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NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE MODELS IN ELT: ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF ACCENT PARALLELISM

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ABSTRACT

As a response to the diversification of Englishes into a great many native and non-native varieties, scholars such as Kirkpatrick (2007: 195) have proposed that "context and learner needs" should decide whether native or non-native models are adopted in ELT. However, an analysis of some of the arguments used in Kirkpatrick (2007) and Jenkins (2000, 2007) suggests that they have overemphasised the importance of non-native models, without giving due consideration to those Expanding Circle contexts where native models would be equally, or perhaps even more, appropriate. It will be suggested that a thorough examination of learners' needs and aspirations in different local contexts reveals that these too are actually subject to diversification. In particular, it is important for those learners who prefer to continue to refer to native-speaker models (without necessarily attempting to attain native-speaker targets) to be aware of their interlocutors' attitudes to stigmatised accent features – especially in those cases where parallels exist between native and non-native realisations (e.g. the absence of dental fricatives). Research by Van den Doel (2006) indicates that attitudes to these stigmatised accent features are difficult to predict, and that it would therefore be undesirable to recommend their general use in any pronunciation models.

KEYWORDS: Pronunciation pedagogy; endonormative; exonormative; attitudes.

1. Native versus non-native models

1.1. Introduction

The unprecedented diversification of Englishes has prompted scholars to re-evaluate existing pedagogical models for teaching oral proficiency in ELT contexts. It is especially native-speaker (NS) models that are increasingly presented as being of lim-

ited value or even no use to non-native speakers (NNSs) of English. As is frequently claimed, NNSs significantly outnumber NSs and are, somehow as a consequence of this, supposed to be much less concerned with interacting with the latter than with other non-natives. Such intra-NNS interaction is to a large extent made possible, it is argued, by NNSs' willingness and ability to accommodate to and converge with each other's English with the aim of ensuring efficient communication. Consequently, any pedagogical interventions in this process should therefore be focused on addressing only those issues which hinder intelligibility between non-native interlocutors.

Such a narrow view of lingua franca communication, which explicitly approaches English as an International Language (EIL) from the point of view of intra-NNS communication only, is epitomised by Jenkins's (2000, 2007) proposals for what she has labelled "English as a Lingua Franca" (ELF), and specifically the "Lingua Franca Core". One such controversial proposal is the suggestion to refrain from teaching dental fricatives (Jenkins 2000: 137-8) – also propagated by Kirkpatrick (2007: 17). Underpinning this proposal is the claim that, since some NSs regularly substitute /θ, ð/ by other obstruents, there is no need to recommend their use in NNS speech. While this argument appears to have become an important tenet of ELF treatises such as Jenkins (2000) and Kirkpatrick (2007), the question arises if such parallels with NS realisations are a reliable guide to determining priorities in any form of ELT pronunciation teaching. In those cases where certain th-substitutions are sociolinguistically marked, learners adopting such patterns may well be placed at a disadvantage. Even if the stigmatisation of these substitutions were to be limited to specific NS communities only, learners' adoption of these may well increase their difficulties in interacting in any setting which did not consist exclusively of other NNSs. This in turn raises fundamental questions of access and empowerment: if NNS models are increasingly presented as being the default for ELT, will their implementation place any significant limitations on the communicative goals of different groups of learners?

1.2. Evaluating advantages and disadvantages

Clearly, responses to the unprecedented diversification of Englishes should also be informed by complex ways in which such diversity manifests itself across the globe. As World Englishes scholars have shown, English has very different roles and functions in the Inner, Outer or Expanding Circles (Kachru 1992). For instance, very considerable variation in levels of exposure to NS and NNS English is already to be found between different European countries in the Expanding Circle. It is evident that in those countries where English-language TV programmes are broadcast in the original version with subtitles, learners are much more aware of NS norms than in countries where instead dubbing is used. Such differences in orientation highlight the need to address the issue of local linguistic ecologies – both where some "com-

munities of practice" prize interaction with NSs more highly than do others, and where access to spoken NS English has created a more hospitable environment for the internalisation, partial or otherwise, of NS pronunciation norms.

Even those advocating pedagogical approaches to the diversity of World Englishes that only prioritise intra-NNS communication, such as Jenkins (2000, 2007) and Kirkpatrick (2007), are careful not to present their proposals as "one-size-fits-all" solutions. Jenkins (2007: 21) makes much of her commitment to "learner choice", is adamant that she does not intend to patronise those wishing to learn NS varieties of English (Jenkins 2007: 26), insisting that she has no desire to exclude NS from lingua franca communication (Jenkins 2007: 3). Yet the main thrust of her argument quite clearly suggests otherwise (for a more detailed discussion, see Van den Doel 2008: 144). In any event, it is perhaps telling that Jenkins has been so widely understood to support the exclusion of NSs that she has been forced to devote a number of publications (Jenkins 2006, 2007) to correcting this impression. In addition, many scholars have suggested that Jenkins (2007: 3) does the NNSs a disservice by refusing to use native models as a "linguistic reference point". Recently, James (2008) has suggested that in most lingua franca exchanges, speakers' targets are exonormative rather than endonormative. Roberts and Canagarajah (2009: 210) are even invoking a new model, entitled "ELF 2" – which does include NS concerns – since, in their view, native speakers are insufficiently represented in "traditional" ELF.

Similarly, when Kirkpatrick examines the implications of World Englishes for teaching, he emphasises that "context and learner needs should determine the variety taught" (Kikrpatrick 2007: 195). Nevertheless, it is difficult to construe his arguments as lending support to a NS-oriented model. In his discussion of both the "exonormative native-speaker model" and the "endornormative nativised model", the relevant section headings of 13.1.1. and 13.2.1. ("Advantages and disadvantages") imply that this will be done in an evenly balanced manner (Kirkpatrick 2007: 185–189). However, Kirkpatrick's discussion of the exonormative model only serves to reinforce the view that it affords no appreciable benefits to NNSs. Advantages such as the prestige accorded to NS varieties, and the acceptance and codification that come with this, are presented as being beneficial only to the "American and British language teaching industries" and the "native speaker teachers" (Kirkpatrick 2007: 184–185). Kirkpatrick (2007: 186) goes on to argue that NS models are disadvantageous to NNS teachers because, since the latter themselves do not "speak" this model, it "undermines the value and apparent legitimacy of a local teacher's own model of English". Kirkpatrick (2007: 188) also states that for NNS learners too, it is discouraging to be taught a model that is "unattainable" to them. This claim warrants further examination.

Kirkpatrick's discussion of the disadvantages of native models to NNS learners is weakened by conflations in terminology and by what would appear to be unwarranted assumptions. My own NNS intuitions suggest that it is varieties of English

rather than models that are spoken, and targets rather than models which are attained. It is vital to distinguish between a native-speaker *model*, which merely serves as a reference point and does not make any claims about target levels, and a native-speaker *target* which is indeed unattainable to many adult learners and teachers. Kirkpatrick does in fact mention the distinction made by other scholars between what he terms *norms* and *models*, as a result of which a NS variety becomes a "benchmark against which to measure the production of learners", without the learning having to "mimic the native speaker model precisely" (Kirkpatrick 2007: 191). However, he dismisses this useful distinction as unimportant because both terms imply that NSs "will remain the source of 'correctness'" (Kirkpatrick 2007: 191).

Nevertheless, if the adoption of a NS model does not automatically imply the attainment of a NS target, the argument of the unattainable and therefore disadvantageous exonormative model loses much of its force. In addition, the claim that NS-like production is unattainable for all adult NNS learners is demonstrably untrue (Bongaerts 1999). Even the Common European Framework for Languages recognises the existence of "C2" or near-native proficiency as one of many possible learner targets. It is tempting to speculate that it is the particular ELT context in which scholars and teachers operate that strengthens their belief that near-native command of English is necessarily out of reach to non-native learners, whatever their language background, training or motivation. Be that as it may, such a belief may help to reinforce a conveniently segregated system whereby NS norms apply to NSs, and NNS norms apply to NNSs. Any such system may be seen as counteracting other possible scenarios – for instance those where NNSs refer to NS norms, or where NSs accommodate to a local NNS model.

At this stage, it may be useful to review Kirkpatrick's (2007) section on endonormative models, which is perhaps also somewhat lacking in balance. While the advantages of NNS models to NNSs are extolled, any possible disadvantages to the latter are minimised. In fact, the subsequent section on "Choosing a *lingua franca* approach" does not mention disadvantages at all. In a textbook that is intended as a primer for "ELT professionals and trainee teachers undertaking TESOL training throughout the world" (Kirkpatrick 2007: 2), this may be seen as an oversight. Moreover, some of the advantages of endonormative models as mentioned by Kirkpatrick are in fact unlikely to appeal to all ELT professionals and trainee teachers to the same degree. For instance, Kirkpatrick (2007: 190) mentions the following "advantage for governments [...] and thus for local teachers" of "adopting a local model":

> Local teachers are less likely than American teachers, for example, to be purveyors of American culture. Why then would governments who fear the encroachment of alien cultural values upon their own insist on recruiting native speakers of English to be teachers of English in their own countries?

Needless to say, there are governments which do not subscribe to such arguably nationalist views – but the point surely is that even in those countries where these ideas are propagated, directly or indirectly, they are not necessarily shared by local teachers, nor by their colleagues worldwide. (Similarly, the opposition to what is perceived as the encroachment of American culture is not distributed equally around the globe.) But even if all local teachers did endorse such perceptions, this would not automatically validate or invalidate them. Pennycook (2008: 38) argues persuasively that while it is possible to oppose the advance of monolithic NS English with an appeal to the "defence of national languages and cultures", this approach may in fact lead to a denial of diversity. "To defend diversity through a focus on language fortresses is to reinforce a vision of national languages that have been instrumental in the denial of diversity" (Pennycook 2008: 38). Arguably, such an imposition of local norms is tantamount to establishing new hierarchies. Even the adoption of a lingua franca approach, such as that proposed by Jenkins (2000, 2007) may run the risk of reifying new power imbalances. For instance, Berns (2008: 333) states that the

> identification of core features of non-native speech in an effort to control language performance and guarantee the success of this performance – even if the result is the overthrow of the tyrannical native speaker – is simply meeting the new boss who's same as the old boss, or the hegemony of the old with the hegemony of the new.

Clearly, there are considerable disadvantages associated with the adoption of endonormative or lingua franca models which Kirkpatrick's primer for ELT professionals fails to address. Given Kirkpatrick's views, it is hardly surprising to find him so very dismissive of the importance of NS models in non-Inner Circle countries "for all but a minority of students" (Kirkpatrick 2007: 188). As he puts it, "[t]eaching a native-speaker model that includes inner-circle linguistic and pragmatic norms and inner-circle cultures is thus not appropriate for many learners of English in non-inner circle countries" (Kirkpatrick 2007: 188). If, however, attaching importance to NS models is part of the local linguistic ecology – an attitudinal disposition attested in both Expanding Circle students (cf. Timmis 2002) and teachers (cf. Jenkins 2007: 231) – then this cannot simply be declared irrelevant or injurious to NNSs' interests, if Kirkpatrick's (2007: 195) injunction that "context and learner needs should determine the variety taught" is to be taken seriously. This is not to deny the legitimacy of NNS models *per se*, but does argue that these should not be regarded as the default in any NNS context (*pace* Jenkins 2007: 143, 242).

1.3. Learners' needs

Perhaps inevitably, any invocation of local linguistic attitudes to justify the choice of a particular model of English will evoke all manner of paradoxes and inconsisten-

cies. For instance, if, as McKay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008: 195–197) have proposed, it is an important principle of a "socially sensitive pedagogy" that "EIL should be taught in a way that respects the local culture of learning", this may well be at odds with the tenet that "EIL curricula need to exemplify L2–L2 interaction". If, in certain "local cultures of learning", there is a traditional disregard for linguistic diversity, or a preoccupation with standardness, or NS norms, it may be considered to be disrespectful, and therefore not "socially sensitive", to expect teachers and learners to change their attitudes overnight – or even at all. Conversely, in those cases where local educators place a strong emphasis on ethnocentric approaches to language teaching, and eschew any pronunciation models perceived as unacceptably foreign, there may well be good reasons to refrain from further reinforcing such tendencies – for instance, in the interest of raising learners' linguistic awareness of the "otherness" of different languages and cultures. Consideration of local attitudes to ELT should therefore not only involve a thorough examination of learner needs, but also entail a critical evaluation of entrenched notions about the "local culture of learning".

It has been claimed that a common European variety of English is currently emerging (cf. Modiano 2003; Mollin 2006) and that, as a consequence of this, European speakers of English are beginning to develop "an endonormative model of lingua franca English which will increasingly derive its norms of correctness and appropriacy from its own usage" (Seidlhofer 2001: 15). In the absence of any compelling evidence that Europeans judge each other's spoken English by anything other than NS standards, it would be useful to be able to determine whether European NNSs of English show any convergence in evaluating the accents of fellow Europeans, and in this respect deviated significantly from NS judges. The preliminary results of an investigation by Quené and Van den Doel (2009) suggest that there is indeed a tendency towards convergence among European judges, but that this is merely towards Inner-Circle norms of appropriacy and correctness. At the same time, such convergence is more pronounced in some communities (e.g. the Netherlands) than in others (e.g. Spain). If it is true that Dutch learners of English, with their considerably more extensive exposure to Inner-Circle Englishes as compared with Spanish learners, are more inclined to internalise such norms, it could be argued that this is an aspect of the local linguistic ecology that should be considered.

A serious examination of learner needs should of course not only take in learners' attitudes to other varieties of English, but also their ambitions in using English to communicate with different groups of interlocutors, whether from Inner, Outer or Expanding Circles. If both intelligibility and acceptability to either NSs, NNSs, or both, are a major concern, then that should obviously be reflected in the pedagogical models provided to the students. It may turn out to be the case that it is particularly considerations of intelligibility and acceptability *to other NNS interlocutors* that may, perhaps paradoxically, prompt the adoption of a NS-oriented learner model – as distinct, of course, from an actual NS target (cf. Van den Doel 2008). In other

words, a possible reason for NNS learners to refer to a NS-oriented model is not the gratification of impossible Inner-Circle demands but a consideration of the needs of other NNSs with different language backgrounds. Jenkins's (2000: 206) bold claim that that "the assumption that a 'standard' 'NS' accent is internationally intelligible is a myth" should be re-examined, along with research actually supporting this "myth" (e.g. Major et al. 2002; Major et al. 2005; Trudgill 2005). Similarly, it may be necessary to re-evaluate Kirkpatrick's statement that the "fear that learners may not be internationally intelligible" if they adopt an endonormative model is "unfounded".

It is, of course, commendable to draw attention, as Kirkpatrick does, to the important contribution made to ELT by NNS teachers. In fact, one could argue that they, rather than their monolingual NS counterparts, are ideally placed to judge the degree of approximation to a NS-oriented learner model necessitated by the local context. Such an argument may be ultimately more empowering to all concerned that the unwarranted assertion that since a NS-like target is unattainable to NNS teachers and learners, there is therefore no point in either using a NS-oriented model in class or in employing NS teachers whose command of this model will only discourage their students (Kirkpatrick 2007: 188). Such a "deficit linguistics" approach to ELT, to put a different spin on this term, should not underpin the choice of either a native or a non-native model – and yet it is one of the central claims in Kirkpatrick's textbook.

2. Accent parallelism

2.1. Introduction

As was pointed out in Section 1.1., it is possible to see parallels between native and non-native accents in terms of a comparison between the phoneme inventories of specific NS accents on the one hand, and observations about learners' actual realisation of any such phonemes on the other. The existence of such parallels has facilitated proposals to "scale down the phonological task for the majority of learners, by leaving to the individual learner's discretion and to later acquisition outside the classroom the learning of peripheral details" (Jenkins 2000: 123) such as dental fricatives. This important argument has been restated by Kirkpatrick (2007: 197), perhaps somewhat confusingly, as the notion that "the differences between all varieties, both native and nativised, are similar and comparable". This can be taken to mean that the same features that are found in native and non-native varieties of English are viewed as unacceptable in the latter merely as a result of linguistic prejudice (cf. Kirkpatrick 2007: 5–15). Kirkpatrick makes the point that since many varieties of English including "Irish and certain varieties of American English" do not employ the dental fricatives /θ, ð/, these sounds may be quite dispensable in an ELT context:

> I feel sorry for poor learners of English who spend hours of classroom time trying to master the RP [sic] sounds of /θ/ and /ð/, as these are difficult sounds to learn if they do not exist in your language and, it turns out, they are not used in many [sic] varieties of English anyway.
>
> (Kirkpatrick 2007: 17)

It hardly needs stating that dental fricatives are not exclusively RP sounds, and they are in fact used overwhelmingly in native English varieties worldwide, but the point is nevertheless an interesting one. Another example with same purport is that of schwa epenthesis, which, as Kirkpatrick (2007: 18) states, is found not only in Japanese English but also in "Irish and Australian Englishes".

What Kirkpatrick is referring to here is what we could term "accent parallelism" – namely the "coincidental matching" of certain phonetic/phonological features in accents which cannot easily be attributed to mutual contact (cf. Johansson 1978: 102). There is no doubt that such "accent parallels" exist between NS and NNS varieties. The substitution of /θ/ by /t/, for instance, is indeed not only frequently attested in L2 speech, where it is traditionally seen as an error, but is also a feature of World English varieties such as Irish and Caribbean English, where it may well be stigmatised but would not considered by linguists to be "erroneous". A further accent parallel is schwa epenthesis (e.g. /fɪləm/), which is not only a heavily stigmatised feature of Irish English, but also occurs frequently in Dutch English (Van den Doel 2006: 43, 180). Another example is uvular-r, which is not only sporadically heard in North East England (Beal 2004: 129), but also from German, Dutch, and French speakers of English. In addition, this feature is found in English speakers from Israel and Sierra Leone (Collins and Mees 2008: 193).

Some such non-standard realisations are in fact high-prestige realisations in other varieties or languages. For instance, uvular-r is clearly a prestigious feature in French, which would give those Northern English learners of French who can pronounce uvular-r an advantage over learners who are unfamiliar with this. Similarly, some varieties of Dutch have a fronted version of the Standard Dutch vowel in *asbak*, i.e. /æzbæk/, which is similar to TRAP in English. Since this dialect feature suffers heavy stigmatisation, Dutch learners are notoriously unwilling to transfer it to English, preferring the much less appropriate DRESS vowel instead, and thus losing a crucial phonemic contrast.

2.2. Implications of accent parallelism

Accent parallels may have repercussions on the way NNS realisations are perceived by those native and non-native speakers who are sensitive to NS norms. One possible scenario is for the existence of a parallel to facilitate acceptance of NNS realisations. This possibility was already mentioned in Johansson's (1978) seminal study of error tolerance, which refers to the "coincidental matching of the dialects of the

source and target language" (Johansson 1978: 102) and even notes that: "[i]f an 'error' is identical to a pronunciation which is widespread among native speakers of English, it is judged to be more acceptable". However, Johansson (1978: 95–96) adds that this is provided that "the social prestige of different pronunciation variants [is] taken into account". Similarly, Ryan (1983: 150) proposed that some non-native realisations of English /ð/ and /θ/ may overlap with what is heard in non-prestige accents, which may cause NNSs to be downgraded socially. This suggests another possibility, whereby it is precisely the familiarity with the NNS realisation as a stigmatised feature of NS speech that causes it to be perceived as a serious error. It is in view of the latter scenario that learners have traditionally been warned off the use of such "regionalisms" (e.g. Cruttenden 2001: 302; Collins and Mees 2003: 180). Swacker's (1976: 17) investigation into the use of Texan "regionalisms" in the speech of Jordanian learners of English even found that "certain dialectal markers may be [...] acceptable when coming from a native speaker, but quite offensive when spoken by a foreigner". This implies, as Eisenstein (1983: 172) states, "caution in teaching the productive use of regionalisms to second language learners".

As was stated in Sections 1.1. and 2.1., the claim that markedly NNS realisations may be judged more leniently if they are paralleled in native Englishes has been an important source of inspiration for suggested changes in the direction of English pronunciation teaching in a globalising world. A modest proposal comes from Wells (2005: 106), who claims that, since "[m]illions of Scottish speakers of English manage perfectly well without any difference between the vowel of *shoot* and that of *foot*", this particular distinction is not required in communication in English as an international language. A much more far-reaching proposal is of course the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins 2000: 123), which excludes all items which Jenkins considers to be "unimportant" or "unteachable" from a non-native speaker point of view. These include not only prosodic phenomena such as weak forms, but also segmental features such as allophonic dark [ɬ], and even the dental fricative phonemes (Jenkins 2000: 138–139, 147). In this context, Jenkins makes much of the notion (inaccurate in the case of weak forms) that these features are not found in all native varieties of English. The implication appears to be that if certain realisations have not been attested in all groups of native speakers, they may not be necessary for non-native communication.

An important argument for Jenkins (2000: 27) is that English NS variation should be seen as being "on a par" with variation found in NNSs. This is similar to Kirkpatrick's (2007: 197) contention that "the differences between all varieties, both native and nativised, are similar and comparable". Given the similarities between them, it would, from Jenkins's (2000: 139) point of view, be "unreasonable to have 'higher' expectations" of non-native as opposed to native speakers. While this hardly sounds like a positive view of regional variation, Jenkins's suggestions clearly address the issue of accent parallels and their consequences for teaching. Her subsequent suggestions for the Lingua Franca Core are in fact endorsed by Kirkpatrick

(2007: 18), who describes them as being of "particular pedagogic value" (Kirkpatrick 2007: 193).

In those contexts where users of English do not expect to engage in any extensive contact with those unused to local accent norms, it would be pointless to consider the extent to which local English pronunciation features may be stigmatised in other NS or NNS communities. However, for those learners who have the ambition or need to interact with non-local interlocutors, whether these are traditional NSs from the Inner Circle, or NNSs used to particular Inner, Outer, or Expanding Circle norms, the issue of stigmatised accent features will be of some concern.

Viewed from this perspective, it may be stated that not all learners from Expanding Circle countries will benefit from the suggestion made by Jenkins that substitutions for dental fricatives can be viewed as non-problematic in the context of EIL. It may expose them to what Kirkpatrick would term "prejudiced" reactions, not only on the part of NS interlocutors, but also from NNSs who have to some extent internalised NS norms. This is testified by the popularity of the well-known Berlitz commercial in which a German coastguard responds to the distress call "We are sinking" by asking "What are you sinking about?". It is unlikely that the 40 million who have watched did so merely for educational purposes (Mindshare 2010).

Interestingly, even Jenkins (2000: 138) recognises that "at the time of writing", dental fricatives "are still stigmatised in the L1 communities by speakers of RP, GA, and other more standard L1 varieties". The implicit suggestion that such stigmatisations may be suspended in the near future seems premature. In her (2007) study, Jenkins (2007: 251) proposes that the stigma may actually be removed by "marginalizing the NS variants and prioritizing the NNS" realisations in pronunciation teaching. It is, however, unclear by what feat of linguistic or social engineering such attitudes could easily be removed from the NS and NNS communities who hold them. Perhaps some of Jenkins's proposals for ELF should be seen as an attempt at language planning, whereby learners are being encouraged to spearhead social changes by deliberately using accent features that could expose them to attitudinally marked responses. For their part, NSs are encouraged to contribute to this by learning to modify their pronunciation when interacting with non-natives (Jenkins 2000: 227–229). Such NSs "have to accept that it may already be better, depending on their EIL interlocutor, to use substitutions of /θ/ and /ð/, and, at the very least, to accept and understand them" (Jenkins 2000: 228). The success of such drastic measures will of course have to depend on the informed consent of all parties concerned.

3. Attitudes to pronunciation errors as in Van den Doel (2006)

3.1. Introduction

The claim that since dental fricatives (or certain other pronunciation features) are absent from a number of NS varieties of English, and are therefore easily dispensa-

ble in any Expanding Circle or lingua franca context, appears to be on its way to becoming a new cliché in ELT. Yet there is in fact insufficient evidence to support its wholesale implementation in teaching. For instance, the results of an investigation by Van den Doel (2006) suggest that attitudes to accent parallels are difficult to predict, even in those interlocutors who may well use similar features in their own speech. In view of the unpredictability of interlocutors' reactions, especially where this is caused by the stigmatisation of specific accent features, it would seem unwise to recommend their general use – at least not to learners whose communicative target is successful interaction with specific groups of interlocutors (such as NSs from North America, or NNSs who are sensitive to particular NS norms).

3.2. Overview of the study

Van den Doel's study (2006) was based on a large-scale Internet survey, in which twenty "traditional" L2 pronunciation errors with close equivalents in non-deviant but regionally distinctive native speech were presented to well over 500 NS participants from different Inner Circle countries. The pronunciation errors (selected from authoritative handbooks on pronunciation training, such as Collins and Mees (2003), were presented to participants in the context of otherwise segmentally and suprasegmentally non-deviant sentences read out by bilingual actors in one of two guises – either Received Pronunciation or General American so as to cater for participants' preferences. An additional 12 pronunciation errors were also included which did not have parallels in Inner Circle Englishes. In addition to being required to self-identify their own accents, participants were asked to detect any errors as well as indicate their severity on a 5-point Likert scale.

Using multi-level analysis (Quené and Van den Bergh 2004), the investigation of all 32 tokens showed that participants chose to regard as serious errors not only pronunciation features that could hinder intelligibility, such as phoneme mergers, but also treated as extremely significant certain features which are only socially marked, such as the inappropriate deletion or insertion of postvocalic /r/. There was considerable convergence in these respects. However, surprisingly, it was respondents from North America in particular who considered the substitution of dental fricatives by stops to be far more serious than did other groups. The additional comments offered by many of the participants reinforced the impression that such substitutions are apparently heavily stigmatised in the North American context. This was not the only indication that there was also notable divergence among groups of NS judges in their assessment of NNS pronunciation errors: the results clearly indicated that North Americans' overall evaluation patterns of pronunciation errors showed higher levels of "accent intolerance" than those of other judges.

3.3. Investigating accent parallelism

In order to examine participants' attitudes to the twenty accent parallels, the investigation also established, on the basis of a representative selection of accent descriptions, whether or not specific errors had direct parallels in respondents' own wider speech communities. To take one example, the L2 error of replacement of TRAP by DRESS was found to be comparable to the raised realisations of TRAP attested in Greater London, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, as well as a number of North American accents. Participants' own comments often helped to identify such accent parallelism. For instance, a number of respondents stated explicitly that the raised realisation of TRAP reminded them of Southern Hemisphere accents. In other cases, they equated it with an obsolescent version of RP, now associated with elderly members of the Royal Family, offensive "poshness", and the antiquated speech of old newsreels. Subsequently, the severity judgements of those respondents whose self-identifications clearly placed them in any of these locations were coded "SIM" (**sim**ilar); responses from participants from other areas were coded "DIF" (**dif**ferent). Finally, multi-level analysis was used to determine, for each of these 20 errors, what the average severity was for the groups of "SIM" and "DIF" responses, and whether or not these were statistically significantly different from each other.

3.4. Investigating accent parallelism: results and discussion

What emerged from the analysis of the twenty accent parallels was a mixed pattern (see Table 1). One overall result was that, if a pronunciation feature is likely to occur in the accent group of the respondents, it may indeed be assessed more leniently. That is to say, this overall effect was only found for all 20 errors when pooled. It was not attested for as many as 14 individual errors; namely, the first 14 listed in Table 1, which include three instances of th-substitution. In addition, the effect was noted in no more than five individual errors. These included three th-substitutions, as well as two instances of inappropriate approximant insertion/deletion (in contexts such as /kɑː ~ kɑːr/ and /nuː ~ njuː/ respectively). One error, the spurious FOOT – GOOSE merger, was assessed significantly less leniently by respondents (Scottish and Northern Irish) whose accents are likely to have a comparable pronunciation feature. Possibly, the judges' objection may derive from considerations of vowel length rather than quality – or perhaps they may have felt that it did not fit in with the speaker's otherwise RP accent. Nevertheless, it indicates that the mere existence of accent parallelism in itself is not the sole factor in accounting for participants' evaluations of pronunciations similar or identical to their own.

Since there was no demonstrable effect of accent parallels on leniency in three out of the six cases of substitutions of dental fricatives, it may be argued that other factors must be reckoned to account for this. It seems likely that context (i.e. word-

Table 1. Estimated average severity differences between responses coded "DIF" and "SIM" (for selected tokens). These are significant at $p < .05$ ($\chi^2 > 9.14$, $df = 1$), unless listed as "n.s" (based on Van den Doel 2006: 282).

Error description	DIF	s.e.	SIM	s.e.	χ^2	
Substitution of medial /θ/ by /t/	2.290	0.159	2.341	0.190	0.17	n.s.
/æ ~ e/ confusion	2.443	0.214	2.216	0.259	1.60	n.s.
Final fortis/lenis neutralisation	2.449	0.189	2.521	0.606	0.01	n.s.
Substitution of final /ð/ by /d/	1.617	0.276	1.827	0.336	0.89	n.s.
/ʌ ~ ɒ/confusion	2.377	0.195	2.400	0.221	0.03	n.s.
Glottalisation of final /d/	2.359	0.230	1.681	0.610	1.36	n.s.
Epenthetic [ə] in /lm/	2.244	0.211	1.989	0.226	4.06	n.s.
Use of uvular-r	2.651	0.190	2.373	0.218	3.85	n.s.
Absence/presence of weakening	1.510	0.217	1.521	0.222	0.01	n.s.
Overdark pharyngealised [ɬ]	1.20e-15	6.65e-09	–1.71e-15	5.70e-09	0	n.s.
Absence of weak form	1.054	0.227	1.338	0.304	1.58	n.s.
Substitution of initial /θ/ by /t/	2.658	0.165	2.833	0.195	1.99	n.s.
Unaspirated [t]	1.576	0.240	1.710	0.287	0.46	n.s.
Initial fortis/lenis neutralisation	2.622	0.209	2.657	1.534	0	n.s.
Substitution of final /θ/ by /t/	1.507	0.246	0.555	0.307	20.80	
Inappropriate post-vocalic r	2.141	0.098	1.691	0.122	11.81	
Yod deletion /insertion	1.173	0.125	–0.038	0.090	166.45	
Substitution of initial /ð/ by /d	0.904	0.231	1.548	0.247	22.53	
Substitution of medial /ð/ by /d	2.001	0.226	1.073	0.276	23.50	
/ʊ ~ uː/confusion	1.977	0.232	2.600	0.266	12.13	

initial, medial or final) is crucial here and contributes to the salience of the errors. This is perhaps not all that surprising, since the most stigmatised substitutions occur most commonly only in certain positions. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1998: 161) have shown that initial /ð ~ d/ alternation is a US "social stereotype" which "may even lead to the stigmatisation of speakers as 'stupid' and 'uneducated'" (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998: 75). This may account for the patterns of leniency towards some substitutions rather than others.

Another potential factor is functional load – a concept also invoked in Kirkpatrick (2007: 18). For instance, Munro and Derwing (2006) have recently demonstrated that substitutions of dental fricatives involving a low functional load do not have a strong effect on what they term "comprehensibility". At the same time, such substitutions do affect respondents' impression of accentedness. As Munro and Derwing (2006: 527) state, "the presence of one, two, or three [...] errors resulted in

significantly worse judgements than the presence of no errors". Thus Munro and Derwing's Canadian respondents show the same bias against substitutions of dental fricatives as were found in Van den Doel's (2007) North American respondents. This would suggest that, while such replacements may be less stigmatised in certain contexts, learners of American English in particular should be wary of any suggestion advocating their general use – certainly if they want to communicate effectively with NSs, or with NNSs sensitive to NS norms. In this regard, it would seem highly relevant to take account of the overall tendency on the part of North American judges (arguably the world's largest and most influential group of NSs) to evaluate NNS pronunciation errors more severely.

This is not to say that British, Irish, Australian and New Zealand judges considered all th-substitutions to be insignificant – in fact, word-initial /θ ~ t/ substitution was actually assessed marginally more severely by these respondents. But, crucially, in general they judged such phenomena more leniently than did North Americans. In any case, it is clear that attitudes to pronunciation features vary considerably from one group of native judges to another – and that it may well be difficult to predict leniency accorded to accent parallels, even for judges who use such realisations themselves. It must be accepted that stigmatisation of certain accent features is best able to account for this.

3.5. Further implications

Given the fact that all participants in the 2006 investigation were English NSs, the experiment provided no information on NNS attitudes to stigmatised features, but it would be interesting to determine to what extent those sensitive to NS norms also internalise NS attitudes to specific pronunciation features. NNSs' convergence to North American accent stereotypes has already been reported for university students of English in both Hungary (Balogh 2008) and the Netherlands (Brummel 2010). Preliminary results from a survey conducted by Quené and Van den Doel (2009), which uses a design roughly comparable to Van den Doel (2006) but which is aimed at European NNSs instead (see Section 1.3.), suggest that judges from the European continent do not evaluate the substitution of dental fricatives by stops significantly differently from NSs. The preliminary findings also indicate that the complex patterns of convergence and divergence, attested for NSs in Van den Doel (2006), are also found in different groups of NSs and NNSs. All this implies that further research into NNS attitudes is required before any sweeping statements can be made about worldwide NNS pronunciation priorities in an ELT context.

At present, however, it would seem prudent not to encourage learners of English to imitate certain regional or local accent features merely because these are very similar to their own characteristic NNS realisations of English. It would be unwise to do so without any awareness of the reactions such realisations are likely to engen-

der in speakers of these accents, or in other NSs or NNSs. After all, even to accept Jenkins's claim that L2 variation is "on a par" with L1 regional variation means that both are liable to stigmatisation from unsympathetic native and non-native speakers alike.

4. Conclusions

The arguments advanced by Jenkins (2000, 2007) and Kirkpatrick (2007) in favour of endormative and/or lingua franca models in ELT present these as overwhelmingly beneficial to the vast majority of NNSs. In doing so, they gloss over many considerable disadvantages to their approach. It is only a thorough examination of specific learner needs that may call into question the certainty with which both Jenkins and Kirkpatrick posit that NS norms are both irrelevant and disempowering to a great many learners. Even the adoption of "local cultures of learning" – a position fraught with controversy – cannot guarantee that the needs of all learners in a specific community are being met. It is in particular the varying degrees to which learners from different communities are prepared to internalise NS norms and attitudes that should be considered in the choice of model. The adoption of any such model should not only be predicated on issues of intelligibility, but also take in issues of acceptability, from the point of view not only of NS but also NNS interlocutors. The mere fact that certain NNS accent features have parallels in NS varieties of English does not in itself constitute a valid reason for incorporating these into any proposed endonormative or lingua franca models. For those learners who have an interest in communicating both with NSs and those who have internalised their norms, it continues to be of vital importance to be aware of the stigmatisation associated with pronunciation features that are socially marked. The previously mentioned Berlitz commercial about the unfortunate coastguard who confuses *think* and *sink* not only explores issues of intelligibility: it also evokes certain socially significant attitudes to this error – and not merely in native speakers. Or so one might sink.

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