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Transmitting more than a Model: Spoken English and Language Ideologies in French (Higher) Education

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Outline

- **What we are proposing: a position paper**

- Presentation outline
 - Introduction: transmitting more than a model
 - Language ideologies in the *Agrégation*
 - Language ideologies beyond the *Agrégation*
 - Alternative models of English pronunciation
 - English as a “glocal” language
 - A plea for variation

Introduction: transmitting more than a model

- Teaching/learning of a language almost always implies the use of a (standardised) model

- Choosing and transmitting a model is an **ideological** process
 - Transmission of attitudes, representations, imaginaries, etc.

- See Cushing 2021, Milroy & Milroy 2012, Lippi-Green 1997, among many others.

Introduction: transmitting more than a model

Language ideologies

“language ideologies are beliefs, or feelings, about languages as used in their social worlds”

(Kroskrity 2004 : 498)

“a set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language and use”

(Silverstein 1979 : 193)

(see Boudreau 2021; Woolard 2020; Gal & Irvine 2019, among others)

Language ideologies in the *Agrégation*

- *Agrégation*: evaluation based on reference model(s)
- The *rapports du jury* as a vehicle of reference model(s)
 - Advice/feedback regarding (relatively) spontaneous spoken English
- Previous research (see Wilson, forthcoming; Wilson 2022; Miras, Wilson & Dupouy 2022)
 - Corpus analysis of 26 *rapports du jury*
 - Identification of specific language ideologies

Language ideologies in the *Agrégation*

Native-speakerism

- Native-speakerism (Holliday 2006): ideologies framing the native speaker as most (or only) legitimate expert/teacher of a language
 - And English produced by native speakers as most (or only) legitimate model

« Les candidats dont la langue orale a besoin d'être **améliorée** sont fortement encouragés à accroître autant que possible leur exposition à l'anglais, que ce soit en effectuant des séjours en pays anglophones, en recherchant les occasions de pratiquer l'anglais avec des **locuteurs natifs**, ou en écoutant de l'**anglais authentique** par le biais d'émissions radiophoniques, de séries ou de films. »

Rapport du jury – Agrégation ext. 2019 (p.214)

- Native-speakerism as ideological in nature
 - (see Braine 2013, Wilson 2021, Piller 2001, among many others)

Language ideologies in the *Agrégation*

National and Raciolinguistic Ideologies

« Pour rappel, le jury de l'agrégation ne privilégie aucun modèle phonétique particulier (américain, britannique, irlandais, écossais, australien, etc.) mais attend que le candidat soit cohérent du point de vue phonologique et phonétique. Le jury attend des candidats le plus de justesse et d'authenticité possible »

Rapport du jury – Agrégation int. 2019 (p.162)

- Indexical/ideological linking of language to nations/countries (see Heller 2011, Joseph 2009)
 - Banal nationalism (Billig 2010)

- All territories situated in the “inner circle” (Kachru 1985) and the Global North
 - Manifestation of “raciolinguistic ideologies” (Rosa & Flores 2017)
 - Link to the figure of the “white native speaker” (Ramjattan 2019)

Language ideologies in the *Agrégation*

Standard Language Ideologies

« Pour rappel, le jury de l'agrégation ne privilégie aucun modèle phonétique particulier (**américain, britannique, irlandais, écossais, australien**, etc.) mais attend que le candidat soit **cohérent** du point de vue phonologique et phonétique. Le jury attend des candidats le plus de justesse et d'authenticité possible »

Rapport du jury – Agrégation int. 2019 (p.162)

- ❑ Promotion of standard varieties of English as a pluricentric language (Leitner 1991)
- ❑ Standard language ideology (Lippi-Green 1997)
- ❑ Linguistic purism (Walsh 2016)

Language ideologies in the *Agrégation*

The ideological elaboration of a model

- Ideological framing of an ideal “legitimate” speaker of English:
 - White native speaker from the inner circle
 - Speaking a standard variety with little/no trace of ‘outside’ influence

- Ideal(ised) model of English: linguistic productions of the above speaker

- Imaginary idealisations, far-removed from the majority of English speakers around the globe

Language ideologies ***beyond*** the *Agrégation*

- Observation/hypothesis: models (and accompanying ideologies) similar to those in the *Agrégation* imbibe the teaching/learning of English in French higher education
- Is the idealised model of English the best choice for English teaching/learning on a wider scale?
- Are we witnessing a form of “linguistic subordination” (Lippi-Green 1997)?

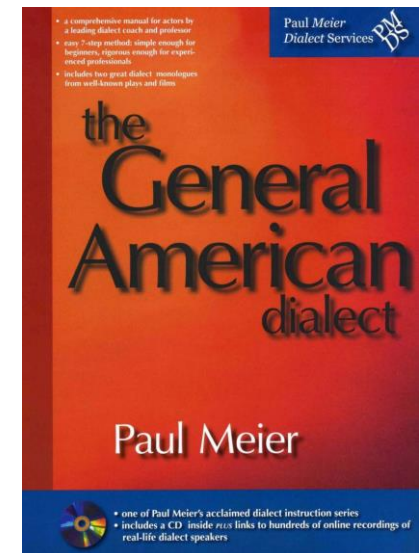
New models

- A shift from NS model to models based on intelligibility
- E.g. CEFR Companion Volume (2018: 47)
 - “Phonology had been **the least successful scale** developed in the research behind the original descriptors. The phonology scale was the only CEFR illustrative descriptor scale for which **a native speaker norm**, albeit implicit, **had been adopted**. In an **update**, it appeared **more appropriate to focus on intelligibility as the primary construct in phonological control**”

Beyond the two standard models



- **Cruttenden (2014: 326-327)**: a brief history of pronunciation models for learners of English as an L2.
- For many years, only the standard models (RP & GA)
- **Cruttenden**: continue to be relevant, as do more regional models, in the context of communication primarily with native speakers.



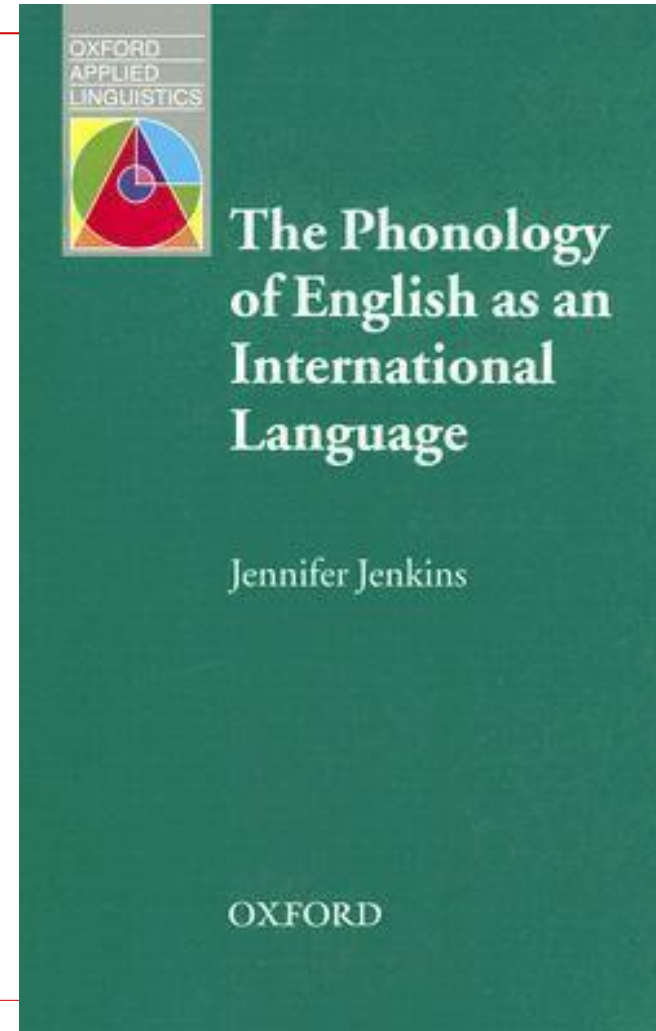
Amalgam English & International English

- Acquiring a pronunciation close to that of a native speaker = unrealistic for the vast majority of learners
→ aim for **Amalgam English**: features of different native accents and interphonology (L1)
- **International English (EIL)**: more suited to communication with other non-native speakers: typical "blend" of Amalgam English, but greater adaptation to features common to other languages. Typically serves as a lingua franca among non-native English speakers with different mother tongues



The *Lingua Franca Core* (LFC) = EIL

- Jenkins (2000) focuses specifically on English as a lingua franca (ELF) (no native speakers).
- → Lingua Franca Core (LFC) = certain features that she considers necessary for effective international communication.
- E.g. consonantal oppositions (with the exception of /θ/ vs. /ð/); placement of the nucleus in the intonation unit.
- Some phonological objectives that are traditionally part of more traditional English teaching methods = irrelevant.



| | <i>EFL target Traditional syllabus</i> | <i>ELF (EIL) target Lingua Franca Core syllabus</i> |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. The consonantal inventory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all sounds • RP non-rhotic /r/ GA rhotic /r/ • RP intervocalic [ɾ] GA intervocalic [ɾ] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all sounds except /θ/, /ð/ and [ɹ] • rhotic /r/ only (any variety) • intervocalic [ɾ] only |
| 2. Phonetic requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rarely specified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aspiration after /p/ /t/ /k/ • appropriate vowel length before fortis/lenis consonants |
| 3. Consonant clusters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all word positions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • word initially, word medially |
| 4. Vowel quantity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-short contrast | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-short contrast |
| 5. Vowel quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • close to RP or GA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L2 (consistent) regional qualities |
| 6. Weak forms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • essential | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unhelpful to intelligibility |
| 7. Features of connected speech | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inconsequential or unhelpful |
| 8. Stress-timed rhythm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • important | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unnecessary / does not exist |
| 9. Word stress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unteachable / can reduce flexibility |
| 10. Pitch movement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • essential for indicating attitudes and grammar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unteachable / incorrectly linked to NS attitudes and grammar |
| 11. Nuclear (tonic) stress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • important | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical |

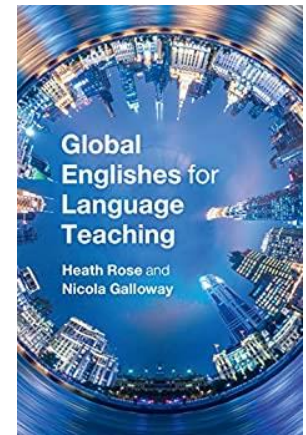
Intelligibility = OK

Comprehension?

GELT

Global Englishes for Language Teaching (Rose & Galloway 2019) = EIL

- ❑ The majority of speakers = now so-called 'second' or 'foreign' language users of English.
- ❑ **"A call for change"** → paradigm shift
- ❑ Participation of native speakers in communication in 'international English' = irrelevant.
- ❑ An assumption? A way of transmitting different language attitudes or ideologies?
- ❑ One concrete proposition:
Shifting from 'native English model' (→ competent users) to 'competent-user model'



Difference between aiming for and reaching a model?

EIL models & The Jenkins-Trudgill 'argument'



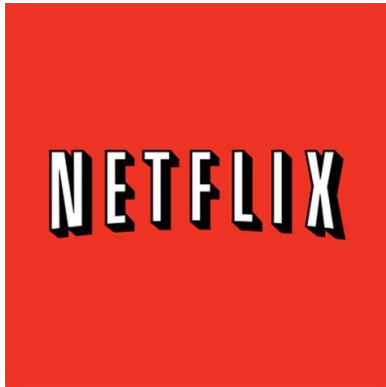
LFC??
EIL??

- LFC-like models (EIL): a certain amount of resistance (some = psychological or ideological); also: more functional criticism
- **Trudgill (2008: 213-228)** raises the question of which model → which phonemic inventory for foreign learners.
 - a reduced phonemic inventory would be easier to acquire (some ESL varieties = only 8 or 6 vowels).
 - phonological skills as a whole → Trudgill argues against reducing the number of phonemes to be taught because of potential comprehension problems
 - International English speakers might be exposed to native English, even if only through the media

The importance of acoustic information

- Dalton et Seidlhofer (1994 : 26): **'Second language learners have often not been able to develop intuitions and expectations about word frequencies,** the likelihood that a word will occur in a situation, or even what counts as a 'standard situation'. Non-native speakers make up for their lack of competence in these two respects by being more analytical. **They rely** – often exclusively – **on acoustic information alone.'**
- They need more acoustic information. Perception and production skills are complementary.

Yet another paradigm shift?





NETFLIX



CANAL+ PLAY
LA VOD ILLIMITEE PAR CANAL+



Comprehension?
In a (post-)Covid world → series
with speakers from all around
the English-speaking world



Apple TV+

Two strands of English

relevant in ESL for production & comprehension

□ *Glocalisation*

□ **1) International English / English as a global language**

- 'Globish' (Nerrière 2004) → international English, while exposing students to L1 and L2 varieties (some fields of study)

Not associated to a particular culture

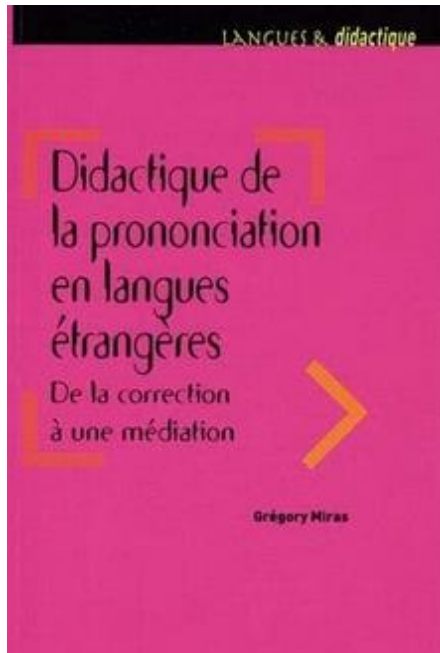
□ **2) Identity-driven varieties of English** → Let's not forget about the inner and outer circles

Clear indexical links with specific cultures

□ → to prepare learners to use English in various global and local communities and to prepare them to understand various Englishes.

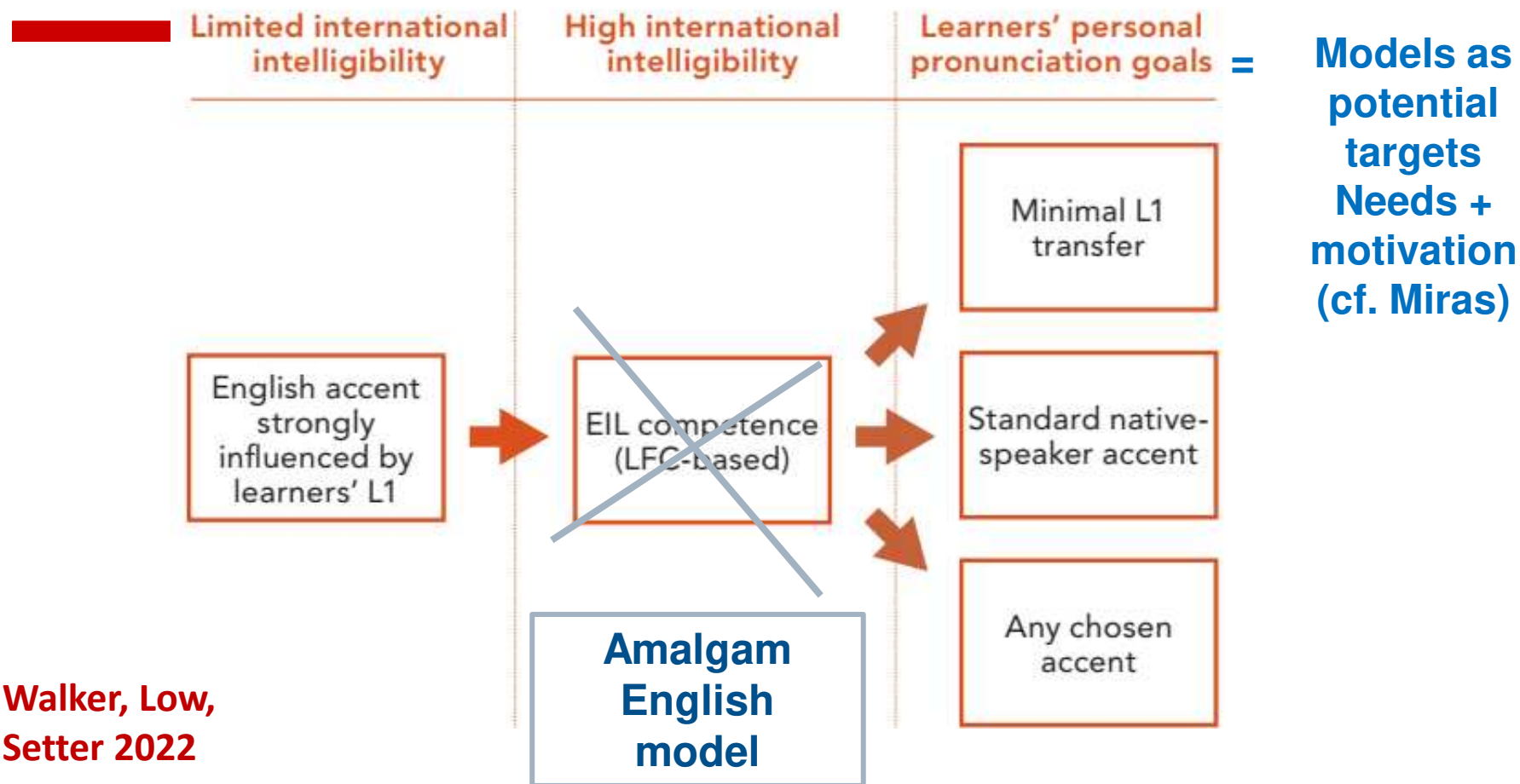
Various communication norms, depending on the needs and profiles of the learners.

Because motivation matters



- « Il s'agira de considérer tout dispositif comme centré sur le développement d'une **agentivité** de l'apprenant·e qui pourra définir **ses propres objectifs en termes de choix de normes et de construction d'identité** translangagière. L'enseignant·e est ainsi un·e médiateur·rice (vs. un modèle) dans le développement de cette responsabilité en reconnaissant que chaque apprenant·e aura des **besoins, des buts et des parcours différents.** »
- *Miras, 2021, Didactique de la prononciation en langues étrangères, de la correction à une médiation*

Our proposition



Replacing an EIL / LFC core by an amalgam English core (*socle commun?*)

With an Amalgam English core...

- Suprasegmentals matter.
- No need to 'suddenly start teaching' about connected speech, about /θ, ð/ after 5 or 6 years of study.
- Learners are exposed to variation → excellent for comprehension. Many different varieties of English.

- Production model: two problems?
 - 1) variation in the quality of input: confusing for production?
 - 2) we miss the "consistency" that we find in CAPES/agreg reports

Does it matter?

With an Amalgam English core...

- 1) variation in the quality of input: confusing for production?
 - Thomson (2018); Flege (2018); Saito et al. (2019), Henderson (2021): variation in the quantity and/or quality of input helps with phonemic categorization
 - High Variability Phonetic Training (e.g. Thomson's English Accent Coach): uses multiple voices rather than a single voice, thus introducing variability in perception practice. This variability helps L2 learners better categorize sounds into target phonemes.
- 2) we miss the "consistency" that we find in CAPES/agreg reports

With an Amalgam English core...

- 1) variation in the quality of input: confusing for production?
- 2) we miss the “consistency” that we find in CAPES/agreg reports
 - The emerging notion of pluriphonia
 - « Nous proposons de parler plutôt de la pluriphonie de la langue (le fait qu’on peut prononcer de différentes manières la même langue), de la pluriphonie d’une région, d’un village ou d’une personne (définie comme la coexistence de différents traits de prononciation dans une région donnée ou chez une personne donnée) [...]. »

Candea & Gasquet-Cyrus 2023

A reality (e.g. Milton Keynes, Missouri, Valence)

Our position

**Amalgam
English core**

**Promoting
pluriphonia**

**Mobilising
variation**

- Numerous pedagogical benefits
- Reduction in the presence and effects of restrictive ideologies
- Potential for reducing linguistic insecurity

Teaching/learning will *always* involve transmitting more than a model...

...and our position is to make that less restrictive and more positive.

Thank You

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