Intelligi... Sorry, what did you say?

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Talk to
the world

Intelligi... Sorry, what did you say?

1) Intelligibility and accent today

2) What do we mean by intelligibility?

3) Can intelligibility be measured?

4) Can we teach intelligibility?

1) Intelligibility and accent today

Delivery
- Intelligibility
- Lexical stress/intonation
- Fluency
- Effects on the listener

- Clearly intelligible
- Uses focal stress and intonation very effectively
- Effortlessly speaks very promptly and fluently
- Requires no careful listening

Appendix 6 – ISE II Speaking and listening rating scale

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Score	Communicative effectiveness	Interactive listening	Language control
	Task fulfilment	Comprehension and relevant response	Range
	Appropriacy of contributions /turn-taking	Level of understanding	Accuracy/precision
	Repair strategies	Speech rate of examiner interventions	Effects of inaccuracies
		Speed and accuracy of response	
4	Fulfils the task very well Initiates and responds with effective turn-taking Effectively maintains and develops the interaction Solves communication problems naturally, if any	Understands all interventions on a first hearing Interprets examiner's aims and viewpoints accurately by making links with earlier information Makes immediate and relevant responses	Uses a wide range of grammatical structures/ lexis flexibly to deal with topics at this level Consistently shows a high level of grammatica[l] accuracy and lexical pre[cision] Errors do not impede communication
3	Fulfils the task appropriately Initiates and responds appropriately Maintains and develops the interaction appropriately (eg expanding and developing ideas, and	Understands most interventions on a first hearing Interprets examiner's aims and viewpoints accurately Makes prompt and relevant response	Uses an appropriate ran[ge] of grammatical structur[es]/ lexis to deal with topics [at] this level Shows a relatively high level of grammatical accuracy and lexical

Trinity College London – Integrated Skills in English

1) Intelligibility and accent today

Cambridge English

Assessing Speaking Performance – Level C1

Reference (CEFR), and the descriptors for band 3 and above genera of at least C1 level.

C1	Grammatical Resource	Lexical Resource	Discourse Management	Pronunci
5	• Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms.	• Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics.	• Produces extended stretches of language with ease and with very little hesitation. • Contributions are relevant, coherent and varied. • Uses a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	• Is intelligi • Phonolog features a effectively convey ar enhance meaning.

Pronunciation

- Is intelligible.
- Phonological features are used effectively to convey and enhance meaning.

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TOEFL iBT® Test

Independent SPEAKING Rubrics

SCORE	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	DELIVERY
4	The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most minor lapses in completeness. It is highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:	Generally well-paced flow (fluid expression). Speech is clear. It may include minor lapses, or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect overall intelligibility.

1) Intelligibility and accent today

SPEAKING: Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	• speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; • any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features • develops topics fully and appropriately	• uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomati...	• uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips'	• uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety
8	• speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language • develops topics coherently and appropriately	• uses a wide v... convey precis... • uses less co... occasional in... • uses paraphr...		
7	• speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility	• uses vocabul... topics • uses some le... shows some inappropriate... • uses paraphr...		
6	• is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	• has a wide e... and make me... • generally par...		
5	• usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems	• manages to t... uses vocabul... • attempts to u...		

Pronunciation

- uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety
- sustains flexible use of features throughout
- is effortless to understand

- uses a wide range of pronunciation features
- sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses
- is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility

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1) Intelligibility and accent today

CEFR 2019 Companion Volume, p47

Phonology

For *Phonological Control*, an existing CEFR scale, a completely new set of descriptors was developed (see report by Enrica Piccardo). Phonology had been the least successful scale developed in the research behind the original descriptors. The phonology scale was the only CEFR illustrative descriptor scale for which a native speaker norm, albeit implicit, had been adopted. In an update, it appeared more appropriate to focus on intelligibility as the primary construct in phonological control, in line with current research, especially in the context of providing descriptors for building on plurilingual/pluricultural repertoires. The resulting Phonology project followed all three validation phases described below in relation to other new scales, with over 250 informants involved in each phase.

1) Intelligibility and accent today

CEFR 2019 Companion Volume, p134

Phonological control

phonology scale was the least successful of those calibrated in the original research.

In language teaching, the phonological control of an idealised native speaker has traditionally been seen as the target, with accent being seen as a marker of poor phonological control. The focus on accent and on accuracy instead of on intelligibility has been detrimental to the development of the teaching of pronunciation. Idealised models that ignore the retention of accent lack consideration for context, sociolinguistic aspects and learners' needs. The current scale seemed to reinforce such views and for this reason, the scale was redeveloped from scratch. A full report on the sub-project is available on CEFR website. From an extensive review of the literature and consultation with experts, the following core areas were identified to inform work on descriptor production:

- ► *articulation* including pronunciation of sounds/phonemes;

- ► *prosody* including intonation, rhythm and stress – both word stress and sentence stress – and speech rate/chunking;

- ► *accentedness* accent and deviation from a 'norm';

- ► *intelligibility*: accessibility of meaning for listeners, covering also the listeners' perceived difficulty in understanding (normally referred to as *comprehensibility*).

1) Intelligibility and accent today

- *more appropriate to focus on intelligibility*

- *detrimental to the development of pronunciation teaching*

- *Idealised models that ignore the retention of accent lack consideration of … the learner's needs.*

- disempowering

- ignore 21st century reality of accent variation

1) Intelligibility and accent today

- research NS accents *not* the most intelligible

  ➢ Smith & Rafiqzad, 1979; Smith 1992

… there was no evidence of a breakdown in the functioning of English as an international lingua franca but that, interestingly…

… native speakers (from Britain and the US) were **not** found to be the most easily understood …

… **nor** were they, as subjects, found to be the best able to understand the different varieties of English.

Being a native speaker does not seem to be as important as being fluent in English and familiar with several different national varieties.

1) Intelligibility and accent today

- research NS accents *not* the most intelligible

  ➢ Smith 1979 + 1992

  ➢ Graddol 2006

  In organisations where English has become the corporate language, meetings sometimes go smoothly when no native speakers are present.

1) Intelligibility and accent today

- research NS accents *not* the most intelligible

  ➢ Smith 1979 + 1992

  ➢ Graddol 2006

  ➢ anecdote

  there were people from all over . Central Eastern Europe . and elsewhere . and that was how it is . this . English . most wasn't most people's first language . except for the Americans . and the British . and nobody could understand the British

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1) Intelligibility and accent today

2) What do we mean by intelligibility?

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2) What do we mean by intelligibility?

Abercrombie 1949 – 'comfortably intelligible'

Smith & Nelson 1985

- **intelligibility** = the basic recognition of words in the speech flow

- **comprehensibility** = the meaning of these words in context

- **interpretability** = the understanding of the speaker's intention

It's hot in here!

2) What do we mean by intelligibility?

Derwing & Munro – 1995, 1997

- **intelligibility** = the extent to which a listener actually understands an utterance (i.e which words were said)

- **comprehensibility** = a listener's *perception* of how difficult it is to understand an utterance

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- **accentedness** = a listener's *perception* of how different a speaker's accent is from that of the L1 community

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2) What do we mean by intelligibility?

Rajadurai 2007

➢ accent ≠ intelligibility (cf. Derwing & Munro)

➢ research into intelligibility – invariably NS judges

➢ intelligibility ≠ one-way street

Listener's attitude (accent prejudice)

➢ Rubin 1992

➢ Scales 2006

➢ Cauldwell 2013

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2) What do we mean by intelligibility?

Listener knowledge

➢ *the new drummer facilities*

➢ *the new **drama** facilities*

➢ *enZYME*

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Smith & Rafiqzad (1979)

➤ cloze (fill in gaps)

Derwing & Munro (2014)

➤ True/False Qs

➤ Comprehension Qs

➤ transcription

3) Can intelligibility be measured?
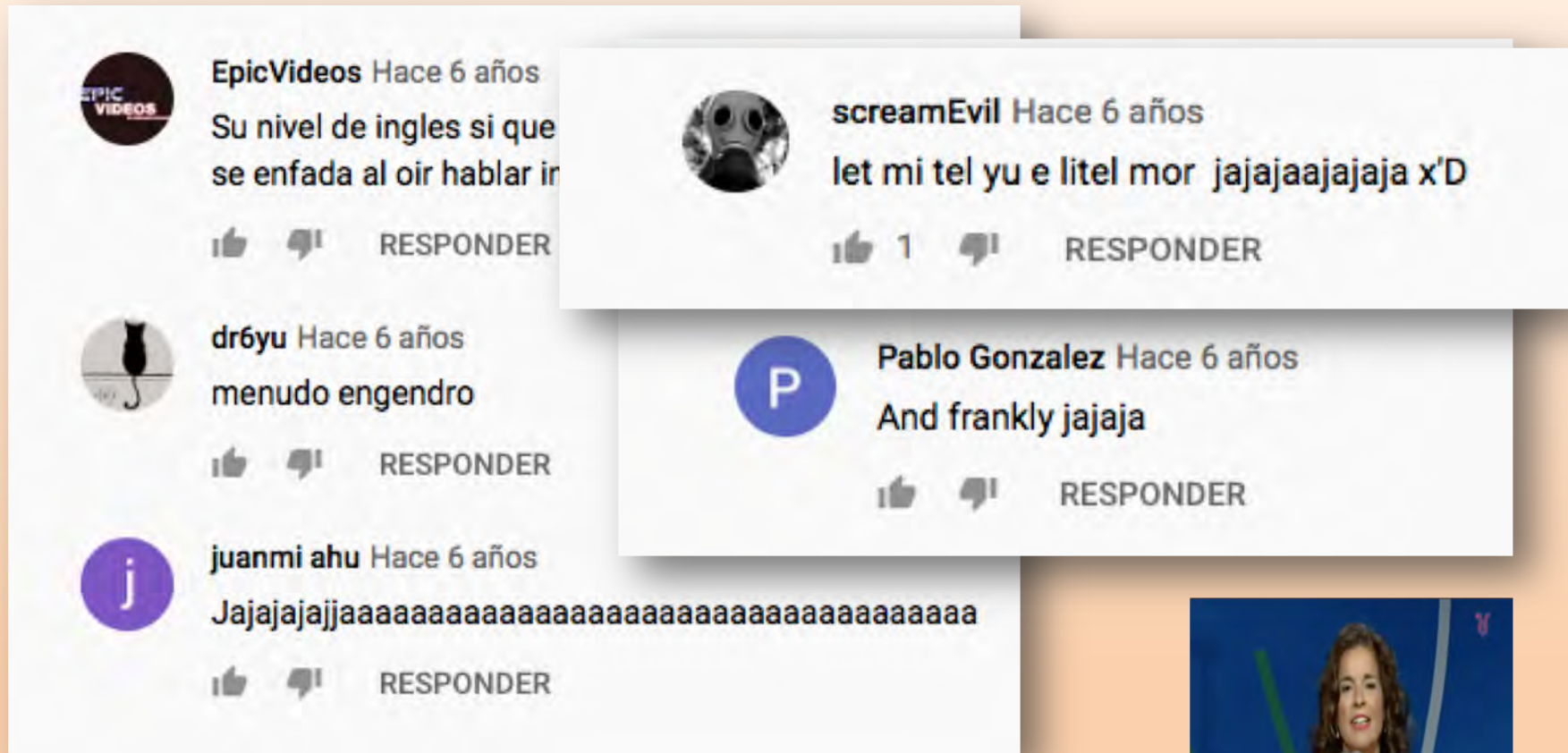
Ana Botella, the Mayor of Madrid, talking to the IOC (International Olympic Committee) Buenos, Aires, September 7th, 2013.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xarUXTTssU

3) Can intelligibility be measured?

Thank you Ignacio, President *Rogue*, dear IOC members,
Ladies and Gentlemen. I had the ...

EpicVideos Hace 6 años

Su nivel de ingles si que
se enfada al oir hablar in

👍 👎 RESPONDER

screamEvil Hace 6 años

let mi tel yu e litel mor jajajaajajaja x'D

👍 1 👎 RESPONDER

dr6yu Hace 6 años

menudo engendro

👍 👎 RESPONDER

Pablo Gonzalez Hace 6 años

And frankly jajaja

👍 👎 RESPONDER

juanmi ahu Hace 6 años

Jajajajajjaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa

👍 👎 RESPONDER

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xarUXTTssU
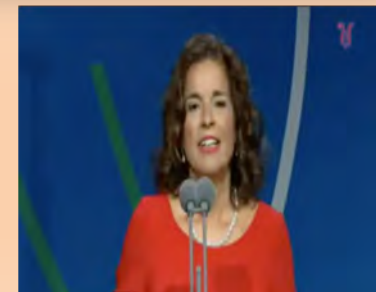
3) Can intelligibility be measured?

Jenkins (2000)

Lingua Franca Core

➢ all consonants (variants ok for /θ, ð, r/)

➢ aspiration initial /p, t, k/

➢ initial & medial consonant clusters – no deletion

➢ vowel length & /ɜː/ vowel quality

➢ word stress – *"a grey area"*

➢ nuclear stress

3) Can intelligibility be measured?

Deterding (2011 & 2013 – CMACE)

Lingua Franca Core

➢ limited importance of word stress

➢ (deliberate) non-use vowel reduction

BUT

➢ aspiration /p, t, k/ not found important

➢ vowel length not found important

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3) Can intelligibility be measured?

Derwing & Munro (2014)

Intelligibility is determined by:

➢ general speaking habits

➢ volume

➢ lexical stress

➢ nuclear stress

➢ rhythm

➢ syllable structure

➢ segmentals with a high functional load

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Derwing & Munro (ESL)	Jenkins (ELF/EIL)	Deterding (ELF/EIL)
General speaking habits	–	–
Volume	–	–
Lexical stress	Lexical stress ?	Lexical stress ?
Nuclear stress	Nuclear stress	Nuclear stress
Rhythm	Weak forms – receptive competence	NO weak forms or vowel reduction
Syllable structure	Initial + medial clusters	Initial + medial clusters
Consonants with a high functional load	Most consonants & Aspiration /p, t, k/	Most consonants
Vowels with a high functional load	Variable quality Vowel quantity	Variable quality but not vowel quantity

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SHORT COURSE FOCUS ON INTELLIGIBILITY: WHAT TYPE OF PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE?

This paper investigates the improvement in intelligibility made during a short spoken-English course for researchers. Analysis is based on recordings of five subjects' English, in which spontaneous speech and prepared speech were compared before and after instruction. Speech rate, pace, and word stress placement were examined for two reasons: these features may be important for intelligibility in the context of international conferences and they seem to be both teachable and learnable. All five subjects were adults at a French university but only two of them were native speakers of French. One was a native speaker of Bulgarian, one of Japanese and one of Greek. They attended a course whose goal was to improve the intelligibility of their spoken English in order to facilitate international communication with both native and non-native speakers.

Henderson 2007

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4) Can we teach intelligibility?

Feature of Intelligibility	EFL / ESL	ELF ≈ EIL
Consonants	✓	✓
Clusters	?	✓
Vowel quality	✓	?
Vowel length	✓	✓
Lexical stress	✓	✓
Schwa + weak forms	✓	X
Rhythm	✓	X
Nuclear stress	✓	✓

4) Can we teach intelligibility?

PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION
ABLE TO HOLD A CONVERSATION
IN ENGLISH (SELF-REPORTED)

*Eurobarometer 386, European Commission,
2012 (data for Croatia from 2006)*

more maps at
jakubmarian.com
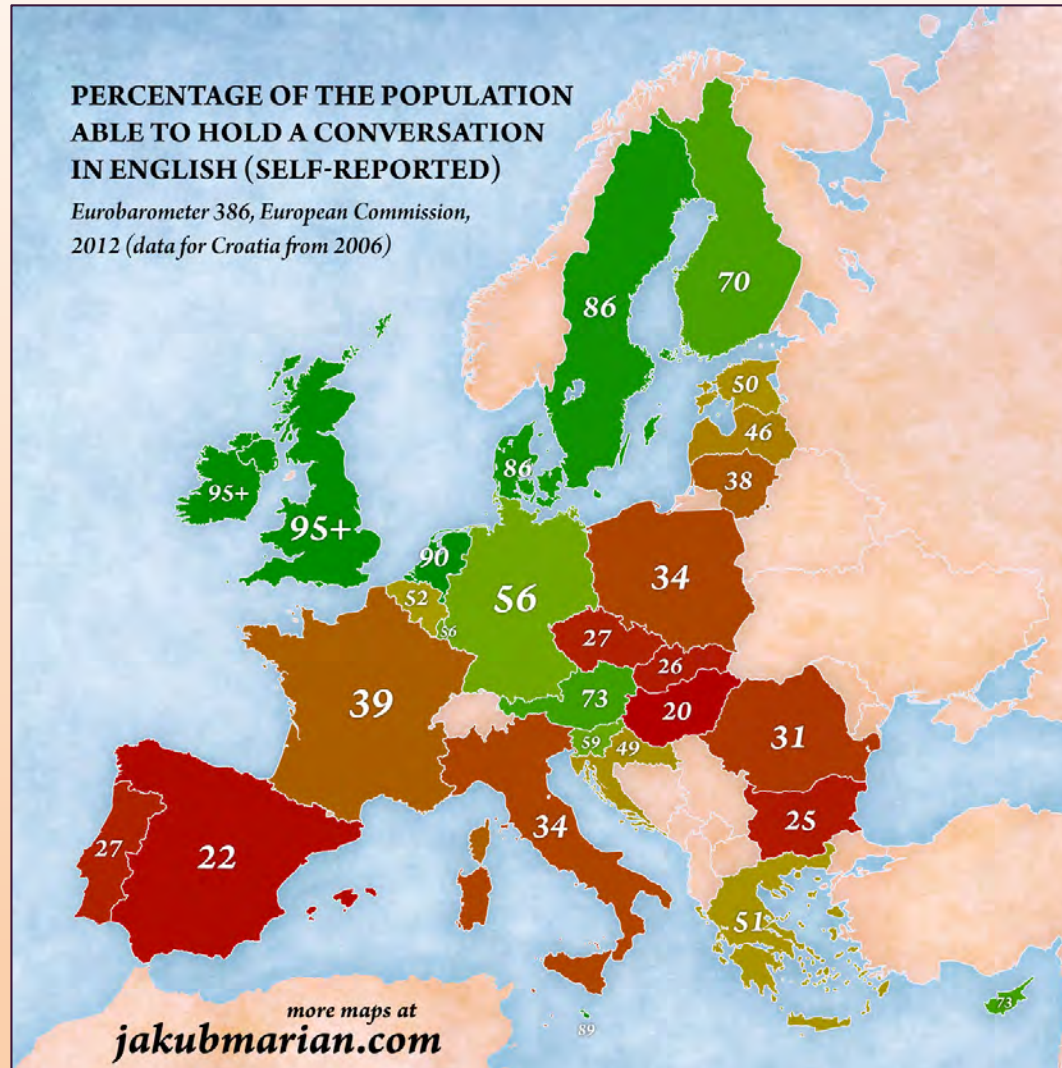
NS vs NNS populations

NSs – 380m
NNSs – 1.5 billion

https://jakubmarian.com/map-of-the-percentage-of-people-speaking-english-in-the-eu-by-country/

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4) Can we teach intelligibility?

http://host.uniroma3.it/docenti/boylan/text/white01.htm

750 million

350-450 m

375 million

UK, USA, Australia...
(norm providing)

India, Jamaica, Philippines...
(norm developing)

Holland, Italy, Japan, Brazil...
(norm dependent)
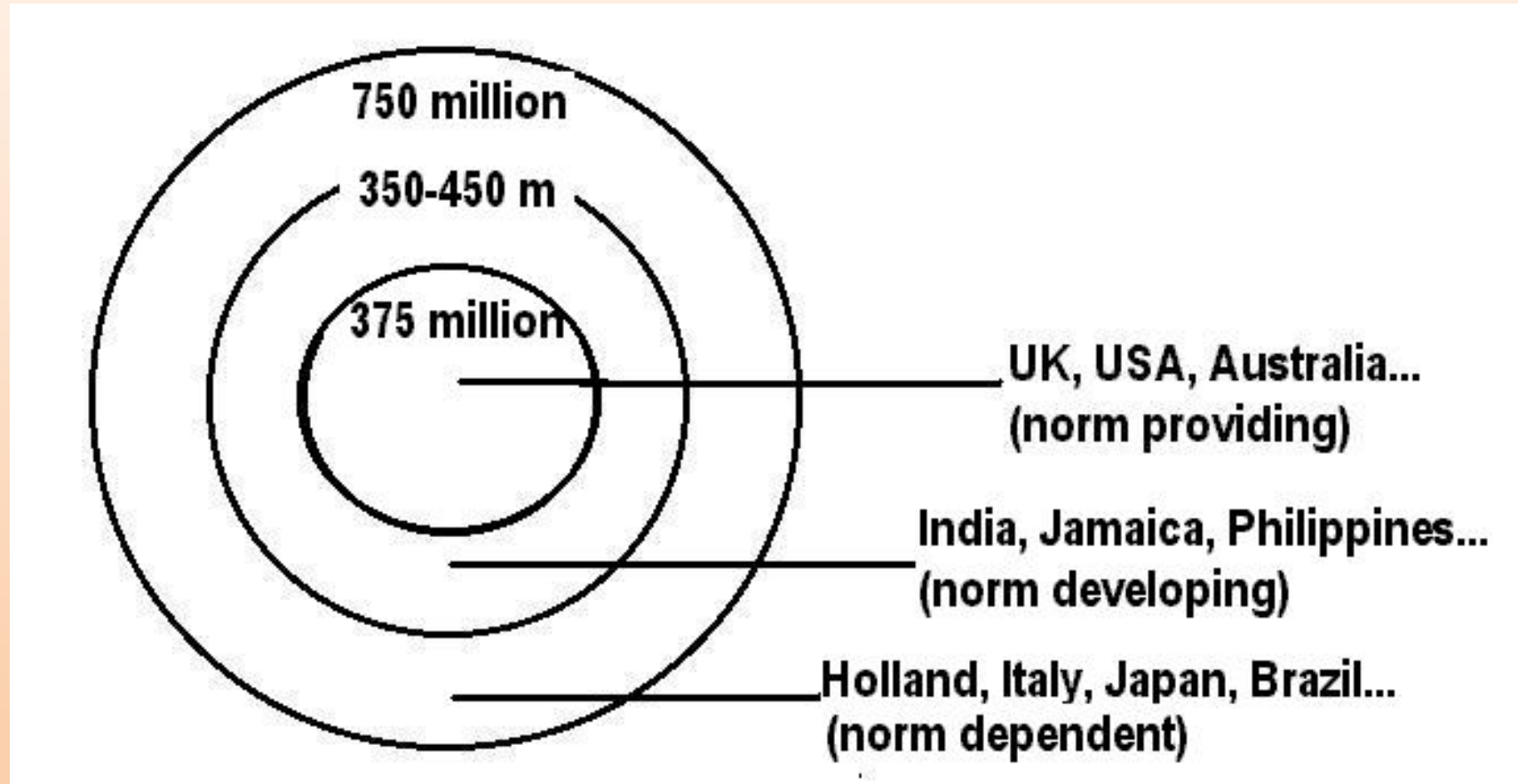
Kachru (1992)

4) Can we teach intelligibility?
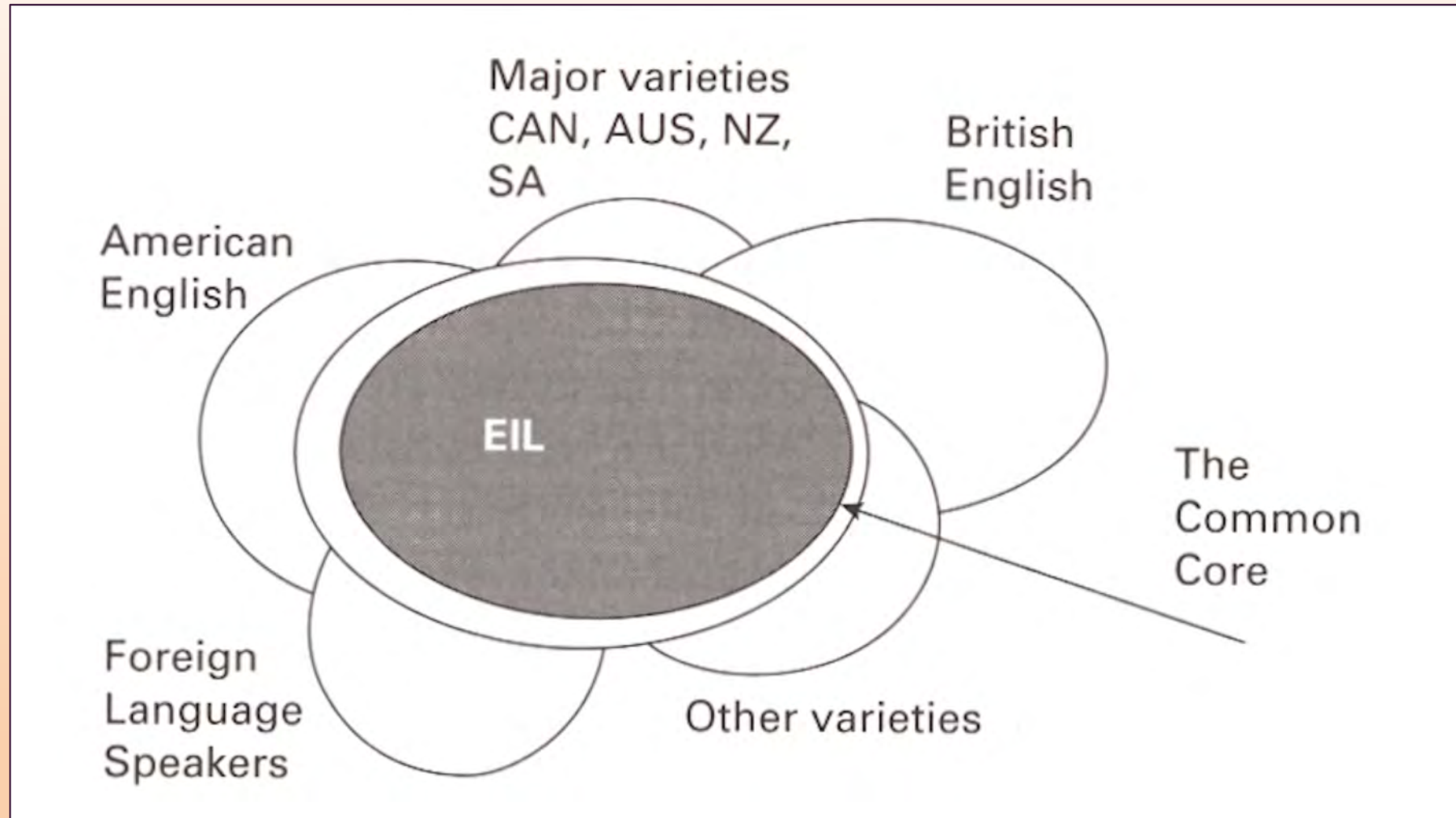
Modiano (1999)

4) Can we teach intelligibility?

Learners' strongly L1-inluenced English accents

Limited international intelligibility

ELF/EIL LFC competence

High ELF / international intelligibility

4) Can we teach intelligibility?

Hancock SO! 60 (2019)

Walker MET 28/3 (2019)

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4) Can we teach intelligibility?

Accent, accommodation and intelligibility in ELF

Robin Walker looks at aspects of pronunciation in English as a lingua franca.

First published in
Modern English Teacher 26/4

Download from https://englishglobalcom.wordpress.com/articles/

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4) Can we teach intelligibility?
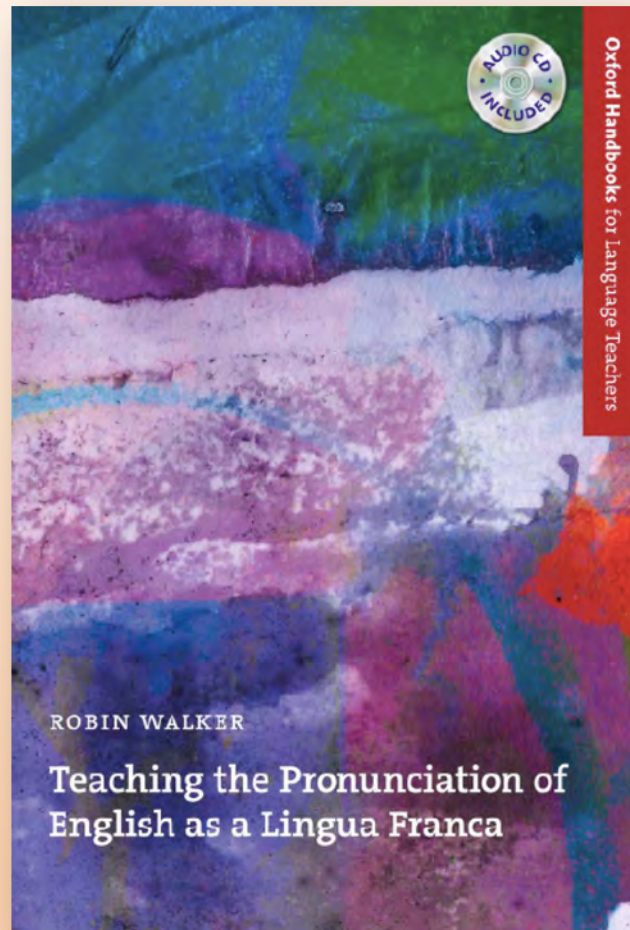
Oxford University Press, 2010
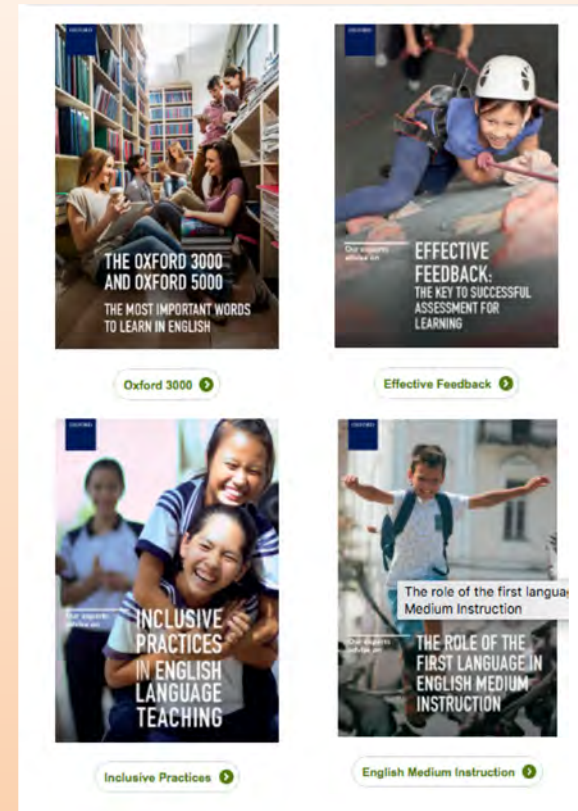
Pronunciation for the 21st-century learner. OUP, late 2020 (?)
https://elt.oup.com/feature/global/expert/?cc=global&selLanguage=en

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