

English Lingua Franca: New Parameters for the Teaching (and Testing) of English Pronunciation?

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Abstract The recent (2018) *Companion Volume* to the *Common European Framework* offers an overhaul of many of the scales of descriptors, including, notably, phonology. A single, skeletal, scale for 'phonological control' is replaced by three scales, describing overall control, sound articulation, and prosodic features. In each of these, the focus has become intelligibility, rather than proximity to a native speaker accent. In this article I examine the development of pronunciation teaching since the communicative revolution, and the rise of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in which intelligibility is crucial. The article concludes with a reflection on how (if at all) the revised framework could inform an ELF aware assessment of pronunciation.

Keywords Pronunciation. Phonology. Accent. Common European Framework. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Non-native speaker (NNS). Assessment.

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1 Pronunciation in the Updated Common European Framework and the ‘Special Case’ of English

Nearly two decades after publication by the Council of Europe of the ground-breaking *Common European Framework of Reference: Teaching, Learning and Assessment*, a *Companion Volume* appeared, in 2018. It was intended to plug the gap of ‘mediation’, the last of the four macro areas of language competences (along with ‘reception’, ‘production’ and ‘interaction’), which had not been fully described, and to update existing scales where it was felt necessary, by adding new competences or readjusting existing descriptors.

Most of the adjustments were minor, but one ‘grey area’, in the words of the authors, underwent a major revision: phonology. In the original, 2001, Framework, the scale for ‘phonological control’ is holistic and skeletal, making reference to (and contrasting) ‘foreign accent’ and ‘native speaker’. Indeed, at the bottom of the scale (A1), evidence of the learner’s low level is provided by the discomfort felt by the native speaker who has to struggle to make sense of the utterance:

A1 Pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases can be understood with some effort by native speakers used to dealing with speakers of his/her language group. (Council of Europe 2001, 117)

An account of the revision process for phonology descriptors commissioned by the Council of Europe is scathing about the shortcomings of this scale. The scale, it claims, is incomplete, unrealistic, and inconsistent, since it

mixes such diverse factors as stress/intonation, pronunciation, accent and intelligibility without providing clear indication of progression in any of these factors specifically. (Piccardo 2016, 9)

In addition, it assumes that the primary reason for learning a foreign language is to communicate with native speakers of that language. In the context of globalisation and instant international communication through the Internet, and the rise of English as the world’s lingua franca (ELF), this is no longer the case. Timmis (2002) suggests that eighty percent of all conversations in English are between non-native speakers, while Crystal (2008) updates an earlier estimate (1.5 billion) to around 2 billion inhabitants of the planet able to communicate in English. This significant development is captured in the rationale behind the revision of the Framework:

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)

The identification of the special role of English in the Council of Europe document follows a similar awareness within the European Union. For example, as well as becoming the *de facto* working language of the Union, English has become an essential enabling tool in the domain of higher education, both for students and staff on mobility, and (related to mobility) as a medium of instruction in numerous degree courses, at both undergraduate and graduate level.

To single out English as a special case would have been taboo until just a few years ago; the European mantra for foreign language learning had long been ‘mother tongue plus two foreign languages’, from an early age, without stating *which* languages (European Commission 2004); this was left to language planners in individual states. However, in 2013 a report on the modernisation of higher education in Europe, commissioned by the EU, finally comes into the open about the role of English, by implying that the ‘mother tongue plus two’ recommendation has become mother tongue plus English (as a lingua franca) and a second foreign language (for cultural reasons):

Higher education institutions should develop and implement holistic internationalisation strategies as an integral part of their overall mission and functions. Increased mobility of student and staff, international dimension of curricula, international experience of faculty, *with a sufficient command of English and a second foreign language and intercultural competences*, transnational delivery of courses and degrees, and international alliances should become indispensable components of higher education in Europe and beyond (European Commission 2013; italics added)

This, then, is the background to the revision process for phonology, and to the decision to remove all references to ‘native speaker’ as a yardstick for measuring performance, to be replaced by the notion of *intelligibility*. Piccardo (2016, 15) records that the fundamental areas of interest for the revision process were identified as articulation, prosody, and accentedness, together with the inter-related notions of intelligibility and comprehensibility. This initial, informative, stage of the revision process drew on the work of (among others) Derwing and Munro (2005), Munro and Derwing (2011) and the *intelligibility principle* propounded by Levis (2005). The five areas of interest are served by three scales which were eventually developed, labelled ‘overall phonological control’, ‘sound articulation’

and ‘prosodic features’. Intelligibility – the degree of actual understanding – has become a key concept in the descriptors, transversal across scales and levels; the words *intelligible*, *intelligibly* or *intelligibility* occur 16 times in the scales. Accent, too, features prominently in the first scale, but it is no longer stigmatised as ‘foreign’; instead, it might be an indication of the speaker’s multilingual background, but not necessarily impinge on intelligibility, as in the descriptor for phonological control at B2 level:

accent tends to be influenced by other language(s) he/she speaks, but has little or no effect on intelligibility. (Council of Europe 2018, 136)

We shall return to the notion of intelligibility, comprehensibility and accent, in the light of teacher and student attitudes to learning pronunciation in the context of ELF, and their incorporation into the revised CEFR. First, however, we shall briefly examine the fate of pronunciation teaching in English Language Teaching (ELT) over the last half century, which can shed useful light on the inadequate treatment of phonology in the 2001 Framework, and the need for revision.

2 Pronunciation Teaching in the ‘Communicative Revolution’

The report of the revision process to update the CEFR also offers Piccardo an opportunity to reflect on the wider issue of pronunciation teaching, and a decades-long dearth of interest in the topic in applied linguistics research, which may have contributed to a corresponding lack of treatment of pronunciation teaching in ELT training courses. Derwing and Munro (2005, 379) refer to the “marginalisation” of pronunciation teaching, and the fact that teachers tend to be left to their own devices to teach pronunciation intuitively, if at all. Specific attention to the pedagogical dimension of phonology, Piccardo claims, is a recent development, fuelled by the intelligibility/nativeness debate, and a growing interest in pronunciation assessment (e.g. Isaacs, Trofimovich 2017). But the failure of training courses to give prominence to pronunciation teaching seems to be persistent and widespread: in a Europe wide survey of pronunciation teaching, Henderson et al. (2012) find that most teachers have not been taught how to teach pronunciation.

It is worth reflecting on this continued marginalisation in the light of changing approaches to language teaching, and phonological description, and whether or not the revised Framework can be seen as a catalyst for change. Levis (2005) recalls that the audiolingual approach in vogue in the 1960s and 1970s, based on a ‘listen and repeat’ sequence of isolated utterances, “elevated pronunciation to a

pinnacle of importance” (Levis 2005, 369). The focus was on accuracy of both segmental and supra-segmental phonology; often devoid, however, of an interactional dimension. But, he warns, the history of pronunciation teaching is a ‘study in extremes’ and the communication revolution which took hold in Europe in the 1980s, with its focus on ‘authenticity’ and meaningful interaction, initially ignored pronunciation.

This marginalisation seems to be confirmed, at least in part, when one looks at ELT course books from the 1980s and 1990s, where brief pronunciation slots may be found, often at the end of a teaching unit, which revisit phonological features (presumed to be difficult for non native speakers) which have occurred incidentally in the unit. They could have functioned, and were probably intended to do so, as gap fills for teachers with time on their hands at the end of a lesson, rather than as an integral part of a teaching/learning process. Connected speech phenomena, such as weak forms, the pronunciation of the unstressed vowel /ə/, and sentence stress, were given as much importance as individual phonemes in what Wach (2011) calls a ‘top down’ approach to pronunciation teaching, in contrast with the ‘bottom up’, segmental approach which was the hallmark of audio-lingualism. She cites a 2001 manual for ESL teachers in which the rationale for pronunciation teaching is re-dimensioned thus:

In the past pronunciation instruction usually focused on the articulation of consonants and vowels, and the discrimination of minimal pairs. In recent years the focus has shifted to include a broader emphasis on suprasegmental features, such as stress and intonation. However, many teaching materials still do not make clear that pronunciation is just one piece of the whole communicative competence puzzle. (Goodwin 2001, 117)

Pronunciation, then, fits into the communicative agenda as ‘one piece of the puzzle’, as long as it is integrated into discourse. Wach sees this approach as being largely compatible with the pronunciation needs of ELF users today, as well as those of students of English as a foreign (EFL) or second (ESL) language, since the objective was “not necessarily to make them [students] sound like native speakers” (2011, 248).

However, a close look at ELT materials which began to appear during the communicative period belies this conviction. To take the pre-intermediate levels of two popular course books from, respectively, the 1980s and the 1990s: *The Cambridge English Course* (published by CUP) and *Reward* (Macmillan). In the contents pages (‘map of the book’) both list the sounds syllabus in a final column; input is divided more or less equally between segmental and supra-segmental features. Unsurprisingly, most of these features are problematic for learners of English. To take just three examples from each course:

Table 1 Sample pronunciation slots in *The Cambridge English Course 2*

Unit 9	interdental fricatives /θ / and /ð/
Unit 14	Linking /r / /j / and /w/
Unit 24	Strong and weak forms of <i>must</i>

Table 2 Sample pronunciation slots in *Reward Pre Intermediate*

Unit 8	Weak syllables with /ə/ and /ɪ/
Unit 23	Weak form of <i>for</i>
Unit 37	Word final dark l /ɫ/

What these features have in common is that none of them are essential to intelligibility. The production of (say) /d/ instead of /ð/, or /t/ instead of /θ/ is unlikely to cause problems of intelligibility to most listeners; /d/ is common in many second language varieties of English, while dental plosive /t/ can frequently be found for /θ/, for example for some speakers of Irish English. Attention to allophonic variation – dark /l/ in word final position – which is treated in both course books – is even less crucial to understanding, and may pass almost unnoticed.

Rather, the aim in these activities seems to be to make the learner sound like a native speaker, or more precisely a native speaker of a standard form of British English, or modified RP. This is an unrealistic goal for most students and a dauntless task for the teacher, but understandable in the context of the communicative approach, which was developed in the UK, where it found its initial expression in language schools, where teachers were native speakers, and where students were in daily contact with native speakers. The main objective, then, was to prepare students for interaction with (largely monoglot) English speakers; thus a number of pronunciation slots in *Reward* involve adjusting intonation patterns to be well received by the native speaker-listener, and have labels such as ‘interested intonation’, ‘polite intonation’ and ‘friendly intonation’.

This concern for native speaker reception of accents resonates closely with the description of phonological control at A1 level of the CEFR, which we noted above; irritating, amusing, or causing the native speaker effort are all implied negative judgements which are used elsewhere in the Framework to indicate a level of (non) proficiency,¹ and which can be seen as evidence that the CEFR is itself a child of the communicative revolution.

¹ For example, the description for ‘conversation’ at Level B2 is: “Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or

By the turn of the millennium the communicative approach was informing national curricula, teacher training courses, and foreign language coursebooks across Europe and beyond, without however taking into account that, for English at least, the overarching need for most users of English internationally had become that of communicating with other non native speakers of the language. It is about this time that research into the phenomenon of English lingua franca began in earnest, championed by (among others) Barbara Seidhofer at the University of Vienna, and Jennifer Jenkins at Kings College London, and it is to Jenkins proposal for a ‘core phonology’ for international users of English that we now turn.

3 The Phonology of Non Native Speakers in ELF

The rationale behind Jenkins (2000) seminal *The Phonology of English as an International Language* is simple, informed and inspired by her background as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language and a lecturer in phonology: if there are aspects of English phonology which are not essential to successful communication then they do not need to be taught. She thus separates essential (‘core’) features from non-essential (‘non core’).

The starting premise is intelligibility. Intelligibility is compromised, Jenkins claims (2000, 123) by the extent of transfer from learners L1s; or, taking a wider view, by the extent of inter speaker variability. But since it would be unrealistic (she argues) to base a pronunciation syllabus on reducing transfer features from the L1, she identifies those phonological features which (she believes, based on her research) are essential for intelligibility in international (and not only international) interaction in English. These include the consonant inventory, with the exception of the interdental fricatives; phonetic requirements including the need for aspiration following fortis plosives; the retention of consonant clusters in word initial position; maintenance of vowel length contrasts; and the need for nuclear stress production. Features not considered to be core include a range of connected speech phenomena such as stress timing, weak forms and the use of unstressed vowel schwa, intonation, especially when theorized as discourse features by Brazil (1997), and word stress. In one fell swoop, then, teachers are invited to disregard supra-segmental features of pronunciation, with the exception of nuclear stress.

However, Kang et al. (2016) suggest that there are environments where segmentals do not ‘trump’ supra-segmentals, such as that of

requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker” (Council of Europe 2001, 122).

Arabic speakers learning English, and that more specific categorizations are needed to capture inter-speaker variety. Other criticisms which have been levelled against Jenkins' proposal include the relegation of word stress to non-core, implying that misplaced stress is not a threat to intelligibility (McCrocklin 2012), and, from a rather different perspective, a possible increased workload for teachers of pronunciation (Olea, Antonio 2019).

This last concern seems to presuppose that the LFC was intended to be adopted *en bloc* as a teaching syllabus – something that Jenkins is at pains to refute, since it is “neither a pronunciation model nor a restricted simplified core” (2000, 158). Perhaps, though, in the same way that the CEFR has come to be seen as a definitive description of (any) language for teaching and assessment purposes, rather than as work in progress offering examples of language behaviour, so too the LFC has provided the input for pronunciation courses (e.g. Walker 2010), as well as providing the backbone for a post EFL paradigm for pronunciation teaching, which can be used in teacher training (Sifakis 2014).

What Jenkins' work did (intentionally) was to focus attention on the value of the non native speaker (NNS) teacher, and to contrast the 'native speaker teacher is best' fallacy identified by Philipson (1992), and before him Kachru (1982), which the communicative revolution had been instrumental in propagating. NNS teachers, Jenkins argues (2000, 223) have the advantage of dealing more effectively with learners' difficulties because they have themselves been learners of English; in addition (at least in a European context) they are more likely to have greater knowledge of phonetics than their UK or US counterparts; and, when teaching in national systems to students with a shared first language, they are likely to be more aware of transfer errors. Jenkins concludes her scrutiny of the NS-NNS teacher debate by suggesting that in the future native speakers will, like their NNS counterparts, “have to expend some effort on learning EIL”.² She cites, by way of example, speakers of General American (GA) having to learn intervocalic /t/ to replace flapped [ɾ] (as in the pronunciation of *city*) and speakers of RP to produce post vocalic 'r' [ɹ], as in the pronunciation of *farm*, turning the prestige British variety into an improbable rhoticised alternative reminiscent of a West of England dialect.

The growth of English as the world's lingua franca since the publication of the lingua franca core, and the massive recruitment of (NNS) English language teachers which this entailed, brought the NS-NNS teacher dichotomy more sharply into focus. Nonetheless, employers continued to advertise posts open only to native speak-

² EIL, English as an International Language, can be taken as synonymous with ELF, English as a Lingua Franca.

ers, in spite of the stances taken by professional teaching organisations such as TESOL and IATEFL; and non native speaker teachers remained wedded to native speaker norms and accents, in spite of a growing body of research (Canagarajah 1999; Mahboob 2005; 2010) endorsing the multilingual perspective brought to bear by non native teachers.

4 The Appeal of the Native Speaker Accent Under Threat? Research into Learner Attitudes

In a worldwide survey of teachers and learners Timmis (2002) found that 67% of learners aspired to a native speaker accent, rather than a pronunciation which could be understood by all (NS and NNS) listeners but which retained traces of an L1 accent. Teachers had a more ambivalent (or perhaps just more realistic) attitude to the same question, 39% of them opting for 'intelligibility', 27% for native-like accent, and 34% expressing no preference.

Subsequent studies have produced similar, or higher, rates of agreement for European students of English. Nowacka (2012), for example, presents research showing that 89% of university students from Italy, Spain and Poland aspire to a native speaker-like accent. Szpyra-Kozłowska (2014) found that 75% of 16-17 year old Polish students aspired either to a GA or an RP accent. In 2019, 95% of incoming students in the foreign language department at Ca' Foscari University of Venice agreed that their pronunciation goal is to 'sound as close to that of the native speaker as possible', whereas the statement 'Having a foreign accent is not a problem for me so long as I can communicate' drew a much more mixed response, with only 40% in agreement. The respondents included students of French, German, Spanish and Russian as well as English, about to embark on a three year specialist course in foreign languages and cultures. These responses, however, are perhaps best seen in the context of integratively motivated students, in which cultural assimilation and native speaker accents may be related goals in the same learning process (Newbold, forthcoming).

When students are asked to focus on an ELF context, their perceptions change, revealing more instrumental learning motives. In a survey of (mostly) Italian learners Christiansen (2017) reports that an overwhelming majority agreed with the statement 'I would like to speak English so well that people would think that I was born in an English-speaking country'. This statement was intended as a NS norm-oriented item in a battery of statements designed to elicit students' orientations towards ELF or NS models of pronunciation. However, it was an exceptional, one-off response; most ELF-oriented options (e.g. 'English is not my native language but it is special to me.

Using it feels natural') achieved a significantly higher degree of consensus than norm-oriented statements.

An awareness of intelligibility-related issues by potential test takers of English language certification emerges very clearly in a large scale survey carried out at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice in 2020.³ The survey was intended to gauge the amount of interest that potential test takers might have in an 'ELF aware' certification of English, if such a test of English were to be developed. Altogether 525 respondents took part, contacted on social media. Mostly university students, from 15 Italian universities, they were studying on a broad range of degree programmes, at both undergraduate and master's levels; the majority were not language specialists.

After a preliminary investigation of respondents familiarity with, and opinions of, existing certification, the survey went on to investigate attitudes towards their understanding of ELF, including the role of accent. ELF was defined in a 'narrow' sense (i.e., without referring to native speakers as possible participants in the interaction) as

the use of English in international contexts: interaction between non-native speakers, colleagues/students of different nationalities, tourists, online conversations, etc.

An initial item on the importance of NS-like pronunciation found only a minority (32.4%) believing that their English 'should be as close as possible to a native speaker's to avoid misunderstanding'. This was followed by a question on comprehension breakdown, shifting the focus from production to reception:

Table 3 Question from survey of potential English language test takers

Q3	What makes comprehension most difficult for you when someone speaks?
	<i>Mark only one oval</i>
	English words I don't know
	Non standard grammar
	Accent / pronunciation I am not familiar with
	If the speaker doesn't make any effort to help me understand
	I don't have any major problems in comprehension

51.4% of respondents selected unfamiliar accents/pronunciation as the major problem; the second most frequently encountered difficult was lack of accommodation on the part of the interlocutor (not making

³ Unpublished master's dissertation by Veronica Faberi, *ELF Certification: Stakeholders' Attitudes and their Perceived Problems* (2020).

any effort to help the listener), accommodation being a well attested strategy facilitating comprehension in ELF contexts (e.g. Cogo 2009). Much further down the list were problems related to lexis (9.4%) or grammar (4.1%). This finding provides confirmation (if any were needed) of the importance of pronunciation in any course preparing students to interact in English in an international environment.

Respondents were then asked to identify those factors which, in their opinion, contributed most to being a ‘successful communicator’ in English. They were given seven features, all of which were presented on a 5 point Likert scale, and for all of which respondents had to indicate the level of importance, ranging from ‘not at all important’ to ‘very important’. The seven ‘successful communicator’ factors, with explanations where felt to be necessary, were:

- Native-like pronunciation;
- Grammatical accuracy;
- Fluency (talking at a normal speed with good pronunciation);
- Effective non-verbal language (gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice);
- Communication strategies (repetition, paraphrasing, etc.);
- Accommodation (making adjustments in how you speak based on your interlocutor’s reactions);
- Intercultural communication (taking into account the culture/s of people speaking to you).

By far the factor deemed least important was the first, to have a native-like pronunciation, with less than ten percent (9.9%) judging this to be ‘very important’, and only 22% choosing ‘sometimes important’. In contrast, the most important strategies were identified as accommodation (75.4% ‘very important’ or ‘sometimes important’), fluency (74.3%), and communication strategies (64%). Here, then, we find further evidence of ELF awareness in students and users of English, and a growing conviction that, although pronunciation is key to success, native-like accents are not going to be an advantage in international communication.

5 Back to the CEFR: Teaching, Learning, and (Especially) Assessment

The phenomenon of ‘ELF awareness’, theorised notably by Sifakis (2014) seems thus to be taking hold on multiple fronts; bottom up with learners of English, as we have just reported; with teachers, both non-native (Lopriore, Grazzi 2019, reporting on secondary school teachers in Italy) and native (Newbold, Sperti 2019, in a survey of mother tongue *collaboratori linguistici* working in Italian universities); and, crucially, top down, in the revised phonological descriptors in the updated version of the CEFR. In the long term, one of the main merits of the revised CEFR may come to be seen as the accommodation of ELF within a framework for mainstream language teaching, and as part of an overall stated policy of promoting plurilingualism and intercultural competence. This would sit well with Jenkins (2015) ‘repositioning’ of ELF as a multilingual resource, and Kohn’s (2019) exploration of common conceptual ground for teachers seeking to reconcile ELF with EFL within a context of mainstream language teaching.

The phonology scales in the revised Framework, we noted at the beginning of this paper, offer a much more articulated description than the original 2001 version, with a major focus on intelligibility. This notion, however, requires an explanatory note. The tripartite distinction between *intelligibility*, *comprehensibility* and *interpretability* was first postulated by Smith and Nelson (1985), and has proved useful to pronunciation research ever since. But whereas the notion of *interpretability* – what the speaker actually means, or the illocutionary force of an utterance – is unproblematic, researchers have struggled to unravel the distinction between *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility*. For Smith and Nelson this lay in the difference between word/utterance recognition and word/utterance meaning – definitions too close for comfort for some –, and over time the conventional distinction has become that proposed by Derwing (2010): *intelligibility* refers to actual understanding, while *comprehensibility* is the effort needed to understand. In the revised Framework, the two notions have been telescoped into one, and subsumed under the heading of *intelligibility*, defined as

accessibility of meaning for listeners, covering also the listeners’ perceived difficulty in understanding (normally referred to as *comprehensibility*). (Council of Europe 2018, 134)

Thus, in the introduction to the rewritten scale for ‘overall phonological control’ we read:

Intelligibility has been a key factor for discriminating between levels. The focus is on how much effort is required from the interlocutor to decode the speaker’s message. (135)

Intelligibility is by far the most noticeable ELF-related feature in the new CEFR. It shifts the focus from production to perception, and highlights the active role of the interlocutor, who has to “be collaborative” (A1, ‘Sound Articulation’), to “recognize and adjust to the influence of the speaker’s language background on pronunciation” (A2, ‘Sound Articulation’) or who “may need to ask for repetition from time to time” (A2, ‘Overall Phonological Control’). It is not, however, the only ELF strategy. The ability to self correct, for example, a well attested feature of successful ELF communication, is indicative of C1 level for ‘Sound Articulation’ “if [the speaker] noticeably mispronounces a sound” (136).

There are also frequent references to accent, but they are no longer labelled as ‘foreign’ (‘Foreign to whom?’ one might ask) and as such erroneous. Accent, usually defined in terms of distance from a given model, but in the absence of a native speaker model now best seen as an indication of the speaker’s phonological repertoire, can be a noticeable feature of pronunciation. It may be useful in the descriptive scales, but it is only partially related to the notion of intelligibility: unintelligible speakers will always be rated as heavily accented, but a speaker with a heavy accent can be completely intelligible (Derwing, Munro 2009). Thus, in the revised Framework, accent is associated with plurilingualism rather than seen as a impediment, and for this reason may be noticeable even at the top of the scale, as in the descriptor for ‘Overall Phonological Control: C2’:

Can employ the full range of phonological features in the target language with a high level of control – including prosodic features such as word and sentence stress, rhythm and intonation – so that the finer points of his/her message are clear and precise. Intelligibility and effective conveyance of and enhancement of meaning are not affected in any way by features of accent that may be retained from other language(s). (Council of Europe 2018, 134)

This appears to be a clear signal that native-like pronunciation is not a realistic goal for a pronunciation course. The revised Framework does, however, indicate a range of prosodic features such as stress, rhythm and intonation, which, as we have seen, would be ‘non core’ in Jenkins’ LFC, and which are a noticeable part of native speaker-like proficiency. In particular, prosodic features, which comprise the third of the three scales, are linked in the descriptors to intelligibility and the expression of ‘finer shades of meaning’, and hence (by implication) to the notion of interpretability.

It is important to remember here that the Framework is not language specific, and even less a proposal for a default ‘minimal’ phonological repertoire such as might be envisaged for a hypothetical course in English as a lingua franca. Rather, it is an attempt to pro-

vide descriptions of language - any language - in functional terms, generalizable to a range of teaching and learning contexts and objectives, and classified by level of proficiency: the three macro areas of 'basic user' (A) 'independent user' (B) and 'proficient user' (C), and the familiar broad reference levels from A1 to C2, most of which are often further sub divided.

These level distinctions are key for assessment purposes, since they inform curricula across the continent of Europe, as well as all the major European based language certifications. But can they be of use to assess ELF? More specifically, do the intelligibility-based rankings in the phonological scales offer guidelines to teachers or examiners attempting to evaluate the potential of a user of English for communicative success in an ELF context? As yet there is no such thing as a test of ELF, not least because there is no overriding ELF construct for a test of ELF (Mcnamara 2012), since ELF interactions, even more than NS-NS or NS-NNS interactions, are one-off, unrepeatable, examples of improvisation in which a range of strategies - linguistic, and non linguistic - need to be made use of by all participants. Test specifications would need to be broad enough to anticipate all the strategies which might contribute to communicative success.

The Framework can offer however some (albeit limited) input for an 'ELF' aware communicative assessment of speaking. The illustrative scales for spoken production and spoken interaction, which have been extended in the revised version to take into account online interaction, are followed by examples of strategies which can be used to bolster linguistic performance, and which are themselves classified by level. They include, for production, compensating, monitoring and repair; and for interaction co-operating and asking for clarification. Both of these latter strategies apply to the interlocutor, or information receiver, in a communicative interaction. A completely new breakdown of mediation strategies includes a scale for 'collaborating to construct meaning'; here the focus is on working in a group, but the term is a familiar one in an ELF context relating to peer interaction.

All of these strategies are highly relevant to successful ELF interaction, and could be used in tandem with other scales, and include the phonological scales, for assessment purposes. Ultimately, though, the Framework probably raises more questions than solutions for a putative 'ELF aware' test. The levels it proposes are of course a convenient fiction; language acquisition reflects a continuum rather than a series of leaps. But in the context of ELF are *any* levels needed beyond that of successful interaction? Since ELF interaction may involve a 'levelling down' of language skills on the part of one accommodating participant, in the search of a common lowest denominator shared with the interlocutor, would this deliberately

simplified or modified performance increase the likelihood of an invalid (and unfair) assessment? Who is doing the rating, in any case? As early as 2003, House speculated that the ‘yardstick’ for measuring ELF performance could only be another ELF user, a ‘stable multi-lingual speaker’, thereby excluding native speakers from the assessment process, while Carey et al. (2011) found that rater familiarity with a particular accent led to higher scores.

But the revised CEFR phonology descriptors can be seen as a starting point. For an ‘ELF aware’ teacher, the three scales could be harnessed for quite different purposes: the first, Overall Phonological Control, can inform attainment targets for syllabus development; the third, with its focus on prosodic features, seems appropriate for language classes where native-like proficiency might be a desirable outcome, particularly at the higher levels, from B2. It is the second scale, Sound Articulation, focussed on intelligibility of individual phonemes, which seems most crucial in the light of the LFC, and which might come closest to providing guidelines for ‘ELF aware’ assessment. If ‘target language’ were to be identified as the LFC, or a modified version of the LFC to suit a particular context, then it might be possible to specify features for each level – assuming, as we questioned above, that performance levels are actually needed.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to map the LFC to CEFR levels, although this could prove an interesting avenue for ELF research to explore. What I have attempted to show is that the new CEFR can be seen as an ‘ELF friendly’ document, ‘open’ to developments such as a language being taken over by non native speakers, and in which new parameters for successful communication need to be established. Above all, it remains in its revised edition a work in progress, which needs to be modified, integrated and developed, to suit the language it is describing and the functions for which the language is being learnt, taught, or tested. The unprecedented rise of English as a lingua franca over the last twenty years has created new challenges for the Framework, and of these the greatest is likely to be assessment, which Widdowson (2015, 231) refers to as “the last frontier” because “only when that is crossed, or bypassed in some way, can there be any real advance in English teaching informed by an understanding of ELF”.

Abbreviations

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELF	English as a <i>Lingua Franca</i>
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
IATEFL	International Association of Teachers of English as Foreign Language
LFC	Lingua Franca Core
L1	First language
NS	Native Speaker
NNS	Non Native Speaker
TESOL	Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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