INVESTIGATING HUNGARIAN EFL LEARNERS’ COMPREHENSION AND ATTITUDES PERTAINING TO ENGLISH SPEECH VARIETIES

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Budapest, 2015. június 11.
Abstract

Spoken communication in English has an increasing role in the lives of people due to the global role of the language. Because of the diversity characterising English in different international contexts, speakers are likely to be exposed to a wide range of English speech varieties, which makes this issue relevant to language learners as future users of English. The aim of the present research project is to investigate Hungarian secondary school EFL learners’ comprehension of and attitudes towards English speech varieties.

The investigation, characterised by a mixed methods approach to research, comprises three consecutive studies built on one another. Study One is a quantitative questionnaire study with an accent-comprehension task, conducted on a sample of 62 secondary school EFL learners studying in Budapest, Hungary. Study Two includes a follow-up interview study with 5 participants from the previous sample and 3 additional learners from the same population. Study Three is a replication of the first study with methodological refinements based on the findings of the previous studies, conducted on a sample of 94 learners from the same population as the previous studies.

The findings show that learners are most successful at comprehending Received Pronunciation which they are familiar with from ELT materials, while unfamiliar accents often pose a considerable challenge to their comprehension of spoken English. It has been found that comprehension is related to a set of intertwined factors, including proficiency, phonological awareness, exposure to English speech and the perceived comprehensibility of an accent. To cope with difficulties in comprehension, which can be caused by a variety of phonological and non-phonological features, learners may use top-down and bottom up listening strategies.

Regarding attitudes, learners show a favourable disposition towards native English accents and attribute positive stereotypes to native speakers, while they show uncomplimentary attitudes towards non-native speech varieties and attach negative stereotypes to ESL and EFL speakers based on their English pronunciation, which suggests that learners’ attitudes are based on a restricted, native-speaker-centred view of English. The findings of the research project offer implications for language pedagogy, which can be used to inform local language teaching in Hungary to cater for the future needs of learners.

Keywords: speech varieties, pronunciation, comprehension, attitudes
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1 Introduction

English has become the global language of communication, and is used by an increasing number of people of various mother tongues and diverse cultural backgrounds. This renders the primary function of English in international contexts to serve as a lingua franca between its speakers (Seidlhofer, 2005). As a result of its historical spread in the world, English has developed into a range of native varieties exhibiting wide dialectal differences, and it has come to be used as an additional language in a number of countries as a consequence of colonisation and the expansion of the British Empire (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2009c). Due to the economic, political and cultural influence of its native-speaker countries in a globalised world, especially the United States of America, English has also become the primary choice as a foreign language for people in countries where English has no historical roots and it does not serve as an official language within the society (cf. Kachru, 1992). For demographic reasons and because of the growing number of people who chose to learn English as a foreign language, native speakers of English are being gradually outnumbered by ESL and EFL speakers in terms of the proportion of English speakers worldwide (Crystal, 2003), and this tendency is likely to continue in the future as well (Graddol, 2006). Therefore, it is argued that English ought to be conceived of not as the language of its native speakers but as a lingua franca whose norms are not determined by its native speakers but are shaped by all its speakers who use English for their own communicative purposes, yielding a fluid, creative and adaptive language system of English (Seidlhofer, 2005; Widdowson, 2014).

Because of the historical development of English and its modern role as a lingua franca, the language is characterised by a great deal of linguistic diversity and language variation
pertaining to its pragmatic use, vocabulary, syntax, morphology, and phonology. Phonological variation is arguably the most conspicuous and pervasive aspect of linguistic diversity in English since users of English are continuously exposed to sound variation when they listen to spoken English in face-to-face interactions or via the media and popular art as opposed to the occasionally occurring variants related to other areas of the language. Speech varieties resulting from the global diversity in English, used in a broad sense, entail established accents of native speakers of English, conventionalised pronunciations of multilingual speakers in countries where English is an official language and the fluid, ad-hoc and often situational variation in the pronunciation of speakers of English as a lingua franca.

Despite the widespread variation in spoken English worldwide, English pronunciation in language education is predominantly represented by Received Pronunciation (RP) (Jenkins, 2000; Jenkins, 2012; Walker, 2010), which refers to the accent of the Standard British English dialect spoken in the South of England (Wells, 1982), with occasional references to General American English pronunciation (GA), the accent with the most generic phonological features of American English dialects without regional accent features (Wells, 1982). Focusing on the two main standard speech varieties in English language teaching can be problematic for learners of English for three reasons. Firstly, in the light of the global proportion of English speakers mentioned above, acquainting learners with a single speech variety of English is likely to cause problems in communication when learners encounter different pronunciations outside their learning contexts, since they might find the unfamiliar pronunciations difficult to understand. Secondly, presenting a single standard of English pronunciation to learners in ELT might contribute to a restricted, unrealistic and monolithic view of the language, which may foster negative attitudes towards other speech varieties of English. Besides, equating English
pronunciation with one of its standard varieties also imposes pronunciation targets on learners which are unrealistic and impractical, preventing learners of English from developing a sense of ownership of the language (Jenkins, 2012; Widdowson, 1994).

The comprehensibility of spoken English and attitudes towards different speech varieties of English have been the subjects of numerous pieces of applied linguistic research in various international contexts. Jenkins (2000) investigated the phonological features of English which can cause breakdowns in communication between different speakers, identifying redundant and essential sound features from the point of view of mutual intelligibility between speakers. The intelligibility of spoken English was also investigated with regards to specific contexts and L1 backgrounds of speakers, namely the context of Asian speakers of English, which showed that the intelligibility of English speech varieties might be dependent on the listener’s L1 background (cf. Chuan, 2010) and the wider linguistic context of the utterances such their syntactic, lexical and phonological environment (Deterding, 2012; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The attitudes of EFL speakers towards varieties of English have also been widely researched (cf. Andreasson, 1994; Jenkins, 2007; Murray, 2003) with considerable focus on attitudes towards English pronunciation (cf. McKenzie, 2006; Rindal, 2010; Rindal & Piercy, 2013). The findings indicate that EFL speakers generally favour standard native-English speech varieties compared to ESL or EFL English pronunciation, which can be characterised as native-speakerist (Holliday, 2005) and anglophone-centric attitudes (Seidlhofer, 2012). However, these attitudes may differ from context to context depending on the role of English in a particular society and the approach of language education to English (Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011).

As far as the Hungarian context is concerned, Balogh (2008) investigated language attitudes towards speech varieties of American English and found that Hungarian university
students show different accent stereotypes towards these varieties. Illés and Csizér (2010) studied secondary school learners’ attitudes towards English as an international language and concluded that even though Hungarian learners are aware of the function of English as an international language, they do not show openness towards international varieties of English, which they regard as a simplified versions of the language. Despite these studies, there is a dearth of empirical research in the Hungarian context related to the significance of English speech varieties for learners. Therefore, the aim of the present doctoral dissertation is to study Hungarian learners’ comprehension of different speech varieties of English and their attitudes towards them. It examines the factors related to successful comprehension and the perception of accents at the affective level with the help of a mixed methods approach to research, combining quantitative and qualitative elements (cf. Dörnyei, 2007). The present research project is comprised of three consecutive studies: Study One is a quantitative questionnaire study complemented by an accent comprehension task, which is followed by Study Two, an interview study with participants selected from Study One, focusing on specific aspects of the initial research. Study Three is the replication of Study One on a different sample with methodological refinements, building on the findings of the two previous studies.

The overall rationale of the research project is to contribute to effective local language teaching in Hungary by offering pedagogical implications which language teachers might find informative for their own practice. Such research is also warranted by the fact that Hungary is part of a global economy and a member of the European Union, which creates a need for the ability of Hungarian learners to communicate in English in an increasing number of situations with a wide range of different speakers in the future. Thus, local language pedagogy ought to
prepare learners to cope with the diversity in English pronunciations which they are likely to encounter.

The present doctoral dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical overview of the three studies, focusing on the terminology used in the studies (Section 2.1), presenting a variationist approach to English for a better understanding of speech varieties based on the historical spread of the language (Section 2.2), discussing the paradigm of English as a lingua franca to provide a theoretical framework for the research (Section 2.3) and reviewing previous research pertaining to the role of pronunciation in English speech varieties and attitudes towards different speech varieties, pointing out parallels between L1 and L2 English (Section 2.4 and 2.5 respectively). Section 2.6 presents the main research questions of the research project and provides a brief explanation of them. Chapter 3 presents the research methods and results of the three studies. After an overview of the entire research project (Section 3.1), the research methods and instruments of Study One are explained (Section 3.2), which are followed by the results of the study (Section 3.3). After that, the methods of Study Two are presented (Section 3.4) followed by the findings (Section 3.5). Subsequently, the methodological adjustments of Study Three compared to Study One are outlined (Section 3.6) followed by the results of the final study (Section 3.7). Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the three studies in light of the relevant literature by providing an overview of the general findings of the research project (Section 4.1), followed by a discussion of learners’ comprehension of English speech varieties (Section 4.2), the background of their comprehension (Section 4.3), learners’ attitudes towards English pronunciation (Section 4.4) and the background of these attitudes (Section 4.5). Finally, the pedagogical implications of the three studies are summarised (Section 4.6).
The research project which the present doctoral dissertation is based on has been undertaken as part of a doctoral training programme, and the various phases of the research project are related to different course components of the doctoral programme. An MA thesis preceding the doctoral studies is considered to be a pilot study of the main research project. For these reasons, certain parts of the present paper contain sections originally written as assignments related to these courses, versions of which have been published as per the list of publications attached to the present dissertation.
2 Theoretical overview

In order to investigate Hungarian secondary school learners’ comprehension of English speech varieties, learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties and the significance of pronunciation for learners, the aim of this chapter is to provide a broad theoretical background to variation in English pronunciation, research on English as a lingua franca and the relevance of these theories for English language pedagogy. Variation and English as a lingua franca are relevant for investigating Hungarian learners’ comprehension and attitudes pertaining to English speech varieties for the following reasons. The variability resulting from the spread of English and its evolution into a global lingua franca underlines the importance of why Hungarian learners need to be prepared to understand a range of different speech varieties of English as opposed to one or two standard varieties represented in ELT. English is used for communication by various speakers in different contexts, which renders diversity in the language and its pronunciation the norm rather than the exception. By contrast, learners of English experience a strong sense of conformity to the standards of a monolithic language when learning English through language education, which creates a dissonance between the representation of English in ELT and the realities of English outside the context of language learning. Research into English as a lingua franca challenges the monolithic and normative approach to English which regards the language as the lingua-cultural artefact of its native speakers to which language learners are suppose to conform, and considers English primarily as a language for communication, which is characterised by natural variability, creativity and adaptability. This justifies the need for Hungarian EFL learners to comprehend different speech varieties of English, and a lingua franca approach to English also entails different attitudes towards English speech varieties, which
means less favouritism towards standard native-English accents and more openness to and acceptance of the pronunciations of various speakers of English. The chapter is structured as follows.

Section 2.1 offers some brief initial remarks on the terminology used in the literature and in the present paper, which will be elaborated on further in the subsequent sections. Section 2.2 discusses the global spread of English, the resulting linguistic variation and how these affected the conceptualisation of English in modern applied linguistics. It aims to demonstrate how English changed from being the language of its historical native speakers to a world language used by a range of different people, highlighting the idea that due to the large-scale variation in English, the range of different English pronunciations that learners may encounter is becoming increasingly diverse; therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the pronunciation models used in language education. Section 2.3 focuses on the emergence of English as a lingua franca as a research paradigm in applied linguistics and the evolution of the concept along with its various interpretations by different strands of research in order to clarify the approach to English used in the research project. Section 2.4 highlights the significance of pronunciation in English as a lingua franca for Hungarian learners from the point of view of intelligibility and identification by drawing parallels between the roles of English pronunciation in L1 and L2 English. Section 4.5 reviews previous research related to learners’ attitudes towards English pronunciation from different contexts, offering a perspective for investigating Hungarian learners’ attitudes towards English speech varieties.

The aim of the following sections is to provide a theoretical framework for the research and to justify the present investigation from a practical as well as from an ideological perspective. The practical aspects entail why pronunciation may be important for learners in
terms of intelligibility, its role for speakers as a means of identification and the attitudes it may evoke from speakers. The ideological aspects include how prioritising certain speech varieties of English can have broader political implications for its users, how language and pronunciation can be used as a form of power and how ideologies related to varieties and pronunciation can have an impact on the status of speakers in the context of ELT.

2.1 Definitions of key terms

2.1.1 English as a lingua franca

In the present research project, the term English as a lingua franca (ELF) is used to discuss variation in English speech and its role in communication. ELF is defined as a “contact language between persons who share neither a native tongue nor a common culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth, 1996, p. 240). According to a more recent definition ELF refers to “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p.7). Although the former definition is necessary to understand the use of the term in certain works reviewed in this chapter, the understanding of ELF in the present research is based on the latter definition since it does not allow for confusing ELF with a variety of English but it focuses on the communicative contexts of the use of English, in which variation can take place, including phonological variation in spoken English.
The use of the term ELF as the basis of the theoretical framework of the study has numerous advantages. Firstly, it highlights the role of English as the medium of international communication between people of different mother tongues. Secondly, this approach treats native and non-native speakers of the language equally in contexts where English is used, assuming a shared ownership of the language. This makes it possible to investigate varieties in their own right instead of using native varieties as reference points and treating the English of non-native speakers as deficient manifestations of native English. Thirdly, ELF emphasises the dynamic nature of English language use whereby language is realised in the act of communication between its different speakers (Seidlhofer, 2012). The various interpretations of ELF will be discussed in more depth in Section 2.3.

2.1.2 Terminology referring to different approaches to English

The concept of ELF is typically contrasted with English as a native language (ENL), English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL) or World Englishes (WE). These terms are used with considerable inconsistency in the literature with frequent overlaps between them. Kirkpatrick (2007) as well as Jenkins (2009a) uses WE as the overarching concept within which ENL, ESL and EFL are distinct subcategories. According to Kirkpatrick (2007), ENL refers to the language of countries where English is the mother tongue of the overwhelming majority of the population such as United States, the United Kingdom, the Australia, Canada and New Zealand (Kirkpatrick, 2007). These countries typically share an Anglo Saxon cultural and linguistic background and English is historically the primary language of the population.
ESL refers to the language of bilingual English speakers in different contexts which share the feature that English is used for intra-national communication within the society. According to Kirkpatrick (2007), ESL encompasses the varieties of English spoken in former colonies such as India, Nigeria or the Philippines, where English constitutes one of the official languages of the country and is widely used in interactions among people. By contrast, Jenkins terms the varieties of English which fall under this concept New Englishes (Jenkins, 2003), referring to the notion that English has evolved into localized, conventionalised varieties, while these varieties are sometimes also referred to as World Englishes. ESL is also used to denote the language of people who live in English-speaking countries and for whom English is not a mother tongue but is acquired through social interaction or it is learned through education (cf. Roberge, 2003). Examples for such speakers are Hispanic speakers in the US, French speakers in Canada, or ESL can also refer to non-English-speaking migrants who have moved to an English-speaking country.

EFL, on the other hand, is generally used for English learned by people mainly through language education in countries where English has no major function within the society, but it is used for international communication (Widdowson, 1997). However, due to the spread of globalisation and pervasive nature of the Internet, English has an increasingly important function in various areas of life in these countries, for instance, in science, education or leisure. These countries include, for example, China, non-English-speaking European countries or Latin America, where speakers have not developed localised norms for English. The above classification of English by Kirkpatrick (2007) into ENL, ESL and EFL resonates with Kachru’s (1992) three circles of English speakers, referring to native English speakers of Anglo-Saxon
countries, multilingual speakers of former colonies and language learners respectively, which will be discussed later.

Besides ELF, ENL, ESL and EFL, a number of other terms appear in the literature referring to the use of English worldwide, such as English as an International Language (EIL), Global English (GE) or WE, as mentioned above, yet the distinction between the concepts is far from clear cut. Some of these terms are often used interchangeably, for instance, Jenkins (2000) discusses the theory of Lingua franca core (LFC) in her book entitled The Phonology of English as an International language, with no apparent difference between the terms EIL and ELF, which can be seen as the evolution of the term EIL into ELF in this case. In other cases, there is a slight difference in emphasis between the terms, depending on the focus of the given inquiry, whether, for instance the research focuses on non-native speakers exclusively, bilingual speakers, or all speakers of English. The use of EIL might imply that the research focuses on interactions between native and non-native speakers of English, while ELF, according to its initial conceptualisation, might indicate a research focus on interactions between non-native speakers only (Seidlhofer, 2005). As was noted above, WE can refer to all types of English around the world; however, the term is more typically used to denote conventionalised varieties of English in non-Anglo-Saxon countries where English is an official language and it is widely used in everyday life. These varieties are also termed New Englishes. On the other hand, Global English and English as an International Language are used as generic terms including the language of all categories of speakers, which might also indicate an assumption of an international variety of English (cf. Crystal, 2003).

In the following sections, while bearing in mind the limitations and ambiguities of these terms (discussed in depth in Section 2.2.4), for the sake of convenience, ENL is used for the
English of monolingual native speakers of English, ESL is used for the varieties of bi- or multilingual speakers who use English intra-nationally in their everyday life, while EFL refers to the English of non-native speakers who learn the language mainly through education, following the terminology of Kirkpatrick (2007). ELF is used to refer to English used in communicative contexts involving speakers of different cultures and mother tongues. Thus, ELF speakers can include ENL, ESL and EFL speakers as well depending on the context of communication.

2.1.3 Attitudes and speech varieties

In the present paper, attitudes are understood as language attitudes, meaning “the feelings people have about their own language or the languages of others” (Crystal, 1997, p.251). According to Gardner (1985), language attitudes consist of three components, the cognitive, affective and conative component, referring to belief structures, emotional reactions and behavioural tendencies respectively. Therefore, the focus of the investigation includes associations of beliefs, feelings, and reactions which are evoked in learners when listening to particular speech varieties of English.

English speech varieties refer to English pronunciations which characterise specific groups of speakers, showing systematic phonological attributes with relative consistency. This working definition is meant to be understood with the qualification that any reference to a speech variety of a group of speakers inevitably involves generalisation, disregarding the unique idiolects of individual speakers and situational variation in the language for the sake of terminological convenience. The terms speech variety, pronunciation and accent are used synonymously throughout the paper in the above neutral and descriptive sense without any
negative connotation or judgement associated with the word accent (Wardhaugh, 2006). The term speech variety may thus denote the pronunciation of ENL, ESL of EFL speakers regardless of whether or not they speak with an English accent which is formally described or codified. In this sense, RP, GA, Indian, Nigerian, Hungarian or Italian English are treated as speech varieties of English since they exhibit phonological variants which may influence learners’ comprehension of spoken English and the attitudes they show towards the accent. The term variant refers to the different realisations of the same phoneme in a given context (Crystal, 1997), for example, the different realisation of the /t/ sound as a voiceless stop [t], a flap [ɾ] or a glottal stop [ʔ] in RP, GA or Cockney English respectively (Wells, 1982). The following section discusses the emergence of varieties of English considering the historical development of the language in order to promote a variationist approach to English and a decentralised view of its norms, including the norms related to varieties of English pronunciations.

2.2 From English to Englishes

Since the present investigation focuses on learners’ comprehension of and attitudes towards speech varieties of English, it is essential to point out why research related to variation in English bears relevance to Hungarian secondary-school learners of English and to language education in general. It will be argued that due to the special status of English in international communication and because of its unique history in becoming a global language, it is essential to adopt an approach to English whereby it is regarded as a diverse language with naturally occurring variation in its linguistic forms, including variation in pronunciation.
When talking about a language as such, one might be tempted to conceptualise it as a monolithic entity. For instance, when discussing French, German or Italian, one might have in mind a prototypical notion of the language based on some form of abstraction or generalisation of a particular instance of the language to mean *the* language per se (Wardhaugh, 2006). However, the closer we investigate a language, the more we come to realize that it is in fact far from being a single entity, but it is characterised by a certain degree of variability, often exhibiting a vast array of linguistic forms and numerous ways in which different speakers use the language (Trudgill, 2002). English, in particular, stands out from other languages in this respect as it has become a truly global language, which is used by a wide range of different people across the world both as a native language and as a common tongue for people of different linguistic background (Jenkins, 2009c).

Despite the considerable diversity in the language, English is often viewed a single concept of a language as it is represented by one or two of its most commonly recognised speech varieties in language education, RP and GA, (cf. Holliday, 2005; Jenkins, 2012). This highly simplistic view of English may lead to widespread misconceptions about the language, which can also contribute to a uniform concept of English pronunciation and a deficiency view of speech varieties. A monolithic approach to English is unjustified for a number of reasons. Firstly, the two commonly recognised varieties mentioned above, like all varieties, are in fact abstractions themselves, since both British and American English include numerous varieties themselves, which can be markedly different from one another. For example, the English spoken in Yorkshire differs from London English substantially in grammar and lexis, and the same holds for English in Texas and New York. Secondly, English has a number of historically established varieties in other Anglo Saxon countries such as Australia, Ireland or New Zealand and it is used
as an official language in many other countries of Africa and Asia, for example, in Nigeria, India or Pakistan. In addition, English is used as a language of communication between people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds all over the world, which naturally results in a high degree of variation (cf. Kachru, 1992; Schneider, 2007; Wardhaugh, 2006). Therefore, it can be argued that the representation of English pronunciation through RP and GA is based on a highly simplified view of English. Although it might be necessary to use abstractions of certain varieties of English for educational purposes (Widdowson, 2003), disregarding variation as a natural and indeed highly characteristic feature of English might give learners the impression that varieties not included as models in education are somehow less authentic, less important, less valuable, or they are plainly bad English compared to the varieties represented in ELT materials.

The following account provides a brief summary of how English emerged as a global language through its history in a process of constant diversification and adaptation to new contexts and purposes, highlighting the spectacular degree of variability in the language. This aims to promote an approach to English whereby it is recognised as a multifaceted, colourful, fluid and adaptive language displaying constant variation and potential for change. It aims to suggest that while simplifications and the use of abstract models of varieties may be necessary for teaching English, it is a desirable long-term objective of language education to view English, including English pronunciation, in its completeness and view different varieties of English as legitimate, naturally occurring manifestations of the language in ELT.
2.2.1 The early spread of English

The early spread of English can be seen as the first step in English becoming a diverse global language since it led to its wide geographical dispersal around the world with considerable variation between its native communities, yielding a wide range of speech varieties of ENL. The early spread of the language is described by the model of Jenkins (2009c) in terms of two diasporas which took place during the time of the British Empire. The first diaspora occurred around the seventeenth and eighteenth century when large numbers English speakers from the British Isles migrated to newly populated parts of the world, namely, North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The English of the migrating populations was far from being homogenous in the first place since these speakers came from different dialectal areas within the British Isles such as Ireland, Scotland or various parts of England. Moreover, the newly formed communities of settlers yielded new and markedly distinct dialects of English which developed in relative isolation from each other due to the lack of contact between these peoples. The linguistic changes in these new varieties of native English were shaped by the new contexts of use, and they were also influenced by contact with other languages, for instance, by the influence of Dutch or Afrikaans in the case of South African English. The dialectal differences were also reinforced by the emerging national or communal identities of the newly formed language communities.

According to Jenkins (2009c), the second diaspora of the spread of English involved introducing the language to colonies of the British Empire in Asia and Africa at different times during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Therefore, English came to be used as a second language by the local population of countries such as Nigeria, India or the Philippines, and the
new varieties became localised by the development and conventionalisation of local forms of the language and norms of language use. These newly emerging varieties continued to serve an official function within these countries after gaining independence from the British Empire, and in some cases they became codified varieties with their own literary tradition in English. The new varieties of English in these multilingual societies have also served as markers of identity in the newly born nations. It is important to point out that in the case of New Englishes, the differences in language forms and the use of the language compared to native English varieties are not regarded as deficiencies or bad English by the speakers themselves, but they are seen as natural features of their own variety whose value is solely determined by their potential to communicate in English. It may be argued that the case of New Englishes can serve as an example for ELT and for EFL speakers to adopt a more inclusive view of variation in English, which means openness towards different speech varieties as well.

Schneider (2007) describes the process of adopting the language of colonizers in his Dynamic Model of Postcolonial Englishes as a transition which takes place in a society on various levels including changes in the socio-political setting, identity construction, sociolinguistic background and structural changes in the language. The model shows that the development of a new variety of English is not entirely a linguistic issue, but it is a result of the interplay between political factors, the role of the language as a means of identification and the function of the language in the given society. This implies that the issue of variation cannot be considered in isolation from a purely practical view, but it ought to be viewed in the social and political context of the speakers, which in the case of EFL learners means the language political realities in ELT, discussed in Section 2.3.5.
As discussed above, the history of the early spread of English demonstrates that despite the fact that English is commonly associated with the simplistic concepts of British and American English, especially in ELT, the language has always exhibited significant variation within its native communities, and it has developed into locally established varieties in contexts where it was used as a second language. This does not necessarily imply that the models currently used in ELT ought to be changed or diversified; however, adopting an approach whereby English is naturally variable and diverse with a function to communicate and express local identities would have important implications for ELT. A new approach could treat L2 variation resulting from L1 transfer as a natural phenomenon, for instance, in the case of pronunciation, whereby the spoken language of speakers is not evaluated against the prestige varieties of ENL, but they are judged based on their ability to communicate ideas and are also seen as a way of expressing their identity, in a parallel fashion with New Englishes.

2.2.2 The spread of English from the 20th century

After the spread of English during the period of colonisation, another major increase took place in the number of speakers during the 20th century, which has been continuing ever since, when English became the language of globalisation and speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds started to use it as a language of communication in various fields such as commerce, education or science (Graddol, 1997). However, contrary to the new native varieties of the first diaspora and the New Englishes in the second, the status of English learned primarily through language education by people who use it for global communication is less clear-cut in
terms of language variation. This may be due to the fact that these speakers of global English do not form a physical community where the variety of English could be associated with a political entity similarly to New Englishes or official languages of countries which can be regarded as language varieties from a linguistic point of view (Wardhaugh, 2006), and also because their English is learned through a language education system which tends to regard variation as deviation from standard varieties of ENL (Widdowson, 1994). However, because of the increasing number of speakers and their growing role in using English for global communication, the status and role of these Englishes became the subject of numerous academic discussions. These discussions focus on the proportion and the type of speakers of English along with the norms and standards which shape the language in these relatively new contexts, which also have implications for the status of speech varieties of English.

2.2.3 The global proportion of English speakers

The main argument for adopting a pluralistic conception of English in the description of the language and in ELT instead of a monolithic approach to the language based on its established standard varieties is the global proportion of the speakers of English, which also implies an egalitarian view of English speech varieties. In a discussion of English as a global language, Crystal (2003) highlights the fact that with English being a global language, bilingual speakers and users of English as a second language from non-Anglo Saxon countries are gradually outnumbering the native speakers of the language. It is estimated that speakers of ENL include approximately 320-380 million people, ESL speakers amount to 150-300 million and the number
of EFL speakers may range between 100 million and 1 billion (Crystal, 2003). Of course, the validity of these estimates is a function of the accuracy of the demographic data they are based on, which is highly changeable in the case of the population of countries with ENL and ESL speakers. Besides, estimating the number of EFL speakers depends on the level of competence after which a person is considered to be a speaker of English.

Nevertheless, regardless of the accuracy of these figures, the tendency seems to be that English spoken by bilingual and multilingual speakers will be increasingly prevalent worldwide, which also entails continuing variation and diversification in English. The trend of shifting proportions from monolingual native speakers to multilingual speakers is also supported by future projections of the number of speakers, which take into account demographic factors and the predicted demand for learning English (Graddol, 2006). By contrast, speakers of RP, which often serves as the pronunciation model in ELT, comprise a mere 3% of the British population (Trudgill, 2002), which is only one of the many native English language communities which are becoming minorities themselves in relation to the English-speaking world as a whole. These considerations question the privileged status of RP and the dominant role of ENL speech varieties in ELT in general, since the global proportion of English speakers would warrant the representation of ESL and EFL speech varieties in ELT proportionately to the number of their speakers worldwide and the presentation of these varieties as legitimate alternatives to RP and GA English for speakers.
2.2.4 The status of Englishes

The status of Englishes around the world is reflected in the model of Kachru (1992), which makes reference to the spread of English discussed above (cf. Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2). The countries of English speakers are classified into three concentric circles with varying degrees of control over the norms of English. The Inner Circle includes native English speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia or Canada, which are considered to be norm providers suggesting an authority over the norms of the language. The Outer Circle comprises former British colonies, where English is an official language which plays a role within the countries. The countries of the Outer Circle are called norm developers referring to the localised forms of Englishes, which are distinct from those in the inner circle. The Expanding Circle covers all other countries in which English does not have an official status and it is acquired mainly through the education system. These countries are called norm dependent, as they are said to rely on the norms of grammar and language use provided by the native speakers of the Inner Circle.

Kachru’s (1992) model of the three circles of Englishes has been widely criticised (cf. Galloway & Rose, 2015; Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2009), which also implies questioning the status of the varieties of English with regards to the norms of English. Despite the neat classification of different types of speakers of English, which highlights the function of English in the speakers’ society and the norms applicable to the speakers, the model fails to capture some of the complexities that characterise English as a global language.

Firstly, classifying speakers based on their countries or geographical origins can often be misleading. Due to the globalisation of the labour market, the increased mobility of people and
the resulting widespread migration for political and economic reasons, speakers of English are no
longer bound to specific geographical locations; therefore, either ENL, ESL or EFL speakers
may be living in various locations all over the world. Consequently, people may move to
countries where the role of English in the society differs from its role in their country of origin,
and the norms that apply to the use of English may also be different (Galloway & Rose, 2015).
For example, in the United Kingdom, which is said to belong to the Inner Circle, there is a
significant migrant population from countries from both the Outer and the Expanding circles;
thus, monolingual native speakers, bi- or multilingual speakers of various generations from
India, Pakistan or Bangladesh and migrants from the EU who originally learned English through
education form a shared language community, which is characterised by diversity and varying
norms of English.

It is also problematic to draw a clear-cut distinction between EFL, ESL and ENL
speakers in certain modern contexts where English is used (Graddol, 2006). In multi-national
working environments, business or education, for instance, EFL speakers may use English intra-
nationally for a variety of purposes. Consequently, in these contexts English serves an
increasingly important role in these speakers’ everyday life similarly to ESL speakers in the
countries of Kachru’s (1992) Outer Circle. The pervasiveness of English in the mass media, in
popular culture and especially on the Internet also makes English less and less foreign to EFL
speakers. The differentiation of ESL and ENL speakers is also questionable since many, if not
most, ESL speakers in Outer Circle countries, and also those who live in Inner Circle countries,
are exposed to English from birth, and it plays an integral part throughout their life. Thus, there
is little, if any, linguistic justification for distinguishing native ESL speakers from “traditional”
ENL speakers, which renders the underlying reasons for the distinction of these speakers, cultural, ideological or racial.

Kachru (2004) also proposes an alternative model to his theory of concentric circles based on the countries of English speakers and their status as ENL, ESL or EFL speakers. His new model classifies speakers into concentric circles based on their proficiency in English on a continuum ranging from high-proficiency in the inner circle speakers to low proficiency speakers on the periphery. While this reformulation of the original model solves the anomalies of referring to the geographical origins or the status of speakers, it creates further complications with the interpretation of proficiency. In practical terms, it is highly problematic to find an accurate way of measuring the proficiency of all the speakers of English worldwide; in addition, proficiency may refer to various aspects of competence in English (cf. Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972), which would mean placing the same speakers on different points of the continuum of proficiency referring to a different component of their competence. On the other hand, a classification of speakers based on proficiency makes more sense in the status of speakers in terms of norms. In the former version of the model, a non-native EFL teacher would be classified as a norm-dependent speaker, making their status rather ambivalent as they are supposed to act as norm-providers in the classroom. By contrast, the new version of the model would empower competent non-native speakers to become norm developers or norm providers – but again, the question is what makes them considered to be proficient. In conclusion, the original model of Kachru (1992) reflects the status of speech varieties of English with reference to the control of their speakers over the norms of language; however, challenging the model based on the complex relationships between the speakers of English gives space to question the status of Englishes and the related speech varieties, basing the status of varieties not on the
origins of their speakers but on their ability to use the variety of English for communication in a competent way.

2.2.5 Changing norms of English

The idea that non-native speakers of English from Outer Circle countries are, by definition, inextricably dependent on native speakers is also strongly opposed by a number of authors (Canagarajah, 2007, 2009; Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2005; Widdowson, 1994; 1997), who view English primarily as a lingua franca. It is argued that due to the growing proportion of non-native speakers worldwide, communication in English often does not include native speakers at all. Thus, the relevance of native speaker norms related to rules of English such as grammar and language use for ELF speakers is strongly questioned by the authors mentioned above, which also entails questioning the norms of pronunciation (cf. Jenkins, 2000).

Furthermore, a number of other authors point out that there are strong biases towards native speakers within ELT, which involves the representation of culture, methodological preferences, employment policy, and, of particular interest to the present research, ideal models of language (Canagarajah, 2009; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992;). This ideology is referred to by the term native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005), which refers to unjustified and unfair favouritism to native speakers of English at the expense of non-native speakers. Widdowson (1994) claims that despite being the cradle of the language and contributing to its global spread in the course of history, neither England nor any other nation of native speakers can claim ownership over the language. The norms of language use are to be decided by the global
community of the speakers of the language in reference to their communicative needs. Consequently, the aim of language teaching should not be to approximate the native speaker in terms of language proficiency or language use but to develop linguistic competence which best suits the needs of the ELF speaker, which calls for an alternative approach to pronunciation as well.

2.2.6 Changing norms in ELT

According to Jenkins (2000) and Seidlhofer (2005), among others, the fact that English is increasingly being used as a lingua franca between non-native speakers creates a need for different priorities in English language teaching from the time when the use of English was centred around native speakers. They claim that it is rather unreasonable and, indeed, unjustifiable to expect learners to conform to the norms of Standard British English, which is the variety of English commonly used as the linguistic model in ELT and which is therefore regarded as the desired outcome of learning English.

This is especially true for pronunciation, as it is perhaps the most prominent aspect of non-native varieties of English, and one which is almost exclusively based on RP English in a significant proportion of ELT course materials (Jenkins, 2012). When learners use English in real-life interactions, they are thus most likely to encounter accents other than RP (cf. Trudgill, 2002), the speakers of which are only a minority of the speakers of English worldwide (cf. Section 2.2.3). Therefore, it is argued that the norms of pronunciation based on standard ENL
varieties, particularly on RP, have limited relevance for learners in terms of their ability to communicate in English outside ELT contexts.

Despite the above reasons for reconsidering the norms of ELT based on standard ENL varieties of English, changing the pronunciation norms of ELT is hindered by ingrained beliefs about the superiority of ENL. Concerning the norms of English in ELT, authors point out that it is, ironically, native speakers who are more tolerant of non-standard varieties, whereas non-native teachers and students are more reluctant to accept deviations from the standards of textbooks. According to Andreasson (1994), in countries where English is taught as a foreign language, one’s success in learning English is often measured in terms of their ability to approximate an idealised image of the native speaker’s language as closely as possible, while failing to do so indicates that the person has not learned English properly (Murray, 2003), which is especially true for pronunciation as the most noticeable aspect of spoken English (Jenkins, 2007).

2.2.7 Pronunciation and the future of English

In order to promote a single pronunciation variety in favour of different accents, it has been hypothesised (cf. Wardhaugh, 2006) that without uniformising standards, English might gradually dissolve into variants displaying such a degree of diversity that it would become mutually unintelligible to its speakers, and consequently, it would fail to fulfil its role as a world language. However, a number of counterarguments can be put forward against this view.
Widdowson (1997) argues that English will be used in communities of practice, in which people of a certain profession, (for instance, doctors, car engineers, IT professionals or students) would use the language for communicating between each other. They would therefore develop their own standards as they use the language, yielding mutually intelligible registers, that is English(es) used for specific purposes. For example, a study by Kalocsai (2011) shows how a group of Erasmus exchange students studying at a Hungarian university develop a community of practice as they use English as a lingua franca. Members of the group used English as well as their L1 linguistic repertoire as a resource in order to achieve their communicative goals, which involved negotiating meaning, using code-switching as group rituals or to express humour to create a sense of community. The Erasmus student community thus created their own English by using both L2 and their L1-s to achieve mutual intelligibility as well as to define themselves as a group through the development of their own linguistic conventions. This shows that instead of conforming to standards of ENL, speakers of English can use the language in a creative way to suit their communicative purposes within their communicative contexts.

As an alternative scenario for the future of English, Crystal (2003) predicts the evolution of a World Standard Spoken English, which people would switch to when intelligibility problems are likely to arise between speakers. According to him, the fatal fragmentation of English is unlikely to happen by virtue of the very nature of language use. He argues that most people are already multi-dialectal in their first language, as they use different varieties (in terms of syntax, lexis, and pronunciation) when they use the language at their workplace or with their friends and family. Thus, speakers are likely to develop a register of English which involves core features of the language which is accessible to and intelligible by all speakers, which can be used as a shared code of communication.
Furthermore, theories of audience design, such as Bell’s (1984), can also be applied to argue against the scenario that English should develop into mutually unintelligible varieties. Speakers utilise their knowledge of different language variants (along with their information about the other speaker) to tailor the form of their message to the receiver. According to Jenkins (2012) this practice of speaker accommodation can be used for affective purposes, mostly used by native speakers who signal their relation towards the other speaker, for instance, closeness, social loyalty or distance by the use (or disuse) of certain features. However, Jenkins (2012) argues that accommodation can also be used to enhance intelligibility, as a proficient speaker of English may consciously select variants that they deem more understandable for their listener. This, of course, requires a high level of proficiency and awareness of sound variants, which learners should master in the ELT classroom through appropriate activities (Jenkins, 2012).

In conclusion, the history of the spread of English as well as the above considerations regarding its status point to the direction that treating English as a monolithic concept and representing it as a homogenous variety in ELT is not justified either theoretically or empirically. Although certain abstractions may be necessary when teaching the language forms of English such as its core vocabulary, grammar or phonology, it should be done with the awareness that in reality, English is increasingly used by a number of different people and it is consequently characterised by a high degree of variation in language forms which are subject to constant change depending on the contexts of its use. In other words, one should be aware of the fact that when talking about English, what is referred to is, in fact, Englishes, which involves numerous traditionally as well as newly established varieties of English along with other manifestations of English which cannot be classified as varieties. These Englishes are invariably legitimate linguistic entities whose features should be regarded as natural differences and not deviations,
and their communicative or social value should be based on their potential to serve as a means of communication and not on the extent to which they conform to the norms of certain prestige varieties of ENL. The implication of these considerations regarding English pronunciations in ELT would be that instead of training learners to use and understand a single prestige variety of the language, it is much more practical and reasonable to acquaint them with a range of varieties and develop their awareness of the diverse, variable and fluid nature of English in order for them to be able to use it for effective communication. The following section presents the paradigm of English as a lingua franca, which offers an approach to ELT which can cater for variation in English unlike a monolithic view of the language.

### 2.3 The paradigm of English as a lingua franca

The aim of this section is to provide an account of the evolution of the concept of English as a lingua franca in applied linguistic theory and to demonstrate how it can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of English and, in particular, to a better understanding of English pronunciation. As could be seen in the previous section, the concept of English shifted from the monolithic language of monolingual speakers to the diverse language of different speakers in the second half of the 20th century, which was largely due academic recognition and in some cases linguistic description and codification of the so-called New Englishes of multilingual people. This tendency of recognising diversity in English gave birth to the paradigm of English as a lingua franca, which can provide a new approach to English speech varieties as well.
In order to study speech varieties of English in the context of Hungarian EFL learners, it is essential to understand the theoretical framework of ELF with its development, various layers and interpretations. As opposed to a view of English pronunciation centred around standard ENL speech varieties, an ELF approach to pronunciation emphasises the importance of being able to comprehend different pronunciations due to the variability of English spoken by different people. This is related to the variable nature of English in ELF use (Section 2.3.2) resulting from the function of English as a language for communication, which is illustrated by the pragmatic view of ELF (Section 2.3.3). These are to demonstrate that variability in English pronunciation is the natural consequence of the purposes of English which speakers use the language for, which in the case of pronunciation can be mutual intelligibility or expressing an identity through language. The political considerations related to ELF (Sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.5) bear relevance to learners’ attitudes to English speech varieties since these ideas pinpoint why such language attitudes are significant for EFL speakers of English. Moreover, ELF provides a framework for interpreting learners’ attitudes by reconsidering the ownership of English (Section 2.3.6) and offering a new approach to English (2.3.7).

2.3.1 The rationale for ELF

Due to the growing number of non-native speakers of English who learn the language mainly through education and the increasing prominence of these people among the speakers of English worldwide, there arose a demand for the recognition the English of these speakers as Englishes in their own right as opposed to imperfect manifestations of ENL, in a similar fashion to World
Englishes. The rationale behind ELF research is to appreciate the communicative value of the English of non-native speakers and to offer a resolution for the ideological and language political issues posed by the dominance of ENL in various areas of the use of English worldwide, in particular, in ELT (Pennycook, 1994).

The separate treatment of ELF from the World Englishes paradigm is necessitated by a number of differences between ELF and WE (Widdowson, 2014). ELF cannot be rendered to a discrete language community in the way World Englishes can be related to the societies where they are used. World Englishes have an integral role in their countries as they are used for intra-national communication, and the given varieties also serve as a means of expressing the national identity of people as the conventionalised local features of these Englishes are used consistently to distinguish their users from other speakers. By contrast, ELF is used primarily for international communication in countries where it has no official function within the society. The main obstacles in describing ELF as a variety similar to World Englishes lies in its diverse and fluid nature, namely that ELF use yields many different variable language forms in different contexts, which makes it problematic to delineate it as one variety; moreover, the language forms do not exhibit the stability over time and consistency through different contexts which would make it possible to identify a tangible set of conventionalised forms. Although some instances of recurring forms can be discovered in ELF use which might recur in different contexts and with different speakers from time to time, many variants which occur in ELF communication are often situational, transitory and improvisational as they emerge in the communicative situation to serve ad-hoc communicative purposes and may not be used again even by the same speaker, let alone by a wider community of speakers. Despite the common patterns in ELF, these language forms are not conventionalised and they do not have the political function of expressing the
speakers’ national identity similarly to World Englishes in former British colonies. Thus, World Englishes can be seen as political constructs with an identifiable set of linguistic features, whereas ELF has no political function and it does not have conventionalised linguistic features. These ambiguities and the various facets of ELF resulted in its different conceptualisations and different applications throughout the emergence of the concept in the literature, which are discussed in the following sections.

2.3.2 The variationist view of ELF

The main aim of early ELF research was to describe ELF as a variety, trying to identify linguistic forms which are used consistently by its speakers and which make ELF distinguishable from ENL. The rationale behind finding consistent linguistic patterns was to distinguish between performance errors of second language users and the competence of ELF users so that features of ELF use would no longer be regarded as deficient manifestations or imperfect imitations of ENL but as features of a language variety in their own right. Similarly to World Englishes, linguistic description and the consequent academic recognition of ELF could mean that its linguistic features can be freed from the stigma of imperfect non-native English, which are seen as flawed attempts to emulate native speakers’ English, meaning that they could instead be regarded as conventionalised forms of legitimate varieties.

This brought about the description of non-native varieties not as erroneous and flawed attempts to emulate native speakers’ English but as fully functional varieties in their own right. Empirical research was conducted in order to identify regular patterns in non-native speakers’
English with regards to phonology (Jenkins, 2000), morphology (Breiteneder, 2009), syntax (Seidlhofer, 2003), vocabulary (Pitzl, Breiteneder, & Klimpfinger, 2008) and language use (House, 2003). The most extensive corpus of ELF English was compiled by the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) project, collecting instances of interactions among non-native speakers and between native and non-native speakers. Although the present research project focuses on speech varieties of English, it is important to illustrate variation in ELF pertaining to other areas of the language in order to emphasise that variability in pronunciation is not a unique aspect of English, but it is part of a generic and natural phenomenon of using English as a lingua franca; besides variation does not hinder communication in ELF use but it can actually enhance it.

Concerning the phonology of ELF, Jenkins (2000) has made suggestions for a lingua franca core, consisting of the essential phonemes necessary for avoiding misunderstandings in ELF communication, which are meant to be applicable to all users of English. This is a significant step as it abandons the idea that the main aim of L2 English pronunciation is to emulate a standard native variety. The theory of the Lingua franca core is discussed in detail in Section 2.4.1.

As for morphology and syntax, the VOICE project provides results of corpus-based empirical research which have implications for norms in ELF. Concerning morphology, Breiteneder (2005, 2009) points out that the present 3rd person singular inflection is omitted by speakers in a considerable proportion of the cases. In language teaching, this is regarded as a frequent mistake by learners, as it deviates from the morphology of the standard varieties of English such as Standard British English or GA English. However, it is argued that this feature does not contribute to the meaning of the message, neither does it have any grammatical
significance and has thus no communicative function whatsoever. Consequently, its omission does not cause misunderstanding between speakers and it is therefore argued that zero marking for this case should be accepted in ELF grammar. This can be regarded as a parallel with English pronunciation where commonly occurring variation of redundant features has only symbolic significance (cf. Jenkins, 2000)

Seidlhofer (2003) provides a list of further morphological and syntactic features, often treated as errors in ELT, which do not result in miscommunication and should therefore be included as features of ELF. These include, for instance, interchanging ‘who’ and ‘which’, transferring the L1 use of definite articles into English, or using question tags which do not agree with the verb of the main clause, such as ‘yes?’ or ‘no?’. These features are common phenomena in ELF speech which do not lead to misunderstandings and therefore should not be persecuted as errors in language teaching solely because they differ from the language use of most native speakers. By contrast, she points out that it is idiomatic and metaphorical language use, commonly used by L1 speakers of English, which tends to lead to miscommunication. Although these observations are based on spoken language, the implications for norms may be applied to written language as well. Consequently, the main implication for ELF norms is that systematic differences from native speaker grammar, which are commonly treated as errors in traditional language teaching, should be regarded as naturally occurring variation in L2 use.

As far as vocabulary is concerned, Pitzl et al. (2008) identify lexical innovations in the spoken VOICE corpus, which are produced by ELF speakers while interacting with each other in order to fulfil ad hoc communicative goals. These words, tagged in the corpus as Pronunciation Variation and Coinages (PVC) include lexical items which do not feature in the reference dictionary and are hence presumed to be different from L1 English vocabulary. These words,
such as ‘pronunciate’, ‘commodification’, ‘turkishhood’, or ‘geostrategical’ are formed by the creative use of standard English vocabulary, productive word formation rules, and L1 language knowledge to fill gaps in the ELF vocabulary or to enhance the clarity of the message. They are not related specifically to a professional (ESP) terminology but can be considered to augment general English vocabulary. Most of these lexical innovations are ad hoc improvisations adapting to the communicative situation, though some of them tend to be taken up by the interlocutors. Besides, a number of similar innovative words emerge independently from different communicative contexts, which may lead to the gradual spread and the eventual standardisation of these words.

The above research into the language forms of ELF illustrates ideas which can be applicable to researching speech varieties of English. Firstly, variation in ELF morphology and syntax illustrate the idea that variation in English is often redundant from the point of view of communication and the importance of these forms lies in the fact that they have a symbolic value of conforming to standards. Besides, as could be seen from the example of vocabulary, ELF users’ creative way of varying language forms when using English can serve as a powerful tool in using English for their own purposes in an adaptive way.

### 2.3.3 The pragmatic view of ELF

After the initial focus of ELF research on language forms, trying to identify common denominators between the variants which occur in different instances of ELF communication, the conceptualisation of ELF shifted from a variationist view to an approach which regards ELF
and its variants as the result of pragmatic processes which take place in intercultural communication (Widdowson, 2014). According to this approach, linguistic forms in ELF follow from the functions of English communication, that is, speakers use English in certain contexts with certain purposes, which yields variation in language forms. The relationship between form and function illustrated by the examples below resemble the way pragmatic functions can affect language forms in speech varieties of English as well.

Cogo and Dewey (2006) illustrate how pragmatic functions affect forms by the example of lexical innovations and the alternation between -s and zero in the 3rd person singular morpheme. Their findings show that metaphorical or creative word choices are used by speakers to convey specialised meanings which are then negotiated by the speakers. The use of these words is characterised by repetition and backchanelling by the speakers to signal support, cooperation and accommodation to each other. According to the corpus data, the frequency of the 3rd person singular suffixes’ realisation as -s or zero depends on pragmatic aspects of language use such accommodation based on the interlocutor, the formality of the context and the topic. The frequency of the morpheme’s realisation as -s in main verbs is found to be relatively high in a formal situation such as an ELT classroom context with a native-speaker teacher as the interlocutor when discussing the topic of grammatical correctness; by contrast, the morpheme is realised as zero more frequently when the interaction involves non-native speakers in less formal contexts.

The examples of accommodation in ELF interactions show that variable linguistic features in ELF are not features of varieties as such, but they are linguistic options strategically used by ELF speakers to achieve particular pragmatic purposes. Accommodation can have three main purposes: convergence, divergence and maintenance (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991).
Convergence involves approximating the listener’s language to either facilitate communication or to signal identification with the speaker, divergence can signal distance from the interlocutor while maintenance means that the speaker does not change features of their language in order to accommodate to the listener. ELF users can thus vary the forms of English depending on the communicative context and their pragmatic purposes.

According to Kecskés (2007) pragmatic processes also shape ELF due to the differences in ELF speaker’s schematic knowledge. Since ELF interactions involve people of different social and cultural backgrounds who come from different contexts, they have less shared knowledge or common references which can support communication. Therefore, ELF speakers use fewer idioms and rely more on the explicit linguistic code to convey messages compared to native speakers, who can use more idiomaticity in English because of their shared schemata and their common knowledge of their shared context. Therefore, for ELF speakers, it is the linguistic code of English that constitutes the basis of the common ground for communication instead of a shared socio-cultural knowledge, and thus speakers’ efforts to cooperate and establish a linguistic common ground in ELF communication shapes the language forms used by the speakers.

In a similar vein, Widdowson (2014) regards ELF as online communicative processes which take place between speakers of different socio-cultural backgrounds and in which English functions as a complex adaptive system. The complex nature of English entails that its language forms are variable, which means that its sounds, grammatical forms and lexical items can be realised or expressed in a number of different ways, giving ELF speakers a range of possible linguistic options to choose from in the course of communication. These forms are, in turn, adapted to the communicative situation online, in the act of communication, in a way that they
suit the purposes of the speakers. This involves processes in which ELF speakers cooperate to understand each other in an ongoing interaction by means of negotiation of meaning and accommodation, using all the linguistic resources at their disposal to achieve their communicative goals.

The pragmatic view of ELF is relevant for investigating English speech varieties since it illustrates how functions of language use may affect language forms. Although in speech varieties, a number of language forms may have no pragmatic functions, for example, variants in pronunciation resulting from L1 transfer in the case of EFL speakers, the use of variables by speakers can be influenced consciously or unconsciously by the context of language use, namely the audience, the formality of the situation of the topic. Pronunciation can also be used for accommodation for the sake of intelligibility, compensating for differences in schematic knowledge by finding a linguistic common ground, or to signal personal relationships with other speakers.

2.3.4 The language political aspect of ELF

Besides the variationist view of ELF, another aspect of ELF research is concerned with the ideological and political issues pertaining to English in international contexts and in language education. This facet of ELF is rooted in applied linguistic research which problematises the use of English in bi- or multilingual contexts. It focuses on the power relationships between ENL speakers versus ESL or EFL speakers and the cultural, political and ideological issues surrounding the use and the teaching of English. The aim of this section is to discuss these issues
and to show how ELF can be conceived as a language political paradigm which offers a new approach to English in terms of the status of its speakers, the norms of its use and the practices of teaching it. This is to provide further theoretical context for investigating Hungarian EFL learners’ attitudes towards English speech varieties.

Phillipson (1994) argues that the transfer of English as a dominant language can be seen as linguistic imperialism, which means demonstrating social, political and cultural power through English, which is promoted by governments and organisations such as the British Council. It is argued that the status of English as the socially dominant language in post-colonial settings creates a linguistic and cultural hegemony of English and its native speakers. This is achieved by emphasising the richness and the superior linguistic qualities of English, for example, by asserting that English is the language with the largest vocabulary, a claim which is not justifiable linguistically, while implying that other languages lack such positive qualities. Besides, asserting the pervasive role of English and its importance of international communication makes other languages appear to be marginal and of limited importance. Linguistic imperialism also involves the idea that through the dominance of the English language, the cultures, values, practices or political systems of native-English Anglo-Saxon societies are presented as superior to those of non-Anglo-Saxon people.

The idea of linguistic imperialism implies that there are many inequalities in international contexts where English is used as the dominant language of communication. Professionals such as business people, scientists or academics who wish to engage in their professions in international contexts are forced to use English as a medium of communication, which means that they need to master a new linguistic code and they also have to conform to ENL speakers’ norms of language use if they seek acceptance in these discourse communities (Canagarajah,
2005). For example, a scientist who intends to share their discovery in an international journal or present it at an international conference will have to adhere to the strict norms of ENL discourse communities. Not only will they have to use English to communicate their ideas, they will have to do so in a manner that native speakers of English do it, structuring and presenting ideas and arguments by following the conventions of ENL, with the idiomacity and possibly the pronunciation of native speakers in the case of spoken discourses. By contrast, since international contexts are dominated by English and Anglo-American norms, ENL speakers enjoy the advantages of home turf in the international arena due to their familiarity with English and the norms of its use regardless of whether they are professionally superior to non-native speakers of English or not.

Phillipson (1992) argues that there are a number of manifestations of linguistic imperialism in language education as well. The main purpose of native speakerism in ELT is not to contribute positively to the teaching of English but to maintain the hegemony of ENL and the dominance of native speakers in the profession. The most prominent aspect of linguistic imperialism in ELT is the promotion of monolingualism which involves several fallacies. It asserts that English is best taught by native speakers who represent authentic English and are therefore the ideal models for learners. In addition, they also have first-hand knowledge of the cultural context of English and they are thus more suitable to teach the language than non-native teachers. Monolingualism also entails that English ought to be the only language which features in teaching materials and which is used during lessons. Learners’ mother tongues are regarded as potentially harmful influences which should be banished from ELT altogether. The main rationale behind excluding learners’ L1 from ELT is that it might result in language transfer, that is, transferring features of the learners’ mother tongue to their English, which would
“contaminate” their English by making it incorrect or simply not authentic as it would mean deviations from ENL. This can be regarded as the main rationale for using prestige varieties of English speech such as RP in ELT and stigmatising L1 accent features of learners.

The inequalities between ENL versus ESL and EFL speakers are also discussed by Pennycook (1994) building on the theory of Center versus Periphery by Galtung (1971) whereby the native speakers of dominant English-speaking countries exert cultural and political influence on ESL and EFL speakers through English, especially in the context of language education. Due to the global dominance of English in the media and in popular culture, political views, values and ideologies are handed down from countries of the Center to countries of the Periphery through the media and through language education. For example, English-language news is produced in countries of the Center and is consumed as international news in the Periphery, while they represent mainly the point of view and interpretations of the Center. Similarly, the values and narratives of internationally popular Hollywood movies represent the narratives, values and worldviews of the Center, which are received in the Periphery as desirable alternatives to their values which are not represented in English-language popular culture. Equating English with ENL and the superiority of the Center can constitute the basis of the prestige value of English speech varieties of the Center due to the associations speakers of English make between pronunciation and symbolic meanings, discussed further in Section (2.4.2).
2.3.5 The political implications of ELF for ELT

Pennycook (1994) argues that the dominance of the Center is particularly strong in English language education, which does not only involve transferring a language as a means of communication, but it is an arena where potentially conflicting cultural and political values compete. This may involve presenting the cultural artefacts, customs and practices of the Center, for example in ELT materials, as if they were inextricably linked to English, which is represented as the socio-cultural product of the Center. This way it is implied that learning English entails adopting the values and practices of the Center which are presented as superior alternatives to the Periphery, which is legitimised by the superiority of English as the prominent language in international communication. Therefore, it is argued that teachers need to be aware of the political aspects along with the potential agendas and ideologies pertaining to the teaching of English, including the language political significance of English pronunciation.

According to Holliday (2005), ELT is characterised by a widespread ideology termed native-speakerism, which refers to the unjust and unjustified favouritism towards native speaker teachers in employment policies and towards the practices and methodologies promoted by them. Due to the pervasiveness of native-speakerism in ELT, employers, learners and even non-native teachers regard native speakers as the ideal models of authentic English as well as representatives of a superior Western culture, which grants them a higher status in the profession regardless of their qualifications. This results in discrimination towards non-native teachers who are not eligible for the privileged status of native speakers.

Paradoxically, as it is pointed out by Murray (2003) and Jenkins (2007) among others, it is typically non-native speakers and, in particular, non-native teachers who perpetuate ideas
underlying native-speakerism, namely that learners of English ought to defer to ENL speakers as the only models of acceptable or correct English and deviating from ENL should be avoided. By contrast, native-English teachers tend to accept non-native English more than their non-native counterparts as the former group regards the communicative value of English as the priority. The reason behind the more conservative attitudes of non-native teachers may be the too-much-invested-to-quit fallacy, whereby they have indeed invested a great deal of effort into approximating native speaker competence; therefore, they might be reluctant to abandon ENL as a stable point of reference. The main disadvantage of this self-inflicted obligation of conformity to ENL is that non-native teachers and learners may find themselves in a position in which they feel compelled to pretend to be someone they are not when using English. They strive to emulate ENL speakers while trying to avoid non-native features in their English, which may create a sense of insecurity and anxiety (Medgyes, 1983, 2004).

Native-speakerism is not only problematic from the individual speakers’ perspective, but it can have large-scale negative consequences for non-native speakers in the form of prejudice and discrimination in the ELT industry. Mahboob and Golden (2013) point out that a large majority of job advertisements for international teaching positions in Asia and the Middle-East discriminate against non-native teachers of English by explicitly stating nativeness as a prerequisite for interviewing for a job. The underlying reason for this discrimination is the equation of internationalism with Anglo-Saxon countries and their cultures (Seidlhofer, 2012). In some cases the advertisements also specify certain nationalities, typically of Western English-speaking countries, as a requirement in addition to nativeness in order to eliminate bilingual speakers from Outer Circle countries as potential candidates. These practices reveal that discrimination happens not only on linguistic, but also on cultural and racial grounds in certain
cases. This raises a serious ethical issue for programmes and institutions which offer teaching qualifications to non-native speakers since the practice of treating educational qualifications as secondary compared to nativeness and nationality in employment practices questions the relevance of these qualifications for non-native speakers. “If these qualifications are not seen as relevant to getting a teaching position, then one may ask: what future is there for those taking these courses? And, by extension, of the institutions and programs that offer these courses?” (Mahboob & Golden, 2013, p.78). This is contradictory to TESOL’s position statement against discrimination in the ELT industry; however, as Fairclough (1995) points out, such ideologies pass unnoticed and hence unquestioned since people are not aware of them in the first place. Thus, they may persist in hiring practices whether or not they are stated explicitly in job advertisements as long as learners and ELT professionals hold ingrained beliefs about the cultural and linguistic superiority of Western native speakers of English.

Another aspect of native-speakerism in ELT is the uncritical adoption of methodologies and practices which are used and promoted by native speakers. This stems from the ideology that because of their linguistic and cultural superiority, English is best taught through methods which are practiced by native English teachers. An example of this is a common interpretation of communicative language teaching whereby learners are taught to communicate in English by assuming ENL as the target language which is meant to be used in ENL contexts with ENL speakers (Seidlhofer, 1999). According to this method, learners are trained to emulate the pragmatic behaviour of ENL, that is, the use of ready-made communicative patterns which are considered to be appropriate in these contexts instead of learning to adapt their use of English to various international contexts (Illés, 2011).
Besides the prevalence of communicative language teaching tailored to ENL, native-speakerism is also manifested in monolingualism in the English-teaching classroom, which involves a monolingual methodology suited to the monolingual native-English teacher. According to this view, learners are supposed to use English exclusively during the learning process, while their L1 is deemed undesirable in the classroom (cf. Widdowson, 2003). The rationale for this policy is that the use of L1 would interfere with the learning of English because language features transferred from learners’ mother tongue would “contaminate” their English and thus make it less authentic. Translating from learner’s L1 is considered to prevent them from thinking in English, and it would result in idiosyncratic phrasing or language use which is uncharacteristic of ENL. However, these disadvantages of L1 use in the ELT classroom only impede learning English in as much as the objective of learning English is to approximate an ideal ENL speakers’ competence of English. Otherwise, the sole beneficiaries of monolingualism are those native-speaker teachers who have little or no knowledge of learners’ L1 and for whom the exclusive use of English in the ELT classroom is a matter of convenience. On the other hand, monolingualism creates an unnecessary obstacle for the language learner and it impinges on their identity by trying to alienate them from their mother tongue in an effort to master a second language (cf. Widdowson, 2003; Jenkins, 2010). Due to the symbolic nature of pronunciation, insistence on standard ENL pronunciations and stigmatising L1 accents in ELT can be seen as a manifestation of native speakerism which is based on the principles of monolingualism and the superiority of ENL and its speakers similarly to the other practices mentioned above.
2.3.6 The ownership of English

Besides describing the forms and the use of English between multilingual speakers, the main contribution of ELF research is that it redefines English as the language of speakers from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds as opposed to the language of its native speakers which other speakers can only strive to approximate, which allows for diversity in English pronunciation as well. This way, the power relationships among English speakers can become decentralised and democratised by acknowledging the validity and legitimacy of English which is independent of ENL, and which is judged by its communicative value instead of conformity to the norms of ENL speakers. The question of the ownership of English is essential from the perspective of attitudes towards English speech varieties because it defines the reference points for making judgements about speakers’ pronunciations. For example, attributing English to ENL speakers might entail negative attitudes towards ESL and EFL accents which differ from ENL, while regarding English as a lingua franca which is the shared possession of all its speakers can imply more positive attitudes towards ESL and EFL pronunciations without judgements based on comparing these speech varieties to ENL.

Widdowson (1994) argues that ENL speakers can no longer claim to be custodians of the English language as their historical legacy, and that ESL and EFL speakers have the right to take full ownership of the language. As a linguistic minority in relation to the speakers of English worldwide, it is not justified that ENL speakers define what is correct or appropriate in English based on their own linguistic and cultural norms. At the same time, certain groups of ENL speakers tend to promote what they deem to be standard English, in a similar fashion to marketing a product, on the pretext that this authentic version of the language is a guarantee of
quality, that is, for successful communication and mutual intelligibility. By contrast, Widdowson (1994) points out that these standard forms have little relevance for communication, and their main significance lies in the fact that they carry a symbolic value and thus serve as a means of identifying with a group of ENL speakers. Therefore, it is argued that defining competence in English in terms of conforming to what is presented as the authentic or real English of ENL speakers is mistaken, and this view is only upheld by virtue of the authority that ESL and EFL speakers attribute to ENL speakers and the symbolic value they attach to Standard English. Authenticity should therefore be regarded as relative to the various speakers of English and their contexts of use, and speakers should appropriate English to suit their own purposes in order for them to be proficient speakers. As Widdowson (1994) puts it:

Real proficiency is when you are able to take possession of the language, turn it to your advantage, and make it real for you. This is what mastery means. So in a way, proficiency only comes with nonconformity, when you can take the initiative and strike out on your own. (Widdowson, 1994, p.384)

In this sense, the underlying purpose of ELF research is to empower non-ENL speakers of English to take ownership of the language and to abolish the anglophone-centric ideologies and attitudes which are prevalent in ELT and in other global contexts where English is used, and which may hinder English in functioning as a shared global language (Seidlhofer, 2012).

Regarding English as the lingua-cultural artefact of ENL speakers gives other speakers of English the impression that mastery of English entails using English in ENL speakers’ terms, that is, according to their rules of correctness and appropriateness. However, the cultural content, idiomaticity or native-like pronunciation, which are relevant to ENL speakers’ contexts of language use may be largely redundant for ESL and EFL speakers since they mostly serve the
symbolic function of identification and have no relevance or communicative value for other international contexts of using English apart from the prestige speakers attach to those language forms. In the light of the above, it can be argued that attitudes towards English speech varieties can be dependent on whether English is viewed as the possession of its native speakers or it is regarded as a lingua franca shared by its speakers which is granted authenticity by its communicative potential and not by its conformity to established standard varieties of ENL.

2.3.7 ELF as a new approach to English

The aim of this section is to explain the understanding of ELF according to which the concept is used in the rest of the paper based on the different facets of ELF research detailed in the above sections and the definition of ELF in Section 2.1.1 The main contribution of the ELF paradigm to the present research (‘is that it’) offers a new paradigm which reconceptualises English in a way that reflects how it is used by its speakers worldwide as opposed to viewing it as the language of ENL speakers. Therefore, in the framework of the present research, ELF is understood as a mode of English and not as a separate linguistic entity or version of English; in other words, it is a question of how rather than a question of what. This difference can be illustrated by analysing the syntax of the following sentence by means of square bracketing:

People \[VP[V use/speak/teach/learn/see] [NP English as a lingua franca]]
In the above sentence, English as a lingua franca is a noun phrase which stands as the object of the verb, implying that it is a something, a separate kind of the language or a variety, which can be distinguished from ENL, for instance. By contrast, in the same sentence, the phrase as a lingua franca can be analysed as an adjectival phrase which modifies the verbs, use, speak, teach or learn rather than the noun, English.

According to this interpretation, the main message of ELF research is not to say that English as a language is modified in any way, since it is changeable and variable in the first place; what is or should be modified about English is the way it is used, spoken, taught, learned or seen by people, by taking into consideration the people who use English, the purposes for which they use it and the different contexts in which it is used. In order to clarify these qualities of English as a lingua franca, a modified version of Firth’s (1996) original definition can be used. Based on this, ELF entails an approach to English according to which it is regarded as a language which serves as shared means of communication between people of various mother tongues and different cultural backgrounds.

There are a number of considerations which follow from this approach to English, which comprise the theoretical basis of the present research project. Since English is shared among its speakers, most of whom use it as an additional language (cf. Crystal, 2003), it cannot be regarded
as the property of its native speakers who are entitled to prescribe the norms of correctness and appropriateness for other speakers. Due to the diverse linguistic and cultural background of its speakers, the use of English inevitably involves a great deal of linguistic variation flexibility. As the main function of English is to serve as a means of communication, language forms are subjected to the function of conveying a message efficiently in a given context, which results in situational, emergent language. Therefore, ENL cannot be considered as a fix model for other speakers to follow, but rather as a resource that other speakers may exploit and complement with their own linguistic resources to suit their communicative purpose. Moreover, due to the fact that communication in English involves speakers of different cultures, ENL culture cannot be imposed on all contexts where English is used or taught, whereby speakers are expected to identify with native speakers of English and their cultural norms. Instead, using English involves intercultural interactions where ENL culture may not be represented, and where English can be seen as resource for speakers to express their personal and cultural identities by making their own choices about the symbolic use of the language. In sum, in the present research project, ELF is regarded not as a variety or a set of varieties of English, but the way English is used in communicative contexts which involve speakers of different cultures and mother tongues, keeping in mind the implications of ELF for the forms, functions, and norms of English and its use.

The following sections discuss the significance of English pronunciation in the light of the above framework of English as a lingua franca, focusing on the forms of pronunciation, the function of pronunciation for communication and identification as well as the norms of English pronunciation in the context of language teaching.
2.4 Pronunciation in English as a lingua franca

2.4.1 Pronunciation and intelligibility

The issue of intelligibility pertaining to speech varieties of English is discussed in a number of studies. Based on the empirical investigation of EFL learners, Jenkins (2000) establishes a phonological inventory called Lingua Franca Core (LFC), consisting of sounds which are considered essential for comprehensibility in ELF as opposed to redundant features of pronunciation, which do not affect the success of communication. The main advantage of this approach is that it does not regard native-like pronunciation as the ultimate goal for learners, but focuses on the practical aspect of intelligibility instead. However, it may be problematic to make generalisations as to what is essential or redundant in ELF by investigating the communication of speakers of a limited number of L1s. While certain features may be crucial to understanding for speakers of certain L1-s, these findings may not be applicable to all speakers of ELF. This is because learners’ L2 competence, including phonological competence, is based on their L1 and therefore, distinctive and redundant phonological features in ELF may vary from speaker to speaker (cf. Chuan, 2010). This is in line with Widdowson’s (2003) general consideration according to which the use of English is undoubtedly global, nevertheless, learning is essentially local and thus learners’ L1 should be considered in ELT and the related research.

Deterding (2012) aims to establish a set of pronunciation features which can potentially cause misunderstanding in ELF communication with focus on Asian speakers of English based on the ACE (Asian Corpus of English) corpus, creating an emerging Corpus of
Misunderstandings in ACE (CMACE) (cf. also Deterding and Kirkpatrick, 2006). It is pointed out, however, that misunderstandings do not inevitably lead to a breakdown of communication in ELF use, since speakers can still decipher the general message of the utterance from the context. The results show that intelligibility cannot be investigated in isolation, since, for instance, familiarity with the lexical items can have an impact on comprehensibility, that is, a familiar word may be better understood despite phonological deviations compared to unfamiliar or less frequent vocabulary. Also, schematic knowledge of the context and priming effect can also enhance, or in some cases, hinder the comprehension of speech. One example of the latter was that the word ‘weather’ in the corpus is misheard for ‘waiter’ in a conversation about food. In the corpus, a number of instances of misunderstanding can be found which are due to the omission or substitution of consonants, but generalisations cannot be made about specific sounds. In some instances, the findings are in line with Jenkins’s (2000) theory of LFC, for instance, in the case of a misunderstanding due to vowel length difference; however, in other cases the findings go against the theory of LFC, for example, when misunderstanding occurred due to a mispronunciation of a TH sound. The main reason for this is that, as the examples in the corpus demonstrate, misunderstandings depend on the number of factors such as the phonetic context the sounds, the lexical items in which they occur or the schematic knowledge of the interlocutor. The importance of metacognition in listening is also emphasised by Vandergrift and Goh (2012).

Jenkins (2012) complements the theory of LFC by additional ideas to enhance comprehensibility in communication among non-native speakers. She suggests that developing skills of accommodation and negotiating meaning are essential strategies for learners of English. This involves a heightened phonological awareness on the part of the speakers, whereby they take into consideration potential sources of misunderstanding pronunciation and modify their
accent accordingly. Such skills require exposure which includes speech varieties other than ENL and conscious reflection on them in order to enhance receptive tolerance of varying sounds in identical utterances.

Kaur (2010) also points out that negotiation of meaning is one of the key aspects in ELF communication, similarly to ENL, which helps speakers avoid breakdowns in communication despite misunderstandings caused by sound variation in spoken language. Speakers deploy a number of communication strategies in order to communicate efficiently such as paraphrasing, repetition, as well as practices to clarify the message and confirm understanding.

It can be argued that teaching methods to enhance general English listening skills may also be applicable to improve learners’ comprehension of speech varieties of English as well, with certain adjustments of the audio samples used in the listening materials. It is suggested that extensive listening accompanied by reading the script of the audio material can considerably improve L2 listening fluency, and it is more effective than listening to spoken language only (Chang & Millet, 2013; Renandya & Farrell, 2010). This method can be helpful when learners are exposed to unfamiliar speech varieties since the script enables them to recognise utterances which would otherwise be difficult to decipher and it also helps them in recognising different ways of pronouncing certain sounds more easily. Chang and Millet (2013) also point out that selecting audio materials which suit learners’ competence and which are engaging for learners also have a positive effect on listening skills. These aspects of audio materials used for extensive listening are particularly important in the case of listening to different speech varieties of English since a high level of motivation is essential in order to overcome initial difficulties posed by unfamiliar English accents.
In light of the above, it seems theoretically justified to abandon the development of a native-like accent as the ultimate goal in teaching pronunciation in ELT, and focus instead on communication strategies and developing phonological awareness of different speech varieties of English. However, Andreasson (1994) points out that having native-like pronunciation is still regarded as an indicator of a proficient learner when it comes to language production; thus, the ability to successfully emulate native speaker pronunciation can still be seen as a status symbol in ELT. Therefore, whereas intelligibility is certainly a crucial issue in ELF, it is important to keep in mind that pronunciation can have further significance for L2 speakers because of its symbolic value in a parallel fashion to pronunciation in L1.

2.4.2 Pronunciation and identification in L1

Besides the function of phonological features to distinguish between meanings, pronunciation has further significance for speakers because of its potential to communicate social meanings in L1 English, which may be applicable to the role of speech varieties for L2 speakers as well. The issue of phonological variation and its significance for L1 speakers of English has been the subject of linguistic research with the emergence of English sociolinguistics.

When Chomsky and Halle (1965) set out to describe linguistic competence of the native speaker in terms of phonology, they assumed ideal speaker-listener interactions, disregarding the variation of actual language use for methodological reasons. This abstraction was necessary for creating a model of syntax and phonology which was based on what language forms were deemed to be well formed by native speakers of English.
Labov (1972), a sociolinguist, on the other hand, focuses on speech communities, and aimed to explore what sound features corresponded with certain socio-demographic features of the speakers such as age, gender, social class, or geographical origins. For example, he found systematic correspondence between the presence and absence of the syllable-final [r] sound and speakers’ social class. The syllable-final [r] proved to be a prestige marker as its use was more common among middle-class speakers and in formal speech. Although this approach to describing language was still based on an abstraction (the speech community), and used predetermined constructs, for instance, social class, it introduced the notion of systematic variation in the description of L1 English.

As shown most notably by Labov (1966), pronunciation in L1 use can have a more profound significance than merely communicating messages. For example, the presence or the absence of the syllable final /r/ may carry information about the speaker’s ethnicity, age, social status or education. Listeners may show a varying degree of awareness towards such variants, which Labov (1972) classifies into three categories. Indicators show consistent variation along social demographic factors, without speakers being aware of them. Markers, on the other hand, are recognised by language users and are overtly associated with certain groups of speakers, while stereotypes are crude generalisations of such features which are not necessarily characteristic of the group in question. Moreover, in L1 certain phonological features display consistent variation in different situations, serving as markers of style (Coupland, 2007) and speakers often make use of them in signalling their group identity, desired self-image or social affiliation (cf. Eckert, 1989, Podesva, Roberts & Campbell-Kibler, 2002).

According to the Social Connotation Hypothesis by Trudgill and Giles (1972), variants such as indicators, markers and stereotypes do not have any intrinsic meaning or aesthetic value
per se, but they become invested with these social meanings as speakers in a language community associate these linguistic features with particular values or qualities. The social value or attractiveness of variants is thus a matter of convention developed by communities of language users.

In this vein, through the description of varieties of English, focusing on native English accents in particular (Trudgill, 2002; Wells, 1982), descriptive linguists emphasised that different speech varieties are equally legitimate and suitable for communication, and considering a variety standard or nonstandard is purely a matter of convention (Wardhaugh, 2006). However, Coupland (2007), for instance, found that speakers using variants which are regarded as devious from standard forms may be judged as inferior in intelligence, education or social status by members of the speech community under investigation, consisting of British speakers.

Studies adopting an ethnographic approach along with a qualitative methodology revealed that variable linguistic features are used to express identities of speakers, though these identities are not fixed and clear-cut but rather fluid, dynamic, multivalent and complex (cf. Mendoza-Denton, 2008; Podesva, Roberts & Campbell-Kibler, 2002; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1998). Variants may take on new significance depending on the social context and they can be used in combination with other features to express a speaker’s identity. An example for this is Estuary English, an accent consisting of a mixture of RP and the previously stigmatised Cockney features. This popular variety is widely used among speakers in the South-East of England who aim to avoid sounding too conservative and want to give the impression of being progressive, but its use is highly dependent on what image speakers intend to project of themselves in particular social context (cf. Eitler, 2006).
Additionally, speakers may use linguistic variants as resources for signalling affiliation towards groups with which they wish to identify. Applying Wenger’s (1998) notion of community of practice, Eckert (2000) investigated how adolescents signalled their group identity by the use of an innovative vowel system emerging in the northern cities of the USA. These youths belonged to and overtly defined themselves as part of groups whose members were all engaged in various well-defined social activities, spent a considerable time in the company of one another and interacted amongst themselves on a regular basis. Eckert (2000) denoted such groups as linguistic communities of practice.

In sum, the research of L1 English pronunciation evolved from the description of an ideal speaker to the investigation of varieties and their significance from the point of view of speakers, focusing on the role of language in expressing a person’s identity. The subsequent section aims to pinpoint parallel tendencies with regard to SLA research, EFL learning and ELF use.

2.4.3 Pronunciation and identification in L2

Similarly to Chomsky’s ideal speaker in L1 English, the central point of reference in SLA and EFL research has been the ideal native speaker, based typically on the abstract notion of the educated speaker of standard British English (Widdowson, 1994). In SLA research, this was reflected in Error Analysis (Corder, 1967) and Contrastive analysis (Lado, 1957). The purpose of the former was to identify systematic errors in learners’ English grammar so that they could be eradicated, while the latter investigated linguistic differences between learners’ L1 and L2 in order to help learners approximate the kind of English used by native speakers. Therefore, non-
native speakers’ competence of English was viewed in terms of interlanguage (Selinker, 1972), a series of transitory phases along a continuum between their L1 and the native speaker variety of L2 to be mastered.

However, similarly to the attitudes towards L1 variation, the description of natural variation and the acknowledgement of its legitimacy by scholars did not grant L2 varieties the same status in EFL and ELT as that enjoyed by the established ENL varieties, in this case, Standard British and American English (cf. Illés & Csizér, 2010). Empirical research into the norms and standards of non-native English suggest that in ELT, native-like linguistic forms, such as native-like pronunciation, carry a prestige value, being indicative of a successful learner, while the use of non-native linguistic features is despised by many teachers and learners (Andreasson, 1994; Jenkins, 2007; Murray, 2003). Therefore, it can be said that differences in L2 English are still widely viewed as deficiencies.

In addition, the relationship of language variation, attitudes and identity in L2 is more complex and controversial than in L1 English. While there is consensus among sociolinguistics that language variation plays an important role in expressing speakers’ identity in L1, there are opposing views as to this role of language with regard to ELF. Firth (1996) defines ELF as “a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth, 1996, p. 240). This definition suggests that the sole function of ELF is that its speakers can make themselves understood when communicating with people of different mother tongues. House (2003) also considers ELF essentially a tool for communication, which does not pose a threat to the L1 by taking over its functions in people’s personal life since it is a “language for communication” as opposed to a “language for identification” (House, 2003, pp.559–650). On
the other hand, Dörnyei Csizér and Németh (2006) argue, using Arnett’s (2002) concept of global identity, that as an international language, English may be used to convey one’s sense of belonging to a global community, while speakers’ L1 can serve for expressing their local identity. In a similar vein, Walker (2010) points out that the transfer of an L1 accent into ELF can serve the purpose of communicating national identities through English.

The reason behind the contradictory views above may be that the authors attribute different significance to ELF in speakers’ lives. When English serves as a tool for basic communication or it is regarded primarily as a school subject, the role of identification of the language can be somewhat limited. By contrast, if ELF is an integral part of speakers’ life, it is likely to function in a similar fashion to an L1, whereby it can be used in day-to-day interactions for expressing the complex identities of its speakers. Therefore, it can be said that the use of ELF does not necessarily entail the expression of identity through language but it only provides an opportunity for speakers to utilise it for identification.

Jenkins (2007) shows that the expression of identity through English is prevalent among non-native teachers of English, yet instead of a global or a national identity, they strive to express a professional identity by approximating ENL. The non-native teachers’ evaluation of a range of native and non-native accents of English shows a preference for the US and UK variety, with a higher preference for the latter. By contrast, non-native accents are rated lower than the two established native accents despite the perceived intelligibility and, in some cases, the pleasantness of the non-native accent. This demonstrates that teachers show a paradoxical professional identity through their judgements of accents as they highly value the US and UK English accent, which they deem authentic English, while they show negative attitudes towards non-native accents, to which their own English accent belongs. The teachers’ account following
the survey reveal that the reasons for these seemingly conflicting identities is that although they are inclined to use their ELF accent to express their own identities, professional expectations from parents, learners and employers make them feel compelled to express a professional identity by conforming to ENL accents.

Concerning role of identity in L2 English in different contexts, a distinction can be made between language learning in schools and the use of ELF outside the classroom. In expanding circle countries (Kachru, 1992), L2 speakers are initiated into using English through ELT, which is currently dominated by native-speaker standards and ideologies (Widdowson, 1994). This is likely to exert a strong influence on learners’ attitudes towards native and non-native varieties, attributing a prestige value to ENL variants while EFL features might be stigmatised. However, using English for communication outside school yields a different context for ELF, where meanings and values are likely to be reconstructed and renegotiated, providing an opportunity to express L2 speakers’ complex identities as members of particular ELF communities. Nevertheless, whether or to what extent language values and identities formulated during language learning are transferred to ELF use outside school remains a question.

It may be argued that with English becoming an important means of everyday communication to an increasing number of ELF speakers, similarly to L1, the sociolinguistic significance of pronunciation may became more and more of a central issue in L2 language use. While an L1 is used as an expression of local or national identity through language, English may become a means of expressing one’s identity as a member of a global community depending of the role of English in the speakers’ life.

Applying the Social Connotation Hypothesis (Trudgill & Giles, 1972) to L2 contexts, it can be argued that variants in L2 can be invested with the role of markers signalling personal
affiliations or group identities similarly to the way it is done in L1 English. The sociolinguistic meaning of markers, such as features of particular native English varieties or ones transferred from an L1, can be reinterpreted depending on the context. For example, the various realisations of the TH sound, in words such as *think*, as [f], [t] or [s] may be interpreted not as failed attempts to emulate the standard ENL pronunciation but as characteristic features of different non-native speech communities of ELF. In ELF, these meanings and the prestige values associated with variants are likely to change fluidly driven by the dynamics of the local contexts on a social as well as a personal level, similarly to Estuary English in ENL. However, contrary to the Social Connotation Hypothesis in L1, in L2 contexts, the meaning of these features is not purely a matter of local convention, but it is influenced by norms of the wider community of English speakers and norms prevalent in ELT.

Furthermore, analogous to L1 language users, ELF speakers may also use English to project a desired self-image either as proficient speaker of a foreign language or as a professional member of a community of practice whose language of communication is English (cf. Widdowson, 1997; Dörnyei et al., 2006). In an ELT context, affective aspects of language, including pronunciation in particular, can bear significance to learner’s motivation as well (cf. Dörnyei, 2005).
2.5 Learners’ attitudes towards English pronunciation

Empirical research in various contexts suggests that learners of English notice variation in English, which enables them to formulate characteristic attitudes about the varieties. These attitudes can bear significance to their own pronunciation as well as the way they might utilise English for the expression of their identity through the language.

As for learners’ judgements of accents, McKenzie (2007) demonstrates that Japanese university students show awareness of different varieties of English. They have complex attitudes towards the speech varieties and they are capable of making judgements about them. Not only do they differentiate between native/non-native and standard/non-standard varieties of speech, but they also relate to them on the affective level. McKenzie’s results show that learners value native speaker speech varieties over non-native accents in terms of prestige, yet they express a higher level of solidarity towards the latter. The non-native speaker in the study was a Japanese speaker, which can be interpreted as expressing group solidarity similarly to the practices of native speakers. Besides, Japanese students also expressed a higher level of solidarity towards non-standard U.S. and U.K. accents compared to standard varieties.

The findings of research into speakers’ attitudes towards pronunciation can be divergent within similar contexts, as it can be concluded from Tokumoto and Shibata (2011). Contrary to McKenzie (2007), it is shown that Japanese students hold standard varieties of English in high regard, while they disapprove of their own L1-accented English, which they consider to cause intelligibility problems with other speakers. According to the same study, similar tendency holds for South Korean students, albeit for a lesser degree, while their Malaysian counterparts show a high valuation of their L1 accent in English while they do not adhere to ENL as much as the
other groups. It is pointed out that people develop such attitudes about language variants as a result of outside influence:

Particular language attitudes tend to be learned and formed in our social environment, such as by hearing others refer to some groups or people, including their languages and cultures, in a certain manner, and through exposure to particular varieties and instructions reflecting teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and choices (Tokumoto & Shibata, p.392).

It is further argued that the societies’ cultural, historical and political environment may exert an effect on language attitudes and the formation of L2 identity. This is considered to account for the attitudinal differences in Japan and South Korea, where English is taught mainly as a foreign language, as opposed to Malaysia, where English is used as a second language in a culturally and linguistically diverse society. The more favourable attitudes South Koreans show towards their English compared to Japanese learners is attributed to language education policies in South Korea, which stress the importance of expressing their own culture and identity through English, and Korean English news articles showing L1 influence. It is assumed that Japanese learners identify themselves as non-native speakers whose English ought to conform to native speakers, whereas Malaysians and to an increasing degree, South Korean speakers see themselves as users of English.

Jenkins (2009a) notes that despite the fact that negative attitudes towards ELF pronunciation is sometimes prevalent in the public and sometimes the academic discourse, some learners show openness towards using their natural English pronunciation without the obligation to conform to ENL. Using ELF pronunciation is criticised on the grounds that it leaves EFL speakers without a stable points of reference, it promotes an attitude of “anything goes”, or it is simply unpleasant to the interlocutors (cf. Prodromou, 2006; Sobkowiak, 2005). On the other
hand, non-native interview participants in the study report that they feel pressured by the obligation to conform their pronunciation to British and American English. Besides, they often express a desire to express national identities and identities of ELF speakers through pronunciation, which also gives them confidence in using English.

Rindal and Piercy (2013) find that Norwegian learners also show a high awareness of L2 pronunciation and they make conscious choices about their English pronunciation based on the attitudes they have towards varieties of English. The Norwegian secondary school learners in the study tend to choose between two major ENL speech varieties, Standard Southern British English (SSBE) and General American English (GenAm) – using the authors’ own terminology. Despite aiming for the consistent use of a variety, the learners’ pronunciation is characterised by hybridity, mixing features of SSBE and GenAm, and intra-speaker variation. The majority of learners show a preference for GenAm as learners are mostly exposed to this variety in films and on-line media, while their teachers’ pronunciation shows little correspondence with learners’ accent choice. According to Rindal (2010), the two varieties are also associated with stylistic meaning, SSBE regarded as formal, while GenAm is seen as more informal and relaxed. Norwegian features, by contrast, are overtly stigmatised as they signify low competence in English. On the other hand, a significant minority of the learners reported to aim for a neutral accent in English, that is, a hybrid accent which feels natural to them as they do not wish to convey values and characteristics of native speakers. This shows that learners might use ENL consciously as a resource to express identities and affiliations and stylistic meanings through the strategic use of English pronunciation.

Galloway and Rose (2012) suggest that using listening journals in ELT in exposing learners to speech varieties of English is a useful way of raising learners’ awareness of the
diversity in Global Englishes. In addition, asking learners to write such journals about their listening experiences is a useful way of reflecting on language attitudes and stereotypes pertaining to English pronunciations. The authors note that the inclusion of World Englishes as well as ELF interactions regularly in audio materials and reflection on these speech varieties are also beneficial for learners in making them more confident about their own English pronunciation. The inclusion of World Englishes in ELT materials in order to broaden learners’ view of English speech varieties is also emphasised by Matsuda (2003), since it is argued that English is often misrepresented in ELT materials by including characters whose English pronunciation is based on an ENL speech variety, typically RP or GE.

In the Hungarian context, Balogh (2008) investigated attitudes towards standard and non-standard accents of American English and found that learners attribute higher status to standard varieties, yet they show solidarity towards non-standard ones. Illés and Csizér (2010) also studied learners’ attitudes towards English as an international language and found that despite the recognition of English as a means of international communication, there is a lack of acceptance towards varieties of English, and EIL is seen as a simplified language.

Reflecting on the historical, social, cultural and political background of ELT in Hungary, explored by Medgyes (2011), can be helpful in understanding the attitudes learners develop towards speech varieties of English. ELT in Hungary developed out of the blue in an unexpected boom from the early 1990s when the sudden and largely unanticipated fall of communism and the resulting change of the political system brought about large-scale demand for English. The feat by the early ELT profession in Hungary of catering for this demand was largely aided by the British Council, which contributed to establishing an anglophile culture in Hungarian ELT. English was a foreign language to which people had limited access through the media and
technology, yet it came to be the symbol of the modern West where the country sought to converge politically, economically and culturally. Thus, it was native speakers, typically British speakers, of English that embodied authentic English and modern Western culture, and linguistic materials produced by them constituted the authoritative models of English and its use. In this sense, aiming to master ENL was an act of identity in which ENL pronunciation was a status symbol of competence, while L1 transfer was stigmatised and thus to be avoided.

The above studies on investigating attitudes towards varieties of English speech in the in various contexts show that this is a relevant field of inquiry, yet there seems to be a need for further empirical studies focusing on the Hungarian context. Firstly, it is necessary to include native as well as non-native speech varieties in the inquiry because of their increasingly important role in English communication in global contexts. Secondly, practical aspects of variation with regard to ELT should also be included, such as comprehensibility or the potential effect on motivation, in order to yield relevant findings for language teaching. Thirdly, the complexities of attitudes and the underlying factors which influence them ought to be explored as well so as to gain a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

The investigation of learners’ attitudes towards English pronunciation is also relevant because such attitudes form the basis of the model for the learner’s own pronunciation. Learners are likely to shape their own pronunciation based on what they regard as correct, appealing or acceptable pronunciation. For this reason, it is crucial whether they consider ENL pronunciation as the only acceptable model or whether they show openness to accepting variability in pronunciation, including variability resulting from L1 influence as it can also impact motivation to speak in English and it can influence language production as well. For example, it can be reasonably assumed that learners such as the Japanese university students in the study of
Tokumoto and Shibata (2011) who deem their own L1-influenced English pronunciation unpleasant, incorrect or unintelligible (Jenkins, 2009b) become highly self-conscious when it comes to speaking in English in front of other people, which is likely to have a negative impact on their language production and their willingness to speak in English. On the other hand, speakers who have a positive attitude towards their pronunciation regardless of L1 influence can be expected to speak in English in a more self-conscious way, increasing fluency as well as the willingness to speak.

These considerations can be supported by the Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety in the classic work of Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) and the Monitor Hypothesis by Krashen (1982). According to the former theory, fear of negative evaluation, which is connected to the way learners think their language production is perceived by their interlocutors, causes negative thoughts about their language ability. This negative self-evaluation then leads to low self-confidence for learners and mental blocks which inhibit linguistic performance, sometimes resulting in avoidance strategies, for example, not participating in conversations and avoiding speaking altogether. Language anxiety can also have a debilitating effect of language skills (Piniel & Csizér, 2013), which can include the comprehension of spoken English in addition spoken language production. According to the Monitor Hypothesis, while learners are trying to speak English spontaneously based on acquired knowledge, they monitor their performance with learned information about what is correct, which can also include attitudes about pronunciation pertaining to its acceptability and prestige value. It is hypothesised that using the monitor requires considerable time and effort on the part of the L2 learner as it creates an additional mental burden besides the general effort of communicating in an additional language, which forces learners to concentrate more on language forms, thus making fluent language production
more difficult. Therefore, whether learners regard English as a lingua franca which they are entitled to use in their own way or they see it as the language of ENL speakers that they are supposed to emulate can shape learner’s attitudes towards English pronunciation, which can make a considerable difference in their own use of English.

2.6 Research questions

As it was discussed above, EFL learners’ comprehension of and attitudes to speech varieties of English are highly relevant fields of study due to the widespread phonological variation which characterises the use of English in global contexts and the growing role of English as a lingua franca for communication between speakers of different mother tongues. Because of the dearth of research in the Hungarian context related to the comprehension and attitudes pertaining to English speech varieties, the present inquiry investigated the following questions:

1. How successful are Hungarian EFL learners in comprehending speech varieties of English?
2. What factors influence Hungarian EFL learners’ success in comprehending speech varieties of English?
3. What attitudes do Hungarian EFL learners have towards speech varieties of English?
4. What factors influence Hungarian EFL learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties of English?

Certain terms in the above questions need to be qualified further in order to delineate the scope of research. In the present study, Hungarian EFL learners refer to learners of English in
secondary schools in Budapest, pursuing the final three years of their studies, thus the phrase is not intended to imply generalisations to the whole population of Hungarian EFL learners (for the details of sampling, see Section 3.2). Besides, in the present research project, speech varieties denote specific instances of spoken L1 and L2 English showing systematic phonological variation in pronunciation (cf. Section 2.1.3). Since it was unfeasible to include all native and non-native varieties of English in the investigation, the term refers to the specific varieties represented in the study (cf. Sections 3.3.2 and 3.6.3). Therefore, generalisation to all Hungarian EFL learners or to all speech varieties of English is not an aim of the present inquiry, yet strong tendencies, if found, are likely to be informative for ELT in Hungary and possibly for other similar contexts as well.
3 Methods and results

3.1 Overview of the research project

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the research project and the methods used in the three studies by presenting the research design and the instruments, explaining and justifying the decisions taken during the investigation, evaluating the research processes and commenting on its limitations.

In order to seek answers to the research questions, three studies were conducted. In Study One, learners' comprehension and attitudes towards English speech varieties were investigated by means of a general questionnaire, a comprehension task featuring three speech varieties of English, each of which was followed by an attitude questionnaire about the given variety. Study Two involved an interview study with a think aloud protocol in order to gain a more profound insight into the issues under investigation. Study Three included a second comprehension test with an attitude questionnaire, which was essentially the replication of Study One, with conceptual and methodological refinements based on the two previous studies. Study Three included adding constructs emerging from the interviews in Study Two, making improvements in the methodology based on the results of the questionnaire in Study One as well as the insights gained from the interviews of Study Two and analysing different aspects of the data.

As can be seen from the outline of the research design above, the investigation presented combined qualitative and quantitative methods, which can be regarded as a mixed methods approach to research. The intention behind this was to take a pragmatic approach in order to
study learners' comprehension of English speech varieties and their attitude towards them in all its complexity, aiming to reveal tendencies on a larger population but, at the same time, allowing the research to be shaped by insights emerging from individual learners. Therefore, mixed methods research did not only pertain to the instruments and the type of data gained from them, but also the epistemological stance of the investigation. This means that the present research cannot be considered as either purely deductive and theory driven, or entirely inductive and exploratory, but it is a mixture of these two approaches (c.f. Dörnyei, 2007). For instance, the constructs of the questionnaire of Study One were based on theories drawn from the literature, while the one in Study Three phase also included constructs emerging from the interview data of Study Two.

In this way, the main aim of the investigation was not to prove or disprove a hypothesis or hypotheses, but to adopt an exploratory approach. Nevertheless, the research project also sought to investigate how theories, such as the theoretical framework of ELF, could be applied to the Hungarian context. For example, the investigation intended to reveal the extent to which theories such as the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000), the model of the three circles of English speakers (Kachru, 1992) or issues of native speakerism (Holliday, 2005) could be applicable to the context or contexts of ELT in Hungary. However, despite the predominantly quantitative methodology used in the research, there were no solid a priori hypotheses regarding how much learners would understand various accents of English or what attitudes they might have towards them.

It is assumed that reality, and as such, comprehension skills and attitudes, are complex and fluid phenomena, which are prone to vary from context to context and change over time,
which does not allow broad generalizations regardless of the methods used, the nature of the data or the type or size of the sample. As Dörnyei (2007) notes it:

Most data collected in the social sciences, regardless of whether it is QUAL or QUAN, is related to people – what they do, what they are like, what they think or believe in, what they plan to do, etc. Because people differ from each other in the way they perceive, interpret or remember things, their accounts will show considerable variation across individuals [...] we have to face the fact that the final picture unfolding in our research will always be a function of whom we select to obtain our data from. (Dörnyei, 2007, p.27)

Therefore, the goal of the present research can be seen as revealing tendencies and informing language pedagogy by providing insights into the comprehension of and attitude towards English speech varieties so that can teachers can make use of the findings at their discretion, making their own judgements as to what may apply to their learners and their particular teaching context (Widdowson, 2003).

The research design was evolving in nature, which means that findings of the previous studies fed into and shaped subsequent studies. For this reason, the following sections present the three studies separately by describing the methods, instruments and procedures followed by the results of the three studies respectively. The following table provides a visual overview of the research process, including the instruments of the three studies and how they contributed to answering the research questions. The research questions are repeated below for the reader’s convenience in order to show how they relate to the three studies of the research project according to the table.
Table 1. Overview of the three studies of the research project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Data type QUALitative or QUANtitative</th>
<th>Relevance for research question (RQ)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase One</td>
<td>General questionnaire</td>
<td>QUAN: questionnaire data</td>
<td>RQ2 &amp; RQ4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension tasks</td>
<td>QUAN: comprehension test scores</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up questionnaire after comprehension tasks</td>
<td>QUAN: questionnaire data; QUAL: comments on speech varieties</td>
<td>RQ2 &amp; RQ4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Two</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>QUAL: interview data</td>
<td>RQ2 &amp; RQ4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think-aloud protocol</td>
<td>QUAL: interview data</td>
<td>RQ1 &amp; RQ2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Three</td>
<td>General questionnaire</td>
<td>QUAN: questionnaire data</td>
<td>RQ2 &amp; RQ4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension tasks</td>
<td>QUAN: comprehension test scores</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up questionnaire after comprehension tasks</td>
<td>QUAN: questionnaire data; QUAL: comments on speech varieties</td>
<td>RQ2 &amp; RQ4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ1: How successful are Hungarian EFL learners in comprehending speech varieties of English?

RQ2: What factors influence Hungarian EFL learners’ success in comprehending speech varieties of English?

RQ3: What attitudes do Hungarian EFL learners have towards speech varieties of English?

RQ4: What factors influence Hungarian EFL learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties of English?
3.2 Methods of Study One

3.2.1 Overview

Study One included a questionnaire study with a comprehension test in order to investigate learners' attitude towards English speech varieties and their comprehension of different accents. Learners of Hungarian secondary schools filled in a questionnaire related to English pronunciation and variation in spoken language in general, after which they completed four comprehension tasks featuring different varieties of English. After each comprehension task, learners were asked to comment on the given speech variety. Then they answered a set of attitude questions related to the speakers and their accent. The duration of a data collecting sessions was approximately 40 minutes.

The questions consisted of five-point Likert scales alongside biographical items and occasional open-ended questions (Appendices A and C). The tasks comprised four gap filling comprehension exercises featuring four speech varieties of English: Hungarian, Egyptian Arabic, GA and RP (Appendices B1-B4). Each task was followed by a set of questions related to the given accent (Appendix C). The reliability of the constructs was measured by their Cronbach's Alpha values, indicated in the subsequent sections where the variable is a multi-item scale.
3.2.2 Participants

In Study One, 62 learners from three secondary schools in Budapest were investigated, aged between 16 and 18, studying in grades 10-11, with their language proficiency ranging from lower-intermediate (B1) to advanced (C2). The reason for selecting this population was that secondary school students were considered to represent the future generation of ELF users, they were conveniently accessible in larger groups and they also had regular timetables, which facilitated the data collection. Thus, conducting a complex quantitative survey was more feasible with secondary school learners than it would have been with adults. The secondary schools the learners attended were reputable schools with a high rate of students who pursue their studies further in higher education after graduation. Therefore, the participants are not representative of all secondary school students in Hungary, only a particular segment of society, which can be characterised as secondary school students studying in Budapest with an ambition for higher education. The selection of schools was based on convenience sampling.

3.2.3 Instruments

3.2.3.1 The opening questionnaire

In the opening series of questions, the items were concerned with the following set of constructs. The Cronbach’s Alpha values are indicated in advance in case of multi-item scales in order to highlight the degree of reliability for measuring the given construct, and sample items are provided to illustrate the concept of the scale.
• The extent of exposure in reference to the types of exposure (e.g. exposure through films, internet), Cronbach’s Alpha: .787;
  E.g., I often hear English on TV.

• The extent of exposure in reference to the varieties of English learners are exposed to, Cronbach’s Alpha: .728;
  E.g., I often hear Hungarian English.

• Awareness of English accents and phonology, Cronbach’s Alpha: .806;
  E.g., I can guess where a speaker is from based on their pronunciation.

• Tolerance of ambiguity: focusing on general meaning, coping with not understanding everything, Cronbach’s Alpha: .771;
  E.g., It does not bother me if I do not understand every word when I hear English.

• Benefits of contact with speakers of English, Cronbach’s Alpha: .574, Adopted from Illés and Csizér (2010);
  E.g., It is good to speak to foreigners because I can get to know their pronunciation.

• General attitudes towards phonological variation in Hungarian and in English;
  E.g., It is acceptable if people have different pronunciation in Hungarian.

• Biographical questions: age, gender, proficiency in English.
3.2.3.2 The comprehension tasks

The aim of the comprehension tasks was to measure the effect that the accent exerts on the comprehension of spoken English. To this end, a comprehension exercise based on a standardised B1 level language exam, the Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET), was used, which was adapted to suit the purposes of the present research. This relatively low-level exercise was considered to be ideal for the comprehension task since this way the proficiency of the participants would not be challenged. This was necessary because the intention of the task was to measure the effect of the accents in isolation from other factors as far as possible.

An almost identical script was recorded four times with different speakers, by varying target words in a way that the information in the previous texts could not help students with the subsequent target items. The reason for opting for identical texts was to eliminate the potential effects of the different content, that is, to avoid certain learners having an advantage over the others because they were more familiar with a given topic and could thus make better use of their schemata in understanding the excerpt and predicting the target words better. This also made it possible to gain comparable results from the four excerpts. The transcript of the comprehension tasks can be found in Appendices B1–B4.

The speakers in the audio recordings included four narrators: a Hungarian, an Egyptian Arabic, a GA and an RP speaker of English, corresponding to Kachru’s (1992) classification of World Englishes, the Expanding, the Outer and the Inner Circle respectively. The four speakers were selected from a number of candidates not featuring in the final study including French, German, Pakistani, Scottish, Cockney and inner London accents. Reasons for exclusion included
problems with reading the script, conscious effort to conceal accent, or the time-limits of the exercise.

It is assumed that due to the fact that the text was below the level of the learners’ proficiency, the order in which the accents were played did not have a major influence on the results by making the later recordings easier to understand. This assumption was confirmed by the results showing that the participants had a lower average score on the second accent compared to the first one (cf. Section 3.3.1); therefore, it can be assumed that an increased familiarity with the task did not make the comprehension of different accents easier, contributing to the validity of the measurement.

As for the socio-demographic factors of the speakers, they were all middle-aged educated males, sufficiently competent in English to make the recordings sound authentic. The personal variables of the speakers such as age, gender and education were intended to be kept uniform so that these would not influence the results of the questions related to the speaker. It has to be noted, however, that the RP accent was taken from a professional recording, made specifically for ELT purposes, while the other accents were recordings of non-professionals with the use of sound recording techniques falling short of studio quality. Although these technicalities might have influenced the difficulty of the listening materials, it could be argued that the professional recording represented classroom English, which learners were exposed to in ELT, while the recordings of non-professionals retained the authenticity of English outside the classroom.

During the task, the learners were asked to fill in the missing pieces of information during a single hearing of the text. The texts contained 14 gaps each, which was necessary for two reasons. Firstly, the 14 gaps could ensure a sufficient number of variables in the texts so that no word in a text could be used to provide missing information in a following exercise. Secondly,
this number allowed for phonological diversity in the target words and so the speakers’ pronunciation could exert a strong influence on comprehension. The target words included numbers and basic words which the participants were expected to be familiar with. At the very end of the session, the learners were requested to correct their tasks based on the answer key, which was read aloud by the administrator of the data collection, and indicate their scores. This substantially reduced the time needed to process the data and also provided participants with the opportunity to gain access to their results, making the data collection a more meaningful experience for learners. The process of self-correction was strictly controlled and closely monitored in order to prevent inaccuracies, and the corrections made by the learners were revised subsequently.

3.2.3.3 The questionnaire related to the accents

After each comprehension task, the participants are asked to answer three short open-ended questions based on the particular accent (cf. Appendix C). The open-ended questions provided room for the respondents to express their opinion concerning the accent and the speaker immediately after listening. The learners’ free associations were expected to provide valuable insights into how they relate to speech varieties. This was followed by a set of Likert scales, which focused on the following areas:

- Perceived correctness, likeability and comprehensibility of the speaker’s English;
● Social proximity to the speaker, referring to ‘layers of acceptance’, asking whether the respondent would accept the speaker as an acquaintance, fellow learner, colleague or English teacher;

● Multi-item scales related to stereotypes pertaining to the speaker based on his accent, such as education, intelligence or friendliness; Cronbach’s Alpha by accent: Hungarian: .855, Egyptian: .851, American: .917, RP: .902;

● Familiarity with the particular accent.

3.2.3.4 The format of the questionnaires

The items in both the general and the accent-specific attitude questionnaire contained five-point Likert scales on which learners were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements. The five-point scale was considered ideal as Hungarian learners are familiar with this rating from the five-mark assessment system used in the Hungarian public education system. The five points in the scale also allowed for a sufficient range of distribution among the answers, yet it kept the differences on the scale meaningful for learners.

The questions were laid out in a grid format in order to facilitate the completion of the questionnaire, making the process of responding more reader-friendly and thus fluent with the unified format. It was assumed that as learners got used to the process of understanding the statements, which were designed to be unambiguous and easy to process, and then ticking the appropriate box, their answers would become more and more spontaneous. This was intended to contribute to eliciting unselfconscious answers related to attitudes, minimising the effect of the social desirability bias, somewhat easing the problem of the observer's paradox. The format and
the layout was also designed facilitate the timely completion of the questionnaire, which was necessary because of the time constraints of the data collection sessions, the 45-minute school periods, and the relatively large number of questions. These features of the questionnaire were expected to contribute positively to the validity of the research.

3.2.4 Procedures

3.2.4.1 Piloting the instrument

A preliminary version of the instrument was piloted on a group of four learners using a think-aloud protocol on the basis of which the wording of some questions was refined. It was also ensured that all questions were unambiguous to the learners by discussing the wordings of the items on the questionnaire. After that, a small-scale pilot study was conducted on a sample of 27 learners which originally used French, Egyptian Arabic, Scottish and RP accents in order to include a range of diverse accents. However, the French and Scottish varieties were replaced by Hungarian and American respectively, as they proved to be more relevant in the context of the Hungarian EFL learners participating in the piloting, who tended to regard pronunciations in terms of native, non-native, familiar and unfamiliar accents. The Egyptian Arabic variety remained to represent an unfamiliar accent from the Outer Circle (Kachru, 1992). Furthermore, additional constructs were added to the questionnaire, including phonological awareness, tolerance of ambiguity and familiarity with accents. The results of the pilot study indicated that learners understood the questions well, which was shown by the high internal reliability of the
scales. The scores of the comprehension tasks also yielded a sufficient range of distribution, showing differences from accent to accent in the whole sample and differences within the scores of the same learners.

3.2.4.3 Data collection

The survey was administered to the learners during their English lessons after requesting access from the teachers and informing them about the purpose of the research. At the beginning of the 40-minute data collecting sessions, learners in all groups were given identical instructions, encouraging them to provide answers reflecting their genuine opinion about speech varieties. The participants were asked to provide a nickname, while their papers contained a code referring to the school, the class and the number of the participant so that the numbers of individual cases could be tracked back from the database. At the same time, the learners’ anonymity was also respected because only they could identify themselves on the basis of the nickname when their class was revisited in order to invite them to participate in the follow-up study.

3.2.4.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted with SPSS 17, using single- and multivariate statistics. Descriptive statistics were provided concerning the relevant items such as the scores of the comprehension tasks and mean scores were compared by paired sample T-tests in order to identify significant differences. Pearson’s correlations were utilised to reveal the relationships between variables.
since the items concerned included interval scales, for which this measurement is regarded as the most suitable one (Dancey & Reidey, 2004). The data was cleaned by analysing the frequencies of the scores, ruling out erroneous figures resulting from incorrect data input. The questionnaires were revised based on their codes to supply the correct figures. Missing values were not supplemented but were disregarded from the data analysis.

3.3 Results of Study One

3.3.1 Comprehension of speech varieties

The results of the tasks showed differences with regards to the comprehensibility of the four speech varieties, as shown in Table 1. The time of the audio recording is also indicated as well as the mean score of the comprehension task out of a maximum of 14 points.

Table 2. The mean scores and standard distribution of the results of the comprehension tasks, out of a maximum score of 14, with the length of the extract indicated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech Variety</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Mean score (out of 14)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>1 min 36 sec</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic</td>
<td>1 min 50 sec</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>1 min 30 sec</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>1 min 55 sec</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The RP variety stood out from the rest, showing the highest score, with the Hungarian and American accent fairly close to each other, followed by the Egyptian Arabic variety as the least comprehended pronunciation. There was a significant difference between the Hungarian and the Egyptian Arabic variety, (t = 5.64, Sig. < 0.001), the Hungarian and RP (t = -9.77, Sig. < 0.001), the American and Egyptian (t = 7.63, Sig. < 0.001), the GA and RP (t = 7.63, Sig. < 0.001) and the Egyptian and RP accents (t = -16.04, Sig. < 0.001). On the other hand, there was no significant difference between the Hungarian and the American variety (Sig. = 0.059). These results were indicative of potential problems, since the highest scoring RP is spoken only by a minority of English speakers worldwide (Crystal, 2003; Trudgill, 2001), and consequently, L2 users are less likely to encounter this variety in real life. On the other hand, the proportion of the global speakers of English warrants the skill of comprehending diverse and potentially unfamiliar speech varieties, which seems to be a challenge for Hungarian learners based on the present findings. To address such difficulties, the importance of familiarising learners of English with a wide range of native as well as non-native accents is emphasised by ELF research (cf. Section 4.2).

3.3.2 Scales related to the comprehension of speech varieties

As Table 2 shows, the two most important variables related to the comprehension of the speech varieties investigated were the self-declared language proficiency and the phonological awareness of learners. The strongest correlations could be found between the scores and proficiency, which indicated that receptive tolerance was closely related to more general
language skills. However, despite the fact that exposure did not correlate with the test scores directly, it was closely connected to proficiency and phonological awareness, which revealed the complexities of the factors related to the comprehension of speech varieties (cf. Section 4.3).

Table 2. Pearson’s correlations between the accent-specific scores of the task, phonological awareness and language proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accent variety</th>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>Phonological awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>.776**</td>
<td>.408*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic</td>
<td>.618**</td>
<td>.336*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>.771**</td>
<td>.444*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>.793**</td>
<td>.473*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 shows the connections between proficiency, phonological awareness, and two aspects of the extent of exposure: the means of exposure and exposure to particular accents. These correlations indicate that proficiency, phonological awareness and exposure should be considered in relation to each other when investigating the comprehension of English pronunciations. The learners’ proficiency, which helped them understand speech varieties, showed a positive correlation to exposure to different accents through the media as well as to personal contact when combined with reflection on the input and awareness of its phonological features (cf. Section 4.3).
Table 3. Pearson’s correlations between learners’ language proficiency, phonological awareness and extent of exposure from the aspect of the means of exposure and the variety learners are exposed to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>Phonological Awareness</th>
<th>Means of exposure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phon. Awareness</td>
<td>.502**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means of exposure</td>
<td>.307**</td>
<td>.532**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to accents</td>
<td>.351**</td>
<td>.524**</td>
<td>.592**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.3.3 Attitudes towards speech varieties

Learner attitudes towards the speech varieties under investigation were encapsulated in three scales: likeability, perceived correctness and stereotypes attached to the speakers based on their pronunciation, whose mean scores are shown in Table 4. There seemed to be a stark contrast between native and non-native varieties, with learners clearly favouring the former. Within the two groups, there was no significant difference between the two native varieties in any respect, yet Hungarian and Egyptian Arabic differed with respect to correctness (t = 3.33, Sig. = 0.23) and the stereotypes pertaining to the speaker (t = 5.02, Sig. < 0.001), both in favour of the Hungarian variety. Non-native accents were judged rather unfavourably, as was shown by the generally lower-than-average mean scores in spite of the relatively high score of the scale, ‘acceptance of diversity in English’ (M = 4.03, SD = 0.94).
Table 4. The mean scores and standard deviation of the variables of likeability, perceived correctness and the scale of positive stereotypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accent variety</th>
<th>Likeability</th>
<th>Perceived correctness</th>
<th>Stereotypes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean St. Dev.</td>
<td>Mean St. Dev.</td>
<td>Mean St. Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>2.2 1.11</td>
<td>2.8 .86</td>
<td>3.1 .64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic</td>
<td>1.9 1.06</td>
<td>2.1 .99</td>
<td>2.8 .66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>4.5 .76</td>
<td>4.6 .61</td>
<td>4 .63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>4.4 .93</td>
<td>4.7 .69</td>
<td>4.2 .61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results were in line with the literature, suggesting that despite the fact that English is considered to be a lingua franca, which involves inherent linguistic diversity, deviation from native speaker standards was not judged favourably by speakers, especially by non-native ones (cf. Section 4.4).

3.3.4 Variables related to attitudes towards speech varieties

Due to the fact that the four speech varieties were judged differently by the learners, generalisations could not be made as to which individual factors were related to all of them. Table 5 shows scales pertaining to the attitudinal variables of the four accents in the study.
Table 5. Correlations between positive stereotype scales (Ster), likeability (Like) and perceived correctness (Corr) related to the Hungarian (H), Egyptian Arabic (E), GA (A), and RP (R) accents along with the multi-item scales of tolerance of ambiguity (Tol).

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. HSter</td>
<td>.545**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.267*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. HLike</td>
<td></td>
<td>.416**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. HCorr</td>
<td>.416**</td>
<td>.376**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ESter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.487**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ELike</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.306*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.327*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ECorr</td>
<td>.376**</td>
<td>.306*</td>
<td>.309*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ASter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.479**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.479**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. ALike</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.605**</td>
<td>.379**</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.605**</td>
<td>.379**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. ACorr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.439**</td>
<td>.379**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.439**</td>
<td>.379**</td>
<td>.373**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. RSter</td>
<td>.267*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. RLike</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.509**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. RCorr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.580**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Tol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In general, there seemed to be a connection between one or more variables from positive stereotypes, likeability and perceived correctness within one accent (this is indicated by bold font and framing for the sake of visibility). Other correlations showed overlaps between some of these factors across accents. Tolerance of ambiguity was related to all three variables of the GA accent and to the stereotype variable of the Egyptian Arabic accent. There also seemed to be a relationship between the perceived correctness of the RP accent and the variables of the American accent.

Based on these correlations, it can be hypothesised that learners liked an accent when they accepted it as correct pronunciation, and this judgement was related to their perception of the speaker, which, in the present context, meant favouring the two native varieties. The significance of tolerance of ambiguity indicated that learners who were comfortable with not fully understanding utterances evaluated certain varieties more favourably. The role of
stereotypes showed that, similarly to L1, learners perceived certain aspects of an L2 speech variety as sociolinguistic markers, with which they associated meanings (cf. Section 4.4.1).

According to learners’ comments in the open-ended questions following the comprehension tasks, these meanings were related to the speakers’ origin, status as a speaker of English (learner or advanced user) (cf. Andreasson, 1994) and personality traits such as being kind, brusque, hurried or easy going. However, more in-depth research was needed to shed light on the exact sociolinguistic meanings attached to speech varieties by learners.

3.4 Methods of Study Two

The qualitative follow-up study included five participants selected from the sample of the quantitative survey and three additional participants. The same classes investigated in Study One were visited one school year following the first data collection. Three more participants were interviewed subsequently in order to enrich the data. The following sections elaborate on the details of conducting Study Two.

3.4.1 Rationale of the follow-up study

After the relatively large-scale quantitative survey, a more focused qualitative investigation was necessitated by the fact that although the former approach might have revealed general tendencies, the latter method could complement this by exploring the learners’ thinking
processes in depth along with their individual characteristics related to accent comprehension and attitudes. The follow-up study was expected to contribute particularly to research questions 2 and 3, concentrating on underlying reasons as opposed to factual descriptions and relationships between variables. Although the quantitative data analysis may have shown correlations between variables, convergent qualitative data could corroborate such findings and also help in their interpretation. The aim of the study was to enrich the main research project with an insiders’ perspective of Hungarian secondary school learners; therefore, I invited the learners who did the comprehension test and the attitude questionnaire in Study One to participate in a follow-up study along with three learners from other schools to share what they know about English pronunciation, what significance it has in their life and how they relate to speech varieties.

3.4.2 Selection of participants

Participants were chosen based on purposeful sampling. In the Study One, learners were asked to write pseudonyms on the questionnaire so that they could be requested to participate in the follow-up study based on their results but allowing for anonymity at the same time. Based on this, I revisited participants who achieved a relatively high or relatively low score on the most difficult speech variety in the comprehension test.

Two types of participants were selected for the follow-up study, based on their results in the comprehension test. The first type included high achievers, who reached the highest score on the task with the Egyptian Arabic accent, which proved to be the most difficult with the lowest average score. This was assumed to be indicative of high allophonic tolerance and it was
therefore clearly worth investigating what characteristics distinguished those learners from the others and made them more successful in understanding a potentially difficult speech variety.

The second type consisted of different achievers, that is, learners exhibiting the greatest difference between their scores in the task with the easiest (in this case RP) and the most difficult (Egyptian Arabic) accent. In order to measure this variable, first the easiest and the most difficult accents of the whole sample were identified based on the means scores of the task. After that, a new variable was created by deducting the score of the difficult (low scoring) accent from the score of the easy (high scoring) accent. In the present case, the Egyptian Arabic accent proved to be the most difficult and RP the easiest, which meant that the additional variable generated for each case was \([\text{RP\_score}] - [\text{Egyptian Arabic\_score}]\). Based on the new variable, cases were ranked in descending order so that the cases with the highest value could be selected. This way, those learners could be identified for whom a difficult or unfamiliar accent may have posed the greatest problems, having a presumably low level of allophonic tolerance.

I also included learners who did not participate in Study One, including learners from locations other than Budapest, to enrich the data. These steps were taken to ensure maximum diversity so that data could be gained from people with different knowledge, different experiences, who come from different contexts. From the three additional learners, 2 were from the countryside, studying in Székesfehérvár. It was assumed that secondary Hungarian school learners who do not share the socio-cultural context of the participants of Study One (cf. Section 3.2.2) might relate to accent variation in English differently since they might have experiences with different accents in their L1 due to the fact that they moved to Budapest from the countryside.
This way, altogether 8 learners participated in the study, 5 of whom took part in the previous study as well, 2 high achievers and 3 different achievers. There were 3 female and 5 male participants altogether. The in-depth study of these learners aimed to identify problem areas in comprehension as well as individual characteristics influencing their comprehension and gain an insight into the way learners relate to English pronunciations on the affective level.

The consent of the school was requested and granted for conducting research with learners. Separate interview sessions were arranged with the three participants who had not taken part in the previous study of the research project. The latter participants were aged over 18 and granted their verbal permission to participate in the study.

### 3.4.3 Instruments

A relatively tight research design was used compared to the standards of the qualitative paradigm, using a structured interview as opposed to having an open discussion with learners, which allowed learners to share their thoughts on the topics related to the focus of investigation. The reason for this was that the present study can be regarded as confirmatory qualitative research (cf. Miles & Huberman, 1994) due to the fact that it was preceded by a quantitative study on the subject with a specific focus, whose results the findings of the present study could be potentially compared with. The purpose of the follow-up study was to focus on individual cases, exploring the process of comprehension along with an in-depth investigation of how learners relate to varieties of spoken English on the level of attitudes, which would have
warranted an open and unstructured exploratory design; however, the research design had to be tightly controlled and focused in order to relate it to the previous study of the research project.

For this purpose, a semi-structured interview was used including a think aloud protocol, a stimulated recall and a recording of the learner’s own pronunciation (cf. Appendix D). The procedure of the interview sessions was as follows. The data collection sessions started with warm-up questions, which also served as icebreakers to create a positive atmosphere for the interview. This was followed by a think-aloud protocol when the learners listened to and commented on an audio recording of an English accent, namely the Egyptian Arabic accent, since this speech variety proved to be the most relevant from the point of view of comprehension as it was mentioned before (cf. Section 3.2.2). Then the first part of a semi-structured interview took place, after which the learners were asked to read a few lines from the script of the audio recording in order to listen to their own pronunciation before discussing the questions in the second part of the interview. The language of the data collecting session was Hungarian, the mother tongue of the learners.

The initial warm-up questions were connected to the learner’s English studies, which could provide an insight into the importance of English for the learner and their motivation to learn the language in general. After this, I played an audio track to the learners, which was taken from the comprehension test of the Study One. The audio script can be found in Appendix E. The sound sample featured a bilingual Egyptian Arabic speaker of English, whose pronunciation was characterized by a slightly fast pace of speech, strong syllable-timed rhythm, the reduction of certain vowels, the pronunciation of the (inter)dental fricative /θ/ and /ð/ sounds as alveolar fricative (/s/, /z/), among some other idiosyncrasies not detailed here. I selected this accent from the others because this proved to be the most difficult to learners based on average scores in the
comprehension test. I was hoping to gain different insights from learners who could understand it relatively well and from those who could not.

The audio recording had several purposes. It enabled the learner to comment freely on the speech variety, identifying features hindering comprehension while seeing the transcript, and they could talk about listening strategies in the form of a think aloud protocol, discussing the accent while listening to the track for a second time sentence by sentence. It also served as stimulus for the rest of the interview for questions focusing on other speakers’ accents and, comprehensibility and attitudes.

This was followed by a semi-structured interview with questions focusing on the learner’s exposure to English, their awareness of English speech varieties, their reaction to comprehension difficulties, the development of learners’ own pronunciation and how they think their pronunciation was judged by others. Before the questions concerning the learner’s own pronunciation, they were asked to read a section from the script of the audio recording so that their actual pronunciation could be compared to what they would say about their pronunciation, and it would make it possible to cross-check the effect of their reported pronunciation models on their English accent. The sessions were recorded with the prior consent of the participants.

3.4.4 Conducting the interviews

As for the interview sessions in the schools, I arranged with the teachers to visit the groups who participated in the previous study and asked the learners whom I had selected based on their test scores to identify themselves based on their pseudonyms. In case a learner was not available, the
pseudonym of the participant with the closest score was called upon. The interview sessions lasted for approximately 35 minutes with each participant as they had to be conducted during a school lesson. The fairly focused questions made it possible to discuss the issues related to the investigation rather exhaustively within this time frame.

The procedure of the interview sessions were as follows. First, the learners were assured that what they said would be treated confidentially. Also, they were made aware of the fact that they were not being tested and whatever they said was valuable data for the research project. This was necessary in order to avoid inhibition and the effect of social desirability as well as to motivate the participants to provide unselfconscious answers. Each participant was asked to give their oral consent to having the session recorded. After the participants gave their verbal permission, the digital recording device recorded the whole session.

The interview began with an introductory question about the source of the participant’s English knowledge, which was followed by listening to the speech excerpt of the Egyptian Arabic accent. First, the audio file was presented in full length, after which it was played sentence by sentence. For the second hearing, the learners were given the transcript of the excerpt and they were asked to underline the words, phrases or parts of the text whose understanding would have been problematic for them without the text. During the process, they could also comment on what speech or sound features they found difficult and why. Learners also had a chance to comment on how they coped with understanding potentially difficult parts of the audio recording. Afterwards, they could also reflect on general features of the excerpt which might have interfered with comprehension, such as general articulatory features, speech rate, rhythm or difficult vocabulary.
This was followed by a semi-structured series of questions centred around the constructs which proved to be relevant in the previous study, namely exposure to spoken English, phonological awareness, tolerance of ambiguity and attitude towards problematic accents. After that, the pronunciation of the learner was recorded as they read out part of the transcript, which served two purposes. Firstly, inferences could be made about the learner’s productive phonological competence, where their pronunciation features came from (e.g., L1 or a native English variety) and whether they tried to emulate a particular native speaker accent, which could signal cultural affiliation. Secondly, reading out loud was intended to help in raising awareness and evoking feelings relating to the learner’s own pronunciation. Thus, it served as a stimulus for the final questions focusing on intended behaviour, that is, the effort made to improve one’s own pronunciation and the perceived significance of accent.

3.4.5 Method of analysis

The aim of data analysis was to find emerging themes in the learner’s accounts which could complement the constructs of the previous study, to reinterpret them, if necessary and to formulate hypotheses based on the qualitative data following the tradition of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The recordings of the data collecting sessions were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were inputted into MaxQDA qualitative data analysis software to facilitate coding and recoding categories as well as searching the text during the process of analysis. The data analysis was conducted based on the Constant Comparative Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The themes related to learners’ own pronunciation were compared to the
recording of their pronunciation. The frequent recurrence of similar themes and the dearth of novelties emerging from the additional three interviews indicated saturation of the data.

Participants are referred to by their pseudonyms given to them for the purpose of the study, which are not identical to the pseudonyms they gave to themselves in Study One (cf. Section 3.2.3). The high achievers were Kálmán and Mária, the different achievers were Helga, Laci and Tamás. The pseudonyms of the three additional participants were Béla, Mária and Ferenc. The interviews were carried out in Hungarian, the native language of the participants, so that they could express their thoughts without the potential limitations of their proficiency in English. Therefore, the following quotations in the following sections are English translations from the Hungarian transcript.

The following section presents the findings gained from the data, divided into subsections related to the foci of the study, containing the major themes and categories related to the areas. For the quotes illustrating the emerging ideas, the pseudonyms are used in order to respect the participants’ anonymity.
3.5 Findings of Study Two

3.5.1 Characteristics related to comprehension

The follow-up study revealed a number of learner characteristics related to the comprehension of unfamiliar speech varieties, providing insight into the listening process and the reasons for the difficulties. It also corroborated certain findings of Study One, namely the importance of variables used in Study One such as proficiency, exposure, awareness and tolerance of ambiguity, as well as highlighting the relevance of motivation.

3.5.1.1 Comprehension difficulties and coping strategies

Concerning the process of speech comprehension, the participants invariably mentioned that coping with the idiosyncrasies of the accent required a distinct mental effort, which may be equated with the concept of allophonic tolerance from the literature (Jenkins, 2000). This meant that participants had to concentrate on deciphering words, while simultaneously trying to understand the overall message. There appeared to be a difference between high achievers and different achievers. During the think aloud protocol as well as in their own listening experiences outside school, the former type of learners reported an extensive use of contextual cues and schemata, while the latter type were more focused on identifying words and tended to lose track more easily. This is in line with Jenkins’s (2000) observation that learners using bottom-up processing in listening tend to have more problems with allophonic variants than the ones who
rely on top-down processing. The learners who had a higher score in the test said during the interview that they used less subtitles when watching films in English, being more comfortable with not understanding certain parts, and relied more on contextual cues, indicating top-down processing.

The learners reported a number of specific features which made it difficult for them to comprehend the English of the Egyptian Arabic speaker. General features included the slightly fast pace of the speech, the rhythm of syllable timing with a characteristic explosive manner of forming syllables, including the strong articulation of consonants, the slight blurring of certain vowel sounds as well as reducing certain syllables, for instance, in ‘opposite’ [opzıt]. The specific problem features included the /ð/ and /ð/ sounds being pronounced as [s] and [z], the [e] sound pronounced higher, almost as [ı] in ‘ten’, or consonant cluster reductions in ‘sandwiches’ [senwıtfız].

More learners described the main source of the difficulty as a mental burden, whereby they had to devote a certain amount of energy to deciphering the words because of the unusual accent, which made it difficult to focus on the content and to remember specific details: I constantly need to concentrate on understanding him and I don’t concentrate on what he is saying. /Béla/; “I understood 95% of the words, but it was harder to put together what he was talking about […] I pay a lot of attention to the way he is saying things, so I couldn’t remember any time arrangements.” /Helga/

Learners mentioned different listening strategies which they used to cope with understanding spoken English with an unfamiliar accent. A general listening strategy mentioned by learners was a process of tuning whereby they listened to the accent until they got used to it, after which they could concentrate more on the content. Participants explained that when
listening to a new and unfamiliar accent, they needed a certain amount of time to become accustomed to the pronunciation. Tolerance of ambiguity may be a relevant notion here, since it allows more time for this process before learners give up and abandon listening to a problematic accent. Another listening strategy was mentioned by Kálmán, one of the successful learners, who reported that he paid conscious attention to features which caused problems in understanding, and once he could decipher the meaning, he tried to learn what the feature corresponded to so that he could understand it more easily in the future. An example of this, pointed out by Kálmán, was the TH sound, which was consistently pronounced [z] by the Egyptian Arabic speaker. Based on the think aloud protocol and the interview, it could be observed that when isolated, the correspondence between the [z] and the TH sound could be easily identified, yet when this variant occurred in combination with other problematic features, it made understanding difficult for some of the other participants. For instance, in the phrase ‘opposite to the reception door’, in which the vowels of the polysyllabic words were frequently reduced, failure to identify the definite article made parsing difficult, thus the phrase could not be understood by Tamás, Laci and Helga. The strategy of the high achieving learner reinforced the finding of Study One that a combination of exposure and awareness can have a positive influence on the successful comprehension of unfamiliar accents, and it also shed light on how this process might work in the course of listening to potentially difficult speech varieties.

The think aloud protocol also revealed some of the underlying reasons why the Egyptian Arabic accent was difficult for learners. The most often highlighted segmental feature was the pronunciation of the TH sound as [z] (see above). However, the participants tended to characterise this sound by the word disturbing, which, on requesting clarification, turned out to be rather ambiguous, sometimes meaning “understandable but kind of irritating” /Mária/, on
other occasions obscuring understanding (as in ‘opposite the reception’, quoted above). This slightly contradicts Jenkins (2000), who treats the TH sound as a redundant feature with reference to the Lingua Franca Core, albeit in other works, it is mentioned that knowledge of typical variants on the receptive level is beneficial (Walker, 2010). Besides, while these works discussing intelligibility in English as a lingua franca are focused on segmental features, in the present case it turned out that most of the reasons for miscomprehension were actually supra-segmental features such as intonation, rhythm and the general articulatory characteristics of the speaker as well as the occurrence of unusual features in specific phonological contexts. Also, while according to the LFC, schwa insertions are allowed, or at least preferred to sound deletion or cluster reduction, in the present case, they caused problems in understanding of the words “third” [sərð] and “renting films” [fɪləmz].

As regards the comprehension of accents in the learners’ listening experiences outside school, participants reported that they found American English easier to understand than British English in films, and non-native English more comprehensible than native speaker English in personal conversation. The former finding may have been related to the fact that learners tended to watch mostly Hollywood films and American television series. This confirmed the importance of exposure, and the resulting higher level of familiarity for comprehension. The latter finding was not shown by the relevant items of Study One, yet the reason for this might have been that learners, as it turned out from the accounts of the interviewees, could not always differentiate accurately between the two varieties. In instances of personal contact, such as when visiting a foreign country or giving directions to tourists, participants reported that non-native speakers had been generally easier to understand than native speakers, because despite their accent, non-native speakers tended to speak with more consideration for the listener than native speakers. This
echoes studies on English as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2012), pointing out that successful communication in English as a lingua franca is characterised by accommodation and a joint effort to understand each other. In the present study, an exception to this was an anecdote by Kálmán, who could not communicate successfully with an Indian tourist asking for directions. On discussing the reason for the breakdown in communication, it turned out that both parties insisted on their own pronunciation, failing to accommodate to the other. This indicated that strategies of successful communication in ELF are not automatic processes and therefore have to be learned either intuitively through experience or consciously during language learning.

3.5.2 Concepts related to attitudes

3.5.2.1 Attitudes towards the English pronunciation of other speakers

The key concept in shaping the respondents’ attitude towards accents was the kind of significance they attributed to pronunciation. However, a distinction had to be made between the significance of the learner’s own pronunciation and how they viewed that of others, as the judgement of the two exhibited some differences. In the case of other people’s pronunciation, comprehensibility was essential for a positive evaluation of the accent by the participants. On the surface, this appeared to be the dominant notion in the assessment of spoken English. However, further questions in the interview revealed that there was also a certain prestige attached to pronunciation. Native speaker pronunciation was held in particularly high regard, while non-native accents, including Hungarian English, were judged negatively, ranging from subtly
derisory comments to overt ridicule. An example was the following remark: “I accept a foreign
or Hungarian accent as long as it’s comprehensible but I giggle inside when I hear it” /Kálmán/.
Furthermore, according to the participants, if a non-native speaker managed to emulate the
pronunciation of a native speaker well, it was considered to be a sign of a proficient and
successful learner, while respondents also attached symbolic value to such accents, assuming that
these speakers are probably intelligent, educated and work in high positions. As Mária noted:

When he or she [a non-native speaker] speaks English very well, and you can feel that it’s not his
or her mother tongue only a little, then I think that the person is, educated and literate, who works
in a high position, where he has to use English.

This resonated with the results of the attitude scales in Study One, as well as similar discussions
in the literature (Andreasson, 1994). However, one of the respondents, Mária, confessed that
although he was aware of the fact that non-native speakers with a strong accent may be highly
proficient, she did not fully appreciate their knowledge of the language because of the accent.
These findings indicated that although comprehensibility is an essential aspect of the evaluation
of accents, similarly to L1 accents, communicatively redundant pronunciation features may
indeed take on symbolic meanings. It was also indicative of the fact that the learners’ attitudes
were heavily influenced by native-speakerist ideas.

Respondents’ preferences varied between British and American English, which are the
two main native varieties they were aware of. For Mária, British English represented the
established norm for pronunciation, sounding complex and sophisticated, yet American English
was also accepted as a definitive standard. Tamás showed an inclination towards British English
but also considered American English appealing because it sounded relaxed. Knuth, on the other
hand, showed a clear penchant for American English, which he considered more modern and also more widespread. According to him, British English is rather old fashioned and is promoted mainly by language education. For him, American English represents a highly valued and influential culture and society, for which he showed admiration. In sum, the preferences could be seen as reflecting the learners’ affiliations to the respective cultures, which they accessed via exposure to English through the media of films, television and the internet. However, it could be observed in the participants that mere exposure to speech varieties did not have a decisive impact on attitudes: these were shaped by deeply ingrained values and personal affiliations towards cultures of the target language.

3.5.2.2 The role of exposure and awareness

The learners reported that they were exposed to spoken English through films and series on a regular basis, which shaped their way of thinking regarding varieties of English, while they rarely had contact with speakers of English in real life apart from their English lessons. The main varieties learners seemed to be aware of included British and American English, though they usually could not tell apart one from the other, only based on whether the films or the characters were British or American themselves. For example, Béla knew that the main actor in the series House M. D., Hugh Laurie, was an English actor; therefore, he associated his accent with British even though the actor actually spoke with an American accent in the series. In another example, Béla noticed that the accents of the series Game of Thrones, a fantasy series set in medieval times, was similar to the British accent he heard in the audio materials of his English lessons.
Mária, Ferenc and Béla knew that the popular sitcom series, How I met Your Mother, was an American series and thus associated the accents they heard there with American.

The learners reported limited exposure to non-native English, for example, when going abroad on holidays and they did not show awareness of their specific characteristics. The non-native variety that they were most aware of was Hungarian English, and some of the learners also mentioned Asian English or Indian English, about which they had a general stereotypical knowledge. Learners’ limited exposure and lack of awareness might explain the low comprehension score of non-native accents in the pilot study (cf. Section 3.2.3) and in Study One (cf. Section 3.3.1).

3.5.2.3 Familiarity and otherness

While the most important aspect of an English accent for learners was its comprehensibility, they also reported that they felt more positively about accents that they were used to. One of the reasons they gave for this was that familiar accents are more comprehensible, yet they also expressed more positive feelings about accents they were more used to, usually based on what series they watched in English. However, these preferences were prone to change, as shown by the following extract:

Tamás: Well, I find British English nicer these days. I used to prefer American English, mainly because of films.
Interviewer: What makes you feel that British English is nicer?
Tamás: There is a series I’ve been watching recently, Skins, which I liked and it made it [British English] seem nicer to me.
Besides familiarity, another recurring theme which emerged from the interviews was otherness, meaning the lack of familiarity with certain accents, which the learners tended to judge rather negatively. Part of the reason for this was that unfamiliar accents were sometimes more difficult to understand; however, learners reported that they felt slightly negatively towards unusual accents even when they were understandable. Béla compared this to unfamiliar accents in Hungarian:

Interviewer: What do you mean when you say that it is also disturbing if the accent is different from what you are used to? Could you elaborate on this?
Béla: This is like when you are from Budapest and someone has a Hungarian countryside accent, for example from Szeged, and I’m not keen on hearing him speak; and yes, this is a bit strange. Maybe I can get used to it after a while. I have a classmate like this, from Szeged, or maybe not from there, who speaks like this. I also have to pay more attention to understanding him.
Interviewer: And does it bother you even if you understand it?
Béla: Of course.
Interviewer: What is the reason for this?
Béla: [speaking more vehemently] Because I’ve been used to hearing a certain intonation and a certain pronunciation for 18 years, which is dear to my ears, or I don’t know. And this is an entirely different pronunciation; it’s just that it’s unusual.
Interviewer: and so is this similar in English?
Béla: Yes, but in English, I’m usually surrounded by my classmates, who speak like me. And it usually bothers me less in English because I am not so used to a single standard English pronunciation.
3.5.2.4 The symbolic meaning of pronunciation

The learners also attached symbolic meaning to variation in English pronunciation including native varieties, non-native varieties and Hungarian English, which refers to the association of phonological features to social meaning (Trudgill & Giles, 1972). The learners talked about British and American English as the two main native varieties they knew of, though they often had but a blurry, rather general idea of the differences between the two, and even mixed them up sometimes (cf.: Section 3.5.2.2). The learners tended to associate RP with being traditional, old-fashioned, elegant, or slightly snobbish, while they saw American English pronunciation as relaxed, friendly or informal and slangish. The positive or negative characterization of the variety depended on their personal attitudes towards the accents. Learners associated a general prestige value to one or the other native variety, which they regarded as good or correct English.

The learners regarded non-native accents as natural to some extent, but they often showed a demeaning attitude towards them. They usually compared non-native speakers’ pronunciation to ENL, saying that even though a perfect native pronunciation is unattainable for non-natives, if they manage to approximate it, the native-like accent gives the impression that they are successful and proficient learners of English, who are generally intelligent and well-educated. For instance, as Mária noted before:

When he or she [a non-native speaker] speaks English very well, and you can feel that it’s not his or her mother tongue only a little, then I think that the person is, educated and literate, who works in a high position, where he has to use English.

On the other hand, the learners suggested that if a non-native speaker had a strong L1 accent, it could give the impression that they do not know English well, even though they may be more
easily comprehensible than natives. Their negative attitude towards non-native English could be often observed, when they giggled when they listened to the Egyptian speaker, or when they mentioned typical non-native accents that they heard such as Asian or Indian speakers and said that they found these pronunciations slightly ridiculous. This is reflected in the following comment by Tamás:

In the case of Indian speakers, it [their accent] doesn’t really bother me, but I feel that it’s a bit funny inside, as if I felt that he was speaking incorrectly, though he may have a wider vocabulary than mine […], still, I get the impression that he doesn’t speak English that well.

Hungarian English was treated similarly, in which case a strong accent was often explicitly ridiculed or at least commented on according to the learners. They mentioned specific stigmatized features, for instance, the trill [r], the pronouncing the sounds [θ] and [ð] as [s], [t] or [z] [d] and [w] as [v]. Besides being offensive, ridiculing and stigmatising non-native accents by Hungarian learners, especially accent features related to their own mother tongue, might be a cause of cognitive dissonance, as these accent features may occur in their own pronunciation as well, which can be a source of insecurity for learners about their own English pronunciation as well.

3.5.3 Learners’ view of their own English pronunciation

As for the participants’ view of the significance of their own pronunciation, – similarly to the evaluation of others’ accent – comprehensibility was also a key issue and exposure proved to be
likewise influential in the formation of their own accent. However, there is some indication that the participants’ own pronunciation is linked to their identity and their desired self-image (cf. Dörnyei et al., 2006). Firstly, the learners in the study invariably reported that being understood when communicating in English was of paramount importance. Secondly, because of their appreciation of native speaker speech varieties, when being exposed to them, they tried to imitate what they perceived as native-like features. They also tended to mimic their teacher’s idiolect if they considered it to be close to a native speaker variety. This was considered important because by deploying a native-like accent, the participants intend to signal that they are proficient, educated and confident users of English. Nevertheless, there was an element of conscious selection among accent varieties, which has a more personal significance to learners, reflecting their identity. Nearly all the learners managed to identify a person, typically from the media, who they considered to be the ideal model for pronunciation. The underlying reason for this was that they found this person or character appealing, somebody that they could relate to or regard as a role model. An example for this was Kálmán’s appreciation of a highly positioned expert in an American software company, whose presentations he regularly watched on YouTube. Since Kálmán was planning to work in IT, he considered this person as a model, which was linguistically signalled by trying to emulate his pronunciation. This may also explain his strong preference for American English, mentioned above; which was also indicated by the participant’s recorded pronunciation, which tended to contain distinctive features of American English, such as rhotic R-s and dark L-s. These findings suggest that pronunciation in an L2 can be used for expressing the speaker’s identity. This supports Dörnyei’s (2005) theory that a learner’s ideal self is a strong motivating force in language learning, yet, contrary to Walker (2010), it implies that expressing one’s identity through one’s accent in English does not
necessarily make reference to national identity but is more complex and personal. In fact, L1 accent features were disliked and stigmatised, as they were seen as indicators of imperfect language knowledge. Therefore, learners with attitudes similar to those observed in the participants of the present investigation may be unlikely to consciously accept L1 accent features in their own pronunciation or in that of others.

Last but not least, an important concept which emerged from the accounts of participants was naturalness. This means that the participants reported that they tended to feel inhibited, anxious and sometimes even frustrated when they had to invest too much energy in their pronunciation, that is, trying to emulate what they regarded as the desirable native speaker variety, because it distracted them from conveying a message, made them less fluent and sometimes negatively affected their willingness to communicate in English. Also, they found it pretentious and irritating when another non-native speaker made too much effort to pronounce sounds in an emphatically native-like manner. On the other hand, extensive use of stereotypical L1 features, such as pronouncing the TH sound as [s] or pronouncing the letters of words with their Hungarian sound equivalents were also subject to negative comments. Thus, naturalness represented a balance between adopting characteristics of native English accents in order to sound proficient, and allowing for some degree of natural L1 sound transfer to facilitate production and make speaking in English uninhibited and unselfconscious. This suggests that the two main criteria for ELF pronunciation, intelligibility and expression of a national identity (Walker, 2010) may have to be reconsidered when applied in the Hungarian context in that the latter criterion may be less important, while an additional aspect, naturalness, seems to bear more relevance to Hungarian learners.
3.5.3.1 Pronunciation targets

The learners reported that their ideal target regarding their English pronunciation was to approximate a native variety, typically British or American English, and use it consistently in order to sound more proficient and to avoid the stigma of having a Hungarian accent. How much effort they were willing to invest in this was proportionate to how important they considered English in their future studies or profession. For example, Kálmán had plans of working in IT, so he thought he would have to speak in English in the future, and Mária and Ferenc were planning to study English at university, so they made more effort to work on their pronunciation, while Béla did not see any role for English in his life and thus did not care so much about how he spoke. The former learners showed a great deal of intrinsic motivation as well, while Béla seemed to be more extrinsically motivated. As he put it:

If I come to work with foreign people or if my work requires it in the future [I would make an effort], but if I just use it [English] when I go on holiday… It won’t motivate me just to learn it for myself.

He later mentioned trying to sound more British during the language exam, because he considered it more official, as he remembered hearing it in the audio materials of his textbook.

Teachers were also mentioned as models for pronunciation, albeit only as a secondary source compared to films, and only when learners believed that the teachers’ pronunciation was similar to an ENL variety. An example for this was the following extract:

Interviewer: Who do you consider to be a model for your own pronunciation?
Ferenc: Well, my teachers, definitely.
Interviewer: Is your teacher native or non-native?
Ferenc: Non-native. But she has been in England a lot, so she speaks quite good English. She speaks British English.

Thus, it can be concluded that having native-like English accent seemed to be a predominant criterion for learners’ pronunciation target if they attributed some significance to English in their lives. British English pronunciation, by which learners presumably meant RP, the speech variety they were used to from teaching materials, is a dominant pronunciation model besides GA, which learners typically encounter outside school. Because of learners’ native-like pronunciation targets, teachers were also expected to conform to and model these speech varieties.

3.5.3.2 Accommodation

Some learners reported a tendency to accommodate to their interlocutors, which meant varying the degree to which they were trying to sound native-like. The purpose of this was either to be more intelligible, to appear as a proficient speaker of English, to avoid negative judgment and being ridiculed, or to blend in with the other speakers in case they used English in an ESL context. Learners tended to be less native-like with less proficient interlocutors and more native-like with people whose proficiency they considered better, including non-native and native speakers, in order to project a good image about themselves.

Mária: at school, my group mates speak good English and most of them have a better pronunciation than I do, so in these cases, I pay more attention to speak more with the original English [sic] pronunciation. And for example if I speak to someone who has been learning English for only a year, they would find it more difficult to understand English-
like pronunciation [...] and it would be more understandable if I use Hungarian-like English [pronunciation].

Learners also mentioned that they usually tried to mimic the actual native variety they were exposed to, which could happen automatically when exposed to a variety a lot, either in a real-life context, or through films or series.

3.5.3.3 Markers of identification

Some learners told that they consciously tried to adopt a speakers’ pronunciation because they found the person appealing. For example, Kálmán explained that he tried to adopt the pronunciation of an IT professional whose videos he often watched on YouTube. Tamás also said that he tried to imitate the English accent of Effy, a character from the British drama series Skins, with a distinctive Estuary English accent, because he found her personality appealing.

The variety learners tried to adopt was also related to a more general cultural affiliation or appreciation of an ENL pronunciation. These efforts to emulate a certain native accent could be observed on certain sounds in learners’ own pronunciation, which could be considered as markers of identification. Examples for these were the liquid [r], the [w] sound, sometimes used hypercorrectly in place of [v] as well, and the effort to produce the [θ] and [ð] sounds. Kálmán’s pronunciation also featured dark [l] sounds, typical of American English, the variety he said to be more appealing to him.
3.5.3.4 Naturalness of pronunciation

Another aspect that learners deemed to be significant regarding their pronunciation was the energy they had to invest in modifying their natural accent, which exerted an influence on the speaking process and their willingness to communicate. Learners considered it to be important to speak with a pronunciation that they found natural, meaning that they did not need to make an extra effort to modify their accent and they could speak in an uninhibited and unselfconscious manner, which could even make a positive impression on the listener. As Tamás explained:

> If you speak in a relaxed way, you do not feel frustrated and this will not bother the person listening to you. One of my classmates tries to articulate every sound emphatically, which is disturbing [...] the important thing is that it [my pronunciation] should be natural, that I don’t feel nervous and I am understood [...] I cannot change basic things in my pronunciation.

According to the learners, paying too much attention to pronunciation required a great deal of mental energy on their part, which distracted them from the communicative process itself, and anxiety about one’s own pronunciation could also have a debilitating effect on learners’ willingness to speak in English. As Helga put it, “The important thing is rather that pronunciation shouldn’t hinder me in whether I say something or not. So the important thing is that I’m fluent, not how I pronounce it”. Learners’ accounts of how they felt about their own pronunciation indicated that there may potentially be a great deal of conflict between their pronunciation targets, what pronunciation they considered ideal for themselves and what English accent they would feel comfortable with. The main source of this conflict seemed to be learners’ perceived as to what their English pronunciation was supposed to be like, based on representations of English pronunciations mainly in ELT and in the media. The significance of an ENL-centred
pronunciation model for learners, investigated further in Study Three based on the above findings, is presented in the following chapters.

3.6 Methods of Study Three

3.6.1 Rationale

The purpose of Study Three was to provide a comprehensive quantitative investigation into learners’ perception of speech varieties and their attitudes pertaining to them, drawing on the previous two studies of the research project. There were three main changes compared to Study One, namely, enlarging the sample, changing the comprehension task and complementing the questionnaire with additional constructs. The following sections provide a brief account of the modifications which have been made to the various components of the data collection process and the instrument utilised in Study Three in comparison to Study One. Apart from these changes, the methods of Study Three are identical with the methods described in Section 3.2.

3.6.2 Participants

The sample size of Study Three was increased to 94 learners of the same population as in Study One, meaning 94 comprehension tests and the same number of questionnaires. Studying the
same population, that is, Hungarian secondary-school learners of English, was expected to ensure that the results would remain comparable and the unchanged elements of Study One could be used in Study Three as well. For the third study, the same sampling procedures took place as in the first study (cf. Section 3.2.2), which meant that the data collection was carried out in secondary schools in Budapest with learners in their final two years of school.

3.6.3 Instruments

3.6.3.1 The comprehension task

The comprehension task underwent modifications because of the limitations of the instrument which were pointed out by experts during discussions and consultations after the first study. The audio script with the RP speaker was re-recorded with another speaker of the same speech variety and the Hungarian accent was changed for a French one. The fact that the first three sound samples were amateur recordings compared to the studio quality recording of the fourth RP accent with a professional narrator raised doubts about the comparability of the RP accent to the previous ones. Therefore, since studio-quality recordings with professional narrators of the speech varieties in the study were unfeasible given the resources of the research project, the last sample was replaced by an amateur recording of an RP speaker. Additionally, the audio sample with the Hungarian accent, representing the speech varieties of the Expanding Circle, was replaced by a recording of a French speaker of English. The rationale behind this was twofold. Firstly, Study Two included an extensive treatment of learners’ attitudes towards Hungarian
English, since it was a recurring concept emerging from the interviews. Secondly, the Hungarian English speaker featuring in the recording read the script in a slightly hesitant way, which gave some learners the impression that his competence in English was lower irrespective of his accent. This was revealed by some of the brief written comments learners made about the speaker after listening to the recording. Therefore, the French speaker seemed to be an ideal choice since he spoke with an English pronunciation which was markedly influenced by his mother tongue, yet at the same time he spoke fluently and in a confident manner.

3.6.3.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was redesigned by adding constructs promising valuable results based on the previous studies and taking out ones with low reliability, which did not contribute to the findings, such as the perceived benefits of contact with speakers of English. This way, the length of the questionnaire and the time of data collection remained approximately the same, which was essential because of the time constraints of the 45-minute data collecting sessions, which had to be conducted during one school period of an English class. Added to the questionnaire were items related to learners’ own pronunciation, since they proved to be important factors in shaping learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties according to the interviews in Study Two.

Moreover, as Study One revealed tendencies of native-speakerism pertaining to learners’ attitudes, and Study Two showed that this way of thinking can be a strong influencing factor in the evaluation of accents, an additional construct has been designed to capture this phenomenon. The questions of this constructs were intended to shed light on the extent to which learners
associated competence and correctness with being native-like, and to what extent they regarded native-like English pronunciation as a learning goal for themselves.

Furthermore, building on the previous findings, the significance learners attribute to pronunciation was investigated further, focusing on comprehensibility, naturalness, inhibition and models shaping one’s own accent. These areas were investigated by means of additional Likert scales. These were expected to show how much the findings emerging from the interview study could be observed on a larger population; moreover, they could also reveal correlational relationships among each other and with other variables, for example, if certain attitudes towards pronunciation models co-occur with inhibition in speaking, or if it shows a correlation with learners' results in the comprehension task.

A further difference compared to Study One was the analysis of the Likert Scales related to social distance. Although these questions featured in the first questionnaire as well, they were not analysed in detail in the study because of the length restrictions of the publication. Moreover, the larger sample size of Study Two was more suitable for gaining meaningful data related to these questions. The questions were designed on the analogy of the Bogardus social distance scale, which is used in social sciences to measure how much people are willing to engage in various degrees of social contact with members of other social groups, focusing on the underlying factors of sympathy and prejudice.

The purpose of these questions in the present study was to observe Hungarian learners' attitudes towards English speech varieties. Consequently, the aim was to measure learners’ willingness to engage in different degrees of contact with the speakers in activities pertaining to using English, for instance, speaking to the person in English, attending the same English lesson, practising spoken English with them or learning English from them. These activities involve an
increasing degree of social contact with the speaker, and an increasing likelihood of influencing the learners’ English accent. The last scale stated that the learner would be willing to adopt the speaker’s pronunciation, which signified the lowest level of social distance, which practically meant identification with the speaker through his accent. Since the learners were only exposed to the speakers through their speech in the recordings, it could be assumed that their judgements of the speakers were primarily influenced by the underlying stereotypes that they associated with their speakers’ accent and the group they identified the speakers to belong to. This way, these scales were expected to shed light on learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties of English.

3.7 Results of Study Three

3.7.1 Comprehension of speech varieties

Similarly to the results of Study One, the scores in the comprehension tasks showed differences regarding how much the learners comprehended the four speech varieties, as shown in Table 6. The learners understood the RP speech variety the most, followed by the other native speech variety, GA. By contrast, they found it markedly more difficult to comprehend the two non-native varieties, the Egyptian Arabic and the French accents respectively.
Table 6. The mean scores of the results of the comprehension tasks, out of a maximum score of 14, with the length of the extract indicated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech variety</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Mean score (out of 14)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French English</td>
<td>1 min 47 sec</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic English</td>
<td>1 min 50 sec</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>1 min 30 sec</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>2 min 11 sec</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The various degrees of difference in the difficulty level between the accents were illustrated by the mean scores of the comprehension tests as shown by the paired sample T-tests in Table 7. The smallest distance could be observed in the case of the two non-native varieties, the Arabic and French English accent, whereas there was a larger gap between the non-native and native accents, with the RP English accent standing out the most. These results resonated with the results of the comprehension test in Study One, indicating that the learners comprehended standard native varieties the most, especially RP English, yet they faced difficulties with non-native varieties that displayed characteristic phonological differences from the standard varieties that learners were familiar with.
Table 7. The degree of difference between the mean scores of the comprehension tests shown by the T-value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>GA</th>
<th>Egyptian Arabic</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>-6.3**</td>
<td></td>
<td>-6.1**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic</td>
<td>-11.3**</td>
<td>-6.1**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>-16.1**</td>
<td>-7.9**</td>
<td>-2.2*</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*sig<0.24 (2-tailed)

**sig<0.001 (2-tailed)

These results foreshadow potential difficulties when the learners would have to communicate in English outside school because the global proportion of native and non-native speakers (cf. Crystal, 2003) makes it highly probable that they will encounter non-native speakers of English if they engage in international encounters, for example, in the fields of business, tourism and education (cf. Section 4.2).

3.7.2 Scales related to the comprehensibility of the speech varieties

The native versus non-native pattern was also reflected in the mean scores of the Likert scales measuring learners’ subjective judgement of the accent’s comprehensibility. Although these items on their own would have been insufficient to measure the actual difficulty of the different speech varieties of English in the comprehension tasks, they served to corroborate the tendencies
in the objective scores of the comprehension tests by indicating that the differences in the later
were in fact not influenced significantly by the circumstances of testing, such as the order in
which learners listened to the sound excerpts, but they reflected the actual difficulty levels of the
accents from the learner’s perspective as well.

Table 8. Mean scores and stand deviation for learners’ perceived comprehensibility level of the
French, Egyptian Arabic, GA and RP speech varieties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech Variety</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. The degree of difference between the mean scores of the perceived difficulty level of
the speech varieties shown by the T-value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>-3.78**</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic</td>
<td>-18.29**</td>
<td>-15.10**</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>-29.82**</td>
<td>-23.35**</td>
<td>-6.03*</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** differences significant at the <0.001 level (2-tailed)
These results might indicate that the perceived comprehensibility of English speech could act as a self-fulfilling prophecy for learners, that is, learners’ first impression of an accent’s intelligibility might have influenced their actual comprehension of the accent. This underlines the idea that comprehensibility may not only be a function of linguistic or cognitive abilities, but affective factors might also play a role in the comprehension of English speech varieties. The findings related to Hungarian secondary school learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties of English are presented in the following section.

### 3.7.3 Attitudes to speech varieties of English

The scales which were intended to measure various aspects of learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties also revealed regularities along the lines of native and non-native speaker accents. The following table shows the differences in mean scores of the constructs related to stereotypes towards the different speakers in the audio samples. As it was mentioned in Section 3.2.2, the components included Likert scales which measured the degree to which learners attributed certain personal qualities to the speakers based on his English pronunciation such as being reliable, cool, kind, intelligent, educated or working in a high position. The data showed that the native (Inner Circle) accents triggered more positive stereotypes from the learners, while the speakers of non-native (non-Inner Circle) varieties of English were judged less favourably. The most positive stereotypes were attributed to the speaker with the American accent and the least favourable to the French and Egyptian Arabic speaker. The difference between the latter two was not significant statistically, which implies that similar stereotypes were evoked by learners by the two unfamiliar non-Inner Circle speech varieties of English.
Table 10. The differences in the mean scores of the scales related to stereotypes towards the British, American, Arabic and French speaker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-4.138**</td>
<td>10.604**</td>
<td>11.534**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.561**</td>
<td>14.549**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>.349</td>
<td></td>
<td>(sig=.728)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** differences significant at the <0.0001 level (2-tailed)

The Bogardus scales, which measured social distance or proximity towards the speakers, also exhibited a similar pattern as shown in the following table showing the T values of a paired sample T-test showing the differences between the speakers. The two unfamiliar non-Inner Circle varieties, Arabic and French English showed the smallest albeit still significant difference between the mean scores, while American and RP English were also relatively close to each other. It can also be observed in the data that while learners showed a clear preference to engage in various activities with the two native speakers, they showed an inclination towards the American English (mean=4.16) speaker over the RP speaker (mean=3.78). The mean score for the American Speaker (4.16) would fall on the “strongly agree”, while the score of the RP speaker on the “somewhat agree” section of the Likert scale.
Table 11. The degree of difference between the mean scores of the social proximity related to the 
speakers of the speech varieties shown by the T-value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>GA</th>
<th>Egyptian Arabic</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>-4.13**</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic</td>
<td>20.63**</td>
<td>20.71**</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>20.39**</td>
<td>23.07**</td>
<td>2.05**</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** differences are significant at the <0.0001 level (2-tailed)

There are also significant correlations between the four Bogardus scales as shown in the table below, suggesting that there was an interaction between the underlying factors that influence the learners’ judgements of the different speakers. According to this data, those learners who showed more acceptance towards the RP speaker were also more accepting towards the American and French speaker. A weaker and less significant relationship of the same type can be seen between the American and the French speaker, while there is a stronger and more significant connection between the Arab and the French speaker.

Table 12. Pearson’s Correlations between the Bogardus scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>GA</th>
<th>Egyptian Arabic</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>.414**</td>
<td>.359**</td>
<td>.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.208*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>.563**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)  
**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
It can be assumed that the background of these relationships is that there was an interplay between the underlying factors which influenced the learners’ judgements about the speakers. Learners might have categorized different speakers in a similar way at a certain level, for instance, the two native speakers who might have represent Anglo-Saxon culture to learners, or they might have felt the same solidarity towards the two non-native speakers. On the other hand, the background factors may have been related to the learners’ personality traits, such as open-mindedness, or their geo-political views on the countries of the speakers, which could explain why they related similarly to different speakers. Nevertheless, based on this data, it can only be speculated what these underlying factors might be exactly.

There seemed to be a relationship between the learners’ willingness to engage with the speakers and the stereotypes they had towards them based on the speakers’ accents, as it can be observed in the correlations between the Bogardus scales and the scales which measured the learners’ judgements about the speakers’ personal qualities and socio-educational background.

Table 13. Pearson’s Correlations between the Bogardus scales related to each speech variety and the corresponding scale on the judgements of the speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>.626**</td>
<td>.302*</td>
<td>.170</td>
<td>.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>.350**</td>
<td>.617**</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.225*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Arabic</td>
<td>.233*</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.560**</td>
<td>.376**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.298**</td>
<td>.571**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
This data shows that the learners’ willingness to engage with certain speakers can be predicted to a certain extent from the stereotypical personality traits and socio-educational features that learners associate with speakers of English based on their pronunciation. The data also suggests that these relationships are not entirely unique to each speaker, but judgements of the accent of one speaker can also be connected to willingness to engage with another type of speaker with a different accent. This can be seen from the correlations between the Bogardus scale of the American speaker and the personal judgement scale of the RP speaker or between the Bogardus scale of the French speaker and the personality scale of the Arab speaker. Similarly to the correlations between the Bogardus scales, there can only be assumptions about the exact relationship between the Bogardus scales and the personality scales related to different speech varieties.

Last but not least, there was a significant correlation between the scales related to the acceptance of different pronunciations in English and in Hungarian (.694** sig<0.0001). This indicated that those learners who were comfortable with hearing different accents in their mother tongue were also likely to be more open and accepting towards different speech varieties of English. The underlying reason for this correlation might have been general beliefs about languages as such, whether learners believed that speakers of a language should conform to certain standards or languages are diverse and variable by nature.

In conclusion, it can be said that learners showed characteristic attitudes towards the pronunciation speakers of different English speech varieties mainly along the lines of whether the speaker had an ENL accent or a non-ENL pronunciation which was unfamiliar to learners. This seemed to what stereotypes learners attached to the speaker based on his accent, which showed a relationship with learners’ symbolic social distance from the speaker. This appeared to
corroborate the findings of Study One according to which learners had more favourable attitudes
towards standard speech varieties of ENL speakers of English from the Inner Circle, contrary to
speech varieties of non ENL speakers from the Outer and the Expanding circle. These results are
discussed further in Sections 4.4 and 4.5 of the following chapter.
4 Discussion

4.1 Overview

The findings presented in Section 3 reveal that speech varieties of English play an important role in Hungarian secondary school learners’ comprehension of spoken English, and the accents of English speakers evoke characteristic attitudes from learners which are deeply rooted in their beliefs about the language, their experiences with English and their socio-cultural knowledge pertaining to speakers of English. The results show that unfamiliar accents, typically of speakers of World Englishes or non-native English, may pose considerable difficulties in understanding spoken English for learners. The participants show the highest success rate in understanding RP, which can be argued to be a minority accent in view of the proportion of English speakers worldwide (cf. Crystal, 2003). This variety of spoken English is widely represented in ELT materials (Jenkins, 2009b); however, the fact that allophonic differences and general articulatory differences from this variety cause comprehension difficulties for learners foreshadows difficulties in their future use of English in various international contexts.

There appears to be a complex interplay of factors related to successful comprehension, while coping strategies of successful learners and potential sources of comprehension difficulties can also be identified, which suggest individual differences across learners in the way spoken English is processed. The findings show similarities with previous research (cf. Deterding, 2012; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Jenkins, 2000); however, the results of the present inquiry also suggest that while some findings from prior research in other contexts related to the
comprehension of spoken English may apply to Hungarian secondary school learners, comprehension of spoken English and potential sources of comprehension difficulties, in particular, can depend on the phonetic context of utterances as well as the L1 background of the listeners. This implies that research together with instruction in language education needs to be sensitive to the local context of learners, taking into consideration their L1 background (cf. Widdowson, 2003).

The results also show that variation in spoken English evokes characteristic attitudes from learners in a similar fashion to the way L1 speakers of English relate to spoken language in using variation to express their identity (cf. Coupland, 2007). These attitudes are based on the knowledge learners accumulate about the speech varieties by their exposure to English mostly through the mass media, especially the Internet, and the beliefs about English they acquire during their education. Learners’ attitudes show a monolithic view of English whereby they see the language primarily as the language of its native speakers; consequently, variation is regarded as deficient, erroneous and generally undesirable. This is in stark contrast to the amount of variation which characterises English nowadays (cf. Crystal, 2003; Galloway & Rose, 2015; Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2009c), and this conception of English can be a source of cognitive dissonance for Hungarian learners in accepting variation in their own English pronunciation.

Regarding the background to learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties, attitudes appear to be related to the significance learners attribute to pronunciation, including their own English pronunciation as well as other speakers’ pronunciation. Learners are aware of the potential of English pronunciation to carry symbolic meanings, and the development of their own pronunciation is also shaped by the identificational function of English (cf. Dörnyei et al., 2006; Walker, 2010). Other speakers’ pronunciation is then evaluated vis-à-vis the identificational role
English has for the learner. In other words, the learners’ L2 identity plays a major role in how they relate to other speakers through the speakers’ English pronunciation. This underlines the notion that although English is a lingua franca whose main function is to communicate information and ideas (House, 2003), L2 speakers may also use English to communicate identities, affiliations and symbolic meanings, and they attribute symbolic meanings to the spoken English they hear from other speakers (cf. Section 3.5.2). This also suggests that language education needs to treat English not merely as a tool whose use learners are supposed to master, but the identificational function of the language ought to be taken into consideration as well (cf. Dörnyei, 2005).

The following sections discuss the above findings in detail and point out their implications for language pedagogy with regards to the Hungarian context in particular. In a parallel fashion to the overview above as well as to the four main research questions, Section 4.2 discusses the findings related to the comprehension of speech varieties, while Section 4.3 focuses on the underlying factors behind successful or unsuccessful comprehension of different pronunciations. Subsequently, section 4.4 discusses learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties of English after which the background factors related to these attitudes are examined in Section 4.5. Finally, the pedagogical implications mentioned in the different sections are summarised in Section 4.6.
4.2 Comprehension of speech varieties

4.2.1 Difficulties in comprehension

According to the results of the comprehension tasks in Study One and Study Three, the speaker’s accent can make a considerable difference in learners’ understanding of spoken English. In both studies, learners achieved the highest score in the task with the RP accent, and this result shows consistency over the two studies despite the fact that in Study One this speech variety featured a professional recording designed for ELT testing purposes, while in Study Three an amateur recording was used with identical quality to the recordings of the other accents. Besides, this result also showed consistency regardless of the order in which the accents were played. While in Study One RP was the last accent to feature in the comprehension task, in Study Three this accent was played first to the learners, which indicates that it was in fact the phonological features of this speech variety that made it the most comprehensible for learners. This is in line with the observation of Jenkins (2009b), according to which RP is overrepresented in ELT materials, thus learners are mostly familiar with this speech variety as they are trained to emulate this pronunciation and they also practise comprehension through this variety. However, it can be argued that the quintessential RP accent featuring in ELT materials is an artificial speech variety, since speakers of this accent comprise a mere 3% of the population of the United Kingdom (Trudgill, 2002).

Although using a speech variety consistently may be helpful for learners of English at lower levels who have to come to grips with other challenging aspect of English, associating RP
with English pronunciation per se can be problematic for learners in the long run. Due to the wide range of variation in English worldwide which learners are likely to encounter in the future (cf. Crystal, 2003; Galloway & Rose, 2015; Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2009c), learners are likely to fail to understand utterances if the potentially different manifestations of those utterances differ from the mental representations of the learner. For instance, if a learner is used to hearing the RP variant of the TH sound, the dental fricative, all the time as a result of their training in ELT and their exposure to this manifestation of the sound, they might have difficulties in rendering other manifestations of the sound with the voiced or voiceless TH phonemes during listening to spoken English. According to Wells (1982) the TH phonemes can be realised in various ways in native as well as non-native Englishes such as labio-dental fricatives /f/, /v/, dental plosives /t/, /d/ or alveolar fricatives /s/ and /z/. Therefore, learners who only recognise the sound, and consequently the word or utterance, in which the sound occurs, when it is realised as a dental fricative are likely to face difficulties in communication in international contexts. These difficulties are also likely to arise because such sound alternations can take place in potentially all other phonemes of English, and alternation can occur on the supra-segmental level of speech as well, in the rhythm, syllable structure or intonation of English.

In the present research, these comprehension difficulties are illustrated by the relatively low scores of learners in the tasks featuring accents they are not familiar with, namely the French accent, the Egyptian accent and also the Scottish English accent in the pilot study. These speech varieties display salient differences from the RP accent that learners are accustomed to both on the segmental level in terms of sound variation and on the supra-segmental level including rhythm and intonation. The Hungarian and American English accents appear to be positioned between the RP accent and the aforesaid non-familiar accents with regards to difficulty. Learners
would be expected to be relatively familiar with these two pronunciations since the former is related to their own mother tongue, and the latter accent is widespread in the media where learners are exposed to English often, as it can be seen based on the questionnaires in Study One and Three and learners’ accounts in Study Two. An explanation for this contradiction may be that in addition to learners’ close familiarity with RP from ELT materials, the RP speakers in both studies display a certain degree of eloquence which facilitates comprehension for learners. By contrast, the pronunciation of the GA speaker features some sounds that learners are less familiar with than the RP variants, even though the GA pronunciation has less such sounds than the unfamiliar French and Egyptian Arabic accents. Besides, both the GA and the Hungarian English pronunciation features spontaneous intonation which may be less clear to Hungarian learners who are used to the contrived eloquence of textbook RP (cf. Sections 3.3 and 3.6).

**4.2.2 Disadvantages of a single pronunciation model**

At first glance, the observation that the Hungarian secondary school learners in the study seem to find textbook-like RP accent considerably easier to comprehend than other speech varieties could imply that this variety is indeed the ideal target for learners of English who aim for a mutually intelligible pronunciation in English, as it is advocated by certain authors (cf. Prodromou, 2006; Sobkowiak, 2005). However, besides the various burdens of such a pronunciation goal for learners, to be discussed in detail in Sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5, expecting learners of English to conform to RP for the sake of intelligibility is unreasonable for the following reasons. Firstly, as it was mentioned above, RP is a minority accent even among ENL speakers (Trudgill, 2002);
therefore, the pronunciation of the overwhelming majority of native speakers is likely to be different from RP to some degree, which is due to widespread historical differences between dialects of the U.K. (Wells, 1982) and the diversity of English accents which evolved as a consequence of the early spread of English such as Australian English, New-Zealand English or the numerous varieties of American English (cf. Galloway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2009c, Wells, 1982). Secondly, the English pronunciation of multilingual speakers of New Englishes has not been influenced by RP through ELT since those speakers acquire localised varieties of English in countries where English is used within the society, for instance, in India, Nigeria or the Philippines, where speakers are considered to be norm developers (Kachru, 1992). Thirdly, the pronunciation of EFL speakers also exhibits a high degree of variation due to the influence of L1 and the fluid, spontaneous and situational nature of ELF interactions, which also involve a great deal of variability in pronunciation. In the light of these considerations, it can be said that diversity in the pronunciation of English is the norm rather than the exception; therefore, designating RP as the target pronunciation for either language production or comprehension is not justified on the pretext of mutual intelligibility.

The findings that learners are the most successful in comprehending RP while they face difficulties with other speech varieties suggest that learners might face problems with the comprehension of spoken English outside school. The demographic tendencies in the global proportion of English speakers suggest that the number of ESL and EFL speakers is steadily increasing, while the number of ENL speakers is stagnating (cf. Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006), which means that variation in English accents is becoming more and more prevalent. For this reason, learners are likely to encounter a variety of different accents in the future when they
communicate in English, which requires the skill to accommodate to interlocutors in terms of language production and comprehension as well (cf. Jenkins, 2012).

Communicative contexts where the participants include different speakers of English are also becoming increasingly prevalent as a result of globalisation and the global mobility of workforce, which means that ENL, ESL and EFL speakers form speech communities in a variety of locations worldwide (Galloway & Rose, 2015). This way, English is likely to develop local functions in more and more countries of the Expanding Circle, including Hungary, where English is traditionally used for international communication (cf. Kachru, 1992). Thus, Hungarian learners may encounter a range of different speech varieties of English in the future, for example, at multinational companies in Hungary where they would have to communicate with co-workers at their workplace or with colleagues at the same company outside the country. Alternatively, they might also have to function in international environments abroad where English is either the local language or the shared means of communication. Therefore, a high degree of familiarity with a relatively rare speech variety such as RP has little adaptive value in communicative contexts which involve English speakers of various linguistic backgrounds. Instead, Hungarian learners, as future users of English, need to anticipate that they will be exposed to various potentially unfamiliar pronunciations of English which they have to adapt to in terms of comprehension.
4.3 Background to comprehension

4.3.1 Concepts related to the comprehension of English speech varieties

There appear to be a number of concepts related to learners’ comprehension of English speech varieties, which are also interconnected with one another. The fact that the present research project could not isolate a single factor which is linked to successful comprehension independently may suggest that the comprehension of different speech varieties is a highly complex mental process which involves various cognitive abilities of learners (cf. Sections 3.3.2 and 3.5.1). Based on the analysis of the relationships between the scores of the comprehension tests and the questionnaire, the factors related to comprehension are general language proficiency, awareness of phonological features of English, the amount of exposure to specific accents of English, the amount of exposure to English through various means and the perceived comprehensibility of English accents.

The correlations between the comprehension scores and language proficiency indicate that learners become better at understanding different accents of English as they progress with their studies of English. Although this finding may sound trivial at first, it raises the question of whether the higher comprehension scores of proficient learners are merely a result of maturation which takes place subconsciously and automatically, or competent learners develop conscious strategies for understanding different accents of English. The correlation of the test scores with other variables such as awareness and exposure may mean that there is a compound impact of these variables together with proficiency, which is related to successful comprehension.
Although causal relationships cannot be made between these factors based on these correlations, it can be assumed, for instance, that proficient learners have had more exposure to English in the first place because they have spent more time studying English compared to less proficient learners. As a result of their success in comprehension, they may also seek more opportunities to listen to English through various means which, in turn, gives them more experience with various accents of English and more awareness of their features.

The correlations between phonological awareness and high comprehension scores suggest that while learners may become better at understanding different English pronunciations automatically as they progress with their mastery of English, learners who pay conscious attention to phonological differences between speech varieties and show a higher degree of awareness of English pronunciation in general tend to be more successful in comprehension than the learners who do not show such qualities. This suggests that developing listening skills involves the process of language acquisition as well as language learning on the part of EFL learners (cf. Krashen, 1983). Acquisition in this case entails picking up pronunciation features automatically as learners are exposed to English speech, while learning involves the conscious studying of the different pronunciations of English words and sounds whereby learners can make sense of language input in a systematic way, recognising patterns and regularities in phonological variation.

The relationship between successful comprehension and exposure to different types of speech varieties of English would suggest that acquisition of comprehension skills takes place automatically when learners are exposed to spoken English of different kinds. However, the very fact that some learners indicated on the scales in the questionnaire that they often hear British, American, non-native, European, non-European accents of English implies that they show some
degree of awareness of the type of pronunciation that they hear. Nevertheless, this finding seems to corroborate the suggestions, for instance, of Jenkins (2000), Jenkins (2012) or Walker (2010) that instead of focusing on one or two standard varieties of English speech such as RP or GA English pronunciation in ELT listening materials, including a variety of English accents in ELT is beneficial for learners’ comprehension skills.

The connection between high comprehension scores and different means of exposure to spoken English also suggests that learners who are successful at comprehending different accents of English listen to English outside the classroom, while learners who rely on exposure to English mainly in school where they hear predominantly RP (Jenkins, 2012) are less successful in this respect. Based on the questions in the means of exposure scale (cf. Section 3.2.2.1), these types of exposure include listening to English on You Tube, watching English-language movies and series or being exposed to English speech in real life conversations outside school. Again, it is not possible to determine causal relationships between successful comprehension and various means of exposure based on the statistical data in the present research, since it cannot be determined whether learners listen to English outside school because they are better at understanding it, or they develop advanced comprehension skills as a result of such exposure to English. However, it can be assumed that this causal relationship can be a two-way interaction in the following way. Learners who have a certain degree of competence in the comprehension of English speech listen to more spoken English through various channels, which develops their comprehension skills further. This, in turn, gives them the sense of achievement and confidence to engage in such activities, which enhances their comprehension skills even more. Conversely, the same process can result in a downward spiral if learners do not understand spoken English and thus develop an aversion to spoken English and avoid exposure to English speech varieties.
This suggests that it might be helpful to scaffold and facilitate learners’ listening to different pronunciations of English to provide them with a positive experience, which can become a catalyst for a positive cycle of exposure to speech varieties and developing adaptive comprehension skills. Examples for such scaffolding techniques may be using extensive listening (Renandya & Farrell, 2010), complementing listening with reading the transcript simultaneously (Chang & Millett, 2014) or using graded audio materials which are only just above the learners’ level (cf. Krashen, 1982). Besides, these listening activities need to feature a variety of English accents to develop listening skills that learners can adapt to real-life situations (Walker, 2010).

Last but not least, learners’ scores in the comprehension tasks also showed correlations with the perceived comprehensibility of the different accents. This can be interpreted in a way that learners’ judgement of the comprehensibility of a speech variety can function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. If learners deem it comprehensible, they might pay more attention to it and make more effort to understand it despite the potential difficulties, while if they decide that the accent is incomprehensible, they might give up and stop making an effort to understand it. Deeming a speech variety difficult to comprehend might also make learners’ more anxious when listening to the accent, which can also have a debilitating effect on comprehension skills (cf. Piniel & Csizér, 2013). Learners’ judgements about the comprehensibility of an English speech variety may be related to learners’ beliefs about what English is supposed to sound like and their attitudes towards diversity in English, that is, the interpretation of the concept of English itself (cf. Jenkins, 2009a). For example, learners might believe that comprehensible English means textbook-like ENL accents or they might consider pronunciations of a range of different ENL, ESL and EFL speakers to be equally suitable for communication. The latter approach would suggest a more realistic conception of English based on the historical development of the
language into different spoken varieties and the different phases of the spread of English (cf. Galloway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2009c; Wells, 1982).

### 4.3.2 Concepts related to difficulties in comprehension

The comprehension tasks in Study One and Study Three along with the think-aloud protocol in Study Two provide an insight into the potential sources of learners’ difficulties in comprehending spoken English with different accents. The findings reveal that comprehension difficulties can be attributed to supra-segmental features, segmental features as well as the context and frequency of these phonological features. It can be said that misunderstandings do not typically occur due to single features in isolation but they are the result of a combination of features in utterances. Besides, the findings suggest that phonological features which can contribute to misunderstandings are not universal, but they depend on the L1 phonological inventory of the speaker.

Learners often attributed frequently occurring comprehension difficulties to general features of the speaker’s accent such as the rhythm of speech and the way a speaker formulated syllables (cf. Section 3.5.1). For instance, the heavy syllable timing of the Egyptian Arabic speaker resulted in changes in vowel sounds such as vowel reduction or epenthesis, the addition of vowel sounds, which blurred certain utterances for the learners. One such example was the pronunciation of third as /sərd/ which shows the reduction of the first vowel and the addition of short schwa sound between the two consonants at the end of the syllable since the speaker does not form syllables ending in a complex coda. It has to be noted that this feature in the utterance
occurs in combination with an /s/ ~ /θ/ alternation, which might exacerbate comprehension difficulties. The comprehension difficulty resulting from epenthesis goes against the findings of Jenkins (2000), according to which adding vowel sounds does not interfere with comprehension as opposed to vowel deletion. It appears that this depends on the context where epenthesis occurs and the extent to which the listeners are used to this phonological phenomenon. The comprehension of accents also seems to be influenced by general articulatory features, which involves the way speakers formulate sounds, which suggests awareness of certain phonological features may be insufficient for learners to avoid comprehension difficulties, but a general flexibility is needed in the way they listen to various English speakers.

Certain comprehension difficulties were reported to be caused by the way specific sounds are pronounced; however, these phonological features do not cause misunderstandings consistently from learner to learner or even for the same learner. These features are in line with the Lingua Franca Core by Jenkins (2000) in some cases, yet they show some differences as well. Core features such as vowel length seems to have an effect on comprehension, for example, in the pronunciation of /i/ ~ /iː/ in ‘Green Hall’; however, other core features such as aspiration does not seem to make a difference for Hungarian learners, for example in the comprehension of the target word ‘Palace Hotel’. This seems to corroborate the findings of Chuan (2010), according to which the phonological inventory of the L1 may influence L2 speech perception. In this case, aspiration is a redundant feature in Hungarian; therefore, Hungarian learners have little awareness of aspiration, which renders its relevance for comprehension negligible. On the other hand, certain non-core features, which are supposed to be redundant in terms of intelligibility do seem to cause intelligibility problems such as the pronunciation of the TH sound as /s or /z/. Even though the dental fricative is not part of Hungarian learners’ L1 phonological inventory,
learners are used to the realisation of the TH sound as a dental fricative in English; thus, the alternation of this sound can cause difficulties in understanding utterances. This indicates that the Hungarian secondary school learners in the study are not exposed to sufficiently diverse accents of English through which they could become familiar with the different realisations of these sounds. Another non-core feature which appears to have an influence on comprehensibility is vowel quality. Based on the accounts of learners during the think-aloud protocol, an example of this is the Egyptian Arabic speaker’s pronunciation of the /e/ sound as /ɪ/ in words such as ‘ten’.

The fact that the above features caused misunderstandings inconsistently also indicates that certain sounds do not inevitably result in incomprehensibility on their own, but the successful comprehension of utterances depend on the contexts in which these sounds occur and the proportion of potentially difficult features within utterances, which is in line with the considerations of Deterding (2012). For instance, the pronunciation of the TH sound as alveolar fricatives /s/ or /z/ does not seem to cause frequent misunderstandings in the target words ‘three’ or ‘Thursday’, which are also high-frequency lexical items; however, it appears to cause difficulties when the variant frequently occurs in utterances which are less predictable from the context, for example in ‘the reception’, where the words become blurred together and thus indecipherable for learners. In addition, the pronunciation of the TH sound seems to lead to misunderstandings when it occurs in the vicinity of other unusual sounds for learners as in the example of ‘third /sər³d/ floor’ where the variant occurs right before an epenthesis. Inconsistencies in the intelligibility of sounds can also be attributed to top-down processing in comprehension, as pointed out by Jenkins (2010), whereby words in certain utterances can be predicted with the help of the listeners’ schematic knowledge. Besides, as Deterding (2012) suggests, the comprehensibility of utterances can also depend on the specific lexical items in the
utterance, which might explain, for instance, why the target word ‘curry’ in the utterance ‘curry dishes’ might have been frequently misunderstood by the learners. In addition to the slight reduction of the vowel /ʌ/ in the word ‘curry’ by the Arabic speaker, Hungarian learners might misunderstand the word because the first vowel in the loanword ‘curry’ is represented with /ø/ in learners’ L1 lexicon, and it can also be assumed that it is not a word they frequently come across for cultural reasons.

In sum, it can be said that it is problematic to make generalisations on the segmental level about what might cause intelligibility problems for learners when listening to different pronunciations of English. These difficulties can be a result of factors related to various aspects of language including the phonological, the lexical and pragmatic level, which might also interact with each other in different contexts in the utterances (Deterding, 2012). Besides, suggestions of specific sound features which are supposed to affect intelligibility universally across speakers of English ought to be examined critically in the local pedagogical contexts in which such theories are meant to be adopted (Widdowson, 2003), taking into consideration the influence of learners’ L1 on L2 speech perception (cf. Chuan, 2010).

4.3.3 Successful comprehension

The think-aloud protocol and the interview in Study Two shed light on strategies that learners use to understand unfamiliar speech varieties of English and overcome the potential difficulties which have been detailed in the previous section. These strategies include unconscious processes which can be described as gradually adjusting or to an unfamiliar pronunciation and conscious
processes of learning the unusual features of the accent. The former processes can be said to involve acquisition based on learners’ intuition, while the latter processes require developing awareness of problematic features and learning them consciously (cf. Krashen, 1982). Learners might use these processes simultaneously, yet it can be suggested, based on Jenkins (2000), that learners are typically inclined to use one strategy rather than the other, which is related to learner differences with regards to preference to top-down or bottom-up processes as it was also reported in the interviews of Study Two related to listening strategies (cf. Section 3.5.1).

Adjusting to speakers’ pronunciation can be described as tuning learners’ speech reception to a speaker’s unfamiliar accent. This involves listening to the accent at length possibly without understanding a considerable amount of detail in the spoken message. During this process, learners can rely on different aspects of their background knowledge as well as metacognition to complement their listening skills using a top-down approach to processing information (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). They can make use of their pragmatic knowledge of situations by anticipating what language forms may occur at certain points in a situation or during a spoken interaction. In addition, once learners understand certain parts of an utterance, they can use their syntactic and lexical knowledge to predict what language forms are likely to occur in a given context, which also explains the correlation between general language proficiency and the comprehension scores. This unconscious process may be largely dependent on learners’ aptitude to intuitively and subconsciously render unfamiliar sounds to their mental representations of the phonemes, which would suggest that this skill cannot be taught as such. However, exposure and extensive listening can help learners in developing this ability (cf. Renandya & Farrell, 2010), as discussed above in Section 4.3.1, yet such instruction also needs
to include appropriate support and scaffolding for learners if necessary (cf. Chang & Millett, 2014).

Another strategy which learners report to use in order to overcome comprehension difficulties is the conscious learning of features which are unusual for learners in a speaker’s pronunciation and which can interfere with intelligibility. When learners manage to identify such a feature in a lexical or phonological context in which the meaning of the utterance can be deciphered, they make note of the variant and use this information to identify the sound in other utterances in which it would otherwise cause misunderstandings. Understanding utterances through deciphering sounds can be regarded as a bottom-up process, yet it also involves interaction with top-down processes in identifying the unfamiliar variant based on the context for the first time. This process can explain the correlation between high test scores and the phonological awareness scale, suggesting that learners who have a high awareness of English pronunciation are able to use this knowledge during speech comprehension.

This finding implies that even though intelligibility problems do not necessarily arise from specific segmental features, it can still be beneficial for learners to develop an awareness of phonological variants in order to develop and enhance this comprehension strategy. Although it is problematic to identify a universal set of phonological features which interfere with intelligibility for all speakers of English in all contexts, there are patterns of variants which frequently re-occur in various ENL, ESL and even EFL pronunciations of English due to universal processes of variation and sound change (cf. Chambers, Trudgill, & Schilling-Estes, 2008). An example for this may be the variability of the dental fricative TH sounds, which can alternate by changing either the place or the manner of articulation. For instance, by changing place of articulation to labial, the sound can be realised as /f/ and /v/ as in Cockney English (cf.
Wells, 1982), changing the place to alveolar can result in /s/ and /z/ as in a number of EFL pronunciations (Jenkins, 2000), or changing the manner of articulation to plosive yields a /t/ and a /d/ as in various ESL varieties (Wells, 1983) such as Caribbean English or Nigerian English. If learners become aware of only a few such frequently occurring variants through exposure and instruction in ELT, they can make good use of this knowledge when they encounter them in different combinations is various pronunciations of English.

The two processes described above, which can help learners overcome comprehension difficulties with regards to unfamiliar pronunciations of English, require certain cognitive abilities or linguistic knowledge on the part of the learners; however, whether or not or to what extent learners make use of such strategies may also depend on affective factors. During the interviews learners referred to the process of understanding unfamiliar pronunciations of English as a mental burden which temporarily distracts them from the meaning of utterances, and which forces them to make a distinct mental effort to cope with the unfamiliar pronunciation. This implies that making the effort of using comprehension strategies in the first place requires perseverance and a generally positive disposition on the part of the learner involving openness towards diverse accents of English, which can be both correct and comprehensible despite their differences. Therefore, learners can appreciate various English pronunciations for their communicative value regardless of the pronunciations they are familiar with. This underscores the relevance of learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties of English, which is discussed in the following section.
4.4 Attitudes towards spoken English

4.4.1 Symbolic meanings of L2 English

Although some authors regard English solely as a language of communication which L2 speakers use for practical purposes (House, 2003) the findings of the present study corroborate the research projects which demonstrate that English is not merely a practical tool for L2 speakers who tend to relate to the language on the affective level as well by attaching symbolic meanings to variation in the language in a similar fashion to the way L1 speakers of English, especially with regards to pronunciation (cf. McKenzie, 2007; Rindal, 2010; Rindal & Piercy, 2013; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011; Walker, 2010). It can be seen that the speech varieties in the present research were not only significant for learners because the different English pronunciations had an impact on intelligibility, but the accents also evoked strong attitudes and stereotypes from learners. Similarly to L1 English, the pronunciation of the different speakers served as an indicator for learners regarding the speaker’s origin. In addition, learners could formulate opinions as to the various qualities of the speakers such as personality traits, educational background and intelligence.

This is analogous with the Social Connotation Hypothesis (Trudgill & Giles, 1972) which describes how L1 speakers of English attach social meanings to arbitrary variants of English. In the case of L2 pronunciation, speakers notice certain phonological variants which are redundant from the point of view of intelligibility as they do not affect the comprehension of utterances, and these variants become invested with meanings which are associated with the language users.
or speech communities to which the variant is attributed. In the case of L2 learners in the present research, these associations typically make reference to native-like pronunciation features which are associated with a high prestige value, and L1-influenced non-native features which are often stigmatised (Jenkins, 2000, Walker, 2010). Learners also make distinctions between different ENL varieties to which they also associate social or stylistic meanings as discussed by McKenzie (2006) or Rindal (2010), for instance. The Hungarian learners associate RP with formal style, language educational contexts and L2 competence in English, whereas American English is linked to informal contexts and leisure, while it also carries a symbol of L2 competence. It can be said that RP is linked to a high official status and overt prestige, while GA is related to the covert prestige of coolness for learners (cf. Labov, 1972). However, these judgements about speakers’ accents are based on stereotypical knowledge of these varieties as learners often confuse British and American pronunciation. In contrast to RP and American English, non-ENL pronunciations are associated with otherness, unfamiliarity and lower social prestige, and L1 pronunciation features of EFL speakers are associated with lack of intelligence and low competence in English. A difference in the Social Connotation Hypothesis with reference to L1 and L2 speakers is that in the case of the former, the social meanings are developed mostly within the larger language communities of native-English societies, whereas in the case of L2 speakers, the meanings of variants are influenced by outside factors such as the representation of English in the media or in ELT.
4.4.2 Types of attitudes

The attitudes that the Hungarian learners in the studies showed towards speech varieties of English can be related to the classification of language attitudes by Lambert (1967) as cognitive, emotive and conative aspects of attitudes. The cognitive component of attitudes refers to knowledge or beliefs about the speech varieties, which in the present research included the stereotypical knowledge of the speakers’ origin and the social beliefs about the speakers. Emotive attitudes included learners’ affective reactions regarding the pleasantness, familiarity with or likeability of the accents. The conative component, which is related to speakers’ tendency to act or behave in a particular way as a result of having certain attitudes, is represented by the Bogardus scale which refers to the question of whether learners would be willing to perform certain actions with the speakers based on their English pronunciation such as hanging out with them, studying English with them, attending the same English course or learning English from them as a student.

It can be hypothesised that these three components of attitudes affect each other in a way that cognition triggers emotive reactions, which then influences conation. For example, if learners have a set of beliefs about an ENL speech variety such as RP, namely that it is a prestigious accent which is associated with educated speakers of the society where the English language originates from, learners react to this accent positively by finding it pleasant, familiar and desirable. This, in turn, makes them inclined to speak to the person in English, work together with them at a workplace or learn English from them as students. Beliefs about speech varieties also explain why learners would be more inclined to hang out with the American speaker, whose accent also evokes positive emotions from learners because the speakers of this variety are
believed to be relaxed, laid-back and friendly according to learners’ comments about the American accent. By contrast, the negative attitudes towards speakers with non-ENL pronunciations can trigger the opposite mechanism. Since these accents are associated with incompetent, less educated and generally lower-status speakers, they evoke negative emotions from learners, for instance, that the pronunciation is unpleasant, strange and annoying, which would make them avoid social interaction and contact with these speakers; therefore, learners become reluctant to communicate with these speakers in English, work with them or learn English from them. This shows that negative attitudes towards speech varieties of English based on superficial beliefs of the language, its speakers and the significance of variation can have potentially harmful effects on Hungarian learners as future users of English in a globalised world where diversity in English is prevalent.

4.4.3 The significance of native-speakerist attitudes

From the findings related to learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties of English, it can be inferred that the learners who participated in the three studies are strongly influenced by ideas of native speakerism (Holliday, 2005). Learners appear to have overwhelmingly favourable attitudes towards ENL pronunciations and the positive stereotypes towards their speakers, while they show decisively negative attitudes towards unfamiliar or non-native English accents and have either mixed or unfavourable stereotypes towards speakers of such accents. This indicates that Hungarian learners regard English not as a lingua franca but primarily as the language of its native speakers, which implies that English is considered to be a foreign language the ownership
of which non-native speakers are not entitled to (Widdowson, 1994). Such attitudes are also likely to have a negative effect on learners’ view of their own English as well, resulting in cognitive dissonance, negative self-evaluation and anxiety. The fact that Hungarian learners show a strong sense of conformity to ENL with regards to the norms of English also makes them susceptible to ideas permeated by linguistic imperialism (cf. Phillipson, 1994), which may contribute to language political inequalities (cf. Sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.5). For example, by taking for granted the superiority of ENL over ESL of EFL, learners might also accept more easily the idea that a native speaker of English is by definition more suitable to teach English than a non-native speaker, or that ENL speakers should enjoy professional advantages in contexts where English is used as the language of communication due to their linguistic and cultural superiority.

4.4.3.1 Monolithic view of English

The positive attitudes towards ENL speech varieties indicate that Hungarian learners have a monolithic view of English, including English pronunciation, which is based on RP and GA, whereas they regard variation from these established standard Englishes speech varieties as deficiencies. As the findings of the three studies indicate, this is likely to be the result of the misrepresentation of English in ELT (cf. Jenkins, 2009a; Jenkins, 2012) and the fact that learners encounter English pronunciation outside school mainly through films and the Internet, where ENL is also prevalent. According to the results of the present research, Hungarian learners are rarely exposed to English in ELF situations where they need to use English for communication with a person of a different linguistic and cultural background; therefore, they fail to recognise the fact that diversity in English is not an impediment but a natural phenomenon pertaining to all
levels of the language such as pragmatics (Cogo & Dewey, 2006; Kecskés, 2007; Widdowson, 2014), syntax (Seidlhofer, 2003) morphology (Breiteneder, 2009), the lexicon (Pitzl, et al., 2008) and, with particular interest to the present research, phonology (Jenkins, 2000). A way for learners to develop a more inclusive, accepting and open-minded view towards English is to represent English in ELT not as the language of its native speakers but as a lingua franca whose main purpose is communication between people whose English is inevitably influenced by their L1 and their local communicative contexts. For this reason, learners would need to be familiarised with diversity in English through ELT (cf. Matsuda, 2003), with variation pertaining to all areas of language mentioned above, not only pronunciation. This way, learners could develop an understanding of the fact that although variation in English might be more conspicuous in pronunciation compared to other areas of the language, it is only one of the many areas of language where variation can naturally occur.

4.4.3.2 Lacking ownership of English

Embracing diversity in English and seeing it primarily as a lingua franca also entails that non-native speakers have as much right to take ownership of the language as its native speakers (Widdowson, 1994). However, the findings of the present research show that Hungarian learners consider English to be the language of its native speakers to whom they must conform with their own English, including their pronunciation, if they wish to be seen as competent speakers of English, which indicates that language education in Hungary shows a preference to conformity over using English in a pragmatic way. By contrast, as Widdowson (1994) points out, genuine mastery of English involves non-conformity, the competence of taking control of the language.
and using it for one’s own communicative purposes. Learners’ negative attitudes towards diversity in the pronunciation of non-ENL speakers of English shows that they would expect other non-native speakers of English to conform to standard English pronunciations such as RP or GA for their accent to be intelligible and acceptable, which is unrealistic in the light of the global diversity of English (cf. Section 2.2).

4.4.3.3 Learners’ negative view of their own English pronunciation

Learners’ negative attitudes towards non-ENL speech varieties of English and their lack of a sense of ownership of the language can also have a negative impact on learners’ view of their own English. Based on the findings in Study One related to learners’ attitudes towards the English pronunciation of the Hungarian speaker, an L1-influenced Hungarian English accent is highly stigmatised and is regarded as undesirable by learners. This is corroborated by the interviews in Study Two in which learners explain that they try to avoid Hungarian features in their English pronunciation in order to avoid negative judgements regarding their competence in English. In addition, based on the interviews in Study Two and the questionnaire data in Study Three, some learners tend to find a Hungarian accent in English laughable, though they typically do not comment on it explicitly in front of the other speaker.

These findings are in line with the conclusions of Andreasson (1994), Murray (2003) and Jenkins (2007), for instance, according to which non-native speakers tend to internalise the ENL model for learning English and are thus often judgemental about non-native features in speakers’ English. Hungarian learners do not seem to show sympathy towards speakers with a Hungarian English accent, which is similar to the way Japanese students relate to Japanese English
according to the study of Tokumoto and Shibata (2011), yet different from the attitudes of the Malaysian and South Korean speakers in the same study. A similar assumption can be made about the reason for this difference as the one made by the aforesaid authors, namely that for Hungarian learners, similarly to the Japanese students, English is primarily a foreign language taught through language education, whose purpose is to follow an ENL model presented by ELT. By contrast, in Malaysia, and to some extent in South Korea, speakers have appropriated English and they use the language for their own purposes and in their own way (Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011).

The negative attitudes Hungarian learners show towards L1 accent features, which can potentially occur in their own English pronunciation, is likely to cause a sense of anxiety and insecurity for learners about their own English pronunciation. Since L1 transfer in L2 pronunciation is a natural and automatic process, it can be assumed that learners need to make considerable effort to monitor their language output while they speak English (cf. Krashen, 1982) in order to avoid L1 features and the negative judgements learners that learners assume to be attached to them. Not only does this make the process of language production more difficult and possibly slower, but it also makes learners more self-conscious about their own English, which can contribute to foreign language anxiety (cf. Horwitz et al., 1986), thus having a debilitating effect on language skills (cf. Piniel & Csizér, 2013). Similarly to the way the perceived incomprehensibility can have a negative effect on language skills such as listening (cf. Section 4.3.1), insecurity about learners’ own pronunciation may impede on their speaking skills as well if learners feel anxious when speaking in English because they fear negative judgement of their accent, which is also likely to lower their self-confidence.
4.4.3.4 Political issues

Hungarian learners’ positive attitudes towards ENL speech varieties of English and their negative attitudes towards non-ENL pronunciation, including Hungarian English pronunciation, can also be interpreted in a broader language policy context. It can be argued that these attitudes bear the hallmark of linguistic imperialism (cf. Phillipson, 1992), and they may contribute to perpetuating undesirable language policy issues such as asserting the linguistic and cultural superiority of ENL speakers compared to non-native speakers, the uncritical adoption of ideas and practices of ENL speakers or marginalising non-native speakers of English in various contexts in which English is used (cf. Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Pennycook, 1994).

The results related to speech varieties of English and their speakers provide a strong indication that Hungarian secondary school learners consider ENL pronunciation to be superior to ESL or EFL pronunciation. These attitudes towards English pronunciation co-occur with marked favouritism towards ENL speakers over ESL and EFL speakers in terms of qualities which are not directly related to the speaker’s pronunciation such as intelligence, reliability or learners’ willingness to interact with the speaker. Based on Phillipson’s (1992) theory of linguistic imperialism, the assumption behind such favouritism towards a British or American speaker might be that the people from Anglo-American cultures are inherently superior to an Arab, French or Hungarian speaker, for instance, not only linguistically but culturally as well. In this sense, Hungarian learners’ proclivity of conforming to these pronunciations can be interpreted as a symbolic way of conforming to and identifying with the culture of ENL speakers. This might be attributed to Anglophone-centric attitudes, discussed by Seidlhofer (2012) and in Section 2.5 of the present paper such as the notion of the exclusive authenticity of ENL, which have had a considerable influence on ELT in Hungary, where the development of
English language teaching in its formative years received considerable support by the British Council, which then resulted in a strong association between the English language, Anglo-American cultures and native speakers of English (cf. Medgyes, 2011).

It can be argued that the lingua-cultural attitudes reflected in Hungarian learners’ attitudes towards English speech varieties are not only a question of cultural preference, but the beliefs underlying these attitudes perpetuate inequalities in the power relationships between ENL and non-ENL speakers. These may contribute to the Centre-Periphery dichotomy discussed by Pennycook (1994). The fact that the learners attach negative stereotypes to a Hungarian speaker, such as lower intelligence, lower reliability or lower professional status compared to British or American speakers based on their English accent may indicate a sense of inferiority and an implicit obligation to conform to the latter speakers not only linguistically, but also in terms of other personal and professional qualities. This may also entail that learners may take for granted the idea that non-native speakers ought to follow the norms and practices of ENL speakers in contexts where English is used as the language of communication (Seidlhofer, 2012). These contexts can include, for instance, business meetings, publications, conference presentations or ELT contexts where non-ENL speakers are expected to follow the discourse norms, pragmatic behaviour or professional practices of ENL speakers. In this case, non-ENL speakers include ESL speakers, some of whom may be native speakers of a variety of English, hence the terminological distinction from the native versus non-native dichotomy. Besides, the learners’ generally unfavourable stereotypes towards the non-ENL speakers and the negative attitudes towards their English pronunciation may serve as justification for favouritism towards ENL speakers at the expense of discrimination towards non-ENL speakers in professional contexts where English is used such as education. For instance, the discrimination of non-ENL speaker
English teachers in international educational institutions (Mahboob & Golden, 2013) may be attributed to the beliefs that native teacher teachers of English are by definition professionally superior to non-ENL speaker teachers, and ENL speakers’ English is also more authentic or more suitable for communication than the English of non-ENL speakers. Therefore, given Hungarian learners’ language attitudes towards English pronunciation, they are unlikely to challenge or question such practices as future employers, parents or administrative decision makers.

4.5 Background to attitudes

4.5.1 Other speakers’ pronunciation

Based on the results of the questionnaire data in Study One and Study Three along with the findings of the interview with learners in Study Two, there are a four factors which are related to Hungarian secondary school learners’ attitudes towards the English pronunciation of other speakers. These factors include (1) the symbolic meanings learners attach to pronunciation; (2) learners’ judgements of the likeability, correctness, comprehensibility of the accent and what stereotypes they attach to the speaker; (3) learners’ general tolerance of ambiguity; (4) and learners’ familiarity with a given accent. Although some of these concepts have been discussed above in relation to comprehension, this section makes reference to them from the perspective of learners’ attitudes to speech varieties.
Firstly, learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties are dependent on what symbolic value or meanings they attach to the variants in a speaker’s pronunciation, as it was discussed in relation to the Social Connotation Hypothesis (Trudgill & Giles, 1972) in Section 4.4.1. These values and meaning are shaped by learners’ exposure to English through the media and ELT, which constitute resources and reference points for using English pronunciation for identification (cf. Walker, 2010), similarly to the way L1 speakers of English identify with other speakers through their accents (cf. Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2000; Eitler, 2006; Podesva et al. 2002). These resources include characters in movies or series which learners can identify with as well as cultural and social values which learners can relate to.

Secondly, learners’ attitudes towards English pronunciations appear to be related to a set of interconnected variables, namely, learners’ subjective judgement of the likeability or aesthetic value of the pronunciation, the stereotypes they attach to the speaker of a given accent and the extent to which learners deem a pronunciation correct or comprehensible. However, there appear to be contradictions between learners’ justification of their attitudes regarding the relationship between comprehensibility and correctness, which can be related to EFL speakers’ ambiguous attitudes towards English as a lingua franca (cf. Jenkins, 2009a, Jenkins, 2009b), which are rooted in the norms of learners’ sociolinguistic environment, for instance, the obligation of conformity to ENL in EFL contexts.

Thirdly, learners’ general tolerance of ambiguity in English also seems to be connected with their attitudes towards English speech varieties which are unfamiliar for them. Learners have to make a considerable effort to cope with the comprehension of English pronunciations which are different from the ones they are used to (cf. Section 4.3), which could explain some of the negative attitudes they have towards such accents. However, learners who can tolerate not
understanding certain parts of an English text or a spoken utterance tend to have more positive attitudes towards different accents. This suggests that learners’ training during ELT can help them in developing more positive attitudes towards diversity in English pronunciation by including various ENL ESL and EFL accents of English in teaching materials (Matsuda, 2003; Walker, 2010) and acquaint them with listening strategies such as extensive listening (cf. Renandya & Farrell, 2010), which can develop learners’ tolerance of ambiguity.

Last but not least, learners’ familiarity with a given accent versus the notion of otherness also seems to have an influence on attitudes towards speech varieties of English. This, again, is related to the identificational function of L2 English, and it questions the suggestion that L2 English has no bearing on ELF speakers’ identity and the function of identification is restricted to a speaker’s mother tongue (House, 2003). Nevertheless, there is indication that language attitudes in L1 and L2 are closely connected, which suggests a dual language identity which is shared between a person’s first and second language (cf. Dörnyei et al. 2006). The ideas outlined above are discussed in detail in the following sections.

4.5.1.1 Symbolic meanings learners attach to English pronunciation

As discussed above in Section 4.4.1, learners attach symbolic meanings to variants of English in a similar fashion that ENL speakers do, as described by the Social Connotation Hypothesis (Trudgill & Giles, 1972), yet there are differences in this respect between L1 and L2 speakers of English. By noticing certain variants in English speech, speakers attach meanings to variants based on the social context in which occur. These varieties then add up to form a complex set of meanings of speech varieties in which these variants occur, possibly in different combinations,
which enables speakers to associate varieties with specific social or geographical language communities. However, Hungarian secondary school learners seem to differ from L1 speakers of English in that learners do not derive the social meanings of variables directly from their own social environment, and they also distinguish varieties in a fairly stereotypical manner. The reason behind these differences seems to be the Hungarian learners’ exposure to English speech varieties, which, according to the findings of the present study involves exposure to English during their English classes along with exposure to English through the media, typically through English-language movies, series and on-line media content. This means that learners formulate connotations related to English speech sounds mostly based on artificial representations of speakers as opposed to real-life contact, for example, representations of English speakers in audio materials used in ELT and constructed characters in the media (cf. Section 3.5.2). In addition, Hungarian secondary school learners seem to evaluate English speech varieties based on stereotypical variants (cf. Labov, 1972), which results in inaccurate and inconsistent identification of speech varieties even in the case of learners who show a high awareness of English pronunciation. For example, based on the open-ended comments after listening to the audio recordings along with learners’ accounts during the interviews, learners often confuse British and American speakers in relation to their accents; therefore, their evaluations of English speech varieties have to be interpreted by keeping in mind the limitation that learners have a rather blurry concept of British and American English, and it is typically the mixture of the phonological features of these two varieties that constitute the idea of native-like pronunciation for them.

Hungarian secondary school learners’ attitudes towards English speech varieties based on the meanings they attach to variants and varieties of English can be seen as acts of identification
based on the representations of the language learners are exposed to and their resulting beliefs about the language. As it was mentioned above, Hungarian learners attribute a high prestige value to native-like English pronunciation, and they typically distinguish between what they understand as British and American English, associating the former with formality, while the latter with informality Rindal (2010), which can be attributed to the dominance of British English in ELT (cf. J. Jenkins, 2009b; S. Jenkins, 2012) and the prevalence of American English in the media (Graddol, 2006). Learners tend to show a slight preference towards American English pronunciation while they generally show solidarity towards ENL varieties which they interpret as informal (cf. Balogh, 2008; McKenzie, 2006). This can be interpreted in a way that learners are more inclined to identify with English outside the classroom which they associate with leisure as opposed to the English of the classroom, yet they consider native-like speech varieties as such to be authentic English. By contrast, learners attach a low prestige value to non-ENL pronunciation, while they stigmatise English pronunciation influenced by phonological features of their own mother tongue (cf. Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011). This can suggest that learners are reluctant to identify with these varieties since they have a low prestige value. Features of Hungarian English in pronunciation are seen as markers of low competence in English and are thus seen as undesirable. As Widdowson (2003) argues, stigmatising and persecuting learners’ mother tongue in ELT can alienate learners from their L1, which can create a conflict between L1 and L2 identity. The generally low prestige value learners attach to non-ENL varieties can be attributed to the lack of exposure to these varieties, and their beliefs about what constitutes authentic English. According Illés and Csizér (2011), Hungarian learners see International English, that is, Englishes of the Outer and Expanding circles, as a simplified language which entails a lack of authenticity; therefore, it is understandable that learners relate to
non-ENL pronunciation in a negative way and are thus unlikely to identify with them because of their beliefs about English, for instance, the belief that varieties of English which differ from ENL such as World Englishes or the language of ELF interactions are deficient by nature. The underlying reasons behind these beliefs are likely to be a native-speakerist ideology of English (cf. Section 4.4.3) as opposed to adopting an approach of English as a lingua franca (cf. Section 2.3.7).

The process of L2 identification can be seen as an interaction between the symbolic meanings or beliefs attached to speech varieties of English and learners’ own L1 and L2 identity. In other words, learners formulate attitudes towards other speakers’ English accent and the resulting stereotypical judgements about the speakers’ personality based on the social meanings that they construct in relation to their own identity. An example for this may be the case of one of the participants of the interview study (cf. Section 3.5.3.4), who explained that he intended to work as an IT professional in the future; therefore, he tried to adopt the American English pronunciation of IT professionals whose presentations he listened to on the Internet. Because of this, he rated American English higher than RP English, while he judged non-ENL pronunciations rather negatively, especially Hungarian English accents. This shows that an L2 identity is constructed based on the L1 identity of professional aspirations and affiliations to L2 role models whose English accent becomes associated with the learner’s desired self-image. American English pronunciation features, in this case, become invested with meanings such as technologically advanced, progressive or successful. The learner used such symbolic meanings to construct an L2 identity, which then formed the basis of relating to other speakers’ English pronunciation in relation to the learner’s L2 self (cf. Dörnyei, 2005). The way learners’ own
pronunciation targets relate to L2 identity and thus the evaluation of other speakers’ English accent will be discussed in detail in Section 5.2.

In conclusion, it can be said that the symbolic meanings learners attach to English pronunciations bear the hallmark of native-speakerism (cf. Holliday, 2005) since the positive accent models learners seem to identify with appear to be invariably ENL speakers based on the interviews and the attitudes expressed in the questionnaires, while they attach negative values to non-ENL accents. However, based on the fluidity and changeable nature of the meanings of variants in L1 English (cf. Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2000; Podesva et al., 2002), it can be hypothesised that as Cockney English lost its stigma in L1 English and came to be used as a resource for modern identity construction in Southwest England (cf. Eitler, 2006), and as the overt prestige of accents formerly seen as status symbols such as RP eroded due to social and political changes within the language community (cf. Coupland, 2007), similar processes may take place with regards to the social value of L2 accents in the future. Based on the present study, such changes may take place in the case of learners if they are exposed to speakers of non-ENL English pronunciations who they can relate to on a personal level and thus they would associate positive social meanings to their accent features such as coolness, originality or self-confidence. Nevertheless, these social meanings are also functions of the social and political context of L2 speakers of English, including the language education system in the case of learners.

4.5.1.2 Constructs related to attitudes towards other speakers’ English pronunciation

Based on the findings of Study One and Study Three, there is a group of interrelated constructs which show a connection with learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties of English, namely the
likeability of an accent, the stereotypes attached to its speaker, the perceived correctness and the comprehensibility of the accent, which are analogous to the findings of Jenkins (2009b) regarding L2 speakers’ perception of English accents. Study Two, which included the interviews with learners, reveal that the relationships between these concepts are interpreted by learners in a contradictory way. Learners report that comprehensible accents can be regarded as correct and thus acceptable pronunciations; however, they do not apply this reasoning to ESL and EFL speech varieties of English. The underlying reasons behind these contradictions appear to be conflicting beliefs and ideologies within learners regarding English, which involve a conception of English as the language of its native speakers whose norms should be adhered to versus conceptualising it as a lingua franca whose main purpose is communication.

The link between the likeability of the English speech variety and the stereotypes attached to its speaker are straightforward, while the role of comprehensibility and correctness is rather complex. As it was discussed above in Section 4.5.1.1, learners’ judgements of the likeability of an English accent is based on subjective associations between the accent, the speaker and social meanings, which are based on the way the accent and its speakers are represented for learners in ELT and the media. Nevertheless, learners also relate likeability to comprehensibility in that they like a particular accent if they find it comprehensible and they do not need considerable effort to understand it; however, learners tend to give low rating to accents which do not cause intelligibility problems such as the Hungarian English pronunciation. In addition, learners also assert that they accept an accent as correct if they understand it, yet they indicate a low level of correctness even if they rate the accent as comprehensible, for example, in the case of the Hungarian English accent. This indicates that the concept of correctness may be ambiguous for learners as it makes reference to different norms of English. One hand, it may
refer to conforming to an ENL model of English whereby correct English means conformity to varieties of Standard English, which learners are presented in learning materials; on the other hand correctness can refer to the practical value of English that it can be used for communication regardless of potential variation in language forms. These considerations are in line with Jenkins (2009a) who finds that learners’ conception of English is largely influenced by norms derived from ELT, yet they show openness towards accepting divergent norms and recognising English as a lingua franca.

However, the judgements of the correctness of English speech varieties are based on established norms in learners’ social and cultural environment (Jenkins, 2009b), which means that even if learners were to adopt a new approach to English, they would be compelled to observe these norms in their own use of English. These norms entail conforming L2 pronunciation to what learners’ perceive as standard English, which is termed a fiction by Widdowson (2012), and which is justified only inasmuch as it serves as an abstraction to facilitate conceptual understanding of the language. Nonetheless, standard English is a very real fiction in the context of Hungarian secondary school learners of English as L2 users of the language, since RP and GA pronunciation are established reference points outside language learning contexts as well, where they serve as the basis of value judgements of a speakers’ English pronunciation and qualities that speakers associate with pronunciation.

4.5.1.3 Tolerance of ambiguity

The tolerance of ambiguity scale showed a positive correlation with factors related to learners’ attitudes towards English speech varieties (cf. Section 3.3.4). This correlation is noteworthy
because this scale includes components which are not affective in nature unlike the constructs discussed above in Section 4.1.3.2. The tolerance of ambiguity scale comprises items focusing on learner’s ability or willingness to tolerate not understanding parts of spoken or written English and adopt a holistic approach to language reception, which can be helpful for learners in the use of English in real-life situation outside the classroom. For instance, it includes watching movies in English and relying on contextual clues when certain utterances are not understood, or simply persevering in listening to spoken English even when most of the language is not understood. The significance of this is that these learner characteristics can be improved through language instruction, for example, by using extensive listening (cf. Chang & Millett, 2014; Renandya & Farrell, 2010) while including a variety of accents in listening materials (cf. Walker, 2010).

Also, tolerance of ambiguity can facilitate the development of listening strategies since it enables learners to tolerate temporary comprehension difficulties instead of opting out of the listening process. These listening strategies can include identifying unfamiliar phonological features which can cause difficulties in comprehension based on the context and anticipating those sounds in other utterances, thereby developing learners’ allophonic tolerance, or relying on top-down processing and schematic knowledge to decipher the meaning of utterances, as it was discussed in Section 4.3.3. These strategies can also be taught explicitly in language classes, and they can be practised through exposing learners to listening materials which are just above their level of proficiency (cf. Krashen, 1982) and possibly include speech varieties which learners are not familiar with, thus deliberately challenge their ability of comprehension.

Nevertheless, applying these coping strategies requires considerable effort from learners; therefore, a positive disposition is needed on their part towards speech varieties of English. If, for example, Hungarian secondary school learners hold the belief about English that it is by
definition the language of its native speakers which other speakers must conform to, they might understandably assume that speakers must conform to an established speech variety of English to be understandable. By contrast, if learners regard English as naturally diverse by virtue of its history as well as its global spread, they might understand that it is their responsibility to adapt to unfamiliar varieties of spoken English rather than expecting other speakers to adopt an English accent which learners find understandable. This would justify the need for tolerance of ambiguity in the process of listening to spoken English.

4.5.1.4 Familiarity and otherness

Learners’ familiarity with given accents also seems to play an important role in shaping their attitudes towards speech varieties of English as learners tend to show more favourable attitudes towards speech varieties which they are used to, while they relate more negatively to accents which they are not used to according to the three studies. The reasons for this might be related to comprehensibility as well as the identificational function of L2 English. On the one hand, the negative attitudes towards unfamiliar pronunciations can be explained by the fact that unfamiliar speech varieties are likely to contain more phonological features which learners are not used to; therefore, these accents are more likely to cause difficulties in intelligibility. However, as it was discussed in Section 4.5.1.2, the lack of comprehensibility of an accent is often a mere excuse for learners to evaluate an accent negatively, since the actual comprehension scores of accents which learners deem unfamiliar or unusual are not invariably low. This finding seems to be corroborated by the interview study in the course of which learners explain that some of the unusual pronunciations which they encountered in the comprehension test of the study or outside
school are, in fact, perfectly understandable, and it is the fact that they are not used to a particular accent that they found disturbing. This phenomenon is related to the identificational function of the language, whereby learners tend to identify with familiar accents, whereas they distance themselves from speech varieties which are alien to them, whose speakers they regard as “they” or “others” as opposed to “we”. These findings seem to contradict the considerations of House (2003) according to which identification is restricted to language users’ L1, and they are in line with the proposition of Dörnyei et al. (2006) based on Arnett (2002) that English can play a role in EFL speakers’ L2 identity.

The findings of the present research project also suggest that there is a relationship between the identificational role of English and the learners’ mother tongue in terms of attitudes towards speech varieties. Learners who are more accepting towards different pronunciations in Hungarian are more open towards various pronunciations in English, which shows that although there is a distinction between L1 and L2 identities, L1 language attitudes appear to be applied to identification with speech varieties in L2. In the light of this, Hungarian secondary school learners’ unfavourable attitudes towards speech varieties of English can be attributed to the fact that they encounter little variation in their own mother tongue, as it is also mentioned in the interviews (cf. Section 3.5.2.4). This is due to the fact that there is relatively little accent variation in Hungary which learners are exposed to as the language is dominated by one standard pronunciation, which is represented in the media and public life. For this reason, learners might develop a view towards languages in general according to which they equate a language with a standard variety and regard deviations from that standard as peculiarities. Adopting a similar view of English might be reinforced for by the representation of English by its established standard speech varieties, RP and GA, in ELT (Jenkins, 2009a). This view of English is
particularly inaccurate given the diversity of English speakers and the resulting wide range of varieties of English (cf. Section 2.2). Therefore, acquainting Hungarian secondary school learners with speech varieties of English can have the educational value of raising their awareness to linguistic variation and diversity in general, which is a natural phenomenon in their mother tongue as well as other languages they might encounter (cf. Galloway & Rose, 2014).

Hungarian learners’ categorisation of English speech varieties into familiar versus different or other accents can be interpreted as a sign of group identity with regards to L2, which is similar to the way L1 speakers of English use the language to delineate speech communities and position themselves in relation to them (cf. Wardhaugh, 2006). However, it can be argued that this phenomenon only shows the potential of L2 English to shape learners’ group identity in a similar way to L1 group identity rather than an actual sense of group identity through English (cf. Eckert, 1989, 2000). Firstly, Hungarian secondary school learners do not form an actual group such as a community of practice, but rather a virtual community of learners, whose linguistic norms are mainly shaped by the norms provided by ELT as well as representations of English through the media. Secondly, Hungarian learners of English have markedly negative attitudes towards English pronunciation influenced by their own mother tongue; therefore, they are unlikely to utilise their English pronunciation to express a national group identity through English as suggested by Walker (2010). Nevertheless, using English for signalling group identities might become relevant for Hungarian secondary school learners in the future if they become users of English in a personal or professional environment which could constitute communities of practice in which English has a central role in identification. The way learners’ can construct a personal L2 identity through English, which can influence their attitudes towards other speech varieties of English, is discussed in the following section.
4.5.2 The significance of learners’ own pronunciation

Hungarian secondary school learners’ own English pronunciation appears to be an important aspect in shaping their attitudes towards speech varieties of English, as it was mentioned in Section 4.5.1.1. Based on the interviews in Study Two, learners’ view of their own pronunciation serves as a reference point for the evaluation other speakers’ English accent. Learners’ perception of their own pronunciation in this context includes both their actual English pronunciation as well as their pronunciation target, that is, the ideal English pronunciation they desire for themselves. Learners evaluate other speakers’ English pronunciation not only in terms of comprehensibility, but they also attach symbolic meanings to it, as it was discussed above in Section 4.4.1; thus, the development of learners’ own pronunciation can be regarded as a process of formulating an L2 identity through English (cf. Arnett, 2002; Dörnyei et al., 2006), as it was mentioned on Section 4.5.1.1. The sections below discuss the following aspects of learners’ own English pronunciation. First, Section 4.5.2.1 will discuss how learners may use pronunciation models for the formation of their own pronunciation as resources and reference points for identification through English similarly to the way L1 speakers of English make use of this function of the language (cf. Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 1989; Etter, 2006). After that, Section 4.5.2.2 will elaborate on learners’ rationale behind identifying practical pronunciation targets such as native-like pronunciation and comprehensibility. The section will also point out the contradictions between these targets and the implications of the target pronunciation for learners. Subsequently, Section 4.5.2.3 will consider the psycholinguistic attributes which shape learners’ own pronunciation including naturalness, that is, the ease of production, and anxiety or inhibition
resulting from monitoring one’s own pronunciation (cf. Horwitz et al., 1987; Krashen, 1982; Piniel & Csizér, 2013).

4.5.2.1 Pronunciation targets and identification

Although learners do not make use of English pronunciation to express a national identity or a group identity because of the stigma attached to a Hungarian English accent (cf. Section 4.5.1.4), they may make use of the identificational function of English pronunciation to construct a personal L2 identity based on ENL accent models they are exposed to, mostly through the media. According to the interviews in Study Two, learners are exposed to spoken English outside the English classes through a number of ways, for example, through watching movies in English, watching English-language series on a regular basis or listening to online media content in English.

As was discussed in Section 4.4.1 learners tend to associate the English pronunciations they hear through these channels with aspects of the contexts in which they occur, for example, the cultural or social setting of the series or the personality traits of a character. Learners then may opt to adopt features they notice in the English accents they are exposed to signal cultural affiliation or personal identification. For example, picking up accent features from American sitcoms can signal affiliation to what learners see as the American way of life, or mimicking the RP accent of a character from the fantasy series, Game of Thrones (cf. Section 3.5.2.2), can be interpreted as identification with the character’s high status and adopting their formal style. In the latter series, the characters’ accents reflect social and regional differences in British English pronunciations, where RP English pronunciation is used by members of royal families and
educated people and regional English accents are used by soldiers and the lower nobility, while people from distant lands have Outer Circle accents (Wheeler, 2002). This way, the media can reconstruct social realities of ENL contexts, which learners can use as a resource for their own pronunciation based on the meanings attributed to English speech varieties in the English-language media. The fact that learners can accumulate pronunciation features and social meanings from various sources can result in hybrid and multifaceted identities whereby social meanings and values are dynamic, fluid and changeable, which is analogous to the construction of modern identities through L1 English (cf. Eitler, 2006).

Learners’ English pronunciation derived from various sources is also likely to be characterised by hybridity in terms of the phonological features they adopt. As it was discussed in Section 4.5.1.1, learners often confuse different ENL accents and they typically have stereotypical associations related to specific accent features. Learners tend to notice salient accent features such as rhoticity, the presence or absence of a syllable-final /r/ sound, which is one of the main distinctive features of British and American English pronunciation, or clear and dark realisation of the /l/ sound, which also serves as a marker of various ENL accents (Wells, 1982). The use of such features could be observed in the recording of learners’ own English pronunciation in Study Two, which showed the inconsistent use of ENL accent markers with considerable variation within the same learners. This suggests that accent features, which can potentially assume an identificational function, are used by learners in an intuitive manner with varying degrees of consciousness of the use of the features. These features can show situational variation as well; thus, their use by learners can be comparable to indicators, markers and stereotypes in ENL (Labov, 1972), which are used for constructing identities through L1 English.
Concerning the relationship between L2 identification, attitudes and exposure, it can be argued that exposing learners to English speech varieties in itself does not necessarily follow that they will develop positive attitudes towards these varieties and identify with their speakers, even though exposing learners to a range of English speech varieties could broaden their view of English by providing them a more realistic conception of the language as it is used worldwide (cf. Section 4.5.1.4). Instead, it can be suggested that fostering positive attitudes towards ESL and EFL speech varieties could be facilitated by exposing learners to these pronunciations through characters they can relate to on a personal level. As it can be seen from the analysis of the way Hungarian secondary school learners in the present research project construct their L2 identities (cf. Section 3.5.2.2), the pronunciation models learners make use of in shaping their own pronunciation and L2 identity invariably involve ENL models and do not involve ESL or EFL speakers at all, which can be the cause as well as the result of learners’ conception of English as the language of its native speakers. Learners might either consciously seek ENL pronunciation models that they can identify with because they consider those speakers more authentic speakers of English, or the prevalence of ENL pronunciation models compared to ESL or EFL models, for example, in the English-language media, might make it more likely that learners choose ENL speakers as a resource for their L2 identity.

Besides, learners do not seem to utilise English pronunciations they are exposed to in the classroom as models for identification. The reason for this could be that although the English audio samples used in ELT may contain accent features which could be potentially used as markers of identification by learners, these features are not accompanied by a context of social meanings in the way they are in English-language movies or series. In other words, it can be assumed that the English in classroom audio materials are merely voices without a character that
can fill the pronunciation features with social meaning. Although learners can associate social meanings to these accent features based on their exposure to English outside school, as they did in the present research project, the accents are unlikely to shape their interpretations of these meanings. Therefore, presenting a variety of ESL and EFL accents in ELT through competent speakers of English who learners can relate to might make learners associate non-ENL phonological features with positive meanings, thus fostering a positive attitude towards English speech varieties and also encouraging learners to find their own voice which can express their L2 identity.

4.5.2.2 Pronunciation targets

According to the learners interviewed in Study Two, the two main considerations for their pronunciation targets are comprehensibility and at the same time approximating a standard ENL accent consistently. These attributes are also reflected in their attitudes towards other speakers’ English accents according to Study One and Study Two, since learners claim comprehensibility to be a key aspect in the evaluation of English speech varieties (cf. Section 4.5.1.2), while their judgement of comprehensibility also depends on whether the given accent is an ENL accent or not. This seems to suggest a reasoning whereby standard ENL accent are more comprehensible than other speech varieties; therefore, non-ENL accents cause difficulties in comprehension. This reasoning is in line with the suggestion that learners of English ought to conform to standard varieties of English in order to be comprehensible (Prodromou, 2006; Sobkowiak, 2005), which learners seem to subscribe to. However, the actual comprehension scores show that non-ENL varieties can also be comprehensible for learners, as shown by the example of the
Hungarian accent in Study One. Therefore, it appears that designating standard ENL as learners’ pronunciation target is not justified by practical considerations such as comprehensibility, but it is likely to be the result of internalised beliefs about the superiority of standard ENL varieties over other speech varieties of English. It can be argued that these beliefs are rooted in the hegemonic status of standard ENL varieties, which are perpetuated by unequal political power relationships among the speakers of English worldwide (cf. Pennycook, 1996; Phillipson, 1994).

The main point of discussion related to a native-like pronunciation target for learners is to what extent it is beneficial for learners to consider an established ENL speech variety to be their pronunciation target. As it was mentioned before, choosing RP or GA English pronunciation because of their better comprehensibility is questionable given the variety of English speakers learners might have to communicate with in English in the future (cf. Section 4.2.2). Speakers of English worldwide can have a range of different mother tongues (Crystal, 2003); therefore, learners cannot take it for granted that an RP or GA English accent will be understandable by all of their potential interlocutors, because the extent to which an English accent is comprehensible for a speaker might be a function of their L1 phonological inventory as well (cf. Chuan, 2010; or Section 4.3.2 of the present paper). Due to these considerations, Jenkins (2012) argues that accommodation, the ability to adjust one’s pronunciation to the interlocutor to facilitate comprehension, is more beneficial for learners than the mastery of a standard ENL accent. On the other hand, it may also be argued that adopting an ENL accent as a symbol of cultural affiliation towards a target-language society can be a source of motivation for learners, yet this approach to English involves a restricted view of the ownership of the language (cf. Widdowson, 1994), and associating English with certain groups of its native speakers can also be the source of negative attitudes towards other varieties of English (cf. Section 4.4.3). Given the significance
of English in constructing an L2 identity discussed above in Section 4.5.2.1, it is also questionable why motivation to learn English should entail affiliation with the culture and values of certain ENL societies (cf. Phillipson, 1992) as opposed to using English as a means of self-expression, expressing L2 speakers’ own cultures, values and identities (cf. Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011). Furthermore, an ENL target pronunciation may also benefit learners due to the prestige of standard ENL accents in ELT and among EFL speakers (cf. Jenkins, 2007; Murray, 2003; and Section 4.5.1.2). Despite the fictional nature of RP in terms of the realities of the use of the English among its different speakers (cf. Widdowson, 2012), RP has very real and rather wide currency as it is often regarded as an indicator of language competence among non-native speakers; thus, learners may benefit from the privileges of RP or other widely recognised ENL accents in terms of social recognition or practical advantages such as better job opportunities, especially in the ELT industry (cf. Mahboob, 2011; Mahboob & Golden, 2013). However, since the privileges of having a native-like accent are rooted in language political inequalities pertaining to the use of English worldwide (cf. Holliday, 2005; Pennycook, 1994), designating ENL accents as pronunciation targets may be argued to perpetuate these inequalities. Apart from language political considerations, conforming learners’ English pronunciation to an ENL speech variety may also have consequences from a psycholinguistic perspective, which are discussed in the following section.

4.5.2.3 Psycholinguistic aspects of pronunciation

According to the interviews in Study Two, there are two psycholinguistic aspects of pronunciation which learners consider important for their own accent, namely, naturalness and
inhibition, which can be regarded as the two sides of the same coin. The former refers to a pronunciation which learners can produce with ease, without making an extra effort to modify certain aspects of their pronunciation such as avoiding phonological features of their L1 inventory and forcing the production of phonological features they subconsciously adopt from other English pronunciation models. The latter aspect is inhibition which can be described as the mental strain learners experience when they have to make an effort to modify their natural English pronunciation for some reason, either by concentrating on avoiding stigmatised sound features or modifying certain sounds in order to conform to either real or perceived expectations of the interlocutors (cf. Section 3.5.3). While the pronunciation targets of comprehensible and native-like English accent relate to English pronunciation from the perspective of outside expectations of the potential interlocutors, naturalness and inhibition refer to the way learners relate to their pronunciation from the inside.

The findings of the present research project regarding the naturalness and inhibition of Hungarian secondary-school learners’ English pronunciation can be interpreted in the light of the Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety by Horwitz et al. (1986) and the Monitor Hypothesis by Krashen (1982). The Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety suggests that although adopting a standard ENL accent has benefits for learners such as social recognition, these benefits may come at the cost of a higher level of anxiety, self-consciousness about their English accent and lower self-confidence when it comes to communicating in English. In the case of some learners, this may also result in avoiding situations when would have to speak in English altogether. According to the Monitor Hypothesis, L2 speakers consciously monitor their language output when they produce written or spoken English based on their explicit, learned knowledge of the language. In the case of L2 English pronunciation, this implies that even if learners are motivated
to make an extra amount of effort to adjust their naturally acquired pronunciation to conform to an ENL accent, it would mean an additional burden on language production and it is likely to reduce learners’ fluency as a result. It may be argued that making such an effort to conform to ENL is misdirected energy on the part of the learner, which does not serve the purpose of communication. One exception when modifying one’s English accent may be justified is accommodation (cf. Bell, 1984; Jenkins, 2012), where a learner would consciously modify their natural English pronunciation in order to facilitate intelligibility for the interlocutor; nevertheless, this adjustment of pronunciation does not mean conforming to native-like pronunciation, but it involves the strategic use of a learner’s phonological repertoire to decide which variant in given utterance would be the most intelligible for the interlocutor. In this sense, accommodation requires a higher level of phonological awareness and competence on the part of an L2 speaker of English than mimicking an ENL accent, yet this extra effort would in fact contribute to successful communication, which is the main purpose of using English.

The controversies related to designating an ENL speech variety as the target accent for learners of English (cf. Section 4.5.2.2) as well as the psycholinguistic aspects of altering learners’ natural English pronunciation raise an important issue, namely, the question of the extent to which it is learners’ choice to opt for a standard ENL pronunciation or to develop their own individual pronunciation. According to Jenkins (2009a), learners of English feel pressurised to conform to a standard English pronunciation, which is understandable in the light of the sociolinguistic realities of L2 speakers of English discussed above, including the prestige of established ENL speech varieties and the potential repercussions of a non-standard pronunciation such as the negative evaluation of a speakers’ competence and other disadvantages. Although the sociolinguistic realities of L2 speakers of English are difficult to alter, and learners’ conformity
to external pressures and expectations are understandable, learners of English could still benefit from being aware of the fact that they have a choice in selecting a target pronunciation in English and that non-standard ENL as well as L1 accent features are legitimate choices for their English pronunciation. An important step for learners in developing such awareness would be to adopt an ELF approach to English, according to which English is primarily a language for communication used by a wide range of different speakers, which is not the possession of its native speakers which other speakers are expected to emulate (cf. Widdowson, 1994). Thus, regarding English as a lingua franca would empower learners to make their own accent choices, and in the process of developing their L2 English pronunciation, ENL would serve as a possible resource for their own pronunciation and not the only viable model to follow. Appreciating English as a lingua franca could also be facilitated by learners’ awareness of variation in other areas of L2 English (cf. Section 2.3.2), which would make them realise that pronunciation is only one of the aspects of English with natural variation which does not impinge on the communicative potential of the language but can actually enhance it. This, in turn, could alter the way learners view speech varieties with regards to other speakers’ English pronunciation, which can have a considerable impact on the attitudes they adopt towards speech varieties of English.
4.6 Summary of pedagogical implications

The first and most important pedagogical implication of the present research project is that pedagogical implications based on research should be taken with reservations. As Dörnyei (2007) points it out, the findings of research related to people are inevitably dependent on the sample selected for the research and the context in which the research has been undertaken. While certain tendencies observed in the three studies of the present research may be generalisable to the population of the sample, the applicability of the findings and their implications ought to be considered in light of the local pedagogical contexts at the discretion of the teacher who is familiar with the context of the learners, their prior knowledge and experience, their linguistic background and their local pedagogical needs (Widdowson, 2003). For example, it could be seen that the theory of the Lingua Franca Core, developed in a certain context based on speakers with specific L1 backgrounds, is applicable in other contexts with other speakers only partially and with qualifications (cf. Chuan, 2010; Deterding, 2012; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006, discussed in Section 4.3.2.

One finding of the three studies was that Hungarian secondary school learners of English find certain unfamiliar speech varieties of English difficult to understand, while they show the highest rate of successful comprehension with the standard textbook-like RP accent. This may foreshadow difficulties for learners in their future use of English, since they are likely to communicate with English speakers of a range of different speech varieties due to the global role of English (cf. Graddol, 1997, 2006) and the diversity of its speakers, including ENL, ESL and EFL speakers alike (cf. Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2009c). This suggests that learners would benefit
from the inclusion of a range of different English speech varieties used in audio materials used in classroom, including accents of English learners would not encounter otherwise.

In addition, while it seems that learners might become better at understanding different speech varieties of English as they become more proficient in English, the findings of the present research imply that exposure to speech varieties of English, awareness of phonological features and the use of listening strategies could enhance this ability of learners. Extensive listening to spoken English with pronunciation unfamiliar to learners may improve their ability to “tune to” the new accent automatically while relying on contextual clues and their schematic knowledge to decipher the meaning (cf. Section 4.3.3). Extensive listening could be optionally scaffolded by reading the transcript of the audio material simultaneously with listening (Chang & Millett, 2014; Renandya & Farrell, 2010). Exposure to spoken English can be complemented by awareness of phonological features of English to enhance learners’ success in the comprehension of unfamiliar pronunciations. Learners ability to identify certain sounds that can cause comprehension problems can help them in deciphering utterances with similar instances of phonological variation (cf. Section 4.3.3). This does not mean that secondary school learners of English would need extensive training in English phonetics and phonology, but they could be acquainted with common patterns of variation in English through making them aware of the different realisations of certain sounds by different speakers, such as the different realisations of the TH sound, the R-sound or shifts in vowel sounds. Familiarity with a small number of such variants would be beneficial for learners since similar patterns of variation tend to occur in a number of different varieties of English in different combinations (cf. Chambers, Trudgill & Schilling-Estes, 2008; Wardhaugh, 2006; Wells, 1982), discussed in Section 4.3.3
Another finding of the studies was that Hungarian secondary school learners of English tend to have favourable attitudes towards standard ENL speech varieties of English and positive stereotypes towards their speakers, while they show unfavourable attitudes towards ESL and EFL pronunciations and negative stereotypes towards their speakers (cf. Section 4.4). These attitudes may lead to problems because they reflect a limited conception of English and they might affect learners’ willingness to make an effort in understanding speech varieties of English other than the standard varieties they are familiar with (cf. Section 4.5.1.3). Besides, such native-speakerist attitudes are likely to perpetuate inequalities pertaining to the use of English (cf. Sections 4.4.3.4 and 4.5.2.2), while they might also have a negative impact on Hungarian learners’ view of their own pronunciation and their ability to use English pronunciation for identification (cf. Section 4.5.2).

Although learners’ language attitudes are, to a large extent, rooted in experiences and beliefs outside school, it may be argued that a change in the way English is presented to Hungarian secondary school learners in the English classroom might make a difference in their attitudes towards English speech varieties. While an abstract standard English speech variety such as RP GA English pronunciation may be useful in language classes for pedagogical purposes for providing learners with stable points of reference (Widdowson, 2012), presenting English as the linguistic and cultural artefact of certain groups of native speakers can give rise to misconceptions about the language. Instead of regarding English as the language of its native speakers, adopting an approach of viewing English as a lingua franca in ELT would encourage learners to be more open minded about variation and varieties in general. This new approach can also involve familiarising learners with variation in World Englishes or ELF pertaining to different areas of English grammar and language use in order to demonstrate that although
variation is particularly noticeable in pronunciation, it is only one of the areas of language in
which natural variation can occur, and variation does not hinder communication but it can be
used as a resource to enhance mutual understanding (cf. Section 2.3.2). Viewing English as a
language whose main purpose is to communicate with people from different linguistic and
cultural backgrounds would change the priority of learning English, including English
pronunciation, from conformity to ENL to practical and adaptive use of the language. This way,
the aim of learners’ own pronunciation is not to artificially unlearn their L1 accent and learn to
emulate an ENL accent but to develop an English pronunciation which they can use in a natural,
confident and unselfconscious manner. In this sense, requiring learners to alter their naturally
acquired English pronunciation is only justifiable if it serves a communicative purpose such as
making it more intelligible for other speakers by accommodation (cf. Jenkins, 2012).

Although learners might be initially reluctant to accept non-ENL pronunciations because
of the established norms of ELT and the sociolinguistic meanings of non-native accents among
non-native speakers (cf. Jenkins, 2007; Murray, 2003), providing learners with competent ESL
and EFL pronunciation models through characters they can relate to and identify with may be
helpful in breaking the ice. These can include celebrities or successful professionals who use
English successfully and confidently without conforming their pronunciation to a standard ENL
variety. Of course this does not mean the exclusion of standard ENL accents from ELT, but
instead of presenting them as the only viable models of pronunciation, they should be seen as
resources for learners’ English pronunciation in addition to a number of other legitimate options
(cf. Galloway & Rose, 2014). Accepting variation in the English pronunciation of other speakers
can help learners accept natural phonological variation in their own English; thus, they can
genuinely appropriate the language and use it as a means of communication, while they may also express their own L2 identity through English pronunciation.
5 Conclusion

Comprehending spoken language is a vital aspect of communication in English, which is becoming increasingly frequent between various speakers as a result of globalisation, the interconnectedness of the global labour market and the mobility of people around the World. Therefore, Hungarian learners ought to be prepared for these communicative situations by developing more adaptive English comprehension skills. The present research project set out to investigate Hungarian secondary school learners’ comprehension of and attitudes towards speech varieties of English because of the growing importance of diversity in English for users of English in global contexts. The investigation included three successive studies with a mixed methods approach to research, a questionnaire study with an accent-comprehension task, an interview study with a think aloud protocol and an additional questionnaire study with a comprehension task based on the findings of the first two studies. The aim of the three studies was to investigate learners’ comprehension and attitudes pertaining to speech varieties of English by focusing on four research questions

In the following sections, the findings of the research project will be summarised with reference to the four main research questions of the research project, and comments will be offered regarding their limitations and potential contributions to language pedagogy. This will be followed by suggesting directions for future research based on the findings.
5.1 How successful are Hungarian EFL learners in comprehending speech varieties of English?

The results of the comprehension tasks indicate that Hungarian learners’ comprehension of spoken English can be considerably affected by phonological variation in English speech varieties. Learners appear to be the most successful in comprehending textbook-like RP, which they are familiar with from their English studies, followed by GA English pronunciation, which learners are often exposed to through films and on-line media. Learners also show relatively high comprehension scores with regards to the Hungarian English accent, although they deem this accent less comprehensible than the two standard ENL accents mentioned above. By contrast, learners seem to have considerable difficulties in understanding speech varieties which they are not familiar with such as the Egyptian Arabic accent and the French accent in the comprehension tasks.

Although the degree of successful comprehension of English speech varieties may vary from one group of Hungarian secondary school learners to another due to their different abilities, competence of English and experience with the language, the above tendency shows that unfamiliar speech varieties are likely to pose a challenge for all learners to some degree. Besides, the present research project included a relatively small number of English speech varieties in relation to the vast array of English accents; however, the selected accents intended to represent certain types of English pronunciations such as ENL, ENL and EFL English pronunciations analogously with the three circles of the uses and speakers of English (Kachru, 1992). This proved to be a relevant classification of English speech varieties to learners, who tended to regard English accents in reference to native versus non-native and familiar versus unfamiliar...
accents; therefore, the tendencies observed in the case of these speech varieties are likely to hold for similar types of speech varieties of English.

The findings suggest that ELT in Hungary should include a wide range of English speech varieties in teaching materials instead of merely focusing on one or two standard English pronunciations in teaching listening skills. This is essential because due to the diversity of English worldwide and the proportion of English speakers, Hungarian learners are likely to encounter a range of English speech varieties as future users of English.

5.2 What factors are related to Hungarian EFL learners’ success in comprehending speech varieties of English?

The questionnaire studies revealed a number of intertwined factors which are positively related to learners’ success in comprehending English speech varieties, while the think-aloud protocol and the interviews identified sources of comprehension difficulties as well as strategies used by learners to overcome them. Learners’ comprehension seemed to show a relationship with their overall proficiency of English, the amount of exposure learners have had to spoken English through various means, the amount of exposure to specific accents, the perceived difficulty of given accents and their awareness of phonological features of English. Learners’ strategies which they used to overcome comprehension difficulties involved a mixture of top-down and bottom-up processes, namely, tuning to the unfamiliar accent through sustained exposure while relying on contextual clues and schematic knowledge to find out the meaning of utterances, and the conscious learning of phonological features which could impede comprehension.
The main limitation of the findings in reference to the factors related to the comprehension of English speech varieties is the fact that no causal link between comprehension and the above factors can be concluded based on the statistical analyses in the present research. Establishing such causal relationships would require controlled experimental studies. Nevertheless, the findings related to comprehension strategies in the light of the factors statistically related to successful comprehension could provide ideas for classroom teachers to enhance learners’ comprehension skills. The findings show that successful comprehension of English speech varieties may involve both unconsciously acquired as well as consciously learned knowledge about the language, which suggests that exposing learners to speech varieties of English could be complemented by conscious reflection on certain phonological variables and comprehension strategies.

5.3 What attitudes do Hungarian EFL learners have towards speech varieties of English?

The findings show that Hungarian secondary school learners of English have favourable attitudes towards established ENL speech varieties of English such as RP and GA English pronunciation, while showing a slight preference for the latter variety. Learners also associate positive stereotypes with the speakers of these varieties. By contrast, they have markedly unfavourable attitudes towards ESL and EFL accented English pronunciations, especially if English pronunciation is influenced by Hungarian phonology. Learners also attach negative stereotypes to speakers with a non-ENL English accent pertaining to their competence of English, intelligence, education, personal qualities and professional status.
These attitudes reflect a native-speakerist view of English (Holliday, 2005), which entails a monolithic perception of English, that is, associating the language with one or two of its major varieties, while variation from the established varieties which learners are familiar with are regarded as deviations. These attitudes are undesirable because they indicate that learners disregard the main function of English as the global language of communication and regard it primarily as the lingua cultural artefact of its native speakers; therefore, native-speakerist attitudes may hinder the development of a sense of ownership of English in learners (cf. Widdowson, 1994), while such attitudes may affect learners’ view of their own pronunciation in a negative way and perpetuate language political inequalities as well.

These assumptions are theoretical in nature, and their relevance can vary from one group of learners to another, and the applicability of these ideas to ELT can be best gauged by the teachers who are familiar with the context of the specific learner groups; nevertheless, these considerations might indicate that the way English is presented through ELT in Hungary ought to be reconsidered. The extent to which an ENL-centric approach to English is beneficial for learners should be questioned, and it should be considered whether learners would benefit more from a variationist, pluralistic approach to English.

5.4 What factors are related to Hungarian EFL learners’ attitudes towards speech varieties of English?

Hungarian learners’ attitudes towards English speech varieties appear to be related to a number of factors, including the symbolic meanings learners attach to pronunciation, their judgements of the likeability, correctness, comprehensibility of the accent, the stereotypes they attach to the
speaker, learners’ tolerance of ambiguity and their familiarity with a given accent. Learners’ attitudes towards different pronunciations of English can be seen as a facet of learners’ L2 identity, which means that learners evaluate other speakers’ English accent in relation to their own English pronunciation or pronunciation targets. Learners seem to attach symbolic meanings to English pronunciation, similarly to L1 speakers of English, which constitute the expression of learners’ personal and cultural affiliations through their English pronunciation. Learners’ own pronunciation is also shaped by psycholinguistic factors related to the production of spoken language such as naturalness, or ease of production, and inhibition resulting from artificially adjusting their accents. These considerations pertaining to learners’ own pronunciation and the constructs related to other speakers’ English accents reveal contradictions and ambiguities in learners’ attitudes towards English pronunciation. While they deem comprehensibility a priority in one’s pronunciation, they also show a sense of obligation to conform to established ENL pronunciations, which typically means RP or GA pronunciation for learners, due to explicit or perceived expectations, which makes comprehensibility and the resulting judgements of English pronunciations a function of conformity to established standard accents of English.

Although it can be argued that the use of L2 English for identification is a highly personal choice for learners, which may only apply to learners depending on the general relevance of English for learners, the fact that English has the potential to serve as a means of expressing their L2 identity implies that English cannot be regarded as a neutral instrument of communication in language teaching (cf. House, 2003). Therefore, it might be beneficial to consider the identificational role of L2 English pronunciation in language teaching by not imposing ENL pronunciation models on learners, which might impinge on their ability to develop their own English pronunciation that they can use for expressing their own identity. This may involve
presenting ENL pronunciations as resources rather than fixed models besides ESL and EFL accents of English through speakers that learners can relate to. This way, it can be hypothesised that learners would be more comfortable with their own English pronunciation and they would also be more accepting towards other speakers’ accents of English. Including different speech varieties of English in ELT and reconsidering pronunciation goals for learners can be envisioned as part of a more general paradigm shift in ELT in Hungary. The essence of this would be to regard English not primarily as the language and the cultural product of its native speakers which learners have to conform to, but to view English as a lingua franca whose main function is to serve as a means of communication between people of different cultures and mother tongues, which learners can use in their own creative way to serve their own communicative purposes.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

The present research project investigating Hungarian secondary school learners’ comprehension of English speech varieties and attitudes towards them can be considered to be an exploratory research project into a highly complex area. While the three studies of the project yielded a number of findings which can be potentially relevant for language education in Hungary, the answers provided to the research questions are far from being conclusive. The present research project has identified a number of further questions for future research.

Firstly, it can be concluded based on the three studies that speech varieties with unfamiliar variants can cause intelligibility problems for learners and that the phonological features impeding comprehension are likely to be language specific. Although a few of these
features were tentatively identified in the present research, a possible question for further research would be: What phonological features of English speech varieties are the most likely to cause comprehension problems for Hungarian learners of English? Another related question would be: How does the L1 phonological background of Hungarian learners influence their comprehension of English? This question could be investigated through a comparative study of distinctive phonological features in Hungarian and English, empirically testing which features are essential for Hungarian speakers’ comprehension of spoken English.

It was also suggested by the present research project that awareness of certain phonological variables frequently occurring in speech varieties of English could be beneficial. A related question for future research would be: Which phonological variants are beneficial for learners to study in order to improve their comprehension of English speech varieties? Or alternatively: Which English speech varieties would be beneficial for learners to be included in audio materials used in ELT? To this end, a controlled experiment could be conducted which could involve familiarising a group of learners with commonly occurring phonological variants through reflecting on certain English speech varieties, and testing if they find it easier to understand previously unheard English accents with similar patterns of variation compared to a control group.

Furthermore, learners participating in the studies often mentioned characters from English movies, television series or from real life to whom they could relate and identify with, which motivated them to adopt their pronunciation features. Examples of related research questions would be: How can fictional or real-life characters be used in ELT to enhance learners’ motivation to learn English pronunciation? This question could be investigated through longitudinal research studying the English pronunciation of a group of learners before and after
exposing them to various accents of English through different speakers. Such speech varieties can involve native-English accents of characters from popular films or television series, non-native speakers who learners can relate to, for example, non-native football managers of English teams or YouTube celebrities. The study could investigate pronunciation features learners adopt from the speakers and whether they become more motivated to learn English pronunciation. In addition, a similar experiment could also reveal if exposure to English accents through characters can change learners’ attitudes towards English speech varieties.

In conclusion, it can be said that investigating the significance of English speech varieties appears to be a highly relevant area of research in the context of ELT in Hungary. Their comments, engagement during the various phases of data collection and their curiosity towards the topic gave the impression that studying various pronunciations of English may be a relevant yet often neglected aspect of ELT in Hungary, which learners and teachers tend to find highly interesting and challenging at the same time.
References


Retrieved April 19, 2015 from:


Retrieved on 19 April, 2015 from:


Retrieved February 14, 2015 from:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvaM2ddMZ9o
## Appendices

### Appendix A

**The English translation of the questionnaire on general learner characteristics in Study One**

Please mark with an X to what extent the following statements are true for you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not true at all</th>
<th>Not really true</th>
<th>Partly true, partly not</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Completely true</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I make an effort to have good English pronunciation.</td>
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<td>2. I look up the pronunciation of words.</td>
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<td>3. I try to guess where a speaker is from based on their pronunciation.</td>
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<td>4. I can guess where a speaker is from based on their pronunciation.</td>
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<td>5. I am interested in the different pronunciations of English.</td>
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<td>6. I can understand various pronunciations of English.</td>
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<td>7. I can determine the features in which pronunciations differ.</td>
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<td>8. I pay attention to the type of English pronunciation of speakers.</td>
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<td>9. I do not care about someone’s pronunciation as long as I can understand it.</td>
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<td>10. It is good to speak to foreigners because I can get to know their pronunciation.</td>
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<td>11. It is good to speak to foreigners because it is different to speak with native speakers than to learn their language in school.</td>
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<td>12. It is a good experience to practice English with foreigners.</td>
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</table>
13. It is good to speak to foreigners because it motivates me to learn English.

14. It is good to speak to foreigners because if I cannot understand them, I will be more motivated to learn English at school.

15. It does not bother me if I do not understand every word in a text.

16. It does not bother me if I do not understand every word when I hear English.

17. It is enough if I understand the gist of a text.

18. I can enjoy films in English even if I do not understand some words.

19. I often hear English on TV.

20. I often hear English on the Internet (e.g.: on YouTube).

21. I often hear English in the cinema.

22. I often speak during English lessons.

23. I speak English outside school.

24. I speak in English with non-native speakers.

25. I speak in English with native speakers.

26. I often hear unusual pronunciation in Hungarian.

27. I often hear unusual pronunciation in English.

28. I often hear British English.

29. I often hear American English.

30. I often hear Hungarian English.

31. I often hear English spoken by other Europeans.

32. I often hear English spoken by non-Europeans (e.g. Asians, Africans, Arabs).

33. I often hear English spoken by non-native speakers.

34. It disturbs me if someone speaks English with a Hungarian accent.

35. It disturbs me if I hear an unknown pronunciation.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>It disturbs me if someone speaks English with a foreign accent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>I laugh inside when I hear somebody speak with a Hungarian accent.</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>It disturbs me if someone’s pronunciation is difficult to understand.</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>It is acceptable that learners of English have different pronunciations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>It is better if learners of English try to speak one particular pronunciation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>It is acceptable if people have different pronunciation in Hungarian.</td>
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</table>

40. Gender: Female Male

41. Age:

41. Level of English (underline your level)

Elementary; Pre-intermediate; Intermediate; Upper-intermediate; Advanced
Appendix B1

The listening comprehension task for the first accent

1/

SCORE: 14/___

You can find the tour guide in the office, which is opposite the (1)_______

He’d like to talk about arrangements for meals and hotel (2)_______

Breakfast is available from (3)_______ to 9:30 a.m.

The dining room is on the (4)_______ of the hotel.

The hotel provides (5)_______ to take on your trips.

Each evening, you need to tell the (6)_______ what you would like.

Supper is served from 7.00 until (7)_______

The restaurant room has an excellent view of the (8)_______,

and is well-known for its (9)_______

Evening meal is not in the hotel on (10)_______,

when there will be an exclusive (11)_______ trip.

(12)_______ are an extra charge

The squash court normally costs (13)_______

You need to collect a (14)_______ from reception.
Appendix B2

The listening comprehension task for the second accent

2/  

SCORE: 14/___

You can find the tour guide in the (1)__________

He’d like to talk about arrangements for meals and hotel (2)__________

Breakfast is available in (3)__________ from 7.00 a.m. to (4)__________

The Blue Room is on the (5)__________ of the hotel.

The hotel provides (6)__________ to take on your trips.

You can collect them at (7)__________.

Evening meals are served from (8)__________ until 9.00 p.m.

The restaurant has an excellent view of the (9)__________.

and is well-known for its (10)__________

Evening meal is not in the hotel on (11)__________,

when there will be an exclusive (12)__________ trip.

All costs are included but (13)___________ is an extra charge

You need to collect a key for the spa from 8.30 in the morning and after (14)__________ in the evening.
Appendix B3

The listening comprehension task for the third accent

3/SCORE: 14/___

You can find the tour guide in the (1)_______

Which is opposite the (2)________

He’d like to talk about arrangements for meals and hotel (3)_______

The Blue Room is on the (4)_________ of the hotel,
which is next to the (5)_______

The hotel provides (6)_________ to take on your trips.

You can collect it at (7)__________

The catering room has an excellent view of the (8)_________,
and is well-known for its (9)___________

On Friday, there will be a special (10)_________ trip.

Most costs are included, but (11)_________ is an extra charge.

The tennis court opens at (12)________

You need to collect a key from (13)________

You will see your tour guide (14)___________ later.
Appendix B4

The listening comprehension task for the fourth accent

4/SCORE: 14/___

The name of the hotel is (1)____________.

The tour guide’s office is (2)__________ the reception desk.

He’d like to talk about arrangements for meals and hotel (3)_______

Breakfast is available in (4)__________

The dining room is on the (5)________ of the hotel.

Breakfast is the only meal which is (6)__________.

For (7) _________ the hotel provides sandwiches to take on your trips.

You can collect them at (8)__________

Evening meals are served in the (9)_________________

There will be an exclusive trip on (10)_______

On that day, you will have dinner (11)_________

The swimming pool opens at (12)__________ and it closes (13)_________

In the morning, you need to collect a key before (14)__________
Appendix C

The English translation of the follow-up questions after each task

How would you characterise the pronunciation of the speaker in a few words?

Please identify if you can the characteristic features of this pronunciation (e.g. the pronunciation of certain sounds, words, or general features)

How would you characterise the speaker’s personality based on his pronunciation?

Please mark with an X to what extent the following statements are true for you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not true at all</th>
<th>Not really true</th>
<th>Partly true, partly not</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Completely true</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The speaker’s pronunciation is understandable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I would be happy to have him as a colleague at an English-speaking workplace.</td>
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<td>3. He knows English well.</td>
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<td>4. I would be happy to attend the lessons of a teacher with a pronunciation like this.</td>
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<td>5. I would be happy to hang out with him.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I would like to have a pronunciation like this.</td>
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<td>7. I would be happy to speak in English with him.</td>
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<td>8. I like his pronunciation.</td>
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<td>9. I would be happy to practice my English with him.</td>
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<td>10. He speaks English correctly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. He speaks with correct pronunciation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
12. I would be happy to attend the same English class with him.

13. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is a nice person.

14. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is reliable.

15. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is friendly.

16. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is good company.

17. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is cool.

18. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is intelligent.

19. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is kind.

20. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker works in a high position.

21. Based on his pronunciation, the speaker is educated.

22. This pronunciation is familiar.

23. I have heard a pronunciation like this before.

24. I often hear pronunciation like this.

25. For me, this is the usual pronunciation.

26. I would be happy to learn to speak with this pronunciation.
Appendix D

The English translation of the questions for the think aloud protocol and the interview

1. Please say a few words about your English education. Where does your knowledge of English come from? How important has it been to you to learn English? How good do you consider yourself at English?

LISTEN & (REFLECT) How difficult is it to understand the text and what are the difficulties?

2. Where do you listen to spoken English?
(during lessons, in films, on the Internet, at school, outside school, how often, what speakers)

3. When you listen to English, how much attention do you pay to the speaker’s pronunciation?
What do you pay attention to?
(you pay attention to comprehensibility, you try to guess where the speaker is from, you make inferences about the speaker’s personality)

4. What is your reaction if you do not understand a film because of the pronunciation: do you carry on listening so that you can pick something out or do you stop listening?

5. What can disturb you in someone’s pronunciation?
(If it is incomprehensible, sounds Hungarian, why do these things disturb you?)

(At this point, the participant is asked to have their pronunciation recorded)

1 In italics are the main questions, followed by complementary questions or notes in brackets, which may be used for clarifying the main question or directing the focus of the interview.
6. How often do you speak in English?
(Who do you speak to?)

7. How much attention do you pay to your pronunciation?
(How do you improve it?; What pronunciation is your goal?; Is there a person such as a teacher, friend or celebrity whose pronunciation you consider to be a model?; What does “good pronunciation” mean to you?)

8. Is it only comprehensibility that is important in your pronunciation or does it have further significance?
(Do you think other people judge you based on how you speak?; What judgements do they make?)
Appendix E

The transcript of the excerpt with the Egyptian Arabic accent

Good afternoon everyone # and welcome to the Palace Hotel.
My name is Peter and I am your tour guide. #
You can usually find me in the office # which is opposite the reception desk. #
If you have any problems, # please come and see me. #
Now, I’d like to tell you about arrangements for meals # and other hotel facilities #
Breakfast is available in the Green Hall # from 7.00 to 9.50 a.m. #
This is on the third floor of the hotel #, next to the lifts. #
Breakfast is the only meal # which is self-service. #
For lunch, we can provide sandwiches for you # to take on your trips. #
You need to tell your waitress # at dinner each evening # what you would like. #
They will be ready for you to collect # at 3 p.m. from the kitchen #
before you leave on your trip. #
Evening meals are served # from quarter past 6 until 9.00 p.m. # in the restaurant.
It has an excellent view of the sea # and is well-known for its curry dishes. #
All your evening meals # will be here in the hotel #
extcept for Thursday # when we have organised a special seaboat trip for you. #
On that day you will have dinner on board. #
Bed, breakfast and evening meal # are included in the cost of your holiday, #
but renting films is an extra charge. #
There’s no charge for anything else # – the meals are all included. #
And finally, the hotel spa. #
All guests are free to use it # from when it opens at half past seven, #
until it closes at 10 at night. #
But before 8.30 in the morning #and after 7.15 in the evening#
you need to collect a key from the reception. #
The rest of the time a member of the staff is there. #
Well, that’s all I have to say for now. # I’ll see you at

---

²Pauses during the second listening are indicated by a hash mark.
Appendix F

The English translation of the modified questionnaire on general learner characteristics in Study Three

Please mark with an X to what extent the following statements are true for you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not true at all</th>
<th>Not really true</th>
<th>Partly true, partly not</th>
<th>Somewhat true</th>
<th>Completely true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I make an effort to have good English pronunciation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I look up the pronunciation of words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I try to guess where a speaker is from based on their pronunciation.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>I can guess where a speaker is from based on their pronunciation.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>I am interested in the different pronunciations of English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I can understand various pronunciations of English.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>I can determine the features in which pronunciations differ.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>I pay attention to the type of English pronunciation of speakers.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>The goal of learning English is to speak in a way that native speakers do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The English of non-native speakers can be just as good as native speakers’ English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The English pronunciation of non-native speakers can be just as good as native speakers’ English pronunciation.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Speaking English well means speaking English like a native speaker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>It is important for me to have native-like pronunciation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>It disturbs me if it takes a lot of energy to understand an English pronunciation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>It does not bother me if I do not understand every word in a text.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
16. It does not bother me if I do not understand every word when I hear English.

17. It is enough if I understand the gist of a text.

18. I can enjoy films in English even if I do not understand some words.

19. I hear English often on TV.

20. I hear English often on the Internet (e.g. on YouTube, podcasts).

21. I hear English often in the cinema.

22. I speak often during English lessons.

23. I speak English outside school.

24. I speak in English with non-native speakers.

25. I speak in English with native speakers.

26. I often hear unusual pronunciation in Hungarian.

27. I often hear unusual pronunciation in English.

28. I often hear British English.

29. I often hear American English.

30. I often hear Hungarian English.

31. I often hear English spoken by other Europeans.

32. I often hear English spoken by non-Europeans (e.g. Asians, Africans, Arabs).

33. I often hear English spoken by non-native speakers.

34. It disturbs me if someone speaks English with a Hungarian accent.

35. It disturbs me if I hear an unknown pronunciation.

36. It disturbs me if someone speaks English with a foreign accent.

37. I laugh in myself I hear somebody speak with a Hungarian accent.

38. It disturbs me if a pronunciation is difficult to understand.

39. It is acceptable that learners of English have different pronunciations.

40. It is better if learners of English try to speak one particular pronunciation.

41. It is acceptable if people have different pronunciation in Hungarian.
<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42. It disturbs me if I have to pay a lot of attention to my pronunciation when I speak in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>43. It hinders me in speaking English if I have to change my natural pronunciation in order to make it sound “more English”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>44. I find my Hungarian accent embarrassing when I speak in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45. I avoid speaking in English because of my pronunciation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. The pronunciation of certain English sounds hinders me in speaking English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. I am worried that others will smile at my English pronunciation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. The pronunciation of certain English words makes me uncertain in speaking English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>49. If I find the personality of an English-speaker appealing, I try to adopt their pronunciation as well.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

50. Gender: Female Male

51. Age:

52. Level of English (underline your level):

Elementary; Pre-intermediate; Intermediate; Upper-intermediate; Advanced