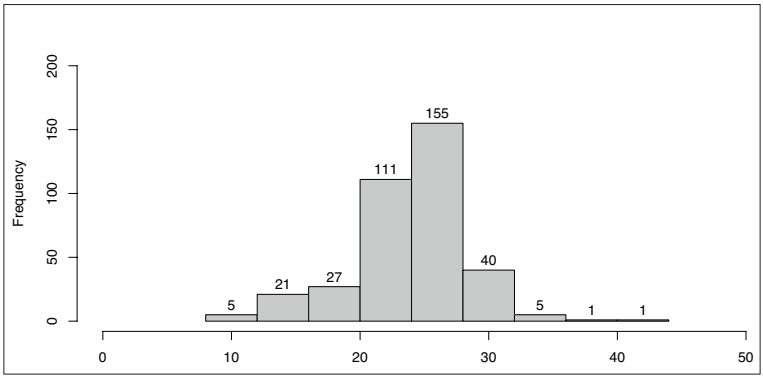


As can be seen from the chart, the majority of informants (158) studied 4 foreign languages, in second and third place follow those who studied 3 languages (113) or 5 languages (53). These 3 groups together constitute 89% of the population.

3.5.5 Years of Language Study

A second variable related to previous language learning might be the total number of years of foreign language study **[chart 7]**, again derived from the answers to questions A08-A15; if in A15 the additional language was without temporal information, we calculated 1 year.

Chart 7 Distribution of respondents by total years of foreign language study



3.5.6 Motivational Coefficient

The final question of the biographical section of the questionnaire (A19) was about the motivations for enrolment in the foreign language degree programme. In a list of 13 possible motivations, the respondents had to choose those which applied to themselves. There was no limitation for the number of choices. Table **1** lists all possible choices, the number of students who chose each one, and a classification as extrinsic or intrinsic motivation (with 2 neutral ones). For details see chapter 1 of this volume.

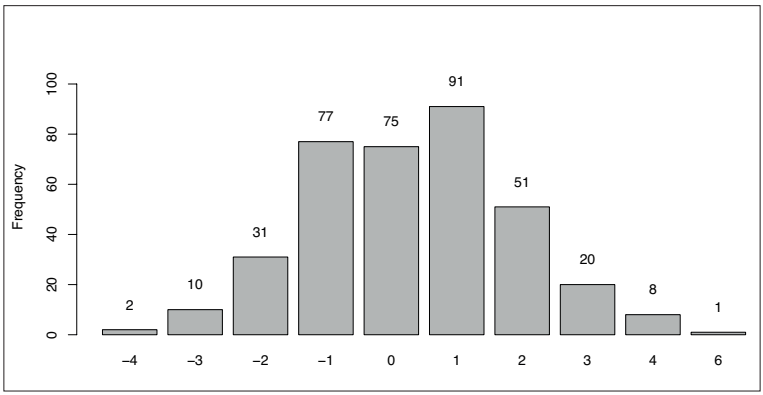
Table 1 Motivations for degree course enrolment selected by 366 respondents

Motivation	Count	Characteristic
1. At school I was good in languages	179	extrinsic
2. Because at school I have never studied foreign languages well	24	neutral
3. I had a good language teacher at school	90	neutral
4. By exclusion (e.g., of scientific subjects)	32	extrinsic
5. Following a stay in a different linguistic context	67	intrinsic
6. Because this degree programme is present in Venice, i.e., close to my home	40	extrinsic

Motivation	Count	Characteristic
7. Because I like literature	111	intrinsic
8. Because I am interested in linguistics	74	intrinsic
9. Because I am curious to know other cultures	233	intrinsic
10. Languages are my passion	227	intrinsic
11. I would like to teach languages	91	intrinsic
12. Because foreign languages give me the opportunity to move abroad	207	extrinsic
13. Good job prospects in the globalised world	231	extrinsic

The motivational coefficient was calculated by adding 1 for every intrinsic motivation (+1) and subtracting 1 for every extrinsic motivation (-1). Chart **8** shows the distribution of the resulting coefficients. The majority (91 students out of 366) had a motivational coefficient of 1, i.e., they chose one more intrinsic than extrinsic motivation. Consider, however, that there are 6 intrinsic motivations in the list, while only 5 are extrinsic.

Chart 8 Distribution of respondents by motivational coefficient



One question in Section A of the questionnaire focused on the (current or past) daily use of a second language. We did not use this data for the analysis, because the daily use of one L2, e.g., English, is expected to have different impacts on the two degree course languages, e.g., English and French, at least if one of these is the language of daily use and the other is not.

3.6 Research Questions (RQ) and Hypotheses

The present chapter deals with perceptual, affective and cognitive factors of L2 pronunciation and foreign accent as seen by 1st year students enrolled in a foreign language degree programme of an Italian university.

Our principal aim was to investigate the attitudes and opinions expressed by the informants: How do they judge their pronunciation quality, their ability to evaluate an L2 pronunciation, their knowledge of pronunciation? Secondly, we wanted to explore which independent variables might influence these judgements.

Since in Section C and D the informants were first of all asked to specify the languages they had chosen as main subjects of study and to rate their corresponding CEFR levels, before answering the same series of 14 Likert-type questions (CD01-CD14) separately for each language with a minimum level of A1, it seemed natural, first of all, to investigate the role of language and proficiency level – two independent variables which are different for the two series of answers given by the same subject. In addition to the research questions, we will also formulate some hypotheses for these two variables.

The biographical features (gender, bilingualism, language studies etc.), in contrast, might predict the answers in Section C/D of the questionnaire only to the extent that they are independent of language and proficiency level. With regard to biographical/individual variables we will explore possible effects but will not formulate hypotheses.

Perception of L2 pronunciation and accent

Questionnaire questions CD01-CD02

RQ 1: How do informants self-rate their pronunciation quality?

RQ 2: What do their ratings depend on?

Hypothesis 1: The pronunciation self-ratings depend on the self-reported proficiency level.

RQ 3: Do informants equate 'good pronunciation' with absence of a 'strong foreign accent'?

Hypothesis 2: Considering the widespread native pronunciation ideal of learners we expect them to equate the two concepts.

Questionnaire questions CD05-CD06

RQ 4: How do informants evaluate their ability to judge the own accent and that of other L2 speakers?

RQ 5: What does their self-reported ability to judge L2 pronunciation depend on?

Hypothesis 3: The self-reported ability to judge L2 pronunciation depends on the self-reported proficiency level.

RQ 6: Do informants make a difference between the ability to judge their own pronunciation and that of other L2 speakers?
Hypothesis 4: In line with findings of real differences, we expect that the informants are less sure about their ability to judge their own L2 pronunciation.

Affective factors

Questionnaire questions CD07-CD10

RQ 7: Knowing that emotions (positive and negative ones) are crucial for pronunciation, what are the pronunciation-related feelings of the informants?
Hypothesis 5: The pronunciation-related feelings of the informants are mostly positive because otherwise they would not have chosen to enrol for a foreign language degree programme.
RQ 8: On which variables do the pronunciation-related feelings of the informants depend?
Hypothesis 6: The pronunciation-related feelings depend on level of proficiency (better command means more enjoyment) and language (in line with widespread stereotypes and universal tendencies).

Questionnaire questions CD03-CD04

RQ 9: How do informants assess the influence of situational mood and feelings on their L2 pronunciation?
RQ 10: On which variables do the importance of mood and feelings for L2 pronunciation depend?
Hypothesis 7: In the eyes of informants, the influence of moods and feelings on the quality of their L2 pronunciation decreases with greater (self-reported) proficiency.

Cognitive factors

Questionnaire questions CD11-CD14

RQ 11: Are informants convinced that they understand their own specific L2 pronunciation problems and/or those of (other) Italians?
RQ 12: On what does the self-reported L2 pronunciation knowledge depend?
Hypothesis 8: The self-reported L2 pronunciation knowledge depends on the declared proficiency level in that language.
RQ 13: Are informants less confident about awareness of their own pronunciation deficits compared to that of other speakers?
Hypothesis 9: Informants believe they have less awareness of their own L2 pronunciation deficits compared to what they believe they know about the pronunciation problems of other speakers.

4 Results

4.1 Statistics

Likert items produce ordinal, not parametric (or interval) data. Some authors (e.g., Kuzon, Urbanchek, McCabe 1996; Jamieson 2004) criticise and reject the use of parametric statistics; others recommend 11-point scales (e.g., Wu, Leung 2017) or 'real' Likert scales, i.e., the sum of single Likert items measuring the same construct (Carifio, Perla 2007), in order to approximate interval data. Still others hold that the robustness of parametric statistics makes them suitable even for the analysis of single Likert item responses (Geoff 2010; Sullivan, Artino 2013). In the present study this controversy is relevant for the choice of the regression model: linear or ordinal (probabilistic).

Since Section C/D of the questionnaire is organised by topic, with each 2 or 4 items covering the same construct, we decided for the 'middle way', i.e., using the means of 2 or 4 items. In this way the 5-point scale is *de facto* extended to 9 points (in the case of 2 items) or even 17 points (4 items) and the data should undoubtedly be suitable for linear regression. Since the majority of respondents have given 2 series of answers (for the two languages studied in their degree course) we use a linear mixed-effects model, with students as (intercept) random effect.[8] The linear mixed-effects model ("lmer" of the R-library "lme4") delivers t-tests for each experimental effect; subsequently degrees of freedom and p-values are estimated based on the Satterthwaite method as implemented in the R-library "lmerTest". The fixed effects are computed for the following independent variables (with range of values in brackets):

Language-specific predictors:

- language (English, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish)
- level of proficiency (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2)

Student-specific predictors:

- gender (female/male),
- first language (Italian/other),
- pluricultural experience (yes/no),
- number of foreign languages studied (range 1 … 6),
- total years of language studies (range 11 … 44),
- motivational coefficient (range -4 … 6: higher coefficients stand for more intrinsic motivation).

8 Cf. Winter 2013 for an introduction to mixed models.

After running a comprehensive linear mixed-effects model, we perform a stepwise backward model selection using the step-function of the R-library "lmer" (cf. Kuznetsova, Brockhoff, Christensen 2017, 8-9). We report estimates and p-values only for predictors of the final, optimised model. Assumptions of regression models (normal distribution and homoscedasticity of residuals) are tested by means of visual inspection (cf. Winter 2020, 109-12).

Before computing means for a specific group of (2 or 4) Likert items, it is necessary to reverse some scores. For example, for the two questions regarding self-assessment of pronunciation (CD01: "I have a good pronunciation in this L2"; CD02: "I have a strong foreign accent in this L2") we must reverse the scoring of CD02, so that high values (4 or 5) mean a good, almost accent-free pronunciation, and low values (1 or 2) mean a bad pronunciation and/or one with a strong accent. Rescoring thus means converting 5 to 1, 4 to 2, 2 to 4, and 1 to 5, while 3 remains unchanged. Reverse scoring affects the answers to CD02, CD05, CD08, CD10, CD12, and CD14 (cf. the question list above).

A great part of the results that go beyond the description of answer distribution thus deal with dependent variables that are arithmetic means computed from single answers as shown by the following list:

Self-assessment of pronunciation:	CD0102 = (CD01+CD02)/2
Emotional variability of one's pronunciation:	CD0304 = (CD03+CD04)/2
Ability to (self-)evaluate the pronunciation quality:	CD0506 = (CD05+CD06)/2
Enjoyment of pronunciation:	CD0710 = (CD07+CD08+CD09+CD10)/4
Knowledge about pronunciation:	CD1114 = (CD11+CD12+CD13+CD14)/4)

Sometimes we want to compare the responses to single items (e.g., the answers to item CD01 and to item CD02) in order to detect correlations, but also differences in distribution. In this case we resort to:

- Kendell's rank correlation to verify if there is a systematic link between two series of responses;
- the Wilcoxon rank test to demonstrate that the difference between two (Likert-type) distributions is not the result of chance.

All calculations and plots were carried out with the R software (R Core Team 2020) and with several supplementary R packages, above all "lme4" (Bates et al. 2015), "lmerTest" (Kuznetsova, Brockhoff, Christensen 2017) and "likert" (Bryer, Speerschneider 2016).

4.2 Visualisation of Likert responses

Chart 9 gives an example of how responses to Likert-type questions are visualised. All bars are centred, i.e., the "neither agree nor disagree" option is displayed in the middle and labelled with the corresponding percentage. In the left-hand margin, the overall percentage of the 2 disagree options is shown (e.g., 11% in CD01), while the overall percentage of the 2 agree options is displayed on the right (e.g., 55% in CD01).

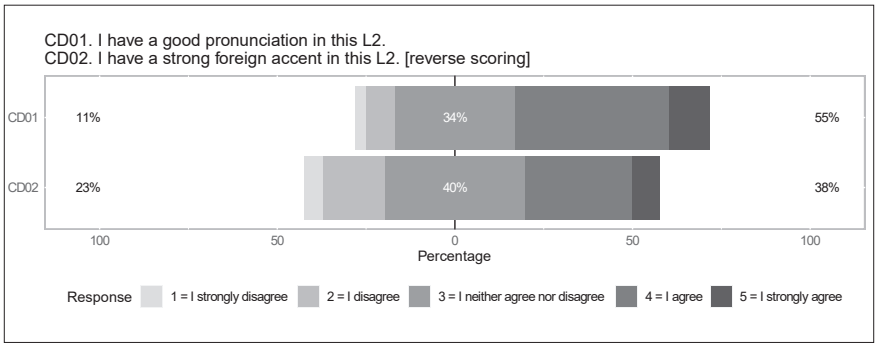
In the questions with reverse scoring, the percentage on the left side is that of agreement with the original statement (without rescoring). For example, 23% of the respondents agreed with the statement CD02 "I have a strong foreign accent in this L2", but due to rescoring the percentage of agreement and the corresponding bar segments are displayed on the left side, vice versa for disagreement.

The answers to the questions in the Section C/D of the questionnaire were not mandatory. Nevertheless, there was never more than one missing answer in each question. Thus, we have 624 answers for CD01, CD02, CD06, CD07, CD11, CD13 and CD14. All the other questions have the maximum of 625 answers.

4.3 Perception of L2 Pronunciation and Accent

4.3.1 CD01-CD02. Self-Assessment of Pronunciation

Chart 9 Responses to questions CD01-CD02



RQ 1 How do informants self-rate their pronunciation quality?

Chart 9 shows that the majority of respondents (55%) are sure that they have a good pronunciation (CD01), while somewhat fewer (38%) also believe that they do not have a strong foreign accent (CD02). On the whole, however, both bars tend to the right side, i.e., they express the students' belief in their own pronunciation quality. What is no-

ticeable is the extremely high proportion (34% and 40%) of respondents who are undecided.

RQ 2 What do their ratings depend on?
Hypothesis 1: The pronunciation self-ratings depend on the self-reported proficiency level.

To answer the question and to test Hypothesis 1, we performed a linear mixed-effects analysis of the relationship between the self-rated pronunciation quality (computed for each subject as the mean of CD01 and reverse scored CD02) and the following independent variables (as fixed effects): language, proficiency level, gender, first language, pluricultural experience, number of foreign languages studied, years of preceding foreign language study, motivational coefficient. The variable 'student' was set as (intercept) random effect, because different respondents might have different, i.e., more or less rigorous, rating scales, and because each student could give up to 2 series of responses (if they had a level of at least A1 in both major subject languages). The linear mixed-effects model produces three significant predictor variables: Language, CEFR_Level and First_Language. Performing a stepwise backward model selection, we find five significant variables: Language and CEFR_Level at the highly significant α-level of $p<0.001$***, First_Language at $p<0.01$**, and Number_L2 and MotivCoefficient at the minimum α-level of $p<0.05$*. After the elimination of Years of L2 study and Pluricultural_status from the model, the fixed effects for the significant predictors are those displayed in table **2**.

Table 2 Mixed model for self-rated pronunciation quality (CD01, CD02)

Predictors	Estimates	Confidence intervals	p
(Intercept)	2.56 ***	2.17 – 2.96	<0.001
Language [French]	-0.17	-0.36 – 0.02	0.073
Language [German]	-0.30 **	-0.49 – -0.11	0.002
Language [Portuguese]	0.22	-0.25 – 0.70	0.358
Language [Russian]	0.12	-0.15 – 0.39	0.376
Language [Spanish]	0.16	-0.02 – 0.34	0.076
Language [Swedish]	-0.59 *	-1.19 – -0.00	0.049
CEFR_Level [A2]	0.50 ***	0.22 – 0.79	0.001
CEFR_Level [B1]	0.73 ***	0.47 – 0.99	<0.001
CEFR_Level [B2]	0.94 ***	0.68 – 1.21	<0.001
CEFR_Level [C1]	1.33 ***	1.03 – 1.64	<0.001
CEFR_Level [C2]	1.87 ***	1.27 – 2.46	<0.001
First_Language [Italian]	-0.37 **	-0.61 – -0.13	0.002

Predictors	Estimates	Confidence intervals	p
Number_L2	0.08 *	0.02 – 0.15	0.013
MotivCoefficient	0.04 *	0.00 – 0.08	0.037
N Student_ID	366		
Observations	623		

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

First, some explanations for those who are not familiar with the output of linear regression models. The intercept-value corresponds to a (hypothetical) student with all variables at their reference level (usually the first in alphabetical order or '0' in case of numeric data), i.e., a student of English, at level A1, with a L1 "other" than Italian, no previous foreign language study and perfectly balanced extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (MotivCoefficient = 0). This (non-existing) student would have an average of 2.56 in CD01 and CD02, i.e., they would self-rate their pronunciation as quite bad, in any case below the indecision-level of 3 ("neither agree nor disagree"). If the answers of the student refer, e.g., to German, the estimate corresponding to "Language [German]" tells us that the model predicts an even lower self-rating of Intercept + Estimate = 2.56-0.30 = 2.26. If the student is at level B2, on the other hand, the model predicts a CD0102-value which is 0.94 higher (3.20). Furthermore, if the first language is not Italian but "other" this value remains unchanged; otherwise it drops by 0.37. That means students who did not acquire Italian as their first language, but Arabic, French, Portuguese etc., self-rate their pronunciation at a slightly higher level. Finally, every L2 studied at school has a small positive effect of 0.08, and also negative or positive values of the motivation coefficient (range -4 … +6), multiplied by the corresponding estimate of 0.04, can move slightly up or down the predicted average value of CD0102. The information in the column "Confidence intervals" means that with a probability of 95% the real contribution of the predictor is within the indicated range (2 standard errors below and above the estimate). Thus, for example, there is a 95% probability that the real contribution of the motivational coefficient is between 0.00 and 0.08.

The last column of the table with the p-values for every single predictor tells us that not only the proficiency-variable CEFR_Level as a whole is significant, but also every single level, and with very low p-levels, compared to level A1. This means that the null hypothesis related to our Hypothesis 1, in other words: the idea that the self-reported proficiency-level does *not* predict the (averaged) answers to CD01 and (reverse scored) CD02, must be rejected. Hypothesis 1 can thus be regarded as confirmed. Moreover, as one would expect, the estimates increase from level to level, which means that the high-

er the CEFR level, the higher the confidence in one's own pronunciation quality. Running the model with CEFR_Level as ordered (categorical) variable (A1 < A2 < B1 < B2 < C1 < C2), it turns out that the best fit is a linear order ($p<0.001$), not a quadratic or cubic one. Therefore, it would be legitimate to substitute the levels by numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), but here we prefer the categorical variable because it produces estimates for every single level.

We will now explore the role of other predictors, for which we have not formulated hypotheses. The Language variable as a whole was significant in the stepwise backward model selection, but not each of the languages has an equally significant deviation (estimate) from English (which is the default and comprised in the intercept). For French, German and Swedish, the deviation from English is negative, but only for German (*) and Swedish (**) it is significant. So for these languages the participants evaluated their pronunciation quality as worse when compared to English. For the other languages the estimate is positive, but not significant. However, French and Spanish both approach the α-level of $p<0.05$.

Among the biographical predictors, the negative estimate for First Language [Italian] means that students who as their first language had acquired standard Italian or an Italian dialect (usually in combination with standard Italian), self-rated their pronunciation quality significantly ($p<0.01$**) lower (-0.37 points) than those who acquired Italian later, because their L1 was different. Finally, the number of L2s studied at school which ranges from 1 to 6 (difference: 5) can at best affect the CD0102 response for 5 * 0.08 = 0.40. Similarly, the motivation coefficient (range -4 … 6) can create a difference of at most 10 * 0.04 = 0.40 points between the most extrinsically and the most intrinsically motivated students.

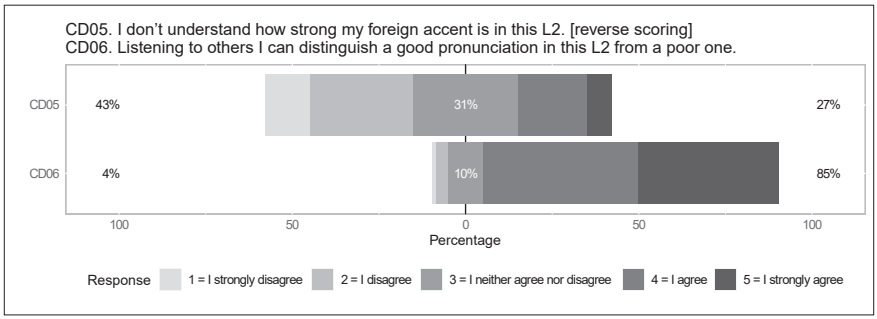
RQ 3 Do informants equate 'good pronunciation' with absence of a 'strong foreign accent'?
Hypothesis 2: Considering the widespread native pronunciation ideal of learners we expect them to equate the two concepts.

To answer this research question, we no longer average the answers to the 2 questions (CD01, CD02), but compare them with each other. If the learners equate the two concepts, there should be a very high correlation between the answers to these questions. Since the possible responses (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) are ordinal (and not interval) data, we apply a rank correlation statistic. Kendell's rank correlation for CD01-CD02 amounts to tau = 0.43 ($Z = 12.48$, $p<0.001$***), which is a medium, but not very high correlation. Thus, one might suppose that informants do not fully equate the concepts of good and accent-free pronunciation. The smaller percentage of agreement and the higher degree of indecision for CD02 **[chart 9]**, as compared to CD01, point

in the same direction. The confirmation comes from the Wilcoxon test (used instead of t-tests for paired ordinal data) which delivers V = 39138, p<0.001***, which means that the null hypothesis corresponding to Hypothesis 2 cannot be rejected: the distribution of answers to the two different questions is significantly different, because the students surveyed do not equate "good pronunciation" with absence of a "strong foreign accent". A substantial part of them think that a good L2 pronunciation is compatible with a foreign accent.

4.3.2 CD05-CD06. Ability to (Self-)Evaluate the Pronunciation Quality

Chart 10 Responses to questions CD05-CD06



RQ 4 How do informants evaluate their ability to judge the own accent and that of other L2 speakers?

From the stacked bar of CD06 in chart **10** we can see that the great majority of respondents (85%) believe that they can distinguish a good pronunciation from a poor one when listening to other L2 speakers. Only 4% think they cannot. Even the percentage of undecided (10%) is very low compared to that in other items. On the other hand (question CD05), far fewer respondents (27%) are convinced they can understand how strong their own foreign accent is. The majority (43%) believe they are unable to do so, and almost a third (31%) have no clear opinion. Even taking into account that the two questions use different concepts (pronunciation quality vs. foreign accent) the difference is striking.

RQ 5 What does their self-reported ability to judge L2 pronunciation depend on? Hypothesis 3: The self-reported ability to judge L2 pronunciation depends on the self-reported proficiency level.

As for Hypothesis 1, we performed a linear mixed-effects analysis of the relationship between the self-rated pronunciation evaluation ability (computed for each subject as the average of reverse scored CD05 and of CD06) and a list of independent variables as fixed effects: language, proficiency level, gender, first language, pluricultural experience, number of foreign languages studied, years of preceding foreign language study, motivational coefficient, while the variable 'student' was set as (intercept) random effect. The LME model produces four significant predictor variables: Language, CEFR_Level, First_Language, and Number_L2. Performing a stepwise backward model selection, the same four predictors are confirmed: CEFR_Level is highly significant ($p<0.001$***), while the other three are significant at α-level=0.05 **[tab. 3]**.

Table 3 Mixed model for self-rated pronunciation evaluation ability (CD05, CD06)

Predictors	Estimates	Confidence intervals	p
(Intercept)	3.19 ***	2.81 – 3.58	<0.001
Language [French]	-0.19 *	-0.35 – -0.02	0.026
Language [German]	-0.24 **	-0.41 – -0.08	0.004
Language [Portuguese]	0.05	-0.36 – 0.46	0.817
Language [Russian]	-0.29 *	-0.53 – -0.05	0.016
Language [Spanish]	-0.04	-0.20 – 0.11	0.594
Language [Swedish]	-0.37	-0.90 – 0.15	0.164
CEFR_Level [A2]	0.15	-0.10 – 0.41	0.244
CEFR_Level [B1]	0.39 **	0.15 – 0.62	0.001
CEFR_Level [B2]	0.38 **	0.14 – 0.62	0.002
CEFR_Level [C1]	0.59 ***	0.32 – 0.86	<0.001
CEFR_Level [C2]	1.20 ***	0.67 – 1.73	<0.001
First_Language [Italian]	-0.29 *	-0.53 – -0.04	0.022
Number_L2	0.08 *	0.01 – 0.15	0.018
N Student_ID	366		
Observations	624		

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

First of all, we can substantially confirm Hypothesis 3: the self-reported proficiency level in the target language is a very good predictor of the (averaged) answers to CD05 and CD06, even if CEFR_Level A2 does not reach significance compared to A1 (included in the intercept). It should be noted that the transition from level B1 to level B2 is not accompanied by an increase in the self-perceived assess-

ment ability (compared to A1): both estimates are around 0.38/0.39.

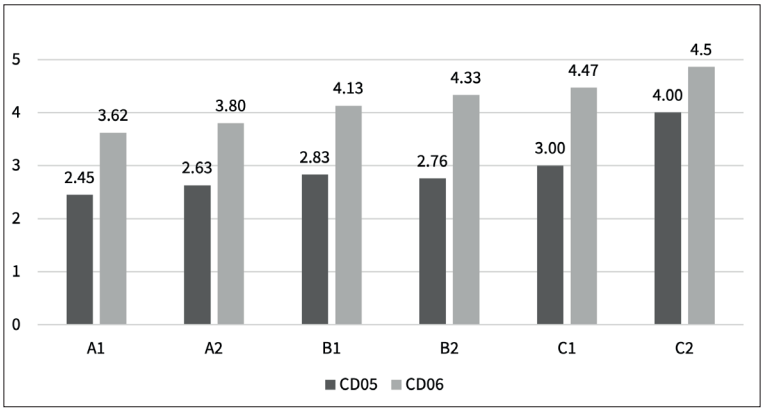
With regard to the target languages, it is striking that almost all languages (except Portuguese) have a negative estimate, i.e., in these languages the participants believe that they have less ability to assess L2 pronunciation (compared to English). The negative difference (about -0.2/-0.4) is significant for German (**), French (*) and Russian (*). Finally, the predictors First_Language and Number_L2 behave in a similar way as in CD01-CD02: respondents with an L1 other than (only) Italian self-rate their pronunciation assessment ability 0.29 points higher, and every L2 studied at school contributes to the dependent variable with 0.08.

RQ 6 Do informants make a difference between the ability to judge their own pronunciation and that of other L2 speakers?
Hypothesis 4: In line with findings of real differences, we expect that the informants are less sure about their ability to judge their own L2 pronunciation.

That this hypothesis cannot be rejected is already made clear by a glance at the two stacked bars in chart **10** and on the percentages of the answer options chosen by the participants. So we do not expect a high correlation between the two answers. Indeed, Kendell's rank correlation gives the very low value of tau = 0.042 with a p-value of 0.2246, which is surprising because it means that we cannot exclude that there is absolutely no correlation between the two self-ratings. The Wilcoxon test (V = 4184.5, p-value < 2.2e-16) confirms that the distribution of answer options is significantly different for the two questions CD05 and CD06. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is confirmed.

Exploring possible reasons for the very different responses to the two questions, chart **11** with mean response values shows that, while agreement with CD06 (assessment of others' pronunciation) increases constantly over proficiency levels, the confidence in self-assessment does not, especially in the middle of the field (A2-B1-B2), which includes about 75% of the responses:

Chart 11 Mean response values for questions CD05, CD06 divided by proficiency level

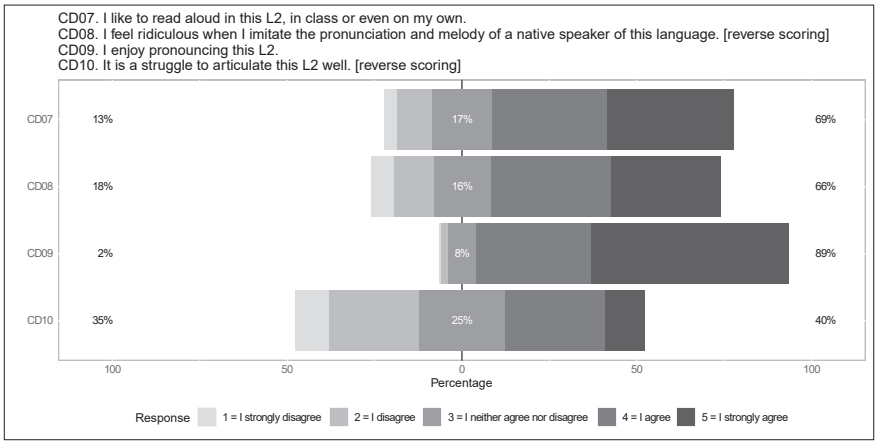


While the progression of CD06 is what one might expect, the answers to CD05 do not show a similar constant advancement. There seems to be some confusion in the central proficiency levels, which reminds us of the extremely high percentage of undecided respondents in CD05. In part this might be caused by the formulation of the question (see § 5).

4.4 Affective Factors

4.4.1 CD07-CD10. Enjoyment of Pronunciation

Chart 12 Responses to questions CD07-CD10



RQ 7 Knowing that emotions (positive and negative ones) are crucial for pronunciation, what are the pronunciation-related feelings of the informants?
Hypothesis 5: The pronunciation-related feelings of informants are mostly positive because otherwise they would not have chosen to enrol for a foreign language degree programme.

As can be seen from chart **12** of the four Likert items, the great majority of respondents (89%) generally enjoy speaking the L2 in question CD09, and at least 2/3 of the first-year students like to read aloud (CD07) and do not feel ridiculous when imitating a native speaker (CD08). This provides a clear confirmation of the hypothesis about prevailing positive feelings. In contrast with this rosy picture, the responses to CD10 are much more balanced: 40% deny that it is a struggle to articulate the L2, but 35% think the opposite. It seems that for part of the population interviewed, enjoyment of L2 pronunciation is compatible with making hard efforts to articulate it.

RQ 8 On which variables do the pronunciation-related feelings of the informants depend?
Hypothesis 6: The pronunciation-related feelings depend on level of proficiency (better command means more enjoyment) and language (in line with widespread stereotypes and universal tendencies).

As before, we computed a linear mixed-effects (LME) model of the relationship between general enjoyment of L2 pronunciation (computed as the means of scores CD07 to CD10) and a list of independent variables (as fixed effects): language, proficiency level, gender, first language, pluricultural experience, number of foreign languages studied, years of preceding foreign language study, motivational coefficient, while the variable 'student' was set as (intercept) random effect. The LME model produced three significant predictor variables: Language, CEFR_Level and the motivational coefficient. Performing a stepwise backward model selection, all three were significant at an α-level of 0.001. The estimates of the reduced model can be found in table **4**.

Table 4 Mixed model for general enjoyment of L2 pronunciation (CD07-CD10)

Predictors	Estimates	Confidence intervals	p
(Intercept)	3.27 ***	3.03 – 3.51	<0.001
Language [French]	-0.05	-0.21 – 0.10	0.511
Language [German]	-0.24 **	-0.40 – -0.08	0.003
Language [Portuguese]	0.44 *	0.05 – 0.83	0.029
Language [Russian]	0.16	-0.07 – 0.39	0.171
Language [Spanish]	0.31 ***	0.16 – 0.46	<0.001

Predictors	Estimates	Confidence intervals	p
Language [Swedish]	-0.35	-0.86 – 0.15	0.170
CEFR_Level [A2]	0.23	-0.02 – 0.48	0.070
CEFR_Level [B1]	0.38 ***	0.16 – 0.61	0.001
CEFR_Level [B2]	0.50 ***	0.27 – 0.72	<0.001
CEFR_Level [C1]	0.88 ***	0.62 – 1.14	<0.001
CEFR_Level [C2]	1.13 ***	0.62 – 1.64	<0.001
MotivCoefficient	0.09 ***	0.05 – 0.13	<0.001
N Student_ID	365		
Observations	624		

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Now we can answer RQ 8: the pronunciation-related feelings of informants depend on the target language, the proficiency level and the motivational coefficient. Thus, in line with Hypothesis 6, pronunciation enjoyment increases steadily with the overall command of the language, leading to an advantage for level C2 of more than 1 point on the Likert scale compared to level A1. Similarly, the target language seems to be a relevant predictor for pronunciation-related feelings: Spanish (***) and Portuguese (*) increase, German (**) and Swedish (n.s.) reduce pronunciation enjoyment (compared to English), while French (n.s.) and Russian (n.s.) remain in between. This result seems compatible with the idea of stereotypes and universal phonological preferences (see the discussion for details). Finally, the motivational coefficient turned out to be highly significant (***). Taking into account the range of this variable (from -4 to +6), we can conclude that enrolment motivation has a potential impact on the (averaged) answers CD07-CD10 of almost 1 point on the Likert scale (10 times the estimate of 0.09).

Exploring the question of enjoyment vs. effortlessness of pronunciation, we tested the idea that for some languages, usually considered to be languages with difficult pronunciation (like German or French), enjoyment (CD09) was rated high compared to ease of pronunciation (CD10), while for others (like Spanish or Portuguese) it was the opposite. For the arithmetical difference CD09-CD10 we thus expect higher values for the first, but lower values for the second group of languages (compared to English). Lower values are also expected for higher levels of proficiency. In a stepwise backward model selection only language and proficiency level proved to be significant predictors of the difference CD09-CD10, so we reduced the model to these to two variables **[tab. 5]**.

Table 5 Mixed model for the difference between enjoyment (CD09) and effortlessness (CD 10) in L2 pronunciation

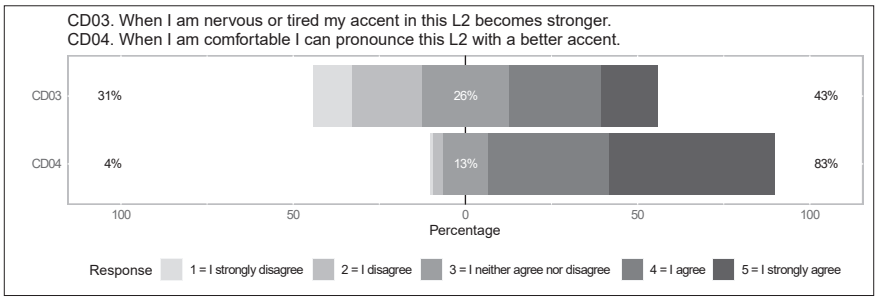
Predictors for the difference CD09-CD10	Estimates	Confidence intervals	p
(Intercept)	1.62 ***	1.20 – 2.04	<0.001
Language [French]	0.67 ***	0.39 – 0.96	<0.001
Language [German]	0.43 **	0.15 – 0.72	0.003
Language [Portuguese]	0.38	-0.33 – 1.08	0.294
Language [Russian]	0.44 *	0.03 – 0.85	0.035
Language [Spanish]	-0.30 *	-0.57 – -0.04	0.024
Language [Swedish]	1.45 **	0.55 – 2.36	0.002
CEFR_Level [A2]	-0.24	-0.68 – 0.20	0.284
CEFR_Level [B1]	-0.36	-0.76 – 0.04	0.080
CEFR_Level [B2]	-0.50 *	-0.90 – -0.09	0.016
CEFR_Level [C1]	-0.60 *	-1.06 – -0.14	0.011
CEFR_Level [C2]	-1.59 ***	-2.49 – -0.69	0.001
N Student_ID	366		
Observations	625		

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Swedish (**), French (***), Russian (*), and German (**) turned out to be languages with relatively high differences (compared to English) between enjoyment (CD09) and ease of pronunciation (CD10), while Spanish (*) reveals a smaller difference than English. Portuguese, contrary to the initial idea, is comparable to German, but the estimate is not significant. The proficiency levels prove to be in line with expectations, but only the levels from B1 to C2 reach significance.

4.4.2 CD03-CD04. Emotional Variability of Pronunciation

Chart 13 Responses to questions CD03, CD04



RQ 9 How do informants assess the influence of situational mood and feelings on their L2 pronunciation?

The bar chart of the responses to questions CD03 and CD04 **[chart 13]** shows an overwhelming majority (83%) who think that they pronounce better when feeling comfortable (CD04) and only 4% of respondents who feel that their mood does not impact pronunciation quality. When it comes to the negative impact of nervousness and fatigue, however, far fewer informants (43%) admit an influence, while many are undecided (26%) or disagree (31%).

RQ 10 On which variables do the importance of mood and feelings for L2 pronunciation depend?
Hypothesis 7: In the eyes of informants, the influence of moods and feelings on the quality of their L2 pronunciation decreases with greater (self-reported) proficiency.

To answer the question, we ran the usual linear mixed-effects (LME) model for the relationship between emotional variability of L2 pronunciation (computed as the means of scores CD03 and CD04) and a list of independent variables (as fixed effects): language, proficiency level, gender, first language, pluricultural experience, number of foreign languages studied, years of preceding foreign language study, motivational coefficient, while the variable 'student' was set as (intercept) random effect. The comprehensive LME model produced only some single significant predictor levels: Language [German] and CEFR_Level [C1]. Performing a stepwise backward model selection, only Language resulted significant at α-level 0.05. The estimates of the reduced model can be found in table **6**.

Table 6 Mixed model for self-rated emotional variability of L2 pronunciation (CD03, CD04)

Predictors	Estimates	Confidence intervals	p
(Intercept)	3.78 ***	3.69 – 3.87	<0.001
Language [French]	-0.04	-0.19 – 0.10	0.574
Language [German]	-0.23 **	-0.37 – -0.09	0.001
Language [Portuguese]	-0.34	-0.70 – 0.03	0.069
Language [Russian]	-0.13	-0.30 – 0.05	0.157
Language [Spanish]	0.01	-0.13 – 0.15	0.927
Language [Swedish]	0.09	-0.38 – 0.56	0.702
N Student_ID	366		
Observations	625		

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

First of all we must conclude that the self-reported emotional variability of L2 pronunciation, measured as the averaged answers to CD03 and CD04, does not depend on proficiency level. In other words, the null hypothesis linked to Hypothesis 7 cannot be rejected. Furthermore, taking into account the minimal impact of the language estimates and, above all, the absence of significance (with the exception of German), we must conclude that the language variable has no relevant impact on emotional variability of L2 pronunciation. Only German seems to predict a slightly lower emotional variability of L2 pronunciation.

Exploring the data further, we found a very low correlation between responses CD03 and CD04 (Kendell's tau = 0.11, p<0.01), leading to the idea that only one of the two items might depend on proficiency. Indeed, while there is no correlation between CD03 and the proficiency level (expressed as ordinal variable: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) (tau = 0.006, p = 0.85 n.s.), the answers to CD04 show a significant (although low) correlation with proficiency (tau = 0.16, p<0.001). Exceptionally (see § 4.1 above) we ran a linear mixed-effects model for a single Likert item. Running a comprehensive model with subsequent stepwise backward model selection, for CD03 no predictor turned out to be significant. Performing the same operation for CD04, both Language and CEFR_Level turned out to be highly significant (p<0.001). The optimised model gives the estimates shown in table 7.

Table 7 Mixed model for the influence of comfort on L2 pronunciation (CD04)

Predictors for CD04	Estimates	Confidence intervals	p
(Intercept)	3.58 ***	3.29 – 3.88	<0.001
CEFR_Level [A2]	0.18	-0.13 – 0.49	0.251
CEFR_Level [B1]	0.66 ***	0.38 – 0.94	<0.001
CEFR_Level [B2]	0.78 ***	0.50 – 1.07	<0.001
CEFR_Level [C1]	0.91 ***	0.59 – 1.23	<0.001
CEFR_Level [C2]	0.92 **	0.29 – 1.55	0.004
Language [French]	-0.08	-0.28 – 0.12	0.423
Language [German]	-0.25 *	-0.45 – -0.05	0.013
Language [Portuguese]	0.35	-0.13 – 0.84	0.156
Language [Russian]	0.36 *	0.07 – 0.64	0.014
Language [Spanish]	0.22 *	0.04 – 0.40	0.019
Language [Swedish]	0.34	-0.29 – 0.97	0.289
N Student_ID	366		
Observations	625		

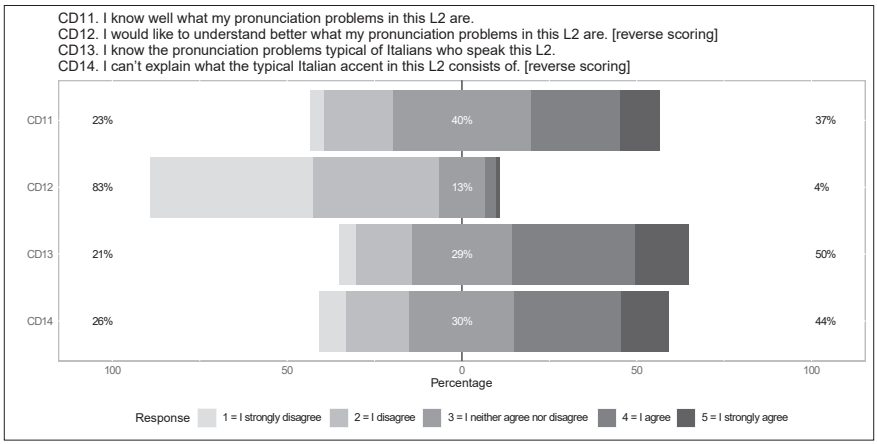
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Contrary to our expectations, with increasing proficiency level informants express a growing agreement with the idea that, when they feel comfortable, they can speak with a better accent. The approval of statement CD04 also prevails at low levels, but it increases with higher levels of self-reported proficiency. Furthermore, three languages exhibit a significant difference to English: for German, students are less convinced that being comfortable improves their L2 accent, while for Russian and Spanish they believe (more than in the case of English) that feeling comfortable entails a positive effect.

4.5 Cognitive Factors

4.5.1 CD11-CD14. Knowledge about Pronunciation

Chart 14 Responses to questions CD11-CD14



RQ 11 Are informants convinced that they understand their own specific L2 pronunciation problems and/or those of (other) Italians?

Looking at the bar chart for the relevant questions (see **chart 14**, leaving CD12 aside for now), informants appear to be relatively confident about their knowledge of L2 pronunciation problems, with only 21-26% giving negative answers and 37-44% expressing agreement with the three statements. But we should notice the very high proportion of "neither agree nor disagree" choices: about 30% for the pronunciation of other speakers (CD13-CD14) which is even higher (40%) when it comes to informants' own pronunciation (CD11). Considering the relatively low degrees of certainty and approval in CD11, not surprisingly almost all respondents (83%) want to know more about their pronunciation problems (with only 13% undecided and 4% not approving). But since we are in an educational context and interviewing students at the beginning of their degree course, it would be strange if respondents had not answered in this way. It is likely that even students who think they are well aware of their pronunciation problems would want to learn more about them.

RQ 12 On what does the self-reported L2 pronunciation knowledge depend?
Hypothesis 8: The self-reported L2 pronunciation knowledge depends on the declared proficiency level in that language.

To answer the question, we ran the usual linear mixed-effects (LME) model for the relationship between L2 pronunciation knowledge (computed as the means of scores CD11 to CD14) and a list of independent variables (as fixed effects): language, proficiency level, gender, first language, pluricultural experience, number of foreign languages studied, years of preceding foreign language study, motivational coefficient, while the variable 'student' was set as (intercept) random effect. In this comprehensive LME model most languages and proficiency levels, as well as Number_L2, turned out to be significant. Performing a stepwise backward model selection, Language and CEFR_Level are significant at α-level 0.001, the number of L2 at α-level 0.05. The estimates of the reduced model are shown in table **8**.

Table 8 Mixed model for the self-rated L2 pronunciation knowledge (CD11-CD14)

Predictors	Estimates	Confidence intervals	p
(Intercept)	2.39 ***	2.07 – 2.70	<0.001
Language [French]	-0.11	-0.26 – 0.04	0.136
Language [German]	-0.34 ***	-0.49 – -0.19	<0.001
Language [Portuguese]	-0.31	-0.68 – 0.06	0.101
Language [Russian]	-0.30 **	-0.51 – -0.08	0.007
Language [Spanish]	-0.18 *	-0.32 – -0.04	0.012
Language [Swedish]	-0.85 ***	-1.32 – -0.38	<0.001
CEFR_Level [A2]	0.26 *	0.03 – 0.50	0.027
CEFR_Level [B1]	0.35 **	0.14 – 0.56	0.001
CEFR_Level [B2]	0.32 **	0.11 – 0.54	0.003
CEFR_Level [C1]	0.67 ***	0.42 – 0.91	<0.001
CEFR_Level [C2]	1.05 ***	0.57 – 1.52	<0.001
Number_L2	0.08 **	0.02 – 0.15	0.010
N Student_ID	364		
Observations	622		

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

First of all, on the basis of the model's estimates, we can reject the null hypothesis related to Hypothesis 8 and confirm that the self-reported L2 pronunciation knowledge depends on the declared proficiency level in that language in the expected way, i.e., a higher CEFR level means more confidence in one's own knowledge. All levels are significant compared to A1, but a closer look reveals a sort of stasis

between A2 and B2.[9] Secondly, compared to English, the model suggests lower ratings for L2 pronunciation knowledge for all other languages, with Swedish (-0.85***), German (-0.34***), Russian (-0.30**) and Spanish (-0.18*) being significant.

RQ 13 Are informants less confident about awareness of their own pronunciation deficits compared to that of other speakers?
Hypothesis 9: Informants believe they have less awareness of their own L2 pronunciation deficits compared to what they believe they know about the pronunciation problems of other speakers.

To answer the question, we first compare the averaged answers CD11-CD12 (related to informants' own pronunciation) to the average scores of CD13-CD14 (which refer to other Italian speakers). The mean of all scores related to the learners' pronunciation is 2.48, that of other speakers 3.32. Is this difference significant? Kendell's rank correlation for the two variables is tau = 0.26 ($Z = 8.23$, $p<0.001$), which means that there is a medium-low, but significant correlation, while the Wilcoxon test ($V = 9889$, $p<0.001$) proves that the distributions of the two answers are significantly different. This goes in the direction of confirming Hypothesis 9. However, it could be objected that the very special distribution of answers to CD12 (see above) might distort the results. So, in a second step, we compare the results of the very similar questions CD11 (mean score 3.21) and CD13 (mean score 3.40). The correlation coefficient is only slightly higher with tau = 0.33 ($Z = 9.94$, $p<0.001$), while the Wilcoxon test ($V = 24559$, $p<0.001$) proves that there is a significant difference in answer distribution, as one can also observe comparing the two histograms in charts **15-16**. This means we can confirm the hypothesis that the participants in this survey believe their knowledge about their own pronunciation problems is less developed than their knowledge about problems of other Italian speakers.

9 Also leaving out CD12 (which behaves differently from the other questions) and modelling the average scores of CD11, CD13 and CD14 only, the proficiency estimates continue to reveal a stagnation: A2 0.31*, B1 0.41**, B2 0.35**.

Chart 15 Distribution of responses for question CD11

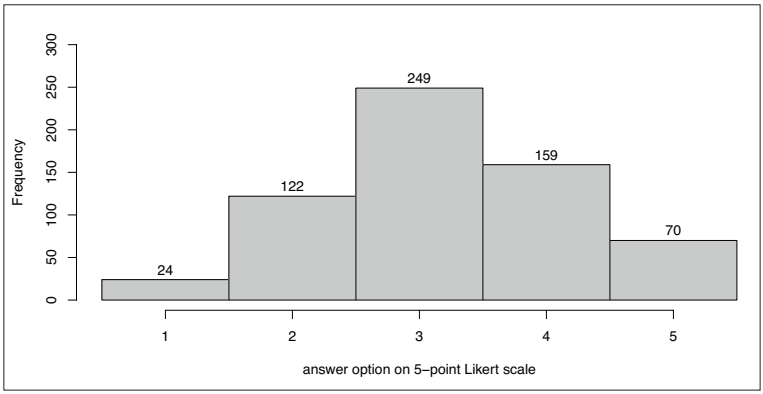
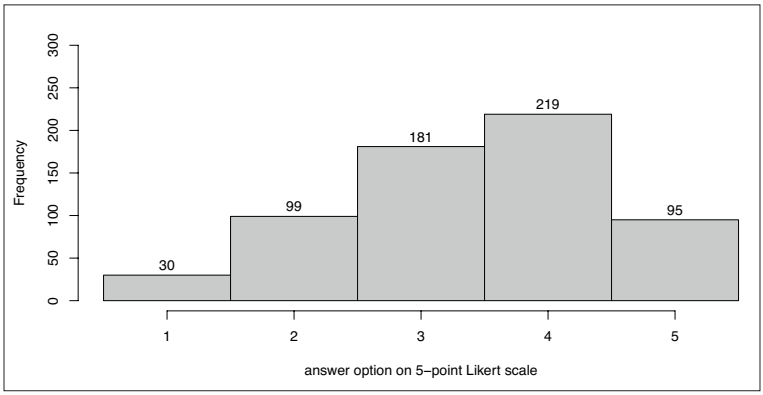


Chart 16 Distribution of responses for question CD13



5 Discussion

5.1 Perception and Evaluation

As previous research has noticed, foreign language students are able to assess other speakers' pronunciation, without differing much from native speakers' judgements (Munro, Derwing, Morton 2006; Wilkerson 2010; Derwing, Munro 2013; Mitterer, Eger, Reinisch 2020). Self-evaluation, on the contrary, is a different story: learners' judgments about the quality of their own pronunciation are not quite so reliable (Foote 2010; Lappin-Fortin, Rye 2014; Trofimovich et al. 2016; Mitterer, Eger, Reinisch 2020; Dlaska, Krekeler 2008). If the preceding studies effectively test the evaluative capacities of the informants with real samples, in the present study the informants were simply

questioned about the beliefs they had regarding the quality of their pronunciation and their abilities as evaluators of their own and others' pronunciation. Results show that, in some way, beliefs interestingly replicate real performances.

In line with other surveys (Hammond 1990; Steed, Delicado Cantero 2018; Muñoz García, Contreras Roa 2019), self-evaluations of pronunciation quality are generally positive in our study, clearly above the average value of the rating scale, but with a third of the informants (34%) undecided. Ratings are somewhat lower and indecision is still higher (40%) when it comes to accentedness: a result comparable to that of Waniek-Klimczak, Rojczyk and Porzuczek (2015) who collected opinions about the absence of Polish accent in English. Our results depict informants who, on average, are only relatively confident when the evaluation refers to themselves. The high degree of indecision can be interpreted as students' awareness of real problems in self-evaluation detected in other studies. Even the positive self-ratings might partly be due to over-estimation of one's own performance (cf. Lappin-Fortin, Rye 2014; Mitterer, Eger, Reinisch 2020).

The level of self-reported general L2 proficiency is shown to be a fundamental predictor of self-ratings, a result which we expected (Hypothesis 1), although the small amount of previous research (referring to English as target language) is contradictory. While Waniek-Klimczak, Porzuczek and Rojczyk found a "strong correlation between self-rated proficiency and pronunciation" (2013, 7), no significant difference in foreign accent self-ratings between BA and MA students emerged in the same population (Waniek-Klimczak, Rojczyk, Porzuczek 2015, 29). Also Cieślicka and Rojczyk (2017, 75-6) did not find any significant differences in pronunciation self-ratings between Polish low (B1-B2) and high (C1-C2) proficiency speakers of English.

Another significant predictor is motivation for enrolment, which is in line with previous research. Deci and Ryan (1985, 257), after reviewing a number of experimental studies on the importance of intrinsic motivation in general academic learning, stated that "one can reasonably conclude that intrinsic motivation is associated with improved learning". Examining the interaction between motivation and achievement specifically in pronunciation learning, Smit (2002, 100) found that for her informants, advanced ESL students, chances of success were increased by "strongly felt feelings of inner motivation". Guinn-Collins (2011, 50), investigating English-speaking learners of Japanese, by means of a test of accentedness, found a significant correlation between intrinsic motivation towards accomplishment and a highly proficient accent. Informants in the present study who were intrinsically motivated significantly tend to attribute better quality to their own pronunciation. Given that real performance is not being examined in this case, the hypothesis that intrinsic or inward motivations may simply foster optimism and confidence in the informants

cannot be ruled out. Besides, the directionality of the relationship remains to be tested: longitudinal studies could possibly shed light on what comes first, intrinsic motivation or positive self-evaluation.

If the level of self-attributed proficiency and the nature of motivation were likely predictors, from our data other predictors emerge which are, as far as we know, unforeseen in the literature. In the first place, we observe that certain languages have significantly lower ratings than English. In particular, this is the case of German and Swedish. The lack of studies which, like the present one, examine different languages in a comparative way, complicates the interpretation of data.[10] The reasons that penalise the pronunciation self-ratings could be strictly linguistic – that is, a greater objective difficulty of the phonetic-phonological system of the target language in relation to the L1 of the bulk of the informants, Italian – an aspect which will be dealt with later on – or of a sociolinguistic nature, for example the perception of greater demands on the part of teachers or the community of speakers of that language. Secondly, aspects of the linguistic biography of the informants have a significant impact on judgments: students whose first language is neither Italian nor one of its dialects, and who learnt Italian only later on, tend to evaluate themselves significantly more positively than the rest of their peers. In some way, this late bilingualism is reflected in a more positive view of one's own pronunciation. Assuming that bilingualism may increase phonetic skills in successively acquired languages, this more positive view would therefore be based on factual foundations. The fact that the number of languages previously studied at school also proved to be reflected in a higher confidence in one's own pronunciation, points in the same direction.

Two dimensions are intertwined in our questionnaire on evaluation of pronunciation: greater or lesser quality, greater or lesser intensity of the foreign accent. Being aware of a plethora of studies that report students' commitment to the goal of native-like pronunciation (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck 1997; Nowacka 2012; Waniek-Klimczak, Porzuczek, Rojczyk 2013; Waniek-Klimczak, Rojczyk, Porzuczek 2015; Brabcová, Skarnitzl 2018; Muñoz García, Contreras Roa 2019; Dao 2018[11]), we expected that our informants would *not* distinguish between a 'good pronunciation' and one without a heavy foreign accent. The results, however, show that the informants do make a difference between the two

10 Only Muñoz García and Contreras Roa (2019), who interviewed French students, report higher L2 pronunciation self-evaluations for English (M = 6.89) than for Spanish (M = 5.90) on a scale from 1 to 10.

11 Some other studies have noticed that the general aim of native pronunciation is not as undisputed as it seems, e.g., Hammond, who found that, while 83% of his Spanish-speaking informants in Miami believed that a Spanish accent in English was a negative factor, only 20% felt that a foreign accent "was detrimental if individuals could otherwise express themselves in a second language" (1990, 146).

phenomena. The great interest that in previous studies learners systematically manifested towards obtaining a native-like pronunciation does not have to correspond to a real ambition to obtain such a level. As an informant from our study points out in a free-standing comment: "I want to clarify that I believe it is possible to have a good pronunciation even without losing the foreign accent and that these two elements (pronunciation and accent) do not necessarily need to be analysed in relation to each other".[12] The native-like pronunciation should therefore be interpreted perhaps not so much as a real goal but merely as an ideal which students naturally wish to strive for. An ideal that can even be imprecise, since, as Scales et al. (2006) found, sometimes learners who show a preference for the native accent are not able to recognise it effectively between different speech samples, a fact they attributed to the idealised conception of what the native accent aspired to actually sounded like. If, as Baran-Łucarz (2011) found, the self-attributed competence, if not satisfactory, can function as a source – even more important than actual competence – of linguistic anxiety, the compatibility between the presence of a foreign accent and a reasonably good pronunciation that our informants make compatible seems like good news. The elimination of foreign accent, as Derwing and Munro (2009) have pointed out, is not a realistic goal for the average student. Moyer (1999) reported that the pronunciation accuracy of native English speakers of German was rated higher for learners who had higher motivation to pursue a native-like quality of pronunciation: we should probably infer that it is not an ingenuous craving that is pushing the learners forward, but the ambition to improve.

The present study sought to measure the degree of confidence of the informants when carrying out evaluations. Again, as in the previous question, a specular panorama emerges to that produced by those studies which, unlike ours, attempt to measure the real accuracy of the judgments: in both cases a clear gap unfolds between evaluation and self-evaluation, thus confirming Hypothesis 4: informants are much more confident in their ability to assess the pronunciation of other learners than their own performance. As pointed out in the results section (§ 4), there is not even a modest significant correlation between the two series of answers. The reason might be, as could be seen, that while the self-rated evaluation of others increases steadily with the (self-declared) proficiency level, self-evaluation ability does not, especially between the most crowded intermediate levels B1 and B2.

It should be noted, in any case, that the formulation of the questions in the questionnaire may have played a non-negligible role in

12 Italian original: "Voglio precisare che ritengo si possa avere una buona pronuncia anche senza perdere l'accento straniero e che sono due elementi (pronuncia e accento) che non necessariamente vanno analizzati in rapporto tra loro" (Stud1191).

the results. While in one case (CD06) the question is about the ability to discern *binarily* between good and bad *pronunciations* (of others), in the other case (CD05) informants are asked about the ability to *grade* the strength of *foreign accent* present in their own pronunciation. Bearing in mind the fact that our informants tend to distinguish conceptually between a good pronunciation and a pronunciation devoid of foreign accent, further explanations can be hypothesised. First, that the evaluation of the degree of foreign accent can be more difficult than the evaluation of the overall quality of the pronunciation. Given that the foreign accent can be conceived as "a deviation from the generally accepted norm of pronunciation of a language that is reminiscent of another language, i.e. the speaker's native language" (Jilka 2000, 9) there emerges the paradox that a foreign language student would have to know perfectly well the native norms that he is learning at that moment, to make such an assessment. However, taking into account the high rate of undecided (34%) in CD01, which refers to overall pronunciation quality, it seems clear that the divergent results of CD05 and CD06 cannot be fully explained by the wording of the questions. Essentially, informants are unsure about self-evaluation of L2 pronunciation as illustrated by the extremely high percentage (31-40%) of undecided in all three related questions (CD01, CD02, CD05).

The global self-perceived ability to evaluate L2 pronunciation improves as the level of proficiency declared by the informants increases, except between B1 and B2, which is – as already pointed out – a result of a step backwards in presumed self-evaluation ability, while the declared ability to evaluate others steadily increases. This result is in line with studies that found a correlation between proficiency and (experimentally tested) capability of native/non-native speech detection (Flege 1988; Wilkerson 2010). Also the different correlations between L2 speakers' and native speakers' evaluations of accentedness – 0.60-0.73 for "advanced ESL speakers" (Munro, Derwing, Morton 2006, 116, 120) vs. 0.88 for "high proficiency L2 speakers" (Derwing, Munro 2013, 169, 171) – could be interpreted as an experimental counterpart.

The self-perceived ability to evaluate one's own and others' pronunciation may also be conditioned by the language of study: the results indicate a lower degree of confidence (compared to English) for French, German and Russian. Except for Portuguese (with an insignificant positive estimate), all other languages turn out to have negative values, i.e., English is the language in which our informants believe they are best at evaluating L2 pronunciation. This is not surprising as students of English usually have the most opportunities to listen to various accents, including native ones.

Again, certain aspects of the linguistic biography of the speakers can play a relevant role. Informants with a L1 other than Italian are more confident in their evaluative abilities. This confidence grows also as the

number of L2s studied at school increases. This is plausible because the more plurilingual the informants are (in a more or less broad sense for the two predictors), and thus the greater their experience with different phonological systems, the better might be their ability to grasp subtle differences in pronunciation. The occasional incidence of predictors linked to the biolinguistic profile of the students in the results of our questionnaire points to the convenience of constructing and making operational in future studies a solid variable which, as the data and intuition seem to tell us, should be of capital importance. Munro, Derwing and Morton already indicated this direction in 2006, when they found that, in understanding and evaluating foreign-accented speech, listeners were affected not only by the properties of the speech itself but also by their own linguistic backgrounds and by their experience with different linguistic varieties. Moreover, Dewaele (2010, 80) found a highly significant effect of the number of languages known on self-perceived competence in various languages, and that values for self-perceived competence increased gradually from bilinguals to trilinguals and continued to rise from quadrilinguals to pentalinguals.

5.2 Cognitive Factors

Even if the role of declarative knowledge for L2 pronunciation is far from clear, it has been shown that L2 learners often cannot identify their pronunciation weaknesses and deficits (Derwing, Rossiter 2002; Dlaska, Krekeler 2008). Our informants seem to be aware of such deficits, even if 37% are quite confident that they know their pronunciation problems. But adding disagreeing and undecided responses, it turns out that almost two thirds are not sure about their difficulties. So, unsurprisingly, almost all informants (83%) want to learn more about their pronunciation deficits. This is very promising for language teaching, but it should be remembered that a merely theoretical teaching input would fail to meet the learners' needs. Rather it is necessary to give individual feedback to raise pronunciation awareness and to improve pronunciation (cf. Mitterer, Eger, Reinisch 2020, 10). The research into the effectiveness of pronunciation teaching (Ramírez Verdugo 2006; Chang 2006; Couper 2011; Kissling 2013; 2014; Inceoglu 2021) suggests that the most promising approaches are: a) a combination of metalinguistic and practical teaching, b) a focus on qualitative language awareness, i.e., a perception of the communicative relevance of certain features.

When it comes to the pronunciation problems of other L2 speakers, informants appear to be more confident of their knowledge (50%), but many (29%) are undecided and, when faced with the task to explain these problems (CD14), the percentage of confident respondents drops to 44%. This is still more than for the knowledge of personal pronunciation problems, but it seems reasonable: informants have some knowl-

edge of the typical problems of speakers of a certain L1 who face learning a L2. Thus, when asked about the pronunciation problems of other Italian L2 speakers, they can imagine people who have a strong accent and serious problems with segmentals. It is a matter of 'encyclopaedic' knowledge, acquired at school, which is enriched by direct experience. In contrast, learners do not have a 'background' knowledge about their own specific problems. Thus a student with good oral competence in a certain language may be aware of typical problems and, at the same time, may not be able to determine to what extent she personally participates in such problems; in other cases, the student may have overcome some typical problems, but be aware of having others (e.g., in the field of prosody), which perhaps she only intuits, and about which she does not have any kind of encyclopaedic knowledge. In any case, there is a significant difference in the distribution of responses between questions related to the person's own problems vs. the problems of others, so Hypothesis 9 is confirmed. This seems plausible in the light of the answers to questions CD05 and CD06 (see above) and of experimental studies about self and others' pronunciation evaluation: self-evaluation is confirmed as being more difficult.

Self-reported L2 pronunciation knowledge above all depends (as claimed in Hypothesis 8, thus confirmed) on the declared proficiency level in that language; however, it does not increase steadily, but there is an evident stagnation between levels A2 and B2. As Yule, Damico and Hoffman (1987) recalled, the ability to analyse and evaluate the progress of learners evolves in an oscillating way, but it is also possible to venture some suppositions that could help explain this stagnation. As a requirement to start their university degree in languages, students majoring in English must provide evidence of a minimum level of B2. Consequently, it is feasible to imagine that, not wanting to declare in our questionnaire a level lower than the required one, some informants might have overestimated their real proficiency. On the other hand, at the upper end of the scale, we find students who claim to possess a C1 or even a C2 in English, which invites us to think that, in addition to their learning experience in the pre-university school context – where the normal exit level of proficiency is significantly lower – they have other relevant biographical experiences. It must be borne in mind that English is the most widely chosen language among our informants (44% of the responses analysed in the present study refer to English). Thus, a combination of biased self-declared proficiency level and truthful answers to the questions of Sections C and D by students of English could explain the stagnation observed in self-reported L2 pronunciation evaluation (CD05-CD06) and knowledge (CD11-CD14).

Finally, the self-reported L2 pronunciation knowledge also depends on the number of languages studied at school and on the target language. Compared to English, our respondents indicate lower

knowledge self-ratings for all other languages, with significant lower estimates for German, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish. This might be explained by the fact that in Italian schools English is taught for more years than every other foreign language and that pronunciation is an integral and important part of English teaching (materials) as opposed to other languages, e.g., German. Moreover, English pronounced by other Italian speakers can probably be encountered (and evaluated) much more easily than any other foreign language.

5.3 Affective Factors

Together with the perceptual and cognitive dimension, and closely related to these, our study examined the affective dimension of L2 pronunciation. Awareness of the influence of negative emotions, and especially anxiety, in the language learning process has generated a large volume of literature in the specific field of pronunciation. From our study emerges the figure of a student who, despite being aware of the difficulty involved in correctly articulating the L2 (only 35% deny the effort needed for articulation), can at the same time take pleasure in speaking (89%). A clear majority of respondents also like to read aloud (69%) and do not feel ridiculous when imitating native speakers (66%). This positive result was expected (Hypothesis 5) since the informants have freely chosen a degree course in foreign languages. Moreover, in line with our claim (Hypothesis 6), as the level of declared proficiency of the students increases, the enjoyment derived from pronunciation does as well. It is a hopeful outlook. The limitations in self-assessment and self-awareness and awareness of making mistakes are not an obstacle to experimenting with positive feelings. As one informant writes: "during my individual study, I regret not knowing where I make mistakes when I read aloud, although I really love it".[13]

On the one hand, it should be remembered that positive emotion does not simply transmute into pleasant feelings but it also increases the learner's ability to notice things in the classroom environment and strengthen their awareness of language input, which successively facilitates the assimilation of the foreign language (MacIntyre, Gregersen 2012). On the other hand, as Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) demonstrated, enjoyment and anxiety, the main positive and negative affective constructs, are two independent dimensions, and not the ends of a continuum. In their study, just as in ours, positive emotions had a greater impact. Translating the principles of Positive

13 Italian original: "nello studio individuale mi dispiace non sapere dove sbaglio quando leggo a voce alta, nonostante mi piaccia da morire" (Stud0025).

Psychology, which offers a more holistic view on human behaviour, to language learning, Dewaele et al. (2018) propose moving away from the overwhelming focus on negative emotions and addressing to a greater extent positive emotions, which are conceptualised in labels such as "foreign language enjoyment" (FLE) (Dewaele, MacIntyre 2014; 2016; Dewaele et al. 2016). Ultimately, promoting positive emotions could be more profitable than preventing negative emotions. In relation to the latter, Baran-Łucarz (2014) conceptualised pronunciation anxiety as composed of four components: fear of negative evaluation, self-assessment and perceived self-efficacy, beliefs about pronunciation of a specific L2, and pronunciation self-image. The latter, defined as "[b]eliefs one holds about personal appearance – about the way one looks and sounds when speaking an FL […]" (Baran-Łucarz 2014, 453), can be associated to the questionnaire statement CD08 ("I feel ridiculous when I imitate the pronunciation and melody of a native speaker of this L2"). A small, but certainly not negligible, part of our informants (18%) agreed with this statement, and another minority (13%) explicitly stated that they did not like reading aloud, in class or even on their own. As we can see from certain comments, some informants associate "imitation" with connotative nuances such as artificial, simulated, not real; that is, they understand "imitate" as "mimic" or "counterfeit". One student noted: "In an attempt to mimic the pronunciation of a native speaker, my accent sounds 'fake' to me, as if I were trying too hard to replicate the sound",[14] while another affirmed: "When I try to speak alone or read aloud alone I seem to have a decent pronunciation, when I read in front of others I feel like I'm fake if I try to imitate the foreign accent".[15] These comments highlight that pronunciation self-image problems: a) are not necessarily linked to poor L2 pronunciation, and b) can emerge in combination with the fear of negative evaluation, which is another of Baran-Lucarz's (2014) pronunciation anxiety components. Indeed, in an average classroom environment in Italy, students who display a very accurate pronunciation, close to the standard that serves as an ideal model, might be perceived by their peers as pretentious individuals, who are trying to show off, and by the same token belittle their own attempts at pronouncing the L2. It ought to be noted, in any case, that some of the respondents are not comfortable with L2 pronunciation, which is recognised as the most anxiety-provoking aspect of spoken language performance (Baran-Lukarz 2013).

14 Italian original: "Nel tentativo di imitare la pronuncia di un madrelingua, il mio accento mi suona 'finto', come se mi stessi sforzando troppo al fine di replicare il suono" (Stud1126).

15 Italian original: "Quando provo a parlare da sola o leggere ad alta voce da sola mi sembra di avere una pronuncia decente, quando leggo davanti agli altri mi sembra di essere finta se provo ad imitare l'accento straniero" (Stud1181).

In addition to proficiency, student motivation is another good predictor of positive pronunciation-related feelings: as is foreseeable, the more intrinsic the motivations of the informant, the healthier the affective relationship with the pronunciation learning process. This intrinsic motivation rooted in the student's desire to acquire the language thus correlates positively, both with the proficiency achieved (Pae 2008) and with the positive emotions that can drive learning forward, as emerges from our results.

Interestingly, the target language arises once again as predictor when measuring affective aspects (as claimed in Hypothesis 6). Compared to English, feelings are more positive for Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian, but more negative for German and Swedish (with no consistent result for French). The question that comes up spontaneously is whether the recurrence of German and Swedish (the latter without statistical significance however) should be attributed simply to a greater objective difficulty of these languages, due to the phonological distance that separates them from the main L1 of the study, Italian, or if a corpus of beliefs and opinions, of general linguistic attitudes and of attitudes specifically related to pronunciation, may be conditioning the affective attitudes of the informants who choose these languages. The study by Reiterer et al. (2020) concluded that, although sound preferences in languages were influenced by societal and individual cognitive factors, it could be noted that universal phonetic factors exerted an important influence. Some phonetic universals – systematic patterns of speech sounds that occur in most natural languages (such as particular segments and segmental sequences, the ratio of vowels to consonants, or characteristics of syllabic structure) – could be perceived as more pleasant to the human ear, so languages that exhibit more universal patterns are more likely to be liked than others. Reiterer et al. (2020) observed that Romance languages tended to sound, to the ears of informants, as more erotic, sweet, soft and melodious than Slavic or Germanic languages, such as German and Swedish. In this respect, it would be useful to establish the phonological distance between languages, in the line of Eden's work (2018), which, however, does not take Italian into account. For the second hypothesis (beliefs and opinions related to the target language pronunciation), it would be necessary to develop an investigation that combines the data of our questionnaire with subsequent surveys.

To conclude, some remarks about the emotional variability of pronunciation examined by our questionnaire. The informants consider their performance more likely to get better when it takes place in pleasant contexts rather than to worsen in situations of fatigue or nervousness. A similar agreement related to negative feelings was found in Derwing and Rossiter (2002, 161), where 40% of respondents reported an accent change when they were angry vs. 60% when excited or nervous. Contrary to what we expected (Hypothesis 7), the

increase in the level of self-declared competence does not lead to students considering their own performance less exposed to the influence of these situational affective factors. On the contrary, informants who have higher levels of general competence seem more aware of the gap that exists between potential phonic competence and actual performance and especially of the facilitating role of a pleasant and favourable context for the learner.

6 Conclusion

The present study has provided useful insights into identifying the beliefs of university students of foreign languages in Italy. The high number of informants and the variety of L2's studied by the participants confer robustness to an investigation whose main results, limitations, didactic implications and possible future developments are detailed below.

6.1 Key Findings

Our study offers an attempt at gathering quantitative data to provide a more detailed understanding of self-assessment and self-awareness in the field of L2 pronunciation learning. If the experimental studies indicated a substantial difference between the evaluation of samples of one's own pronunciation and that of others, our study shows that such a difference is also manifested in the perception of the learners. The greater effective difficulty in evaluating one's own oral discourse is mirrored in our data, so that, although as proficiency increases the values do actually improve, informants are unsure about their ability to calibrate their degree of phonetic acquisition as well as to diagnose the specific difficulties that stand in the way of their goal of native-like pronunciation, an objective that we must understand relatively dissociated from the total absence of a foreign accent. Contrary to the discrepancies that have emerged in the bibliography between the attitudes of teachers and students (Huensch 2019), our results show a student population who, despite taking a native-like accent as an ideal, in practice believe that the presence of a foreign accent is not an obstacle to having good pronunciation, therefore aligning with the beliefs of language teachers. In short, we should not propose solutions to a problem that, for the average Italian university student, the specific profile of our study, does not exist. In the same way, we did not find that the participants suffered particularly from the effects of linguistic anxiety, because from the results it emerges that, although the students are aware of the difficulties of learning pronunciation in L2 and of the toll to pay in emotional terms, positive emotions exerted a greater global influence. This fact is not surprising if we consid-

er that our informants have freely chosen to study languages at university. In this sense, it should be added that intrinsically motivated students, compared to those with more extrinsic motivations, tend to regard their ability to evaluate learning more optimistically. General optimism must, in any case, be modulated according to the specific language of study. Interestingly, some languages, such as German or Swedish have functioned as negatively significant variables in questions related to the assessment of the quality of pronunciation itself, the estimated ability to assess pronunciation, or the ability to detect the specific problems which penalise L2 pronunciation.

6.2 Study Limitations

Despite the numerical strength of the data – the product of a detailed and large-scale survey, which also reports a number of interesting free-standing comments – it is necessary to raise certain methodological reservations about the research. In the first place, the formulation of the questions in the questionnaire cannot completely escape the effects of the 'negativity bias'. The very polarity of the items may have had an impact, and in practice "it may be more difficult to endorse a negative question with an agreement than to answer 'no' to the equivalent positive question" (Holleman et al. 2016, 3). Negativity can be explicit (*no*, *nobody*) or implicit (*forbid*, *restrict*) and associated to a word that "sounds harder and may therefore be more difficult to endorse" (3). In our case, for example, informants could have had more difficulty to express agreement with 'negative' statements like CD03 ("When I am nervous or tired my accent in this L2 becomes stronger") than with the positively worded CD04 ("When I am comfortable, I can pronounce this L2 with a better accent"). In future studies this aspect should be considered carefully.

Regarding statistical aspects, the association of the most common L2 among the informants, English, as the intercept value, implies that the significance of individual languages in some sections must always be interpreted in relation to English. The possibility in future studies of subdividing the languages to articulate the comparison around variables such as Germanic vs. Romance could provide the data that our study has not been able to supply. Another drawback concerns statistical modelling: the biographical predictors Number_L2 and motivation (MotivCoefficient) sometimes (CD01-02) become significant only after a stepwise model selection, which is a controversial methodology (cf. Winter 2020, 276-7). These results, therefore, should be considered as provisional insights and starting point for successive research rather than ultimate outcomes.

The authors' intuition led to hypothesise the influence of the composite variable 'pluricultural status' on the responses of the question-

naire. If, on the one hand, the variable, as it was conceived, has not been significant, we do observe the recurrence of significant values for simple variables. Thus, not having Italian as an L1 is associated with a more positive self-evaluation of competence, and the number of previously learned languages has a positive impact on confidence in one's own pronunciation. Hence, when the composite variable is not a significant predictor, but the simple variables seem to have a systematic impact on answer behaviour, we may presume that a better articulation of cultural status may lead to results along the lines of those found by Dewaele and McCloskey (2015), that is, to a significant reflection of these biolinguistic traits in the beliefs and attitudes of the informants.

6.3 Pedagogical Implications

To be aware of the attitudes of students, which play a fundamental role in learning the pronunciation of a certain L2, has implications for the organisation of teaching. The results of the present study suggest the convenience of actively intervening to correct the obvious deficits that the informants show when evaluating their oral production and identifying the critical aspects which penalise them. To the extent permitted by the usual time constraints, abundant external and personalised feedback should be provided: if, on the one hand, students have a certain amount of encyclopaedic information, which allows them to identify common difficulties among their peers, they lack a solid self-awareness that can guide them in their progress. Teaching which targets this lacuna would presumably be well received: teachers should be gratified to know that the informants may have gaps, but are at least aware of having them, and are willing to correct them. In addition, informants would have an important advantage: the emphasis on positive emotions (enjoyment) and its benefits, in terms of the ability to notice things in the classroom, to perceive gaps, to strengthen awareness and, ultimately, to learn. If the action of teachers has traditionally prioritised the prevention of potentially critical affective aspects, our data invites them to reinforce the pleasurable aspects of their learners' experience, including that of students who do not seem to enjoy speaking the L2.

Ultimately, our intuitions as teachers about the attitudes of foreign language students can be affected by the results of studies such as this one. We ought to pursue a greater accuracy in the description of this set of perceptual, cognitive, and affective mental representations in the groups with which we work in the classroom – which requires paying adequate attention to group variables, such as the specific language studied, as well as to individual variables, such as the biolinguistic profile. A more complete knowledge can lead to more focused teaching of pronunciation.

Appendix
Original questions of Section C/D of the questionnaire

Autovalutazione della pronuncia

CD01. Ho una pronuncia buona nella lingua A/B.

CD02. Ho un forte accento straniero nella lingua A/B.

Variabilità della propria pronuncia

CD03. Quando sono nervoso o stanco il mio accento nella lingua A/B diventa più forte.

CD04. Quando sono a mio agio riesco a parlare la lingua A/B con un accento migliore.

Capacità di giudicare un accento straniero

CD05. Non capisco quanto è forte il mio accento straniero nella lingua A/B.

CD06. Ascoltando gli altri riesco a distinguere una buona pronuncia nella lingua A/B da una scadente.

Aspetti affettivi della pronuncia

CD07. Mi piace leggere ad alta voce nella lingua A/B, in classe o anche per conto mio.

CD08. Mi sento ridicolo/a quando imito la pronuncia e melodia di un madrelingua della lingua A/B.

CD09. Provo piacere a pronunciare la lingua A/B.

CD10. È una fatica articolare bene la lingua A/B.

Sapere sulla pronuncia

CD11. So bene quali sono i miei problemi di pronuncia della lingua A/B.

CD12. Vorrei capire meglio quali sono i miei problemi di pronuncia nella lingua A/B.

CD13. Conosco i problemi di pronuncia tipici degli italiani che parlano la lingua A/B.

CD14. Non saprei spiegare in cosa consiste il tipico accento italiano nella lingua A/B.

Domanda finale aperta

CD15. Vuoi dirci qualcos'altro sul tuo accento nella lingua A/B, sulle particolari difficoltà a pronunciare la lingua A/B, su come ti senti a pronunciarla oppure vuoi lasciare un commento sulle domande di questa sezione?

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Accents and Pronunciation
Attitudes of Italian University Students of Languages
edited by David Newbold and Peter Paschke

ELF 'Awareness': Student Attitudes Towards Accents in a Context of English as an International Language

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Abstract The term 'ELF awareness' has gained currency in recent years to refer to teaching and learning contexts in which the ability to communicate in an international environment, between non native speakers, is recognised as a desired outcome of the course. In this chapter we present the results of a survey administered to incoming undergraduate students of languages at Ca' Foscari University of Venice to determine their attitudes towards non-native accents when English is used in an international context. I go on to compare the results of the same survey administered to students in two MA courses, in English language and literature, and in International Relations, to determine whether MA students are more 'ELF aware' than undergraduates, and whether students of International Relations have a more pragmatic, instrumentally motivated approach to ELF than their peers who are specialising in English language and literature. The findings lead to a reflection on the usefulness of an 'ELF aware approach' in English language courses in higher education in Italy and Europe.

Keywords Accent. Pronunciation. English Lingua Franca. Undergraduate. MA.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

SAIL 23
e-ISSN 2610-9557 | ISSN 2610-9549
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-628-2 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-629-9

Peer review | Open access
Submitted 2022-03-23 | Accepted 2022-05-03 | Published 2022-08-03

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-628-2/004

1 'ELF Awareness'. A New Perspective for University Students Learning and Using English?

The research project reported in this chapter is premised on the notion of 'ELF awareness', a term popularised by Sifakis (2014) and Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015) in which 'awareness' refers to an understanding of the strategies employed by successful users of English in international communication, or ELF: English as a Lingua Franca. Firstly, however, the notion of ELF itself needs clarification. In this chapter, I take it to refer to interaction between speakers, neither or none of whom have English as their first or native language.[1] With the unprecedented rise of ELF in recent years, and the corresponding increase in the number of English speakers – Crystal (2008) puts this at two billion – his claim that non-native speaker (NNS) interactions in English outnumber native-speaker (NS) interactions by three to one (Crystal 2004, 69) seems more than ever plausible.

This, in turn, has consequences for teachers and learners of English. Two decades of ELF research have shown that a variety of strategies, such as accommodation and linguistic creativity, are regularly employed in ELF interaction; that the promotion of intelligibility rather than personal identity through features of pronunciation is crucial; that proactive collaboration between listener and speaker is fundamental to communication; and that in all of these aspects of ELF interaction pragmatics and intercultural awareness are likely to have an important role. The norms of NS English, are replaced by the fluid but functional norms of ELF, driven by the need for intelligibility, and observable in its syntax, lexis and pronunciation. The quandary for teachers of English begins with the recognition of these fluid norms: should examples of non-(native-speaker) standard language be stigmatised as errors, or seen within a wider context of ELF strategies (Newbold 2017)?

This is a real dilemma for teachers. Research into teacher attitudes has consistently shown awareness of the need for learners to be exposed to the English of international interaction, as in most cases they are more likely to need to communicate (in English) with non-native speakers like themselves. At the same time, they are committed to native-speaker norms at least in terms of their teaching and testing of the productive skills (Timmis 2002; Groom 2012; Soruç 2015). This is especially true of NNS teachers, who make up the bulk of the English language teaching community worldwide. These teach-

The author would like to thank Pavel Duryagin for his help with the statistical analysis and Peter Paschke for his close reading of the manuscript and comments.

1 Following the narrower definition by House (2003) rather than Seidlhofer's (2011) broader definition in which English L1 speakers may be included.

ers may also be aware of a paradox that some of their students who do badly in an educational environment – where, presumably, they have been subjected to the norms of Standard English – turn out to be good communicators in 'real life' ELF interaction: as Seidlhofer and Widdowson (2017) put it, they have language "capability" rather than "competence".

But at university level the picture which emerges is one of teachers, and institutions, firmly wedded to native-speaker norms. A large-scale survey of European University professors, of all disciplines, by Mollin (2005) showed that an overwhelming majority censored as "unacceptable" non-standard morphology, such as a missing third-person marker, interchangeability of relative pronouns *who*/*which*, or plural markers for mass nouns ("informations"), none of which compromise intelligibility. This attitude is confirmed by Jenkins (2014) in her study of ELF in 24 universities worldwide, all of which aim to attract international students, and which therefore offer courses through the medium of English. In a questionnaire delivered to teaching staff she found that the attitude of deference towards native-speaker models is however less noticeable when it comes to pronunciation, with some teachers taking a more "flexible" approach, but a sizeable group of "normative" teachers "find it unacceptable for their students to maintain a noticeable non-native English accent" (Jenkins 2014, 139).

When it comes to student attitudes towards pronunciation, a raft of surveys of student attitudes shows a marked preference for acquiring an accent which is native-speaker-like. In Europe, this is likely to mean an accent which is close to British RP, and which students were probably exposed to at school, the model adopted by their teachers and propagated through courses produced by major UK educational publishers. For example, in a survey of university students of languages from Italy, Poland and Spain, Nowacka (2012, 49) found 89% agreeing, or strongly agreeing, with the statement "Students should aim for native English pronunciation". This figure rises to 94% in a survey of English language majors in Poland carried out by Waniek-Klimczak, Rojczyk and Porzuczek (2015).

More recently, reporting a survey administered to mostly Italian students, Christansen (2017, 65) notes that an overwhelming majority identify with the statement "If I could, I would like to speak English so well that people would think that I was born in an English-speaking country"; a deliberately loaded proposition, in a questionnaire which combined 'ELF oriented' and 'native-speaker oriented, statements. But, as Christiansen points out, the phrase "If I could" presupposes wishful thinking on the part of respondents, who presumably realise that the aim is unrealistic.

A preference for native-speaker pronunciation remains deep-rooted even for students who are not majoring in languages, and who

might therefore be seen as less integratively motivated than their peers who are specialising in languages. Brabcová and Skarnitzl (2018), for example, found that more than 70% of students they interviewed in the Czech Republic declared that they wanted to sound like native speakers. However, respondents also agreed that they would like teachers to present a range of accents, including examples of non-native speakers. Griffiths and Soruç (2018), investigating the preferences of (non-language majoring) international students in Turkey and New Zealand, from 72 different national backgrounds, and with a wide range of first languages, found respondents similarly attracted to native-speaker accents. But they note that those students living in a native English-speaking environment (New Zealand) showed more tolerance of non-standard forms than their counterparts in the international university in a NNS location (Turkey), leading them to the conclusion that

> the environment in which they use English as a medium of communication might predispose them to be more tolerant of language which is less than perfectly "correct" as long as they can convey the necessary message. (Griffiths, Soruç 2018, 62)

On a related note, but from a different perspective, Borghetti and Beaven (2017) look at the attitudes towards ELF of Italian students on mobility to European universities, and how 'ELF awareness' can be raised by getting students to reflect on the learning opportunities presented by interacting in ELF, and compare their experiences with their peers who communicate (or try to communicate) using the local language to interact with native speakers of that language. The survey, of 141 students, 59% of whom used ELF for most of their interactions, yields a number of reflections on the nature of ELF interaction, such as less embarrassment (compared with interactions with native speakers) since interlocutors using a lingua franca are "more ready to fill gaps" and are in a better position to understand the students' needs.

The mobility experience brings us to the realities of university life in Europe today, where the Erasmus programme has contributed to massive international movement of students across Europe, and beyond. Since the inception of the programme in 1987, more than 10 million students[2] have taken part in mobility programmes, with currently more than 300,000 participating each year in the Erasmus+ programme. As Borghetti and Beaven note, for most participants this means using ELF in the mobility country. However, the implications for ELF usage go beyond the experiences of those directly benefit-

2 https://europeancommission.medium.com/10-things-you-didnt-know-about-erasmus-41bb2c8ebd9c.

ting from the mobility, to include the 'stay-at-homers' who need to interact with their international peers in informal as well as educational settings. These students may also have to interact with teaching staff on mobility, in both written and oral contexts, attend lectures and other events in English, and consult documents written by non-native speakers. In short, the 'ELF experience' has become an integral part of university life in Europe for all students, especially those in universities such as the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, which have an increasingly international vocation.

2 The First Survey. Undergraduates

A survey of incoming undergraduate students was administered to two successive cohorts (2019 and 2020) who had enrolled for the *laurea triennale* (BA) in modern foreign languages at the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice. As reported elsewhere in this volume Ca' Foscari has one of the largest intakes of language students in Italy, and the highest number of languages on offer, consistently around forty, with a strong tradition in Oriental, as well as Western, languages.

Most students had enrolled for one or two of the 'big five' western languages on offer in the Department: English, French, German, Russian and Spanish, although other languages, notably Portuguese and Swedish, were also represented. A total of 372 students from the two cohorts completed the survey, which was administered via Google Forms; of these, 273 indicated "English" or "Anglo-American" as either their first or second language.[3] The survey was designed to investigate student attitudes towards accents, especially their own aims and desiderata regarding the acquisition of pronunciation in their chosen languages. It also aimed at identifying variables, such as the personal language backgrounds of students, which might account for those attitudes. This aspect of the research project is amply described elsewhere in this volume.

The fifth, and penultimate, section of the survey (Section E), was devoted to students' perceptions of the role of English as a Lingua Franca, with particular reference to pronunciation and accents. The term was clarified at the beginning of the section in the 'narrow' sense introduced previously:

3 At Ca' Foscari all students are required to do two languages, both of which have equal status, and involve the acquisition of the same number of credits. 'Anglo-American' is taught as a separate course from 'English', although students may not enrol to do both English and Anglo-American.

> English has become a lingua franca used throughout the world. By "lingua franca", we mean a language used to communicate by speakers of other languages, who are not native speakers.

This was intended to invite students to think of their own experiences of using English with other NNSs, such as their familiarity (or lack of familiarity) with specific accents, as well as their opinions about the importance (or lack of importance) of a native speaker-like accent in ELF interaction. Could it be that when using English *as a lingua franca* students took a different attitude towards the importance of native-speaker norms, compared to the overwhelming preference for a native speaker-like accent expressed by students towards their chosen languages in Section B?

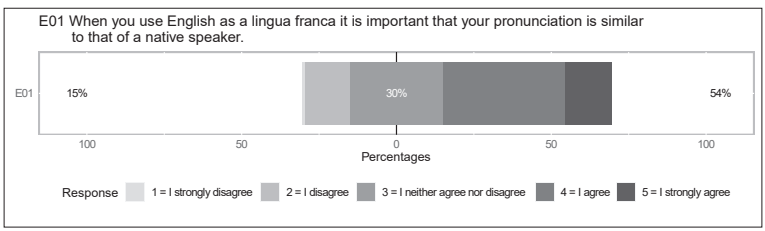
The format used to elicit responses in this as in previous sections of the survey, was a 5-point Likert scale which invited students to agree or disagree with given statements, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5) and thereby allowing a neutral response (3) for students who felt unable to commit themselves to an opinion. There were seven statements in all, and the section concluded with an invitation to make any comment on the questions, or to add any comment on the pronunciation of English as a lingua franca.

The first two items revisit the notion of 'native speaker', which features in the second section of the survey (see ch. 2 in this volume), and in which more than 95% of respondents affirm that "I want my pronunciation to be as close as possible to that of a native speaker" (B05), while 88% agreed with the statement "I like being mistaken for a native speaker" (B12) – a statement which seems to assume that this is an experience that students will have had, although it is unlikely that many of them will have been mistaken *by native speakers* as such. Identity, then, with a native-speaker group, rather than (mere) intelligibility, is a clear target, albeit perhaps unrealistic, for first-year language students.

The first statement in the section on ELF echoes B05, but limits the context to that of speaking:

E01 When you use English as a lingua franca it is important that your pronunciation is similar to that of a native speaker.

Chart 1 Responses to E01



However, in contrast with Section B, which addresses the students' opinions through 1st person pronouns ("Ci *tengo* molto ad avvicinar*mi* il più possibile alla pronuncia di un madrelingua": "*I* want *my* pronunciation to be as close as possible to that of a native speaker"), an impersonal form is used in the original Italian version of E01 ("Quando *si usa*"), inviting students to take a more detached overview of the phenomenon. Here, too, a majority (54%) agreed, but the margins are considerably narrower, with 15% disagreeing, and a sizeable 30% undecided. NS pronunciation is still the gold standard, but there is perhaps an incipient realisation of the specific context of ELF interaction.

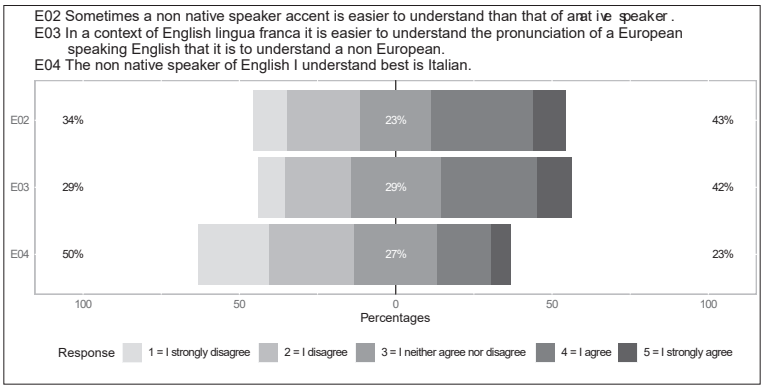
The next three statements move away from production to perception of NNS accents:

E02 Sometimes a non-native speaker accent is easier to understand than that of a native speaker.

E03 In a context of English lingua franca it is easier to understand the pronunciation of a European speaking English than it is to understand a non-European.

E04 The non-native speaker of English I understand best is Italian.

Chart 2 Responses to E02, E03, E04



The intention here was to investigate students' own experiences, with statements premised on the likelihood that they were familiar with European and especially Italian accents. But familiarity does not necessarily mean intelligibility. Whereas more respondents (43%) agreed that a NNS accent can be easier to understand than a NS accent (E02), with 34% disagreeing, and 23% unable to decide – a response which was consolidated for the European context in the next statement (E03), with 42% in agreement – the picture changes in the more specific context of Italian speakers of ELF (E04). The responses for E04 are as follows:

1	strongly disagree	22.6%
2	disagree	27.2%
3	neither agree nor disagree	26.8%
4	agree	17.2%
5	strongly agree	6.3%

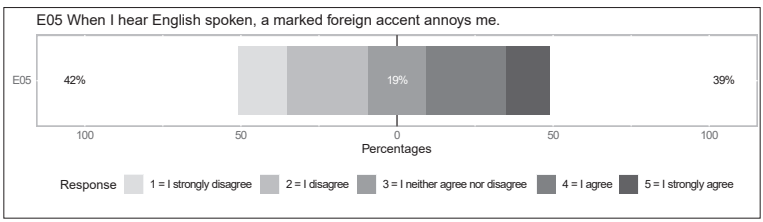
It is worth noting that this statement drew by far the greatest number of "strongly disagree" responses in the whole section, and counted fewer than a quarter of students in agreement. "Strongly disagree" suggests a degree of confidence in their opinions on the part of these respondents. They have no doubt that Italian accents are problematic. Why should this be so? Why should Italian students find it more difficult to understand a speaker of English who has an Italian accent rather than someone with a French or Greek accent? The result seems to belie Jenkins' (2000, 123) claim that intelligibility is undermined by transfer from the L1, and the implication that the more the transferred features differ between participants, the greater the threat to intelligibility.

One could argue that just as the intelligibility of native speakers of English may be compromised by regional accents (a fact which seems to be recognised in the responses to E02), so too Italian speakers might transfer phonetic features of their own regional dialects when speaking English, making comprehension problematic for listeners unfamiliar with the dialect. But the same could be said of speakers of other languages. Perhaps an explanation could be sought elsewhere, in the light of students' clear preferences for native-speaker accents: when faced with an Italian speaker whose variations from a native-speaker norm reflect their own shortcomings, the reaction is one of rejection or intolerance, which compromises intelligibility.

The notion of intolerance is a crucial one in evaluating attitudes towards accents, which features more overtly in the next statement:

E05 When I hear English spoken, a marked foreign accent annoys me.

Chart 3 Responses to E05



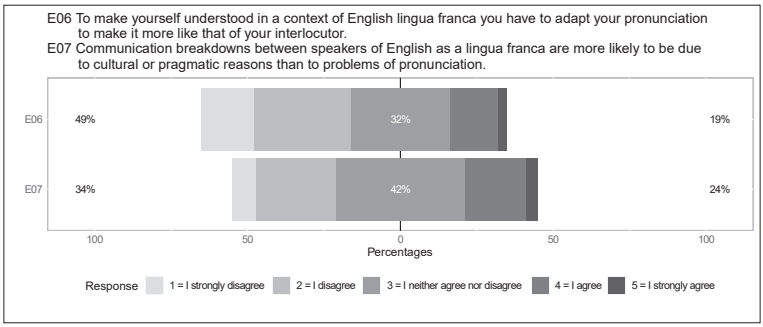
39.5% of students agreed with the statement, including 13.8% who "strongly agreed". Although this is fewer than the body of students choosing "disagree" (26%) or "strongly disagree" (15.7%), it is a sizeable minority displaying an attitude which seems likely to compromise comprehension in ELF contexts, in which collaborative co-construction of meaning is essential, and with it, the need to embrace the variety one's interlocutor is using, whatever this is, and however much it is influenced by L1 transfer. Attitudes are learned, not intuitive, as Garrett (2010, 22) reminds us; and here too, as with the previous statement, the negative reaction towards marked foreign accents could be correlated with the extent to which these students, embarking on a higher education course as language specialists, identify their learning objectives with a 'perfect' native speaker-like accent. This attitude is captured in one of the (few) free standing comments at the end of the survey, in which a student complains that they feel horrified when hearing someone speaking with a strong accent. We shall return to the notion of intolerance when examining the attitudes of Master's students in the following sections.

The final two statements moved into the domain of ELF strategies, such as accommodation, pragmatics, and the intercultural dimension:

E06 To make yourself understood in a context of English lingua franca you have to adapt your pronunciation to make it more like that of your interlocutor.

E07 Communication breakdowns between speakers of English as a lingua franca are more likely to be due to cultural or pragmatic reasons than to problems of pronunciation.

Chart 4 Responses to E06, E07



They invite students to reflect on what actually happens in ELF interaction, on how communication is promoted (e.g., by accommodation strategies), and why it can break down (e.g., for cultural misunderstandings or inappropriate pragmatics). But although these phenom-

ena are frequently observed in ELF, the statements caused more uncertainty for respondents than any of the previous statements. For both of them the preferred option was "neither agree nor disagree", reaching a noteworthy 42.4% in E07. In short, it seems that, lying outside students' personal experiences and preferences, the statements do not induce much in the way of reflection. Those who do come down on one side are more likely to disagree – 49% do not think they should adapt their pronunciation to that of their interlocutor, flying in the face of mainstream ELF research; while 33.7% do not think that culture and pragmatics are more responsible for communication breakdown than pronunciation. 'ELF awareness', if present at all, takes second place to the default position of all students in the survey which had already emerged in Section B: the overriding belief that good (i.e., native speaker-like) pronunciation – is necessary for successful international communication, and an appropriate target for university language students. That the special circumstances of NNS – NNS interaction in ELF may require a different attitude towards their own and their interlocutor's pronunciation to ensure intelligibility, does not seem to be an issue.

3 The Second Survey. Master's Level Students

The findings in the undergraduate survey are thus in keeping with those emerging from similar surveys of European university students, reported in § 1 above, and which reveal a marked preference for a (near) native-speaker accent even in ELF interaction. The respondents were all at the start of their three-year course and may not themselves have had much experience as participants in ELF interaction. Would the results have been significantly different if the survey had been administered to MA students with three years experience of student life in the increasingly international environment of a European university, and in which international interaction in ELF had become a daily reality for many of them?

A 2010 survey of third-year Ca' Foscari undergraduate students across the four faculties, the majority of whom were not language specialists, showed that many had needed English to successfully complete their course: specific needs for English included reading (70%), using the Internet for research (53%), attending lectures (21%), writing emails (19%) and interacting with foreign students (18%).[4] A decade down the line, these percentages – especially for spoken interaction with international students – are likely to be much higher. International enrolments have continued to rise, at least until the

4 Reported in Newbold 2012

temporary halt imposed by the pandemic in 2020 for 2021 enrolments, especially at Master's level, as can be seen in table 1:

Table 1 International enrolments of degree-seeking students at Ca' Foscari

	Bachelor	Master	Total
2019	125	247	372
2020	174	296	470

The higher numbers enrolled at Master's Level are due to the large number of Master's courses delivered entirely through the medium of English.[5] The figures, however, refer to degree seekers who choose Ca' Foscari as their home university; they would be much higher if we were to include students on mobility, usually on Erasmus programmes, most of them at undergraduate level, and usually for a single semester. Most mobility students and international degree seekers are unlikely to be Italian speakers, and communicate with their peers, and their professors, in English. The increasingly large numbers are likely to be replicated in other Italian and European universities with similar international vocations, and as a result many, probably most, students beginning a Master's level programme, including the stay-at-homers we referred to in § 1 above, will have participated in ELF interaction as part of their undergraduate experience.

It was thus decided to administer the ELF section of the survey to students enrolling at Master's level concurrently with the administration of the main survey to the second cohort of undergraduates (in 2020). The main research question was to investigate whether MA students are more 'ELF aware' than undergraduates, for example by showing an appreciation of ELF strategies, or in a greater tolerance towards imperfect accents. Very little comparative research of this nature seems to have been carried out; one example is a small scale project in Croatia reported by Margić and Širola (2009), which found that 80% of undergraduate students wanted to sound like native speakers, but only 50% at MA level: perhaps because they realised that native speaker-like accents were unrealistic, but also because they were more sensitive to the reality of ELF and related issues of intelligibility.

We chose two *laurea magistrale*[6] courses, the first in European, American and Postcolonial Languages and Literatures (Lingue e Letterature Europee, Americane e Postcoloniali, LLEAP), the second in

5 Currently 16 courses at Master's level, compared with 4 at undergraduate level.

6 The *laurea magistrale* is a two-year second-level academic degree, in contrast with the more professionally or vocationally oriented one-year Master's degree. However, in this article we use the term MA to refer to the *laurea magistrale*.

Comparative International Relations (Relazioni Internazionali Comparate, RIC). For LLEAP the survey was administered only to students majoring in English; the second was open to all RIC students, whichever of the five curriculum strands they were following. Two of these strands (Global Studies and EU Studies) are taught entirely in English; the other three are taught partly in English and partly in Italian. As with the undergraduate survey, students were at the very beginning of their course, and so had not been primed in any way in the field of ELF. The decision was made to sample from two different courses, one for language specialists, the other for non specialists, to ensure a wide representation. However, it should be noted that a minimum B2 level in English is required for students of RIC, and a second foreign language is also studied. The B2 level is a prerequisite for all *laurea magistrale* students while for students of LLEAP the presumed level is at least C1. 118 Masters' Level students participated in the survey, of whom 53 were students of LLEAP and 65 RIC.

In order to test the differences between the different groups of survey participants it was decided to use the Mann Whitney (Wilcoxon rank-sum) test, as an indicator of significant difference in situations in which differences are measured on scales which are ordinal, or which use arbitrary scale units (Conroy 2012). Analysis was conducted in R (R Core Team 2020). We used an alpha level of .05 for all statistical tests. In fact, four of the statements (E01, E02, E04 and E07) show no significant difference between the two groups. E03, however, has a significantly larger percentage of MA students agreeing that it is easier to understand a European speaking English than a non-European ($W = 23251$, p-value = 0.0292). Here, a possible explanation might be found in their own university experience, in which visiting international lecturers or students on mobility they may have had dealings with were more likely to have been European than extra-European; or simply, because of their greater experience of travel in Europe than their undergraduate counterparts.

More interesting, from an ELF point of view, is the considerable difference in attitudes towards foreign accents in E05 ($W = 30510$, p-value = 0.01475). Whereas, as we noted, a large number of undergraduates report that they are "annoyed" by a marked accent, the figures drop considerably for MA students, with 22% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 48.3% disagreeing. In short, the older (more mature?) students display greater tolerance towards a less than perfect accent; a strategy which is likely to pay dividends in an ELF context.

The third and final statement which divides the two groups is E06 ($W = 29325$, p-value = 0.05913). Contrary, however, to the hypothesis that MA students are more 'ELF aware' than BA students, a considerable majority (59%) disagree with the statement that participants in ELF interaction have to adapt their pronunciation to make it more like that of their interlocutors. Here, the undergraduates were un-

decided, with 32.4% opting for "neither agree nor disagree". MA students in agreement (16.3%) were fewer than for any of the other statements. The notion of accommodation, then, as a linguistic strategy to promote intelligibility, seems to be unavailable to most of them.

The final statement, E07, sees more MA than BA students attributing breakdowns in communication to cultural and pragmatic reasons (32.2%, as opposed to 23.9%) but overall there is no significant difference between the two groups. However, the smaller percentage of undecided respondents in the MA group (28%, compared to 42.4%) suggests that they are the more reflective group, at least in their desire to articulate an opinion. This is confirmed by the number of comments made in the final free-standing task, E08: 21 (out of 118) added a comment, compared with 13 (out of 370) undergraduates. Typically, respondents refer to their own experiences, sometimes in anecdotal form. For example, one student identifies the phenomenon of accommodation as an unconscious process which may be noted by an observer, but not by the participants themselves. Another student sees the process as a levelling down, because:

> I have noticed that when I speak English with a non-native speaker, the quality of my oral expression diminishes, especially if my interlocutor has a language level which is lower than my own. But when I speak with a native speaker, perhaps because I want to make a good impression, I speak much better…

Several students provide comments which resonate with this one, preferring to aim for a native speaker-like accent not because it promotes greater intelligibility, but because it is likely to be judged more favourably. But this is countered by curiosity in the face of a variety of accents such as the reflection made by the student who writes:

> I have always been intrigued by different accents rather than by a single accent, since they help me to understand better the cultural background of the person I am speaking with

and who concludes by referring to a counterproductive (at least in respect of intelligibility) but interesting side-effect of this attitude:

> What's more, I often find a foreign accent attracts my attention more than what is actually being said.

Perhaps the most 'ELF-aware' comment is the practical piece of advice offered by a student who (like many of those making comments) seems to have considerable experience of international communication in English:

I myself gave up on having the perfect accent (only recently) and decided that it is more of importance to pronounce words correctly and talk as fluently as possible. I think most of the language learners focus on accents more than necessary and it is even more the case with English.

4 Intra-MA Variability Language Specialists, Non-Specialists, and International Students

So far we have considered the MA students as a single group, and examined their attitudes in comparison with those of their undergraduate counterparts. The choice of two different degree courses, however, makes a further, intra-group exploration possible. Students of International Relations are not language specialists, although they have to complete a 30-hour course in English for International Relations which focuses on debating skills, as well as a course in another foreign language of their choice. However, as previously mentioned, some of them attend a curriculum strand taught entirely in English; and any RIC student can, if they wish, write their final dissertation in English; in this way, the doors remain open for international students who do not know Italian to graduate.

In contrast, students of LLEAP are language and literature specialists. All courses (for students majoring in English) are taught in English. Only one of these, Aspects of English Today, has a focus on the language (rather than literature or culture), but it is supported by a hefty *lettorato*, three 90-minute lessons per week with a native-speaker language teacher (*collaboratore linguistico*) which offer an extensive reading programme in contemporary world literature in English and a focus on critical writing. Needless to say, the final dissertation is written in English.

A second research question was thus: Are there any significant differences in attitudes between MA students who are English language specialists (LLEAP) and those who are not (RIC)? If so, what are they, and in what way do they reflect the students' 'ELF awareness'? For example, one might speculate that LLEAP students, having graduated in English for their first degree, have a greater understanding of language variety and communication strategies, and the development of English as the world's lingua franca, even though they may themselves be wedded to the idea of the desirability of a native speaker-like accent. One could also take the converse view: perhaps students of international relations – an obvious context for ELF – take a more pragmatic view of the nature of ELF interaction, and the extent to which successful communication is context-dependent.

We thus ran the same Mann Whitney (Wilcoxon rank-sum) test for these two subgroups, and again found significant variation in re-

sponses to three statements: E01, E02 and E07. The first statement produced the greatest difference in responses (W = 1112.5, p-value = 0.00014). Most RIC students have no doubt: it is important to try to sound like a native speaker. 64.6% agree, including 21.5% who "strongly agree". In contrast, only 39.6% of LLEAP students agree with the statement, with just 5.7% (3 respondents) "strongly" agreeing. It is a noteworthy difference which undermines our preliminary supposition that RIC students might take a more practical approach and view a native-speaker accent as inessential for international communication. What, then, is the explanation for the biggest variation in the whole survey? Perhaps the answer should be seen in the response of the LLEAP students, who are more cautious, and perhaps more 'mature' than their RIC counterparts and more experienced in their own use of the language; perhaps they were more attentive to the specific circumstances indicated by the phrase *as a lingua franca* in the statement ("When you use English *as a lingua franca* it is important that your pronunciation is similar to that of a native speaker"); perhaps the RIC students rushed in to this first question in the survey, and simply equated their own language learning targets with 'perfect' pronunciation. But the statement is about *using* the language, not about learning objectives; about 'life outside', rather than the classroom.

If this analysis is correct, it could also account for the difference in E02 (W = 2197.5, p-value = 0.03603). Here the LLEAP students are more in agreement (47.2%) than RIC students (33.8%) that non-native-speaker accents can be easier to understand than native-speaker accents. Again, perhaps, this suggests greater personal experience, but also the realisation (after a three-year undergraduate degree in English) that most native speakers of English have a regional accent, whether of UK, US or other varieties; indeed, the RP[7] pronunciation model typically adopted by teachers in European schools and universities is spoken only by 3% of the population of the UK (Crystal 1995, 365).

The third statement separating the 'specialists' from the 'non-specialists' is the final one in the survey, E07 (W = 2260, p-value = 0.01447). Although there is considerable indecision in both groups, LLEAP students are more likely (41.5%, compared with 24.6%) to see communication breakdown as the result of cultural or pragmatic problems, and not problems of pronunciation. Here too, one could attribute the difference to the background of the LLEAP students as English language and literature specialists, who will perhaps have spent more time at the language/culture interface in their undergraduate studies of literature in English and be more sensitive to the in-

7 Received Pronunciation, also known as 'The Queen's English' or 'Oxford English'.

tercultural dimension in international communication. But for the most 'ELF-aware' statement of all, on the importance of accommodation to facilitate communication (E06), both groups take more or less the same position, which as we previously noted, is less 'ELF aware' than the position taken by the undergraduates. Only 18.5% of RIC students agrees with the statement, a percentage which dropped to a mere 13.2% of LLEAP students. In short, an overwhelming majority of MA students think it is not necessary to adapt their pronunciation to make themselves understood. We shall return to this finding in the concluding section.

The MA survey also produced a further variable: the attitudes and opinions of international students.[8] Although their numbers were too few to be statistically significant (16, 6 of whom were enrolled in RIC, 10 in LLEAP), it is worth looking again at the statements where they differed most greatly from their (Italian) peers. For example, only one student dissents in E02: for international students at Ca' Foscari, interacting on a daily basis in English with non-native speakers, it is unsurprising that they should find non-native accents easier to understand that native speakers to whom they have probably been less exposed. Similarly, given the presence of Chinese and Vietnamese students in the group, as well as other non-Europeans, it is not surprising (E03) that they do not find European accents easier to understand than non-European accents, while nine students "strongly disagree" (E04) that the easiest accent to understand is an Italian one. At first sight, this last finding might seem a little perplexing: after all, these international students are presumably hearing Italian accents more than any others. However, it should be remembered that they are at the beginning of their course, some of them may have arrived only a few weeks, or even days, before participating in the survey, and thus they may be experiencing stressful situations, such as administrative and bureaucratic procedures, as they attempt to settle into university life. Perhaps, at the end of the year, their responses would be noticeably different.

Like their Italian peers, they do not seem particularly 'ELF aware' (E06 and E07). Only three international students think it a good strategy to adapt their pronunciation according to the interlocutor they find themselves with (E06). However, seven of them do think that cultural differences can be a major cause of communicative breakdown (E07), a rather higher percentage (43.7%) than that of the Italian respondents (32.2%). Here it is tempting to speculate that these students have had personal experiences, perhaps recent, which influenced their responses.

8 The International students in the survey declared their first languages to be Albanian, Chinese, Kazakh, Romanian, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian, or Vietnamese.

But the biggest difference of all is with E05. Only one student acknowledged annoyance when hearing a marked foreign accent, with six "strongly disagreeing". This compares with 39.5% of undergraduates admitting to feeling annoyed, and 29.6% of MA students taken as a single group (including the international students). Again, the response of the international students could be related to their personal experiences, and it is an encouraging one: frequent interaction in ELF, which is a feature of international student life, seems to lead to greater tolerance of variation, which in turn is a contributory factor in successful international communication.

5 Conclusion. Which English for Internationalisation in European Universities?

'ELF awareness' can be manifested at various levels: it can be more or less conscious, acquired over time with experience, and helping users of English to shape spoken interaction, especially in informal contexts. It is this self awareness which has been the focus of the surveys reported on in this chapter. But it can also refer to an explicit educational context, in which course designers or language teachers identify a 'lingua franca' element in international communication which can be integrated into mainstream English Language Teaching (ELT), thereby helping to prepare students for international communication.

The surveys, which as we have seen underline a lack of 'ELF awareness' in students at the start of their courses, at both undergraduate and MA levels, beg the question whether or not an ELF-oriented, or at least 'ELF aware', approach to a formal English language teaching input would be beneficial to them in their university careers. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to speculate in detail about the possible nature of this input, but it could include exposure to a variety of NNS accents, a reflection on World Englishes (starting perhaps from Kachru's [1986] well-known model of *inner circle*, *outer circle* and *expanding circle* of users of English), and the observation of ELF strategies at work. Such an aim is likely to sit comfortably within the objectives of most English language courses in a globalised world, an enrichment to a norm-focused approach based on a single NS model, and not necessarily in conflict with it. Kohn (2019) believes that adopting an 'ELF-aware' element could bridge the conceptual gap between ELT pedagogy and ELF research, which have led to conflicting views over the past two decades.

But beyond the 'reconciliation' of ELF theory and ELT practice, there seem to be cogent reasons for introducing an ELF element to the Italian university context described in these pages. These reasons include the possible future careers of university graduates, and

how they relate to the learning outcomes of their courses. Whatever the career, either as language 'specialists' (such as graduates of LLEAP) or as 'non-specialists' working in an international environment (graduates of RIC), 'ELF awareness' is likely to be an asset. For the latter, most of their interactions in English are likely to be with non-native speakers, and hence require their interpretation of non-native accents; for the former, many will themselves become teachers of English, and will need to prepare their students for the reality of international English.

This reality has been acknowledged in the revised phonology scales in the recent *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe 2018) of the *Common European Framework for Languages. Learning Teaching and Assessment* (CEFR). Commenting on the revision process, Piccardo (2016), refers to phonology as one of the "grey areas" in the original CEFR, and goes on to refer explicitly to the use of ELF as a catalyst for change in the revised Framework's criteria for teaching and assessment. Thus the term 'native speaker' is no longer used as a default model against which learner's pronunciation is to be measured, but is replaced by *intelligibility*, and accents are no longer labelled as 'foreign', but rather, as indicative of the speaker's bilingual (or polylingual) background. The implications for language teachers at university level are significant. They include the need to extend beyond an 'informative' approach to the phenomenon of ELF, to the assessment of pronunciation. In particular, the next few years are likely to see international examining boards responsible for the best-known English language certifications recalibrating their assessment criteria to bring them more into line with the revised CEFR scales. Given the importance of certification for many students, both on the jobs market, or to continue in higher education in an international English medium environment, teachers would do well to keep abreast of these ELF-related changes.

But an 'ELF-aware' element would have a more immediate relevance: it would provide insights into the process of internationalisation at work in European universities today. At the moment of writing, the Ca' Foscari University of Venice has just issued a press release stating that it has become "the 'number one university in Italy for internationalisation".[9] 'Internationalisation', as we have already suggested, implies the ability to attract foreign degree-seekers, and to facilitate the mobility of its own and incoming students, but it also refers to engaging in research at an international level, and promoting conferences and events which have an international appeal. All this comes at a cost; part of that cost is the investment in language

9 https://www.unive.it/pag/14024/?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=10900&cHash=8db705b21d80aaee728b6cb0cc5d5443.

resources, which, in essence, translates as the tacit, uncritical, adoption of English as the (academic) lingua franca.

Uncritical, since the question of *which* English should be used as the interface between the university and the world is rarely an issue; it is premised on the belief that there is a monolithic native-speaker variety of the language which should inform (among other things) support courses for teachers lecturing in English, scholarly research articles, and user-friendly webpages intended to attract international students. That English has become the academic lingua franca of the world is not in question; what is needed is an awareness that the monolithic model is neither realistic nor necessary for European universities to be able to compete with UK and US counterparts in the higher education market which is driving the process of internationalisation.

Pronunciation is of course only one aspect of the reality of ELF in academia, but it is a vital one, a key to intelligibility and the co-construction of meaning. Whatever the contents of the language courses they will follow, the students in our survey will be encountering written and spoken English on a daily basis outside their language classes during their two- or three-year degree programme. A targeted 'ELF-aware' element in their language courses could help bridge the gap between their aspirations towards 'native-speakerism' as revealed in the survey, and their ability to communicate as protagonists in the process of internationalisation.

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Appendix
Complete Questionnaire in Its Original Italian Version

Questionario sull'accento straniero per gli studenti del corso "Lingue e Culture e Scienze del Linguaggio" (LCSL)
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

Buongiorno,

vorremmo rilevare le vostre opinioni sull'accento straniero/sulla pronuncia delle lingue straniere. Le domande riguardano la vostra biografia linguistica, l'accento straniero in generale, le lingue scelte (A e B, se il livello è almeno A1), infine l'inglese lingua franca e l'accento straniero in italiano. Sono richiesti ca. 20 min. per la compilazione. I risultati della ricerca servono a tracciare un quadro delle convinzioni e motivazioni degli studenti LCSL e potranno essere alla base di ulteriori ricerche empiriche nonché di interventi didattici.
Il questionario non è anonimo, in quanto per compilarlo bisogna essere loggati con il proprio account Unive, ma le vostre risposte saranno usate solo a scopo di ricerca scientifica e verranno trattate garantendo l'anonimato degli intervistati.

Grazie della collaborazione!

Gruppo di Ricerca sull'Accento Straniero del Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali Comparati

Sezione A

Dati anagrafici e biografia linguistica

In questa sezione ti chiediamo alcuni dati anagrafici e informazioni sulla tua biografia scolastica e linguistica.

A01. Indica il tuo genere
- ○ Maschio
- ○ Femmina
- ○ Altro

A02. Indica il tuo anno di nascita
- ○ [menù con gli anni 1950-2005]

A03. Indica il tuo anno di iscrizione al corso di laurea LCSL
- ○ 1° anno
- ○ 2° anno
- ○ 3° anno
- ○ fuori corso
- ○ non iscritta/o a LCSL

Scuole frequentate

A04. Se hai frequentato la scuola in Italia (per almeno 1 anno), indica qui la regione prevalente
- ○ [menù con le 20 regioni italiane]

A05. Se hai frequentato la scuola fuori dall'Italia (per almeno 1 anno), indica qui lo stato prevalente
- ○ [menù con gli stati del mondo, senza "Italia"]

Lingua italiana

A06. Come hai imparato l'italiano?
- ○ L'italiano è la mia lingua madre, prima appresa in famiglia e poi studiata a scuola
- ○ In famiglia ho appreso un dialetto italiano, poi a scuola ho imparato e studiato l'italiano
- ○ Altro: _____

Bilinguismo

A07. Da bambina/o o adolescente hai imparato un'altra lingua, diversa dall'italiano, che padroneggi (o padroneggiavi) a livello di madrelingua oppure comunque con grande spontaneità? In caso affermativo scegli "altro" e specifica la/e lingua/e e se la/le usi ancora.
- ○ No
- ○ Altro: _____

A scuola per quanti anni hai studiato le seguenti lingue straniere?

A08. Francese come lingua straniera (se non l'hai studiato indica 0 anni)
- ○ [menù da 0 a 13 anni (e oltre)]

A09. Greco antico (se non l'hai studiato indica 0 anni)
○ [menù da 0 a 13 anni (e oltre)]

A10. Inglese come lingua straniera (se non l'hai studiato indica 0 anni)
○ [menù da 0 a 13 anni (e oltre)]

A11. Latino (se non l'hai studiato indica 0 anni)
○ [menù da 0 a 13 anni (e oltre)]

A12. Russo come lingua straniera (se non l'hai studiato indica 0 anni)
○ [menù da 0 a 13 anni (e oltre)]

A13. Spagnolo come lingua straniera (se non l'hai studiato indica 0 anni)
○ [menù da 0 a 13 anni (e oltre)]

A14. Tedesco come lingua straniera (se non l'hai studiato indica 0 anni)
○ [menù da 0 a 13 anni (e oltre)]

Altre lingue studiate

A15. Se hai studiato altre lingue straniere specifica quali e per quanti anni:
_____

Diploma di maturità

A16. Specifica quale tipo di diploma di maturità hai conseguito.
○ Istituto professionale, Manutenzione e assistenza tecnica
○ Istituto professionale, Produzioni industriali e artigianali
○ Istituto professionale, Servizi commerciali
○ Istituto professionale, Servizi per l'agricoltura e lo sviluppo rurale
○ Istituto professionale, Servizi per l'enogastronomia e l'ospitalità alberghiera
○ Istituto professionale, Servizi socio-sanitari
○ Istituto tecnico economico (Amministrazione, finanza, marketing)
○ Istituto tecnico economico (Turismo)
○ Istituto tecnico tecnologico (Agraria, agroalimentare e agroindustria)
○ Istituto tecnico tecnologico (Chimica, materiali e biotecnologie)
○ Istituto tecnico tecnologico (Costruzioni, ambiente e territorio)
○ Istituto tecnico tecnologico (Elettronica ed elettrotecnica)
○ Istituto tecnico tecnologico (Grafica e comunicazione)
○ Istituto tecnico tecnologico (Informatica e telecomunicazioni)
○ Istituto tecnico tecnologico (Meccanica, meccatronica ed energia)
○ Istituto tecnico tecnologico (Sistema moda)
○ Istituto tecnico tecnologico (Trasporti e logistica)
○ Liceo artistico
○ Liceo classico
○ Liceo delle scienze umane
○ Liceo linguistico
○ Liceo musicale e coreutico
○ Liceo scientifico
○ Altro o diploma straniero.

Uso della lingua straniera

A17. Escludendo le lezioni di lingua straniera, nella vita di tutti i giorni, parli (o parlavi) abitualmente una lingua diversa dall'italiano (per es. al lavoro, nei social network, durante un anno scolastico all'estero ecc.)? In caso affermativo seleziona "altro" e specifica la/e lingua/e e le situazioni di utilizzo.

○ No
○ Altro: _____

Dialetto

A18. Se usi (o usavi) un dialetto italiano, indica quale e in quali situazioni

_____

Motivi di iscrizione al corso di laurea

A19. Perché hai scelto di iscriverti ad un corso di laurea in lingue e culture moderne? (è possibile scegliere più opzioni)

○ a scuola andavo bene nelle lingue
○ perché a scuola non ho mai studiato bene le lingue straniere
○ avevo un/a brava/o docente di lingue a scuola
○ per esclusione (per es. di materie scientifiche)
○ in seguito ad un soggiorno in un contesto linguistico diverso
○ perché Lingue è presente a Ca' Foscari, sede vicina a casa mia
○ perché mi piace la letteratura
○ perché sono interessata/o alla linguistica
○ perché sono curiosa/o di conoscere altre culture
○ le lingue sono la mia passione
○ mi piacerebbe insegnare lingue
○ perché le lingue straniere mi danno la possibilità di trasferirmi all'estero
○ buone prospettive di lavoro nel mondo globalizzato
○ Altro: _____

Domanda finale aperta

A20. Vuoi darci qualche altra informazione sulla tua biografia linguistica oppure vuoi commentare qualche domanda di questa sezione?

_____

Sezione B

Opinioni e attitudini riguardo l'accento straniero

In questa sezione vorremmo capire che cosa pensi in generale dell'accento straniero e dell'importanza di una buona pronuncia.

Leggi le seguenti affermazioni e indica se sei:
1 = fortemente in disaccordo,
2 = in disaccordo,
3 = indeciso,
4 = d'accordo,
5 = fortemente d'accordo.
Le domande sono presentate in ordine casuale.

B01. È prioritario per me avere una buona pronuncia.

B02. Ci tengo ad avere poco accento straniero quando parlo.

B03. Il vocabolario e la grammatica sono più importanti della pronuncia.

B04. Vale la pena investire parecchio tempo in aula per avere una buona pronuncia.

B05. Ci tengo molto ad avvicinarmi il più possibile alla pronuncia di un madrelingua.

B06. L'accento straniero non è un problema per me finché riesco a comunicare con gli altri.

B07. Pronunciare bene mi dà una sensazione gradevole.

B08. Con una cattiva pronuncia potrei dare una brutta impressione.

B09. Con una buona pronuncia ci si sente più sicuri in una conversazione.

B10. Con una cattiva pronuncia si rischia di essere meno convincenti.

B11. Non mi dà fastidio che dal mio accento si capisca la mia provenienza.

B12. Mi fa piacere essere scambiata/o per madrelingua quando parlo.

B13. Parlare con un buon accento per me significa sperimentare una nuova identità.

B14. Imitando la pronuncia nativa non mi sento me stessa/o.

Domanda finale aperta

B15. Vuoi dirci qualcos'altro sull'accento straniero o sull'importanza di una buona pronuncia o vuoi commentare qualche domanda di questa sezione?

_____

Sezione A_bis

Lingue triennali scelte nel corso di laurea LCSL: Lingua A

A21. Indica la tua Lingua A
- Albanese
- Angloamericano
- Catalano
- Ceco
- Francese
- Inglese
- LIS (lingua italiana dei segni)
- Neogreco
- Polacco
- Portoghese
- Romeno
- Russo
- Serbo/Croato
- Spagnolo/Ispanoamericano
- Svedese
- Tedesco

Padronanza Lingua A

A22. Indica il tuo livello di padronanza attuale della Lingua A
- Zero [se viene scelto “Zero”, il questionario continua alla Sezione A_ter]
- A1
- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2
- Madrelingua

Sezione C

L'accento straniero nella lingua A del corso LCSL

In questa sezione vogliamo capire come giudichi la tua pronuncia nella lingua A scelta nel corso di laurea. Inoltre vorremmo sapere se conosci le difficoltà di pronuncia della lingua A e quali sensazioni provi ad articolarla.

Leggi le seguenti affermazioni e indica se sei:
1 = fortemente in disaccordo,
2 = in disaccordo,
3 = indeciso,
4 = d'accordo,
5 = fortemente d'accordo.

Le domande sono presentate in ordine casuale.

C01. Ho una pronuncia buona nella lingua A.

C02. Ho un forte accento straniero nella lingua A.

C03. Quando sono nervoso o stanco il mio accento straniero nella lingua A diventa più forte.

C04. Quando sono a mio agio riesco a parlare la lingua A con un accento migliore.

C05. Non capisco quanto è forte il mio accento straniero nella lingua A.

C06. Ascoltando gli altri riesco a distinguere una buona pronuncia nella lingua A da una scadente.

C07. Mi piace leggere ad alta voce nella lingua A, in classe o anche per conto mio.

C08. Mi sento ridicolo/a quando imito la pronuncia e melodia di un madrelingua della lingua A.

C09. Provo piacere a pronunciare la lingua A.

C10. È una fatica articolare bene la lingua A.

C11. So bene quali sono i miei problemi di pronuncia della lingua A.

C12. Vorrei capire meglio quali sono i miei problemi di pronuncia nella lingua A.

C13. Conosco i problemi di pronuncia tipici degli italiani che parlano la lingua A.

C14. Non saprei spiegare in cosa consiste il tipico accento italiano nella lingua A.

Domanda finale aperta

C15. Vuoi dirci qualcos'altro sul tuo accento nella lingua A, sulle particolari difficoltà a pronunciare la lingua A, su come ti senti a pronunciarla oppure vuoi lasciare un commento sulle domande di questa sezione?

_____

Sezione A_ter

Lingue triennali scelte nel corso di laurea LCSL: Lingua B

A23. Indica la tua Lingua B
- Albanese
- Angloamericano
- Catalano
- Ceco
- Francese
- Inglese
- LIS (lingua italiana dei segni)
- Neogreco
- Polacco
- Portoghese
- Romeno
- Russo
- Serbo/Croato
- Spagnolo/Ispanoamericano
- Svedese
- Tedesco

Padronanza Lingua B

A24. Indica il tuo livello di padronanza attuale della Lingua B
- Zero [se viene scelto “Zero”, il questionario continua alla Sezione E]
- A1
- A2
- B1
- B2
- C1
- C2
- Madrelingua

Sezione D

L'accento straniero nella lingua B del corso LCSL

In questa sezione vogliamo capire come giudichi la tua pronuncia nella lingua B scelta nel corso di laurea. Inoltre vorremmo capire se conosci le difficoltà di pronuncia della lingua B e quali sensazioni provi ad articolarla.

Leggi le seguenti affermazioni e indica se sei:
1 = fortemente in disaccordo,
2 = in disaccordo,
3 = indeciso,
4 = d'accordo,
5 = fortemente d'accordo.

Le domande sono presentate in ordine casuale.

D01. Ho una pronuncia buona nella lingua B.

D02. Ho un forte accento straniero nella lingua B.

D03. Quando sono nervoso o stanco il mio accento straniero nella lingua B diventa più forte.

D04. Quando sono a mio agio riesco a parlare la lingua B con un accento migliore.

D05. Non capisco quanto è forte il mio accento straniero nella lingua B.

D06. Ascoltando gli altri riesco a distinguere una buona pronuncia nella lingua B da una scadente.

D07. Mi piace leggere ad alta voce nella lingua B, in classe o anche per conto mio.

D08. Mi sento ridicolo/a quando imito la pronuncia e melodia di un madrelingua della lingua B.

D09. Provo piacere a pronunciare la lingua B.

D10. È una fatica articolare bene la lingua B.

D11. So bene quali sono i miei problemi di pronuncia della lingua B.

D12. Vorrei capire meglio quali sono i miei problemi di pronuncia nella lingua B.

D13. Conosco i problemi di pronuncia tipici degli italiani che parlano la lingua B.

D14. Non saprei spiegare in cosa consiste il tipico accento italiano nella lingua B.

Domanda finale aperta

D15. Vuoi dirci qualcos'altro sul tuo accento nella lingua B, sulle particolari difficoltà a pronunciare la lingua B, su come ti senti a pronunciarla oppure vuoi lasciare un commento sulle domande di questa sezione?

_____

Sezione E

Sulla pronuncia di inglese lingua franca

Premessa: L'inglese è diventato una lingua franca usata in tutto il mondo. Per lingua franca qui si intende una lingua usata da parlanti di altre lingue, e quindi non di madrelingua inglese, per comunicare tra di loro.

Leggi le seguenti affermazioni e indica se sei:
1 = fortemente in disaccordo,
2 = in disaccordo,
3 = indeciso,
4 = d'accordo,
5 = fortemente d'accordo.

Le domande sono presentate in ordine casuale.

E01. Quando si usa l'inglese come lingua franca è importante avere una pronuncia che assomigli a quella di un madrelingua.

E02. A volte un accento non madrelingua mi sembra più facile da capire di uno madrelingua.

E03. In un contesto di inglese lingua franca, per me è più facile capire la pronuncia inglese di un europeo rispetto a quella di un non europeo.

E04. L'accento straniero in inglese che capisco meglio è quello italiano.

E05. Quando sento parlare inglese, un forte accento straniero mi dà fastidio.

E06. Per farsi capire in un contesto di inglese lingua franca occorre adattare la propria pronuncia a quella dell'interlocutore.

E07. La mancata comprensione tra parlanti di inglese lingua franca è dovuta più a motivi culturali o pragmatici che a problemi di pronuncia.

Domanda finale aperta

E08. Vuoi dirci qualcos'altro sulla pronuncia dell'inglese lingua franca o vuoi commentare qualche domanda di questa sezione?

_____

Sezione F

Sulla pronuncia dell'italiano

Nell'ultima sezione ti proponiamo alcune domande sulla pronuncia dell'italiano.

Leggi le seguenti affermazioni e indica se sei:
1 = fortemente in disaccordo,
2 = in disaccordo,
3 = indeciso,
4 = d'accordo,
5 = fortemente d'accordo.

Le domande sono presentate in ordine casuale.

F01. Quando uno straniero parla italiano con forte accento per me è faticoso ascoltare.

F02. Mi diverte imitare un accento straniero in italiano, per es. parlare come Stanlio & Ollio.

F03. Mi diverte imitare altri accenti regionali come per es. l'accento napoletano.

F04. Quando parlo a lungo con gente di un'altra regione italiana, il mio accento cambia.

Domanda finale aperta (ultima domanda)

F05. Vuoi dirci qualcos'altro sull'accento straniero in lingua italiana o vuoi commentare qualche domanda di questa sezione o di tutto il questionario?

_____

Inviando le mie risposte acconsento alla partecipazione alla ricerca e all'utilizzo dei dati raccolti a scopo di ricerca scientifica con garanzia del mio anonimato.

SAIL

1. Caon, Fabio (2012). *Aimes-tu le français? Percezione dello studio obbligatorio del francese nella scuola media*.

2. Serragiotto, Graziano (2012). *Cosa ti hanno insegnato al liceo? La percezione di studenti di Lingue sulla loro formazione linguistica*.

3. Balboni, Paolo; Daloiso, Michele (2012). *La formazione linguistica nell'università*.

4. Novello, Alberta (2014). *La valutazione delle lingue straniere e seconde nella scuola. Dalla teoria alla pratica*.

5. Freddi, Edigio (2015). *Acquisizione della Lingua Italiana e adozione internazionale. Una prospettiva linguisitica*.

6. Carloni, Giovanna (2015). *CLIL in Higher Education and the Role of Corpora. A Blended Model of Consultation Services and Learning Environments*.

7. Melero Rodríguez, Carlos Melero (a cura di) (2016). *Le lingue in Italia, le lingue in Europa: dove siamo, dove andiamo*.

8. Cavaliere, Salvatore (2016). *Tra lingue e culture. La comunicazione interculturale tra italiani e popoli slavi meridionali*.

9. Bonvino, Elisabetta; Jamet, Marie-Christine (a cura di) (2016). *Intercomprensione: lingue, processi e percorsi*.

10. Dalla Libera, Cristina (2017). *Tra lingue e culture. La comunicazione interculturale fra italiani e russi*.

11. Maugeri, Giuseppe (2017). *La progettazione degli ambienti didattici per l'apprendimento delle lingue straniere*.

12. Newbold, David (2017). *Rethinking English Language Certification. New Approaches to the Assessment of English as an Academic Lingua Franca*.

13. Bier, Ada (2018). *La motivazione nell'insegnamento in CLIL*.

14. Balboni, Paolo (2018). *Sillabo di riferimento per l'insegnamento dell'italiano della musica*.

15. Spaliviero, Camilla (2020). *Educazione letteraria e didattica della letteratura*.

16. Castagna, Vanessa; Quarezemin, Sandra (org.) (2020). *Travessias em língua portuguesa. Pesquisa linguística, ensino e tradução*.

17. Daloiso, Michele; Mezzadri, Marco (a cura di) (2021). *Educazione linguistica inclusiva. Riflessioni, ricerche ed esperienze*.

18. Caruana, Sandro; Chircop, Karl; Gauci, Phyllisienne; Pace, Mario (a cura di) (2021). *Politiche e pratiche per l'educazione linguistica, il multilinguismo e la comunicazione interculturale*.

19. Maugeri, Giuseppe (2021). *L'insegnamento dell'italiano a stranieri. Alcune coordinate di riferimento per gli anni Venti*.

20. Maugeri, Giuseppe; Serragiotto, Graziano (2021). *L'insegnamento della lingua italiana in Giappone. Uno studio di casa sul Kansai*.

21. Benucci, Antonella; Grosso, Giulia I.; Monaci, Viola (2021). *Linguistica Educativa e contesti migratori*.

22. Balboni, Paolo E. (2022). *"Thesaurus" di Linguistica Educativa: guida, testi, video*.

How important is it for language learners to have a 'good accent' in the foreign language? Do they want to sound like native speakers, or is intelligibility their main aim? How do they perceive their L2 accents, and what kind of sensations do these procure? These are some of the questions addressed in this volume which reports on a large-scale and wide-ranging survey of the attitudes of Italian university students of foreign languages. It investigates their motivations, self-perceptions, and opinions towards L2 pronunciation, taking into account the influence of gender, plurilingualism, target language and proficiency level, and is likely to be of interest to anyone involved in language teaching at university level.

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