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Mistakes in phonemic transcriptions made by Polish EFL Teacher Training College students

Abstract
Phonemic transcriptions are invariably treated as a means to record and present pronunciation errors, rather than to analyse their types and sources. To date, little attention has been given to the relation between pronunciation and transcription skills. Hence, to the best knowledge of the author, there is no empirical data yet available or accessible about errors committed exclusively in phonemic scripts of Polish EFL students and their comparison with typical faulty pronunciations. In this paper, the results of an empirical study which examined types and sources of deviations in broad transcriptions are reported. The data were collected by means of a phonemic test at the segmental level. It was expected that most mispronunciations result from errors on the level of competence that reveal themselves in both performance and transcription. The findings show that most common mispronunciations of Polish EFL speakers, which are described in the literature on the subject, are distinctly reflected in their erroneous scripts. Thus, it can be argued that currently both error types should not be considered as separable issues. Consequently, it is suggested that from now on simplified transcription and pronunciation practice should be interwoven with a view to fostering accurate pronunciation skills prior to post-secondary levels of education.

Keywords phonemic transcription, pronunciation errors, transcription errors, pronunciation teaching, Polish EFL students/learners

Streszczenie
Transkrypcje fonemiczne są niezmiennie używane, jako narzędzie do zapisu i prezentacji błędów wymowy, nie zaś do analizy ich rodzajów czy pochodzenia. Dlatego też, o ile mi wiadomo, nie istnieją, bądź nie są dostępne dane empiryczne dotyczące wyłącznie błędów popełnianych w transkrypcjach fonemicznych przez polskich studentów języka angielskiego, jako języka obcego, a także ich porównania z typowymi błędami wymowy. Poniższy artykuł prezentuje wyniki badania empirycznego, w którym przeanalizowano rodzaje, jak również pochodzenie błędów w transkrypcjach fonemicznych. Materiał badawczy został zebrany za pomocą testu transkrypcji fonemicznej. W swoim badaniu przyjęłam wstępne założenie, iż błędy wymowy są błędami na poziomie kompetencji, które przejawiają się zarówno w wymowie, jak i błędach transkrypcji. Otrzymane rezultaty ukazują odzwierciedlenie często opisywanych w literaturze fonetycznej błędów wymowy w błędach transkrypcji. Z tego względu zakłada się, iż nie powinny być one postrzegane jako osobne zjawiska. W rezultacie sugeruję, iż uproszczone ćwiczenie transkrypcji powinno być połączone z ćwiczeniem wymowy, celem wsparcia rozwoju poprawnej wymowy przed rozpoczęciem kształcenia na poziomie pomaturalnym.

Słowa klucze transkrypcja fonemiczna, błędy wymowy, błędy transkrypcji, nauka wymowy, polscy studenci/uczniowie języka angielskiego, jako języka obcego

Introduction

Pronunciation teaching has received increasing attention in the field of applied linguistics, which has led to the emergence of some innovative approaches and methods with bespoke pronunciation activities (e.g. transcription games proposed by Ciszewski 2004). However, it even though some of them recognise transcription practice as an efficient technique for alleviating pronunciation difficulties, it is still disregarded by many English teachers.

Transcription is generally perceived as a tool which is of great importance for many linguistic analyses. It is also defined as "a consistent coding system" (Sobkowiak 2008: 28), which explicitly visualizes direct pronunciation of sounds, words, phrases and whole utterances (Wells 1996). I argue that transcription is not only a research tool but also a teaching aid. Moreover, I suggest that its gradual incorporation into EFL classroom and

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carefully tailored practice could facilitate the process of developing accurate pronunciation skills at the primary and secondary levels of education (e.g. see Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak 2003, 2006).

To this date little empirical research has been done to reexamine this issue in Poland. Previous experimental studies conducted among Polish secondary school learners and Finnish first-year university students have found that consistent and simultaneous practice of both pronunciation and transcription skills clearly demonstrates their interrelation, which entails possible pedagogical implications (e.g. see Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak 2003, 2006; Lintunen 2005).

These data lend support to the hypothesis that most pronunciation errors, which reveal themselves in both performance and transcription result from errors on the level of competence. Corder (1981: 10) defines competence errors as "those which reveal … underlying knowledge of the language". Unlike competence *errors*, performance *mistakes* can be detected and corrected without undue hesitation as they are not motivated by insufficient language skills (Corder 1981: 10).

The present paper demonstrates a distinct relationship between some transcription errors and most common mispronunciations of Polish EFL speakers. Moreover, it attempts to specify types of transcription errors which mirror those made in pronunciation and account for their occurrence in broad transcriptions. There are a few limitations of this study that deserve consideration. Nevertheless, it seems sufficient to substantiate pedagogical benefits of transcription practice and call for more research.

The role of phonemic transcription in teaching English as a foreign language to Polish learners

While discussing the use of phonemic notation in EFL teaching, it can be clearly stated it is not widely used as a teaching tool in Poland. It is mostly neglected by authors of English course-books, consequently, it is also disregarded by teachers (there is a scarce number of EFL course-books which include phonetic component) (e.g. see Sobkowiak 2012 in Nowacka 2015; Szymańska-Czaplak 2006 in Nowacka 2015; Szpyra-Kozłowska *et al.* 2003).

Phonemic transcription is taught at the post-secondary level of education, at English department s of teacher training colleges and universities, where its importance is eventually taken into account. Yet, one could ask why transcription practice is widely-acknowledged at all post-secondary levels of education and not at the primary and secondary. There are several reasons which are constantly repeated; mainly some judgements of EFL teachers, such as

doubts that transcription practice can really be beneficial for their learners, or beliefs that its unattractiveness and difficulty overshadow its practicality (see Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak 2006). It may be deduced that teachers simply do not want to overburden their students with additional information concerning theoretical aspects of phonetics, which are generally perceived as irrelevant, especially for younger learners.

Yet, Ciszewski (2004: 32-33) in his study proves that even though phonemic transcription is labelled as "difficult" by students, it is at the same time regarded by them as "essential" in mastering correct pronunciation. Moreover, Szpyra-Kozłowska (2015: 215) notes that EFL learners perceive transcription practice as an attractive activity (ranked fourth out of ten). Both findings contradict some views held by language teachers, who seem to be far less motivated to engage in transcription training than their learners.

According to Abercrombie (1956: 29 in Szpyra Kozłowska and Stasiak 2006), pronunciation teaching can be successful even without transcription instruction. The mechanism of teaching pronunciation usually consists in pronouncing a word by a teacher with learners repeating, or correcting learners' errors. Nonetheless, as mentioned before, phonemic script reflects direct pronunciation of words (Wells 1996), thus it enables learners to see what is uttered and as a result comprehend that it differs substantially from what is actually written in orthography (due to many grapheme-phoneme inconsistencies) (Lecumberri and Maidment 2000: 1; Szpyra-Kozłowska 2015: 171-172).

Transcription practice requires that learners "ignore learned spelling patterns" and discover a novel system of sounds/symbols (Small 2005 in Hall-Mills and Bourgeois 2008; Lecumberri and Maidment 2000: 1). Szpyra-Kozłowska (2015: 172) claims that the adoption of such visual reinforcement can enhance learners' auditory perception, (drawing their attention to certain sounds not only through repetition drills). Such "visual training" can help them not only become more sensitive to the discrepancies between certain native and foreign language sounds but also to acquire unknown sounds of a target language (Szpyra-Kozłowska 2015: 171-172; Lecumberri and Maidment 2000: 1). Furthermore, Szpyra-Kozłowska (2015: 232) aptly claims that transcription training "aids in the cognitive process of L2 sound system formation in the learner's mind".

It must be observed, however, that learning to transcribe words successfully "require[s] non-negligible effort" to achieve such competence (Crookston 2001: 7 in Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak 2006). This discrepancy in the level of transcription skills among learners and the pace at which they are acquired (cf. Moran and Fitch 2001) may contribute negatively to its

value and utility. But what is it exactly that makes transcribing so difficult for EFL learners? So far there has been very few studies that could answer this question.

The potential explanation of this phenomenon can be found in studies on factors contributing to transcription attainment by undergraduate phonetics students (see Moran and Fitch 2001; Robinson et al. 2011). Moran and Fitch (2001: 85) claim that "one factor that may contribute to the diversity of phonetic transcription skills" may be grounded in the "difference in phonological awareness abilities". Robinson et al. (2011: 89) consider phonological awareness as "the most likely factor influencing the learning of phonetic transcription" and refer to some other studies which prove that music perceptual skills can also influence the ability of transcribing words (e.g. Mackenzie-Beck and Dankovicová 2003 in Robinson *et al.* 2011: 89). In order to learn transcription, students must be able to recognise individual sounds which constitute the basis for more complex categories (Robinson *et al.* 2011: 88).

It should be stressed, however, that as difficult as it may seem, there is always a matter of context in which transcription is presented (e.g. whether it be a phonetic course or an EFL lesson) and abundance of information included. That is, whether students have to create a phonemic or a phonetic script (see Heselwood 2006), which undoubtedly differs in their complexity. Here, I refer to language learners, not students; more specifically, learners who have not mastered their foreign language sufficiently. Therefore, transcription practice must be recognized only as a "learner-friendly" additional pronunciation exercise, whose goal is to facilitate the process of foreign language attainment by providing learners with yet another possibility to learn how to speak correctly from the start.

Previous empirical data collected from Polish secondary school learners revealed the existence of "mutual feedback" between pronunciation and transcription skills, which most probably indicates efficacy of transcription as a teaching technique in alleviating incorrect pronunciation habits (see Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak 2006). Such findings invite an assumption that both types of deviations have their roots in competence rather than performance. The present article addresses the issue again; it compares most common erroneously pronounced words of Poles with phonemic transcriptions of Polish EFL third year students, focusing mostly on the thorough analysis of the latter. It investigates whether both error types would yield a clear correlation. This comparative research study is based on words which contain features that are most problematic for Polish learners (Śpiewak and Gołębiewska 2001: 164-165) and on words commonly mispronounced proposed by Sobkowiak (2008).

Moreover, this paper offers an analysis and classification of errors in broad transcriptions made by students. Such observation would be valuable to determine more explicitly the extent

of interrelation of transcription errors with major areas of pronunciation difficulty. Overall, this empirical research examines the relationship between pronunciation and transcription errors and attempts to explore the sources of those errors with a view to drawing pedagogical implications concerning the use of phonemic transcription as a teaching tool.

Method

Participants

The study was performed on 15 Teacher Training College (henceforth TTC) students in Toruń. The data were collected from the third year students (N=15, 11 women and 4 men) aged 22-37 with the mean age 24, SD=4,19. The larger number of women in this group reflects the fact that women constitute a large portion of the College's population. All students were introduced to the International Phonetic Alphabet in the first year of their study in TTC. The general characteristics of participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The general characteristics of the participants.

No of the participant	Sex	Age
1	F	22
2	F	22
3	F	22
4	F	24
5	M	22
6	M	22
7	F	25
8	M	22
9	F	22
10	M	22
11	F	22
12	F	37
13	F	31
14	F	27
15	F	23

Procedure

The data were gathered by means of a short phonemic test at the segmental level (apart from weak forms, suprasegmentals were not examined). The test comprised of seven tasks, which analysed various transcription skills. The sources of errors researched here were based on a set of notions described by Sobkowiak (2008) (interference from spelling and sound). Among the items used in the test were words most commonly mispronounced by Poles. More specifically,

the transcription errors analysed in the study were compared to most common pronunciation errors described in the literature on the subject, for instance, by Sobkowiak (2008) and Śpiewak and Gołębiewska (2001). The students were not restricted to use the British (RP) version of pronunciation to create transcriptions. Each student completed the test individually with the author present. No time limit was imposed. The structure of the test is presented below.

- **Task 1** The students were requested to select appropriate single phonemes in the words written orthographically, they had to choose from two options (e.g. between the phonemes /θ/ and /t/ in the word *Thomas*). The words chosen are considered to be commonly confusing for Poles, especially when it comes to distinction between related sounds, and mispronunciations of the suffix <ate>.
- **Task 2** The students were requested to provide phonemic scripts of nine words (e.g. *brought, thyme, cease*) written orthographically (spelling-to-sound notation).
- **Task 3** The students were asked to write the missing sounds in phonemic scripts of the single words.
- **Task 4** The students were required to choose the correct version of a phonemic notation on the basis of the context given (e.g. *I wish that one day I will be* ***riːʧ/ rɪʧ***).
- **Task 5** The students were requested to transcribe phonemically a short narrative from hearing. The audio material used during the phonemic test was adapted from the passage composed by O'Connor (1980). The students were supposed to take into account some features of connected speech (weak forms), yet they were asked to mark lexical rather than sentence stress. The students listened to the recording, which was played by the author of the study with short intervals in order to eliminate any possible errors which could stem from unnecessary haste.
- **Task 6** The students were required to mark lexical stress in words with the same spelling that change their word class according to stress placement (Roach 1991: 100). More specifically, they were supposed to mark lexical stress on the basis of the context given (e.g. *Ann* ***objected*** *to the terms of the argument.*)
- **Task 7** The students were asked to write orthographic versions of eight words presented by means of broad transcriptions.

Results

Table 2 below presents an overview of the errors committed in Task 1 which aimed to establish whether the students knew which of the presented single phonemic symbols occurred in the given words.

Table 2. Overview of the data collected from Task 1

examples in orthography	incorrect answers (out of 15)	errors
live	1	**/li**ː**v/**
man	0	
three	0	
graduate (v.)	2	/ˈgrædʒu**ət**/
graduate (n.)	2	/ˈgrædʒu**eɪt**/
separate (adj.)	3	/ˈsepər**eɪt**/
Thomas	3	/ˈ**θ**ɒməs/

The data show that about 10 percent of the inaccurate phoneme selections were probably motivated by overgeneralizations of the pronunciation rules. Substitution of short /ɪ/ for long /iː/ can be assessed as an illustration of either spelling-to-sound interference or lack of a vowel length distinction.

Table 3 presents an overview of the data from Task 2, which aimed to examine deviations in broad transcriptions created from words in orthography (it has to be noted that incorrect stress placement is illustrated, yet not counted as a separate error).

Table 3. Overview of the data collected from Task 2

spelling	number of erroneous transcriptions (out of 15)	types of errors	some examples of errors
half	3	– errors connected with lexical stress – substitution of long /ɑː/ with either short /æ/ or /ʌ/	– /h**æ**f/ /h**ʌ**f/
answer	9	– errors connected with lexical stress and spelling (reflection of the grapheme <w> in transcription) – substitution of long /ɑː/ with either short /æ/ or /ʌ/ – substitution of /ə/ for long /ɜː/ – other deviations in vowel sounds	– /ɑːns**w**ə/ – /**æ**nsə/ /**ʌ**nsə/ – /**ɑ**nsə/ /ɑːns**ɜ**ː/ – /**ə**nsə/ /**ɒ**ns**w**ə/
brought	1	– errors connected with lexical stress – substitution of long /ɔː/ with short /ɒ/	– /br**ɒ**t/
subtle	5	– errors connected with lexical stress and spelling – substitution of short /ʌ/ with short /e/ – employment of a wrong consonant	– /s**ʌb**tlə/ – /s**ep**tl/
finger	10	– errors connected with spelling <ng> – overgeneralization of the common pronunciation of the diagraph <ng> as one consonantal sound /ŋ/	– /fi**ng**ə/ – /fɪ**ŋ**ə/
because	5	– substitution of short /ɪ/ with long /iː/ – employment of a non-existing symbol	– /b**i**ːkɒz/

thyme	12	– overgeneralization of the rule in which the diagraph <th> is pronounced as the voiceless /θ/ sound – replacement of the diphthong /aɪ/ with the monophthong /ə/	– /**θ**aɪm/ – /**t**əm/
comfortable	5	– substitution of short /ʌ/ with other vowels either /e/ or /ə/ (the weak vowel 'schwa' present in the stressed syllable)	– /k**e**mftəbəl/ – /k**ə**mftəbəl/
cease	10	– substitution of the voiceless /s/ sound with the voiced /z/ sound (overgeneralization of the rule concerning final consonant voicing) – errors connected with lexical stress and spelling	– /si:**z**/ –/**c**i:z/

In general, as the table shows, there were about 44 percent erroneous transcriptions, which vividly mirrored most common errors in pronunciation rather than transcription. It can be observed that overgeneralizations of pronunciation rules and various problems with vowel sounds are predominant. It is worth noting that words *thyme*, *cease*, *finger* and *answer* proved to be the most problematic for the students, as they comprise about 68 percent of all errors. Incorrect stress placement (which mostly refers to its absence) can be treated as the only error explicitly reflecting deficient knowledge of transcription rules.

Table 4 presents an overview of the data collected in Task 3 which aimed to establish whether the students struggled with overgeneralizations of the diagraph <ea>, which as Sobkowiak (2008: 148) claims is most preferably pronounced as long /i:/.

Table 4. Overview of the data collected from Task 3

spelling	number of errors (out of 15)	examples of erroneous transcriptions
knead	0	
heal	1	/h**ɪə**l/
pear	4	/p**ɪə**/ /p**ɜ**:/ /p**ea**/
yearn	4	/j**ɪə**n/ /j**eə**n/ /j**ə**^{r}n/

Overall, there were only about 15 percent incorrect sounds inserted in phonemic scripts. Once again, some examples proved to pose a greater problem for the students, as errors in words *pear* and *yearn* comprised approximately 89 percent of all deviations. It may be noted that most common mispronunciations (especially confusion regarding the use of vowels and diphthongs) are still quite apparent.

Table 5 presents an overview of the data collected in Task 4 which aimed to evaluate the students' ability to choose correct phonemic notations on the basis of the context given. This task at the same time examined whether the students can decipher spelling versions of words

on the basis of their phonemic transcriptions. It also assessed the students' perception of vowel length discrepancies.

Table 5. Overview of the data collected from Task 4

correct transcription	number of errors (out of 15)
/pen/	0
/rɪtʃ/	3
/bæd/	1
/hɪt/	3

Overall, there were only 12 percent incorrectly chosen scripts. It can be observed, however, that the students struggled with appropriate vowel length distinction, as this error is reflected in words *rich* and *hit* which comprise 88 percent of all errors. It is interesting to notice how an issue of mispronunciations of particular pair sounds, that is, iː/ɪ is reflected in phonemic scripts.

Table 6 and 7 present an overview of the data collected in Task 5, which aimed to assess the students' ability to transcribe words from hearing. It is worth noting that the students were not trained to complete such exercises during their practical phonetics classes. Only the most recurrent and specific errors were selected and classified into some general categories in order to exemplify the most problematic areas (illegible transcriptions were not evaluated).

Table 6. Overview of the data collected from Task 5

error category	spelling	number of errors (out of 15)	examples of errors
lack of reduction in unstressed function words	we	12	/w**i**ː/
	some	11	/s**ʌ**m/
	for	8	/f**ɔ**ː/
	that	9	/ð**æ**t/
	but	8	/b**ʌ**t/
spelling-to-sound interference errors	clever	3	/ˈ**c**levə/
	difficult	2	/ˈdɪfɪk**u**lt/
	money	2	/ˈmʌn**eɪ**/
devoicing	spend	6	/spen**t**/
	hands	5	/hænd**s**/
	bookshelves	3	/ˈbʊkʃel**fs**/
	bookshelves	2	/ˈbʊkʃelv**s**/
vowels and diphthongs	prudent	7	/ˈpr**ʊ**dənt/
	tackle	5	/ˈt**ʌ**kəl/
	decided	2	/d**i**ːˈsaɪdɪd/
	already	4	/**ɒ**lˈredi/
	during	11	/ˈdj**u**ːrɪŋ/
consonants	thought	2	/**ð**ɔːt/

Table 7. Overview of the data collected from Task 5

error category	type of deviation	number of errors (out of 15)	examples of errors
	capital letters	5	/**N**ɒt/ /**B**ʌt/ /**A**ɪ/

ignorance of transcription rules	wrong symbols	1	/ʊ:/ instead of /u:/
	punctuation marks	7	full stops
	grammatical contractions	2	/dɪdnˈt/

Errors from this exercise were divided into two main categories. The first one once again reflects common pronunciation errors (see Table 6), whereas the second one comprises errors which more probably can be ascribed to deficient knowledge of transcription rules (e.g. wrong symbol shapes, grammatical contractions, punctuation marks, capital letters) (see Table 7). This exercise turned out to be the most difficult for the students, as it can be observed that they committed various errors.

Table 8 presents an overview of the examples presented in Task 6 which aimed to establish whether the students are aware of differences in stress placement.

Table 8. Overview of the data collected from Task 6

examples of the sentences	number of errors (out of 15)
1. They conflicted the group with the teacher.	2
2. I read a book about a conflict between two neighbours.	0
3. I decided to conduct a lesson because my friend was ill.	0
4. I am happy that your conduct at school is better than before.	0
5. Ann objected to the terms of the argument.	0
6. Tom treated his wife like an object.	0

No particular problems with stress assignment in this exercise were observed.

Table 9 presents an overview of the data obtained in Task 7, which aimed to establish whether the students struggled with sound-to-spelling interference errors.

Table 9. Overview of the data collected from Task 7

words transcribed phonemically	correct words in orthography	number of errors (out of 15)	examples of errors
/breθ/	breath	1	breathe
/raʊ/	row	7	raw; raugh
/fəʊk/	folk	6	fouk; fawk; foult; fouak; fork
/ˈkɑːsl/	castle	0	
/pɑːm/	palm	2	pam
/θʌm/	thumb	3	tham, them
/ˈmedəʊ/	meadow	0	
/haɪnd/	hind	1	hummed

In general, there were only about 17 percent incorrectly written words, which in some cases imply the students' inability to convert phonemic script into spelling. Yet, some correlations with most common mispronunciations are still frequent. The words *row* and *folk* were the most problematic and comprised about 65 percent of all errors. It can also be noted

that some of these errors stem from sound-to-spelling interference (e.g. /aʊ/ – <au>; <aw>) and (e.g. /əʊ/ – <ou>; <aw>).

Discussion

This empirical study revealed that the transcription errors reflected the most common pronunciation errors made by Poles as enumerated, for instance, by Sobkowiak (2008) and Śpiewak and Gołębiewska (2001). The collected data provided new empirical evidence on certain linkages between pronunciation and transcription errors. Thus, it appears to corroborate particular aspects of previous studies concerning correlations between transcription and pronunciation practice in the EFL environment (e.g. see Szpyra-Kozłowska. and Stasiak 2003, 2006), which aimed mainly to assert that simultaneous practice of both skills can positively strengthen the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction. Yet, the authors did not exemplify any particular error types present in broad transcriptions, which could have intensified their observation. The present empirical research remedied this limitation, as it visualised that the most common pronunciation errors made by Polish speakers reveal themselves in erroneous scripts of Polish EFL students. This observation lends further support to the hypothesis that practice of both pronunciation and transcription skills should be interwoven, as well as that both error types ought not to be treated as separable issues. Yet, this topic requires to be further tested empirically.

It can be it can be observed that some words used in the study were more susceptible to errors, which at the same time were not random as certain patterns such as inadequate vowel length distinction can be observed (e.g. in words such as *live, rich, hit*). It is evident that tasks which involved broad transcription either from written or spoken language (see Tasks 2, 3, 5 and 7) resulted in more errors. This allows us to establish a typology of recurrent transcription errors, with a view to illustrating a close correlation of transcription errors with most common mispronunciations of Polish EFL speakers. However, it cannot be ruled out that imperfect knowledge of the notation itself might have played a role.

The major categories in the study can be identified and exemplified as:

- **overgeneralizations of pronunciation rules** (e.g. transcription of <th> as [θ] in *Thomas, thyme*; <s> as [z] in *cease*; <ng> as [ŋ] in *finger*)
- **spelling pronunciation** (e.g. <eit> as [eɪt] in *graduate, separate* irrespectively of the word category; <ng> as [ng] in *finger*; <ey> as [eɪ] in *money*; also presence of silent letters <b> in *subtle* – */ˈsʌbtlə/; <w> in *answer* – */ˈɑːnswə/)

- **devoicing of word final obstruents** (e.g. transcription of <vs> in *bookshelves* as [vs] or [fs])
- **confusion between short and long vowel sounds** (e.g. substitution of [ɑː] for either [æ] or [ʌ] in *half, answer*; [uː] for [ʊ] in *prudent*)
- **distinction between vowels and diphthongs** (e.g. substitution of [eə] for [ɜː] in *pear*; [ʊə] for [uː] in *during*; [ɜː] for [əʳ]**,** [ɪə] or [eə] in *yearn*)
- **lack of weak forms in transcription of function words** (e.g. *for, some, that, but*)

The above error classification comprises only some striking examples of transcription errors which as the study revealed match the common pronunciation errors in Polish EFL learners. Moreover, similar error categories can be found in earlier studies which examined mispronunciations of Polish learners (e.g. see Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak 2003, Sutkowska-Woźniak 2005 in Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak 2006; Zając and Pęzik 2012 in Zając 2015). It is worth noting that some of the errors can also be labelled as manifestations of "Polglish" (the notion developed by Sobkowiak) e.g. word-final devoicing */ˈbʊkʃəlfs/ or spelling pronunciation */ˈsʌbtlə/.

As far as the sources of errors are concerned, the results showed that the participants struggled both with intralingual and interlingual interference (e.g. the latter is present in the above-mentioned final obstruent voicing of the word *cease*), which may be due to their high level of English. What is more, both interference from sound as well as spelling are reflected in erroneous scripts. Regarding the former, it can be noted that Task 7 (see Table 9), can be treated as the best example of "Polish mispronunciation habits" owing to the fact that the majority of errors committed in this task were induced by sound to spelling interference. In other words, as acknowledged by Sobkowiak (2008: 28) Polish learners tend to treat the English language as "predominantly written" (referring to spelling versions of words). We can observe that the students copied some symbols/sounds into words which should have been written orthographically (e.g. [aʊ] in *row* – <au>; <aw>) and (e.g. [əʊ] in *folk* – <ou>; <aw>).

Interestingly, the students manifested difficulties which were due to spelling to sound interference (e.g. in *money* – */ˈmʌneɪ/), even when they were asked to create a phonemic notation from hearing, which may suggest that they were not sure of what they actually heard and they tried to recall their memorized orthographic versions of words in order to transcribe them. Furthermore, such error types, usually defined as *spelling pronunciation* are treated by Szpyra-Kozłowska (2015: 172) as negative outcomes of lack of transcription practice (when learners who cannot rely on their "auditory memory" usually refer to spelling versions of words).

As regards findings, which can be interpreted as 'pure' transcription errors (e.g. see Table 7), it has to be admitted that they were also present in the scripts (e.g. wrong symbol shapes, grammatical contractions, punctuation marks, capital letters). Yet, their presence was not so evident, i.e. they did not prevail over those which resembled pronunciation errors. This implies that the students simply are not used to transcribing, and consequently they employed rules applicable only in orthography.

I believe that these data support the use of phonemic transcription as a teaching technique which can contribute to enhanced understanding of discrepancies between L1 and L2 sounds. However, more empirical studies should be conducted in this area to provide further validation of the findings. Moreover, such links between pronunciation and transcription errors support the view held by Szpyra-Kozłowska (2015: 172) that a broad transcription ought to be treated as effective visual reinforcement of a regular auditory pronunciation training, as it provides an explicit 'visual image' of most common pronunciation errors, thus it caters for learners with different learning modalities (who do not have to rely entirely on their auditory perception).

The results seem to indicate the absence of systematic pronunciation and transcription training at earlier stages of foreign language learning. As Ciszewski (2004 in Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak 2006) notes in his study carried out among university students from two English Departments, about 15 percent of students met with phonemic notation at the university for the first time. Hence, it can be presumed that some transcription errors may be evaluated in terms of some learned "pronunciation patterns", which the students did not manage to overcome sufficiently. This leads to the conclusion that simplified transcription practice should not be marginalized or abandoned at primary and secondary levels of education.

Conclusion and further research

The present study investigated errors committed in phonemic notations and described their connection with most common mispronunciations of Poles. The obtained results imply to confirm the existence of a correlation between pronunciation and transcription skills. From this perspective, it can be assumed that transcription errors, which vividly resemble faulty pronunciations, should be treated as indicators of deficient knowledge about pronunciation skills.

In order to emphasize the significance of transcription instruction and its positive impact on pronunciation practice, another experimental study should be performed, so as to examine the scope of relatedness between pronunciation and transcription errors more thoroughly. Previous empirical research studies in this area (e.g. Lintunen 2005; Szpyra-Kozłowska and

Stasiak 2006) can be the source for a general procedure. Such an experimental study should be carried out among a particular group of university students and consist of the analysis of two kinds of empirical data 1) speech material data (errors collected from recordings) 2) phonemic transcription tests (errors gathered from scripts devised by students themselves). Moreover, it is important to conduct this research on participants who are aware of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and transcription rules, in order to eliminate any errors which may stem from inadequate transcribing skills that were not practised sufficiently.

The participants would have to read a short passage as well as isolated words containing features that are difficult particularly for Polish learners. The procedure should be repeated with transcription tests that ought to be administered with a specific interval of time between the pronunciation and transcription tasks. This would prevent learners from remembering lexical items presented to them in the first place. Both data sets should be compared so as to determine the extent to which one influences the other, and to establish more detailed classification of areas of pronunciation difficulty that reveal themselves in pronunciation scripts.

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