Learners’ beliefs about pronunciation training in Flanders

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Dr. Ellen Simon
Preface

After the completion of my Bachelor paper (on the pronunciation component in textbooks for native speakers of Dutch learning English), I quickly realised that my Master dissertation would also deal with the teaching and learning of English pronunciation. I am very pleased that, with this thesis, I got the chance to explore the world of pronunciation education not only from a pedagogical, but also from a psychological point of view. For me, designing a new questionnaire and conducting interviews were quite a challenge, but in the end it was well worth the effort.

This work could not have been completed without the support of many people. First of all, I am very grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Ellen Simon, for her advice and guidelines on how to proceed with my research, for answering all my questions and for giving useful feedback. I would also like to thank her because she gave the initial impetus to start working on this particular topic and because she allowed me to distribute the questionnaire during her course.

Secondly, I am grateful to the English linguistics staff for their technical support. I am of course also indebted to all students of English at Ghent University who voluntarily completed the questionnaire and/or participated in the interview sessions.

A special thanks also goes to my brother and my nephew for taking the trouble to complete the sample version of my questionnaire.

Finally, I should not forget to thank my family and friends for always giving me support along the way. Thanks to your encouragement, help and patience I was able to pull through.

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1 Introduction

When we encounter the term “pronunciation class”, the first image that most likely comes to our mind is that a group of students saying after the teacher in front of the class or repeating the practice sentences of a tape recording over and over again. It would be interesting to read the minds of these learners, particularly since their psyche exerts a considerable influence over their learning progress. If one of these learners for example believes that he is sounding silly when pronouncing all these foreign sounds, he will be afraid to speak up and consequently the teacher will not be able to hear or correct his mistakes.

Exploring minds of language learners is exactly what studies on learner beliefs intend to do. If researchers can gain a better insight into the personality of language learners, they can also draw conclusions on how the language learning process can be improved. It is particularly important that problematic learner beliefs are spotted and eradicated because they hinder the learners’ progress.

Notwithstanding the fact that learner beliefs are said to strongly influence actual learning practice and success, up till now very little research has been devoted solely to the beliefs of language learners about pronunciation training. The majority of studies on learner beliefs enquire for ideas about English language learning in general and were held in non-European countries, such as Taiwan (Yang, 1999), Japan (Riley, 2006) and Australia (Bernat, 2005).

The present study therefore aims to be an exploratory study which describes the opinions of Flemish university students of English about pronunciation training and in this way hopes to spot beliefs that could possibly affect the learning process. Consequently, it will also try to formulate some suggestions for the improvement of pronunciation instruction.

Three central research questions were posed to achieve this goal:

1. What are the beliefs of Flemish university students of English about their pronunciation training?
2. What language learning strategies do these students employ to improve their pronunciation and how do these relate to their beliefs?

3. What is their opinion about certain concrete pronunciation tasks and the pronunciation training they received?

To guarantee that these learner beliefs are as accurately described as possible, the present study was conducted in two phases: a quantitative (by means of a questionnaire) and a qualitative one (through supplementary interviews).

This paper is structured as follows. The introduction (chapter 1) is followed by chapter 2 which presents the theoretical background that served as a basis for the development of the actual study. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology. The next chapters contain the interpretation of the both the quantitative (chapter 4) and qualitative data (chapter 5). A final discussion on all results obtained (in chapter 6) precedes the conclusion of this study which is put forward in chapter 7.
2 Theoretical background

2.1 A definition of learner beliefs

Bernat (2005) noticed an important change in research about language instruction. The focus gradually shifted from teacher- to student centred learning, with special attention for the student’s perspective and individual differences among learners. As a result, learner beliefs have attracted much attention among linguists in recent decades and many have tried to define the concept and propose a classification. The first, crucial step in the theoretical discussion about learner beliefs consists of course in a definition of the concept and a discussion about its characteristics. The following part of this section will then sum up the factors which can have an impact on learner beliefs as well as those elements in the learning process that can be influenced by this type of beliefs.

A general description of beliefs is given in Richardson (1996, as cited by Bernat, 2005) who defines beliefs as “psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true”. According to Arnold (1999, as cited in Bernat, 2005) they can therefore be compared to “filters of reality”. Horwitz (1988) narrows down the scope and describes learner beliefs in a language learning situation as “preconceived notions [of learners] about language learning”. These beliefs can concern various fields of the language learning process: the learner’s own capabilities and limitations, the degree of personal control over the language learning achievement, possible reasons for success or failure and his expectations for the future (Wenden, 1991, as cited in Finch, 2006). Lightbown & Spada (2006) classify learner beliefs as “opinions” that almost all learners have “of how their instruction should be delivered”. Sewell (2003) gives a similar description: learner beliefs can be seen as the concerns of learners about “the right way to learn” and “the right role for teachers”.

Mantle-Bromley (1995) divides a learner’s attitudes in three major components: affect, cognition and behaviour. Any belief is situated at the level of cognition, since it concerns a learner’s knowledge about a certain object (in this case language learning), but it is important to note that this knowledge does not necessarily
correspond with the factual truth. A learner's affect can then be described as an evaluative, emotional reaction to an object, while his/her behaviour regards the actions related to that same object. Between these three attitudinal elements strong links can be observed. If students for instance believe that attaining proper pronunciation is important when learning English and if they thereby also like the sound of the English language, it is very likely that they will try to attain a native-like pronunciation.

Probably because of the strong relationship between affect and beliefs, Riley (2006) considers beliefs to be an affective factor, together with motivation and anxiety. The same author also cites Alexander & Dochy (1995) and Wenden (1999) who confirm his viewpoint that beliefs have a cognitive as well as an affective pole. Beliefs are not only based on (un)consciously acquired knowledge, but they also have a personal and subjective component. Linguists have tried to determine the precise influence of both these poles on the language learning process. Stern (1983, as cited by Riley, 2006) sustains that the affective factors have a major impact on language learning, a thesis later on confirmed by Alexander et al. (1995, as cited by Riley, 2006) who recorded the minor effect of the actual knowledge on a learner’s learning practice.

Learner beliefs are strongly individually determined, but the influence of group dynamics (classmates, for example) can not be ignored either. Horwitz (1988) therefore distinguishes individual and common beliefs (i.e. beliefs held by whole groups of language learners). Chang (2007) for his part has investigated the effect of certain group processes, such as group cohesiveness and group norms or rules, on individual learner beliefs about autonomous language learning and concluded that they were not easily influenced by the group dynamics. This seems to suggest that learner beliefs remain an individual phenomenon in the first place.

Linguists have not yet reached consensus on the degree of stability of learner beliefs. Some researchers, like Horwitz (1987, as cited in Diab, 2006) point out that learner beliefs can easily change, during the course of study (Oh, 1996; Sato, 2004, both as cited in Riley, 2006) or by “positive intervention”, i.e. a reflexive discussion about learner beliefs to create more realistic ideas and goals for language learning (Dole & Sinatra, 1994, as cited in Riley, 2006). Horwitz (1999, as cited by Diab, 2006) also refers to the learning stage – next to age and gender – as an important source of variation in learner beliefs. According to Alexander & Dochy (1995, as cited by Riley,
2006) however, learner beliefs are “often resistant to change”, an opinion that is shared by Kern (1995, as cited by Riley, 2006) at least for beliefs that are shared by a whole group, while individual beliefs can change more rapidly after exposure to alternative methods.

Next to the class group, age, gender and learning stage of the student, the following two factors also possibly influence learner beliefs: the cultural context and previous language learning experiences. Many linguists claim that learner beliefs are culturally determined (Horwitz, 1988; Bernat, 2005; Diab, 2006; Finch, 2006). Horwitz (1988) argues that beliefs about language learning can depend on the country of origin: in Canada or America for example, a general belief is present that in second language learning the attainment of a native-like accent is almost impossible. In Lebanon too the political and socio-cultural situation clearly affects the beliefs of the university students involved in foreign language education. In particular their opinions about the difficulty of language learning and their motivation were subject to the broader cultural context (Diab, 2006). Previous experiences with language learning can obviously also shape a student’s present beliefs about learning a foreign language (see: Yang, 1999; Bernat, 2005; Finch, 2006; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). If learners associate their former foreign language class with a disagreeable experience, their opinions about language learning are likely to be less positive. In addition, Finch (2006) signals that even a learner’s family can influence his beliefs.

Learner beliefs themselves have a very strong influence on the effectiveness of the learning process. Beliefs colour the expectations that a learner has about the language learning task that awaits him (Horwitz, 1988; Wenden, 1991, as cited by Finch, 2006; Riley, 2006). Positive beliefs also go hand in hand with a more positive attitude towards the target language (Bernat, 2005; Riley, 2006) as well as with a higher level of motivation (Zimmerman-Schunk, 2001, as cited by Diab, 2006; Bernat, 2005; Finch, 2006). Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) label anxiety as a belief that impedes the acquisition of fluency in a foreign language. Others, like Bernat (2005) and Diab (2006) see anxiety rather as a separate affective variable that is the result of negative beliefs. From the previous examples, it is clear that learner beliefs indirectly have an impact on the actual actions undertaken by the learner, on the

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1 Throughout this paper, the term second language refers to “a non-native language that has an official role in a country” (as opposed to a foreign language) (Crystal, 2003, p.468)
amount of energy invested in language learning and also on the way in which this learning process is perceived, either positively or negatively (Horwitz, 1988; Alexander & Dochy, 1995, as cited by Riley, 2006; Cotterall, 1999; Bernat, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

An important example of the fact that one’s beliefs affect one’s learning practice is the strong correlation between the beliefs of a learner and the actual learning strategies used. This link has been discussed in Wenden (1987, as cited by Riley, 2006), Horwitz (1988), Wen & Johnson (1997, as cited by Cotterall, 1999), Yang (1999), Bernat (2005) and Lightbown & Spada (2006). Another example was given by Riley (2006): if students strongly approve of the role of the teacher in the language learning process, they will be less enthusiastic about autonomous learning and will probably try to avoid this as much as possible. As a result, learner beliefs do not only have a serious impact on the learning process itself, but also on the actual outcome of the language learning, as Horwitz (1988), Cotterall (1999) and Bernat (2005) signalled. Ehrman & Oxford (1995, as cited by Cotterall) observed that positive beliefs (such as “I am good at learning foreign languages”) automatically lead to a higher proficiency in speaking as well as in reading. Riley (2006) underlines that learner beliefs need to be consistent with “good learning practice”: if students agree that repetition and practice are crucial in the acquisition of a foreign language, this conviction will undoubtedly have a positive effect on the outcome of their learning. It is therefore important to correct possible misconceptions to avoid that learners are already carrying with them a number of disadvantages – of which they very often do not seem to be aware – at the start of their language learning adventure. Horwitz (1988) and Mantle-Bromley (1995) point out that erroneous beliefs can hinder language learning progress and even persistence to continue the learning process. Peacock (1998, as cited by Finch, 2006) explains that the effects of unrealistic learner beliefs tend to be interpreted by the learner as a lack of aptitude. Consequently, they affect a learner’s confidence which in turn results in limited learning efforts and a poorer performance.

Victori & Lockhart (1995, as cited by Cotterall, 1999) and Finch (2006) come to the conclusion that not only erroneous beliefs, but also negative beliefs in general could lead to a failure in trying to learn a second language. Another source of potential learning problems lies in the gap between a learner’s beliefs and the actual
instructional practice. Learners who, for example, prefer a considerable amount of corrective feedback and guidance by the teacher will be dissatisfied when they are forced upon a communicative language classroom (in: Yorio (1986, in Lightbown & Spada, 2006)).

Particularly among university students it is important to eradicate inaccurate learner beliefs not only because their convictions strongly influence their learning process, but also because of the fact that many university students of English are being trained to become language teachers (Riley, 2006). In later professional life they risk taking their faulty beliefs with them to class which will in turn affect the thinking of their future students. Mantle-Bromley (1995) warns that teachers at all educational levels should be aware of the dominating beliefs among their students. In a situation where the beliefs of the teacher do not at all correspond with those of the students, language learning will be more problematic and will even lead to failures. According to Bacon & Finnenmann (1990, as cited by Riley, 2006) teachers as well as curriculum planners and writers of learning materials need to be aware of the personality of potential students and their beliefs.

This chapter showed that recent research in the field of language learning devotes a considerable amount of attention to the figure of the learner. Consequently, learner beliefs have been frequently studied and discussed, but no consensus had yet been reached on an exact definition for the term. In this paper, learner beliefs are defined in the same way as Horwitz (1988) sees them: “preconceived notions [of learners] about language learning”. Such a broader definition is especially useful, because it allows us to cover the affective as well as the cognitive aspects of beliefs. Since both aspects are closely related and the affective factor is considered the most powerful one, it seems legitimate to incorporate affective feelings (such as anxiety) about language learning under the notion “learner beliefs”. According to Wenden (1991, as cited by Finch, 2006), for example, a particular type of belief regards the learner’s own capabilities and limitations, revealing a learner’s self-efficacy and anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) also label anxiety as a kind of belief. Learner behaviour or learner strategies can not be considered as a type of “notion”, but rather
as actions undertaken by the learner. Learner beliefs and learner strategies will therefore be strictly separated in this paper.

Learner beliefs seem to be rooted in the individual, in the learner's personality, but there is also the possibility that they are being influenced by the dominant beliefs of the larger group, such as classmates for example. Researchers do not yet agree on the degree of resistance to change: some think that beliefs rapidly change, while according to others beliefs are stable in nature. Previous language learning experiences can colour a learner's beliefs, as well as the cultural background does.

The main importance of researching learner beliefs lies of course in their impact on the language learning process, such as on a learner's expectations, his attitude towards the target language, the degree of motivation and anxiety, learning strategies and eventually also on the attained level of proficiency. It is therefore extremely important to counter possible problematic learner beliefs (particularly among future language teachers) to increase the effectiveness of language learning. In this light, studies enquiring for the beliefs of learners can be very useful to spot problematic beliefs or beliefs that do not correspond to the actual learning philosophy of a course and can thus function as an incentive for improving the quality of foreign language instruction.

However, it is not always that easy to decide which beliefs are detrimental. As already explained above, beliefs that do not correspond to “good learning practice” or that do not correspond at all to the actual learning practice in class most probably impede one’s learning progress. It should of course be noted that the same belief may eventually work out positively for a particular student, while it may negatively affect the learning process of another person. Moreover, the precise degree to which beliefs are detrimental is also rather difficult to determine.

2.2 Frameworks for the classification of learner beliefs

Several authors distinguish different types of learner beliefs and consequently elaborated a framework for their classification. Such divisions may be useful in determining which kinds of beliefs should be given attention to in this study.
2.2.1 Yang (1999): Metacognitive versus motivational beliefs

A first distinction suggested by Yang (1999) separates metacognitive from motivational beliefs. **Metacognitive** beliefs consist of three subcomponents: what learners know about themselves (their own proficiency, aptitude, learning style, etc.); what learners think about the task (the nature, focus and difficulty of language learning); and their knowledge about learning strategies (beliefs about the best way to learn a second or foreign language). The **motivational beliefs** can also be subdivided into three branches: a learner’s belief about his/her ability and expectations about learning the foreign language; the goals set by the learner and his/her interest in the language learning task; and the learner’s emotional reactions to learning the foreign language. The following questions are thus crucial when enquiring for a language learner’s motivational beliefs: “Can I learn the language?”; “Why am I learning the language?” and “How do I feel about learning this language?” (Yang, 1999). Yang’s subdivision was based on Pintrich’s model for the classification of motivational beliefs. Pintrich (1989, as cited by Yang, 1999) analysed the concept motivation within the light of the expectancy-value theories which see motivation as a combination of certain beliefs about the outcome of actions with the value placed upon those outcomes. According to Pintrich, motivation also consists of three pillars: expectancy (beliefs about one’s own ability), value (learning goals & importance, utility and interest attributed to learning the target language), and affect (emotional reactions to the task). Clear parallels can be drawn between Pintrich’s original discussion of motivation and the model developed by Yang.

2.2.2 Dörnyei (1994) & Smit (2002):

**Learner-, subject- and classroom-related factors**

The motivation component of beliefs has also been studied in detail by Dörnyei (1994, as cited by Smit, 2002) who proposes a completely different classification. Here again, the division consists of three branches: learner-related factors, subject-related factors and classroom-related factors. The **learner-related factors** include a learner’s anxiety and self-efficacy, his/her self-perception of his/her accent in the second [or foreign] language and causal attributions. Integrativeness, extrinsic as
well as intrinsic motives are labelled as subject-related factors. Smit (2002) argues that mainly these factors are responsible for the special status of pronunciation in language instruction. Finally, the classroom-related factors encompass a learner’s ideas about class goals, teaching styles, feedback, student roles and learning strategies. In his study on motivational beliefs of advanced pronunciation learners Smit (2002) suggests to add an ultimate distinction within the branch of classroom-related factors: practice with others as opposed to individual learning. Smit (2002) distinguishes practice with peers (with classmates in pronunciation class or with a tutor in language lab sessions), practice with instructor and practice with tapes (by means of specialised tapes or recordings of one’s own voice).

2.2.3 Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model

A final and well-known classification developed for motivational beliefs is Gardner’s socio-educational model. Gardner regards motivation in language learning as a socio-psychological factor, where the learner’s attitude towards the target language and his integrativeness have the strongest impact on the level of motivation (Gardner, 1985, as cited by Smit, 2002). In Tremblay & Gardner (1995) Gardner’s motivational construct is discussed more elaborately. Motivation is said to consist of a combination of three components: the effort to achieve a goal, the desire to learn a language and satisfaction with the task of learning that same language. Integrativeness (i.e. “an open and positive regard for other groups, and for groups that speak the [target] language” or, in other words, the desire of learners to integrate themselves in the target community) and their attitude (here towards the learning situation - no longer to the target language) are again considered to have the strongest influence on the level of motivation.

The most recent version of Gardner’s socio-educational model is presented in Masgoret & Gardner (2003). The authors introduce a distinction between attitudinal and motivational variables. Integrativeness and the learner’s attitude towards the learning situation are here both labelled as attitudinal factors, distinguished from motivation, integrative and instrumental orientation. Masgoret & Gardner’s definition of integrativeness as “openness to identify, at least in part, with another language
community” does not differ greatly from Tremblay & Gardner’s description. They also note that a high degree of integrativeness promotes a learner’s motivation. Logically they consider integrativeness to be a crucial factor in pronunciation acquisition, since a student needs to internalise “foreign” sounds (belonging to a “foreign” speech community) to be able to speak a second or foreign language. As explained before, Smit (2002) comes to the same conclusion. Masgoret & Gardner’s article also gives a clear description of what is meant with the label “attitude towards the learning situation”: a learner’s “individual reaction to anything associated with the immediate context in which the language is taught”. To elicit a learner’s attitudes towards the learning situation, Masgoret & Gardner (2003) suggest to ask for the learner’s evaluation of the course, the teacher, the learner materials and/or teaching environment.

A synonym for motivation is “goal-directed behaviour”, again consisting of three components: expanded effort, the desire to be proficient in the foreign language and the affect experienced when learning the language (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Here again, the proposed division for motivation clearly echoes the three components distinguished by Tremblay & Gardner, except for the “satisfaction” element that was changed into “affect”, a broader term. Masgoret & Gardner (2003) also confirm Tremblay & Gardner’s observation that the learner’s integrativeness and attitude towards the learning situation have a great impact on his motivation and consequently also on his achievements. This correlation becomes clearly visible in one’s integrative orientation, also called integrative motivation and the fourth variable individuated by Masgoret & Gardner (2003). The presence of integrative motivation as part of a learner’s personality can thus be explained by a certain desire to become part of the target community. Combined with positive attitudes towards the learning situation this leads to a higher level of motivation.

2.2.4 Summary

The different models for the classification of learner beliefs all seem to acknowledge that a preliminary distinction should be made between metacognitive and motivational beliefs, as Yang (2002) proposes. Metacognitive beliefs are beliefs about the learners themselves, their language learning task and learning strategies. Motivational beliefs seem to be most frequently studied and various classifications
have been developed. Gardner (1985), Pintrich (1989, as cited by Yang, 1999) and Yang (1999) (who used Pintrich’s division as a model) agree that goal-setting forms a crucial aspect of motivation. But the same three authors seem to have different opinions about the other elements that contribute to a language learner’s motivation. Yang (1999) confirms Pintrich’s opinion that a learner’s expectations and his thoughts about his own ability (in my opinion equivalent to the concept of self-efficacy) as well as his other affective reactions to the language learning that he is involved in (such as anxiety) all function as important motivational factors. Gardner’s motivational construct (as cited by Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) contains a factor similar to Pintrich’s and Yang’s affect: the learner’s attitude or reaction to the immediate learning situation. He also introduces “integrativeness”, a concept that is absent the reasoning of Pintrich and Yang, but especially interesting for the study of pronunciation training since a high degree of integrativeness facilitates the acquisition of foreign sounds.

Dörnyei (1994, as cited by Smit, 2002) splits up the concept “motivation” into three alternative elements: learner-, subject- and classroom-related factors. Anxiety and self-efficacy can be classified as learner-related while integrativeness as well as extrinsic and intrinsic motives are considered to be subject-related. Opinions about feedback or learning strategies can be found under classroom-related factors. Smith’s (2002) addition to Dörnyei’s classroom-related factors under the form of learner opinions about practice with others (peers, instructor or tapes) should not be forgotten either. The existing classifications for learner beliefs demonstrate that not only the pure metacognitive beliefs, but also motivational beliefs have to be taken into account in language learning contexts in general and in pronunciation training contexts in particular. As already confirmed in the previous section on possible definitions for learner beliefs (section 2.1), it is important to look at the cognitive as well as the affective side when studying learner beliefs. Metacognitive beliefs represent the purely cognitive aspect of beliefs, while motivational beliefs seem to incorporate the affective aspect (expectations; motivation: integrativeness, anxiety, self-efficacy, etc.).

As Dörnyei and Masgoret & Gardner observed, integrativeness functions as an extremely important motivational stimulus in making oneself familiar with the pronunciation of a foreign language. Taking this observation into consideration,
affective motivational beliefs seem to be the most crucial elements in a study enquiring for learner beliefs about pronunciation training, especially since it is widely acknowledged that pronunciation is the component of a language that is most closely related to one’s identity. Consequently, a certain desire to identify oneself with the foreign culture and language is absolutely necessary when trying to learn the pronunciation of a foreign language. But it is important to note that some learners do not fully develop their integrativeness with regard to the target language since they still feel so closely related to their mother tongue and culture that they are afraid of “betraying” their origins. As a result, they will consciously adopt a non-native like pronunciation to show their affiliation with their mother tongue (Gatbonton, Trofimovich & Magid, 2005, as cited by Lightbown & Spada, 2006) because they do not completely want to give up their own identity, as Simon (2005) expresses it. In some cases, learners may also be frightened by the “unpleasant” sounding sounds of the target language (Leaver, Ehrman & Shekthman, 2005) and therefore have little affinity with a native-like accent.

The study that will be presented in this paper asks learners for their beliefs about the pronunciation training they receive. It will therefore mainly consider motivational beliefs (the learner’s expectations; intrinsic and extrinsic motives, integrativeness; self-efficacy; anxiety; classroom-related factors such as feedback and practice with others, etc.) and look at the concept motivation from a more general angle (enquiring for the goals set by the learner). Metacognitive beliefs, particularly those about the difficulty and value of the language learning task, also seem to provide useful material for a study about foreign language pronunciation training.

As already indicated in the first section of this introductory chapter (section 2.1), the actual use of language learner strategies should not be mistaken for the beliefs that a language learner has about these strategies. According to Yang (1999), beliefs about language learning strategies belong to the metacognitive type, while Dörnyei (1994, as cited by Smith, 2002) classifies them under motivational classroom-related factors. Notwithstanding their disagreement about the precise typological characteristics of these particular beliefs, both authors agree that these beliefs do not necessarily correspond to the actual use that learners make of learning strategies. Therefore also
in this paper a clear distinction will be made between the learner’s beliefs about and his effective use of language learning strategies.

In the following sections of this paper, the most interesting concepts for the study of beliefs about pronunciation training (motivation: section 2.3, anxiety: 2.4, self-efficacy: 2.5 and language learning strategies: 2.6) will be discussed more elaborately.

2.3 Motivation

While section 2.2 already presented the various types of motivational beliefs, this part about motivation will explain in more detail the importance of motivation in the language learning process and the way in which the construct of motivation works (By which elements it is influenced? On which factors of the learning process does it have an impact?). Particular attention will be devoted to integrativeness (integrative motivation) and the differences with instrumental, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

2.3.1 Definition

According to Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) the word “motivation” has to do with all the reasons why someone is learning a language. Within the context of pronunciation training it can therefore also be described as a learner’s “readiness to work on and to change his pronunciation” and consequently predicts a learner’s achievement in pronunciation training (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Smit, 2002). Smit (2002, citing Elliott, 1995 and Mayer, 1999) also adds that the factor motivation is traditionally considered to be crucial for pronunciation learning, but that not all researchers are convinced that motivation should be given central attention (citing Coates, 1989). Oxford & Shearin (1994) sustain that the kind of motivation that learners possess determines their choice of learning strategies, a thesis confirmed by Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005). Moreover Oxford & Shearin (1994) emphasise that the degree of motivation has an influence on how much foreign language input reaches the learners. A logical conclusion, since highly motivated students will be more enthusiastic about potential contacts with native speakers of the foreign
language that they are learning. As a result, the strength and origin of the learners’ motivation have an impact on their persistence in the language learning process, their eventual level of proficiency and even on the preservation of certain language skills (Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

2.3.2 Maintaining motivation

Because motivation is a very important element for improving one’s language proficiency, it is of course interesting to list some helpful factors in maintaining a high level of motivation. To avoid demotivation, learning goals should be specific and not too difficult. An example of such a specific learning goal is the following: “I want to improve my pronunciation to give a good presentation” (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Lightbown & Spada (2006) also mention that the language learning tasks imposed should not be too heavy because even a highly motivated learner will eventually lose courage in front of tasks that are extremely challenging. Lightbown & Spada add that a considerable amount of variation in the language learning tasks helps in maintaining motivation.

Another second factor in upholding motivation seems to be assessment. When learners know their performance will be judged, their motivation will likely increase, especially if they are aware of the fact that the assessment may result in a “reward”, such as good grades or positive feedback, and when they attribute this success to their own efforts (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). But there is of course always the possibility that the idea of being evaluated hinders learners in their performance and consequently diminishes their motivation.

A similar observation has been made by Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005): anxiety causes demotivation since it makes learners avoid certain tasks or opportunities for practice. If learners do not feel comfortable at all about their pronunciation being evaluated, they will try to avoid such situations even though it may be very useful in improving their pronunciation. Leaver et al. (2005) also present three helpful tricks in maintaining a learner’s motivation: increasing a “pleasure” component in the language training, helping learners in managing their feelings (for example trying to reduce their anxiety) and stimulating interaction with others. They
explain that the first solution consists mainly in integrating agreeable activities in the language learning process. Such as (fragments of) music, television programmes or films in the target language that can all be used to enhance the learners’ interest. By signalling to the learners that most native speakers certainly are not keen on judging the performance of non-native speakers and by stressing that a single error or slight accent does not matter to them - that it is successful communication that matters most - one can help a learner manage his feelings, particularly anxiety. Finally, by stimulating communication and practice with others (like the teacher, friends and/or family) - preferably about or in the target language - one can promote the formation of relationships that are in a way preparatory examples of possible future interactions with native speakers. Such exchanges may therefore function as a great help in increasing the language learners’ confidence about the use of the target language and consequently have a positive effect on their integrative motivation.

2.3.3 Types of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative and instrumental

In general, four different types of motivation can be distinguished: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, integrative motivation (also called integrativeness) and instrumental motivation. When talking about integrative motivation, Smit (2002) notes that here the locus of motivation is situated “within” the learner, for example when the learner wants to improve his/her pronunciation because “pronunciation is fun” or because he sees this class as a challenge. According to Brown (2000, as cited by Sewell, 2003), motivation that comes from the inside tends to be more powerful than motivation from the outside (i.e. extrinsic motivation). Likewise Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) describe integrative motivation as a type of motivation where the source of motivation can be located “inside” the learner and forms part of his personality, since in this case the learner mainly wants to find happiness and/or increase his/her self-esteem through certain language learning activities. The opposite of intrinsic motivation is instrumental motivation. Here, the learner’s motive can be found outside the learner, such as in his/her future career or his/her present school career (Smit, 2002). Learners that are extrinsically motivated will therefore most likely agree with the following statements: “I want to improve my pronunciation because it will prove to be a useful skill for my job” or “I want to improve my
pronunciation because pronunciation classes are simply part of the curriculum”. Deci & Ryan (1985, as cited by Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005) also conclude that in the case of extrinsic motivation, the reason for a learner’s motivation is an external one, like for example money, a job, a test, etc. A study by Smith (2002) revealed that both intrinsic and extrinsic motives tend to remain relatively stable during the course of study. Even after intensive pronunciation training, no major shifts were detected with regard to the levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Another distinction traditionally made within the motivation framework is the one between integrative and instrumental motivation. As stated by Oxford & Shearin (1994), the notion “integrative motivation” originates in Speech Accommodation Theory and can be defined as the “degree of identification with the in-group” [in this case: the speakers of the target language]. Sewell (2003) defines it as a desire to become integrated in the target language community, while Lightbown & Spada (2006) cite Gardner & Lambert (1975) to underline that an integratively motivated learner seeks for personal growth and cultural enrichment. Gardner & Lambert’s (1975) conclusion that the primary motivation here lies in acceptance and eventual membership of the target community was formulated in Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005). Lightbown & Spada (2006) therefore stress that the degree of intrinsic motivation can not be influenced by the teacher. Of course, they recognise that a supportive classroom environment and appropriate learning activities could contribute to a “fertile” atmosphere for the growth of intrinsic motivation. The teacher can also stimulate feelings of intrinsic motivation by presenting an attractive, positive portrait of the target culture to the students.

Instrumental motivation is the counterpart of integrative motivation. According to Gardner & Lambert (1975, as cited by Lightbown & Spada, 2006) and Sewell (2003) an instrumentally motivated learner looks at the target language as an instrument to attain a goal. This type of student is learning the target language for a certain purpose, for instance a professional or academic one (Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005). As demonstrated by this definition, there is considerable overlap with extrinsic motivation.

Integrative and instrumental motivation both equally contribute to successful language learning according to Sewell (2003) and Lightbown & Spada (2006), but
Smit (2006) argues that – at least in the case of pronunciation instruction – a higher level of intrinsic motivation contributes to higher marks. Only Norton (1995, as cited by Lightbown & Spada, 2006) does not seem to agree with the integrative-instrumental separation for motivation. She instead proposes to speak of motivation in terms of “investment”, to “capture the relationship of the language learner [and his/her identity] to the changing social world” because motivation has much to do with social factors. Dörnyei (1990, as cited by Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) also seems to be convinced that the socio-cultural world of the learner decides upon which type of motivation will be the most powerful one. In a second language learning situation, the socio-political position of the target language is stronger and integrative motivation will be higher. In comparison, instrumental motivation tends to be higher in a foreign language learning context because contacts with the target community are less self-evident. As a result, due to the minor role of the target language in society, learners do not very often get the chance to form favourable opinions about the target culture through interaction with native speakers and they will look for more practical reasons to motivate themselves during their foreign language study. Dörnyei (2001, as cited by Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) later qualifies this observation because a study among Hungarian learners and their motivation for learning English revealed that even in foreign language context integrativeness can prevail. Masgoret & Gardner (2003) themselves believe that the level of integrative motivation is always superior to that of instrumental motivation, in both second and foreign language contexts. Oxford & Shearin (1994) share Dörnyei’s opinion of making a distinction between second and foreign language contexts when it comes to motivation. They associate second language learning with a larger amount of stimuli in the target language, since this target language is used as a means of communication by many people in the home country of the speaker. In a foreign language environment, this is not the case. Here language learners need to actively seek for instances of the target language outside the classroom and in that way their foreign language input is always somewhat artificial. To explain the possible presence of integrativeness in a foreign language context, notwithstanding this artificial “separation” from the target culture, they follow Dörnyei’s reasoning that in this case the integrative motivation is probably not directed towards a specific culture, but to foreign languages and cultures in general. However, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that a Flemish learner really wants to learn a foreign language, such as Spanish for
example, mainly because s/he has fallen in love with the Spanish culture and the country. In that case, the person’s integrative motivation is clearly more directed towards a very specific target culture.

Ely (1986, as cited by Oxford & Shearin, 1994) designed another typology to describe a language learner’s motivation. A third component is added to the traditional dichotomy between integrative and instrumental motivation: fulfilling a language requirement under the form of a concrete goal, such as completing a language learning exercise. Dörnyei (2001, as cited by Lightbown & Spada) also developed an alternative description for the concept. The author looks at motivation as if it were a process and distinguishes three different phases. The first phase is called “choice motivation” (goal-setting), followed by “executive motivation” (carrying out of the tasks to remain motivated) and the “motivation retrospection” (satisfaction after one’s performance) in the end.

### 2.3.4 Summary

Motivation strongly influences the language learning process (and in particular the acquisition of a foreign pronunciation) because a higher degree of motivation comes with corresponding amounts of input in the target language. If learners actively look for opportunities to encounter or even use the foreign language, this of course increases their chances of success.

Specific and realistic learning goals are crucial in maintaining motivation. To put it somewhat extremely, forcing EFL [English as a foreign language] students to develop an accentless native English pronunciation while underlining that such a skill is absolutely necessary “because the curriculum requires it” is certainly not the best strategy to motivate these learners. It is best to aim at a realistic improvement in one’s pronunciation and link this to a certain assignment, such as having to give a final presentation while paying particular attention to their pronunciation. The idea of being assessed can also work counterproductively by increasing one’s anxiety. If this should be the case, anxiety can be minimised by putting the learner’s feelings in perspective, again by imposing suitable requirements for proficiency. When teachers want to aim at a native-like pronunciation, it therefore seems safer to start working
towards an intelligible pronunciation and signal this to the learners, while stressing
that successful communication lies at the heart of language learning and that
pronunciation mistakes are part of the learning process. This way, especially
beginning learners will not give up because they were not forced upon the idea that
their speech should be completely accentless and exactly similar to that of native
speakers already from the beginning.

In increasing one’s motivation, contacts with native speakers of the target language
are of course even more influential than a more “artificial” interaction with a teacher,
friends or family when it comes to practising one’s language skills. There is nothing
more rewarding than experiencing that your speaking skills in the target language
enable you to have a smooth conversation with complete strangers who compliment
you afterwards because of your good pronunciation. To uphold motivation, variation
in the design of the curriculum is crucial, in the same way that the introduction of more
“pleasant” learning activities seems to be helping in making learners enthusiastic and
more interested in the target language. This argument apparently works in favour of
the integration of songs and/or fragments from films television or radio programmes
in English pronunciation courses for educational purposes. Moreover, this type of
exercises functions as an excellent opportunity for a learner to see what the English
culture is like and consequently it may even provoke feelings of integrativeness.

After a careful examination of the definitions of intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative and
instrumental motivation, one cannot but conclude that there is considerable overlap
between these four types of motivation, in particular between extrinsic and
instrumental motivation which seem to have very similar descriptions. Learners can
possess several types of motivation at the same time: to improve their pronunciation
learners can be integratively motivated (because they are really interested in the
culture and want to bridge the gap with the target community) and at the same time
also have instrumental motives (believing that an appropriate pronunciation will help
developing their future professional career).

Specialists do not seem to agree which motivational type should be most prominent
to ensure maximal progress in learning. Most of them share the opinion that
instrumental motivation prevails in foreign language contexts, while integrative
motivation tends to be associated with second language learning contexts. Only
Masgoret & Gardner (2003) believe that integrative motivation prevails in all language learning situations. This reasoning seems to confirm the idea that a certain degree of integrativeness of the learner is considered to be especially crucial for guaranteeing successful pronunciation training, as already demonstrated in the previous section (2.3.3). When talking about pronunciation training in Flanders, it may be interesting to consider the degree of integrative-intrinsic motivation among learners, since many linguists are convinced that this type of motivation is necessary when one wants to acquire a foreign pronunciation. In the Flemish educational context, the level of instrumental-extrinsic motivation should not be overlooked too, since we are dealing with a foreign language setting (English is no official second language in Flanders).

2.4 Anxiety

The discussion about the categorization of learner beliefs in chapter 2.2 revealed that, according to Pintrich (1989), Dörnyei (1994) and Yang (1999), anxiety can be regarded as an affective, motivational belief since it originates in a learner’s feelings (it is more than an instance of “pure” knowledge as would be the case for metacognitive beliefs) and because it affects his/her level of motivation. The design of this section will be very similar to the previous ones, containing first of all a list of possible definitions, followed by a more elaborate discussion of the concrete impact of anxiety on the learning process – especially on motivation – and on possible causes and solutions.
2.4.1 Definition

Traditionally, anxiety - in the broader sense - tends to be associated with worries, stress, apprehension, nervousness and other similar feelings that impede one’s performance. Smit (2002) offers a clear definition of the anxiety that specifically occurs within the context of pronunciation instruction, i.e. a “feeling of inadequacy about one’s own pronunciation”. From this description, it becomes clear that anxiety functions as counterpart of self-efficacy (for a definition consult section 2.5) and that a negative correlation between both variables can be observed: when a learner’s anxiety increases, his self-efficacy level decreases.

Logically, one could conclude that anxiety only hinders the language learning process, since feelings of worry, apprehension and nervousness strongly affect one’s performance (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret (1997) and Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) come to the same conclusion, but recognise that a certain degree of anxiety can have a positive effect too. Lightbown & Spada (2006) explain in further detail this double role of the factor anxiety. On the one hand they cite MacIntyre (1995) to prove that feelings of anxiety slow down the learning process for the reason that anxious learners start to fear the learning tasks themselves or their own reactions associated with it. This apprehension then starts to dominate their cognition and emotions which can no longer be optimally employed (Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005). Consequently, these students cannot but see language learning as a stressful occasion, they will no longer feel relaxed about it, will no longer be able to enjoy the experience and will finally seek to avoid this stressing situation. However, Lightbown & Spada (2006) admit that some sense of anxiety possibly allows a learner to be more focused and motivated. Lightbown & Spada (2006) also seem to be in doubt about the precise nature of anxiety. On the one hand they consider it to be a permanent feature of a learner’s personality, as the design of the FLCAS [Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, developed by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope in 1986] suggests. On the other hand they realise that one’s anxiety level can also depend on the situation. At the beginning of the semester students may be more anxious due to the fact that they do not know what to expect from their language learning classes. Or they may feel extremely nervous while giving an oral presentation in front of the class, yet feeling completely at ease when working in pairs on their pronunciation.
2.4.2 Causes of anxiety

Philips (1991) lists some causes of this foreign language classroom anxiety. First of all, when learners do not have the impression that their abilities and efforts are recognised or rewarded, they will become more anxious. The same happens when too much emphasis is laid on the achievement of perfect oral competence and an atmosphere is created in which the teacher and classmates are eager to condemn every mistake. She explains this by saying that the learners’ ability to express themselves in a foreign language is closely related to their self-image. When practising oral skills and pronunciation in particular the learners’ “language ego” – as Philips calls it – shows to be extremely vulnerable, since errors are inevitable and the attainment of a completely “authentic” pronunciation is virtually impossible. She also adds that unrealistic beliefs about language learning could cause feelings of worry. Smith’s reasoning clearly shows how one’s cognitive beliefs can shape one’s motivational beliefs (in this case anxiety). Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) make the same observation and give an example of how such a mistaken belief can create a sense of anxiety. When a person is convinced that “nothing should be said in the foreign language until it can be said correctly”, he self-imposes a considerable amount of pressure that will particularly affect the fluency of his speech. The authors therefore can not but conclude that a learner’s beliefs, feelings and behaviours are extremely closely related, forming an intricate network with reciprocal influences.

Philips (1991) also shows that the level of anxiety most likely only has a minor impact on the learner’s eventual achievement. The simple thought that that this apprehension might impair one’s performance makes the learner panic. It is purely this conviction that is responsible for the increase of one’s anxiety to a certain level so that it will actually affect a learner’s learning qualities. The situation above once more illustrates how powerful beliefs can be and what impact they have on the language learning process and its outcome. Bailey (1983, as cited by Philips, 1991) accurately characterises this situation as follows: “What the learner experiences in a language lesson is as important as the teaching method, the sequence of presentation, or the instructional materials”. Or formulated otherwise: “What the students believes is possibly more important than ‘any external reality’” (Bailey, 1983, as cited by Philips).
Anxiety appears to be most vehement in speaking situations (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Philips, 1991; Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005). Having to speak in the foreign language is generally experienced as the most threatening activity (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986), but here again situational differences can not be overlooked. When confronted with drill or prepared speech, learners tend to be less anxious, especially when compared to a role-play or a test in which the feeling of uncertainty clearly contributes to a greater anxiety. Philips (1991) explains this fear in terms of the preservation of one’s own self-image. Oral language skills are felt to be closest to the speaker’s identity (see section 2.2.3). Learners are often afraid to make a fool of themselves by speaking a foreign language and to ruin their reputation as a competent speaker or person. In a presentation or role play in front of classmates, performance anxiety causes a learner to worry that his foreign accent may be too strong (Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005). The authors therefore suggest to counter this anxiety through preparedness, by encouraging the learner to practise beforehand, in the classroom or on his own. Lightbown & Spada (2006) report about an experiment carried out by Guiora and others (1972), which demonstrates how anxiety impairs a learner’s willingness to take risks. It is exactly this risk-taking which is crucial to give a successful pronunciation performance in a second (or foreign) language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

2.4.3 Remedies

Since a highly anxious learner risks falling behind in the language learning due to the negative effects of this dominating belief, language teachers should try to integrate in their classroom practice as many elements as possible that can lower one’s anxiety. Philips (1991) and Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) list some helpful actions for making language learners less anxious. First of all, students should be given some control over the learning process. Offering individual self-study exercises might, for example, fulfil this requirement because learners are then able to decide for themselves on the frequency and intensity of their practice. Philips (1991) and Leaver et al. (2005) agree that teachers should guide learners in developing realistic expectations about their language learning and achievement. Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) stress that every language learner should be aware of the fact
that it takes years to master a foreign language. If students believe that only a single semester will be sufficient to become a highly proficient speaker of, for instance, English, they are of course suddenly seized with alarm when they start to realise that their progress happens much more slowly. Setting realistic learning goals is therefore an important factor in limiting language learning anxiety (Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005).

Another helpful step, listed by Philips (1999) as well as Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005), is the presentation of mistakes as necessary steps in the learning process. By means of this “reframing” – as it is often called – errors will be perceived as less threatening and the training will take place in a more relaxed atmosphere, which of course will reduce the number of mistakes made as well as the anxiety level. Within the same light, Philips (1999) suggests to provide an explanation of frequently committed mistakes at the end of the class. This suggestion probably is made not only to direct the learners’ attention to common errors, but also to create a sense of “solidarity” among the students because they get the confirmation that they are certainly not the only one to be mistaken.

In a classroom environment a learner’s self-esteem is subject to considerable pressure since one might have the impression that his performance is continuously evaluated by the teacher and classmates. To liberate the learner from this pressure, he should in the first place focus on his own performance and progress instead of that of others (Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005). Here again, the authors underline the importance of making learners aware of the fact that native speakers of the target language should not be looked at as “judges” but as people prepared to communicate with non-native speakers, and willing to tolerate most of their errors. Philips (1999) also proposes to create a pleasant classroom environment by means of constructive feedback, evaluation and occasional use of humour to reduce the tension that traditionally emerges within a classroom setting. She therefore suggests to include enough opportunities for communicative practice, such as role plays. Another of her suggestions consists in acknowledging the students’ fear about the evaluation of their oral skills, for example by starting a discussion about classroom anxiety at the beginning of the course to allow the students to discover that they share certain fears about language learning and proficiency tests.
2.4.4 Summary

Notwithstanding the fact that the word “feeling” frequently occurs in the definitions of the concept, anxiety should not be considered as a purely affective factor, as a feeling that suddenly arises out of nowhere. As Philips (1999) and Bailey (1983, as cited by Philips, 1991) observed, the element “belief” is even more powerful than reality in determining the level of anxiety in a learner. The psychological aspect clearly dominates here: one’s cognitive beliefs shape one’s motivational beliefs and in their turn these thoughts determine one’s feelings. If students are convinced that the English pronunciation is extremely difficult (a metacognitive belief), this idea will have a strong impact on their motivational beliefs. It is, for example, very likely that they suppose that they are not capable at all of attaining a native-like English pronunciation, or that they will be anxious about learning or practising this language skill. This reasoning legitimises the classification of “anxiety” as a belief, as done by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986), Yang (1999) (who uses the label “motivational belief: emotional reaction, see section 2.2.1) and Dörnyei (1994, as cited by Smit, 2002, who calls it a learner-related motivational belief) (see section 2.2.2).

Anxiety can be seen as the opposite of a learner’s self-efficacy. However, anxiety also has a positive face. It makes learners more focused when having to “perform” in the foreign language, a statement that is of course only valid when the level of anxiety is not that high. If learners suffer from excessive anxiety, this will of course affect their performance and learning progress. A language teacher’s goal should therefore not lie in the complete eradication of every single trace of anxiety, but consist in lowering the anxiety in each student to an acceptable level to guarantee a more relaxed and successful language training.

Although anxiety is traditionally considered to be a permanent characteristic of a learner’s psyche, teachers should also be aware of the fact that the degree of anxiety can depend on the situation. Classroom anxiety can manifest itself in many guises, such as performance anxiety (fear of having to “perform” in a foreign language, like giving a presentation in front of the class) or test anxiety (fear of being evaluated). Two major causes of classroom anxiety can be discerned. The first one has already been discussed in the introductory part of this section, that is the presence of erroneous cognitive beliefs about language learning. The second one is the pressure
that language learners very frequently impose on themselves to preserve their “language ego” – as Philips states – for fear of making themselves look extremely silly. Especially in situations where learners have to speak in the foreign language, this apprehension tends to be very strong since the students do not want to make a fool of themselves and put their self-image as a competent speaker at risk. Within this light, learners involved in pronunciation classes are especially vulnerable to this type of anxiety. Panic is particularly detrimental for pronunciation training because it takes away one’s readiness for this risk-taking and blocks one’s readiness to temporarily display themselves as less competent in the target language to eventually become a better – or even near-native – speaker.

Several authors, such as Philips (1991) and Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) have proposed advice on how to diminish anxiety. However, some of these tips need to be qualified within the context of pronunciation training. It is suggested that students should be given a certain degree of control over their language learning process. Of course this does not necessarily have to be a inadequate choice since individual work allows students to practise their pronunciation at their own rate. Yet too much individual work could be detrimental as well, particularly for inexperienced students who need external guidance – not only on how to pronounce those foreign sounds, but in the first place on their pronunciation errors and feedback on how to avoid them.

Setting realistic learning goals is said to be another useful element in lowering learner anxiety. It is good to warn learners that a native-like foreign accent does not come about from one day to the next and to adopt the teaching programme to this philosophy. When this idea does not correspond to the expectations of the learners, this could of course lead to serious discouragement already from the start of the course. Particularly if students strongly believe that the pronunciation class will all turn them into native speakers within a single term, they risk losing all motivation when the exercises do not seem to allow them to advance as planned. That is why the actual learning goals set should always be compared to the expectations of the learners. When a gap is detected, the learning goals should not be applied until the learners are convinced about their validity, for example by means of a class discussion. In such case a drastic change in the students’ expectations is required to
diminish their anxiety, while the mere application of realistic objectives will not prove to be sufficient at all.

To create a relaxed classroom atmosphere in which mistakes are considered to be a part of the learning process, one of the suggestions of Philips (1999) is to integrate more communicative practice (for example by means of role plays). Here it may be interesting to ask students for their opinion about the switch to a more communicative approach, especially since it is known that spontaneous speech in a foreign language generates a higher level of anxiety. Possibly, students feel better about more repetitive drill and giving oral presentations which they can prepare beforehand because these types of practice provide a greater sense of security. However, it must be admitted that such imitation-centred practice and exercises that require preparation do not correspond with the nature of real-life interaction. This final argument works of course in favour of spontaneous speech practice which represents a more lifelike situation. On that ground teachers best adopt a well-balanced approach which includes both types of practice (i.e. imitative as well as spontaneous speech) in pronunciation class.

2.5 Self-efficacy

Just like anxiety, self-efficacy can also be classified as an important affective and motivational belief (Pintrich, 1989; Yang, 1999; Dörnyei, 1994). A definition of the term as well as a motivation for its classification as motivational belief, together with some guidelines on how to develop this positive belief will be presented in this section.

Smit (2002) equals “self-efficacy” with the learner’s rating for his chance of success (here in achieving proficiency in a particular target language). A similar definition is given by Yang (1999), citing Schunk (1985) who describes self-efficacy as “personal judgements of performance capabilities in a domain of activities [here: language learning]”. Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) consider the term to be a synonym for “the feeling that one can accomplish a task or project”, such as foreign language learning. They do not consider it to be completely equivalent to the word “self-
confidence”. This opinion is not shared by Clément (1980, as cited by Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997) who uses the term “self-confidence” to describe the positive feeling that arises out of the combination of “perceptions of confidence in the second language” with “an absence of anxiety about learning or using the language”. Here, “self-confidence” is clearly not used in the broad sense and equivalent to “self-efficacy” which may be due to the fact that that this author only concentrates on second and not on foreign languages.

Another interesting element touched upon by Clément (1980, as cited by Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997) and also valid in foreign language learning contexts is the fact that self-efficacy can be considered to be the “positive” pole of anxiety, something that has also been noted by Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005). The latter observed that the self-efficacy of learners is influenced by two factors: their previous language learning experiences and their personality or learning style. If their former language learning experiences were successful, the learners will be more confident about a new language learning task. And when extravert learners have to talk to interlocutors in a foreign language, they will also feel more comfortable and their degree of self-efficacy will be higher in comparison with more introvert people.

Some reasons for calling self-efficacy a motivational belief can be found in Smit (2002) and Yang (1999). Smit (2007) explains that – at least to a certain extent – a more intense feeling of self-efficacy leads to a stronger motivation and higher grades in pronunciation class. When students feel confident about their own performance, their language training will be more successful and they will have better results on tests. Yang (1999) cites Bandura (1986) to explain how self-efficacy can have an impact on the learning activities carried out by learners: if people believe they are capable of doing something successfully, they will be more motivated to get involved in it, while others who have doubts about their capability will try to avoid such an activity. Bandura & Schunk (1981) and Stigek (1993) (both as cited by Yang, 1999) add that learners will expend more efforts and be more persistent in their learning if they have some sense of self-efficacy.

Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) list five tips to increase one’s level of self-efficacy. Self-awareness (i.e. knowledge about one’s own learning style and personal preferences) as well as awareness of one’s own learning progress and a realistic
attitude are crucial. Also gradual work on personal points of weakness forces learners to tackle their problems and not avoid them instead. The final advice given by these three authors is to practise with friends, especially those that are native-speakers of the target language. This type of practice is of course not always that feasible in a foreign language learning context.

In sum, self-efficacy can be defined as the degree of confidence that a learner has about his own language learning abilities and forms the counterpart of a learner’s anxiety level. It is labelled as a motivational belief which positively influences a learner’s motivation and consequently has an impact on his performance in the target language. It is said that extravert learners automatically have a higher sense of self-efficacy when talking to native-speakers of the target language. It may therefore not be unreasonable to assume that if it is possible to increase a learner’s level of self-efficacy (especially by making him aware of his own progress), the learner slowly becomes more “extravert” in a way and feels less anxious about having to speak the target language.

This observation can of course be taken into account when one wants to make pronunciation training more effective. Insisting on learners taping themselves to practise their pronunciation may be a useful way of making them aware of their own abilities and progress. It also allows for pronunciation errors to be spotted more easily and as a result stimulates practice on one’s personal pronunciation problems. Exactly this type of training should be encouraged as much as possible to exclude avoidance of those “weaker” areas. As already mentioned before, realistic learning goals and contacts with native-speakers are also crucial in increasing a learner’s self-efficacy and motivation, something that is certainly valid for pronunciation training.

### 2.6 Language learning strategies

This section on language learning strategies starts with a general introduction to the concept, including a presentation of possible definitions and a discussion of its relationship with other variables. The main part consists of an enumeration of
typologies developed to classify different types of strategies, as well as of a
discussion on the importance of language learning strategies for the learning
process.

2.6.1 Definition

Learning strategies in general can be described as the techniques used by a learner
to improve his knowledge (Sewell, 2003; Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005).
Within the context of language learning, Cohen (2003) defines learning strategies as
“(semi-)conscious thoughts and behaviours used by learners with the explicit
knowledge of improving their knowledge and understanding of the target language”.
Hsiao & Oxford (2002) do not mention the factor “thought”. To them, the term
language learning strategy seems to be exclusively synonymous to an action or a
behaviour. McDonough (1999) provides a definition similar to Cohen’s, but
distinguishes language learning strategies (strategies to improve the learning of the
target language) from language use strategies (strategies to improve the use of the
target language). Hsiao & Oxford (2002) do not agree with this distinction, sustaining
that there is considerable overlap between both types of learner strategies, a
conviction in its turn countered by Ellis (1994, as cited by Hsiao & Oxford, 2002) and
Cohen.

learner strategies are controllable. Their viewpoint is partly confirmed by Leaver,
Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) who believe that certain strategies are employed under
conscious control, while others are automatically employed. Chamot (1998) and
strategies are teachable.

Different types of learners use different types of learning strategies. Hsiao & Oxford
(2002) observed that the learning strategies of beginning and proficient learners
strongly differ. Later on their thesis was confirmed by Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman
(2005): if a learner’s proficiency increases, some strategies are no longer useful and
new ones are required. On the basis of research carried out in Asia, Lee & Oxford
(2008) observed that more proficient language learners possess a more extensive
collection of strategies which are used more effectively. Moreover, the strategies used by learners of a second language are different compared to those used by learners of a foreign language, due to the different learning contexts (Green & Oxford 1995, as cited by Lee & Oxford, 2008). The same is true for the higher number of strategies employed by learners in the humanities compared to those in science or engineering (Lee, 1994; Park, 1999, both as cited by Lee & Oxford, 2008). Gender also plays a role, since women are said to use more learning strategies than men (Oxford et al., as cited by Lee & Oxford, 2008). Young learners employ them more frequently as well (Lee, 2000; Wong Fillmore et al., 1985) (both as cited by Lee & Oxford, 2008), while adults particularly prefer metacognitive learning strategies over social strategies, according to Oh (1992) and Touba (1992) (both as cited by Lee & Oxford, 2008). McDonough (1999) concludes that language learning strategies are thus influenced by the degree of language proficiency and multilingualism, gender and age. Next to these factors, he infers that the level of motivation and cognitive style of the learner also have an impact. Leaver et al. (2005) agree that the preferred learning styles of a learner affect his choice of strategies.

2.6.2 Typologies

Within the framework for learning strategies, several different typologies were designed. Chamot & O’Malley (1994, as cited by Leaver et al., 2005) distinguish three types of learning strategies according to their CALLA [Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach]. Metacognitive strategies consist in planning, monitoring and evaluating one’s own learning process. Cognitive strategies have to do with the rehearsal and memorising of foreign language material and are, according to Sewell (2003), most closely related to actual learning itself. Socio-affective strategies are particularly needed for instances of actual language use (Sewell, 2003); they regulate a learner’s interaction with others and the management of his emotions.

Cohen (2003) proposes to expand this division to four different elements, splitting up social and affective strategies: metacognitive strategies (“for managing and supervising strategy use”), cognitive strategies (“for memorising and manipulating
target language structures”, for example by means of rehearsal), *affective strategies* (“for gauging emotional reactions to learning and lowering anxieties”) and *social strategies* (“for enhancing learning”, by means of cooperating with other learners and seeking opportunities to interact [with native speakers]), such as asking for assistance of the teacher or a classmate (Leaver et al., 2005). Yang (1999) defines social strategies as “strategies that involve other people”, like practicing with other students or asking native speakers to correct you when you talk.

The well-known taxonomy for learning strategies developed by Oxford (1990, as cited by McDonough, 1999 and Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005) contains the same four traditional types (cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social strategies), supplemented by two new ones: *compensation strategies* (to make up for missing knowledge) and *memory strategies*. The final type of strategy shows how Oxford allocates the term “cognitive” exclusively for the knowledge-related analytical strategies, by withdrawing the memory strategies from this category.

A preliminary distinction made within this 6-category framework for language learning strategies is designed by Hsiao & Oxford (2002). *Direct strategies* are those that directly involve the second [or target] language and are used for actual practice (such as cognitive, compensation and memory strategies), while *indirect strategies* do not directly involve the second [or target] language, but are still indispensable in the language learning process (metacognitive, affective and social strategies). However, Hsiao & Oxford observe that this kind of division does not correspond with the actual use that learners make of these strategies.

McDonough (1999) adds that different language skills (reading, writing, listening and talking) come with different strategies, a point of view later on confirmed by Leaver et al. (2005) who separate receptive skills (like reading and listening) from productive skills (speaking and writing). Also in Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005), a distinction is made between *learning strategies* (strategies that make one’s learning more effective; important for learners with limited proficiency) and *communication strategies* (strategies used by a learner when he does not know how to express or interpret target language material; especially useful for learners with a higher proficiency level). What is named here “communication strategies” is thus equivalent to Oxford’s “compensation strategies” (1990, as cited by McDonough, 1999 and
Leaver et al., 2005). The following table shows which authors proposed which categories and also contains a brief description of each strategy type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Strategy type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cognitive strategies</td>
<td>strategies for rehearsing and memorising foreign language material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>socio-affective strategies</td>
<td>strategies for regulating interaction with others and managing emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen (2003)</td>
<td>metacognitive strategies</td>
<td>strategies for “managing and supervising strategy use”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cognitive strategies</td>
<td>strategies for “memorising and manipulating target language structures”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>affective strategies</td>
<td>strategies for ”gauging emotional reactions to learning and lowering anxieties”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social strategies</td>
<td>strategies for “enhancing learning” (by seeking interaction with other learners or native speakers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford (1990) (in: Leaver, Ehrman &amp; Shekhtman, 2005)</td>
<td>metacognitive strategies</td>
<td>strategies such as “analysis, applying background knowledge, prediction, etc.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cognitive strategies</td>
<td>strategies such as “self-evaluation of progress, planning language study, etc.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>affective strategies</td>
<td>strategies such as “positive self-talk”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social strategies</td>
<td>strategies such as “asking questions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>compensation strategies</td>
<td>strategies for making up for missing knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>memory strategies</td>
<td>strategies such as “using mnemonics and keywords”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hsiao &amp; Oxford (2002)</td>
<td>direct strategies</td>
<td>strategies directly involving the second/target language (cognitive, compensation and memory strategies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>indirect strategies</td>
<td>strategies not directly involving the second/target language (metacognitive, affective and social strategies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaver, Ehrman &amp; Shekhtman (2005)</td>
<td>learning strategies</td>
<td>strategies for making learning more effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>communication strategies</td>
<td>strategies for coping with expression or interpretation problems in the target language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Categorizations for language learning strategies
Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005) introduced the concept “strategic competence”: the “ability to select the appropriate strategies for the learning or communicative situation in which you find yourself”. These authors emphasise that the selection of the right strategies is more important than the total number of strategies used by a learner. Language learning strategies are not automatically “good” or “bad”, but the learner can only take advantage of them by selecting the appropriate strategy for a certain situation (Cohen, 1998, as cited by Hsiao & Oxford, 2002). Lee & Oxford (2008) by contrast, argue that a higher frequency of language learning strategy use probably has a positive effect on one’s learning progress. Two other positive outcomes of an elaborate knowledge of learning strategies were enumerated by Hsiao & Oxford (2002): an increase of learner autonomy (i.e. a higher degree of control over one’s own learning process) as well as an increase in proficiency. Sewell (2003) therefore suggests to provide students with strategy-based instruction, particularly about (meta)cognitive strategies for improving their speaking skills in the target language. Students should be stimulated to try different and unknown types of strategies in order to familiarise themselves with it and expand the range of strategies at their disposal.

2.6.3 Summary

Language learning strategies are best described as the actions and thoughts selected by learners in order to improve their learning of the target language. A language learning strategy can for example consist in repeating a list of words with a problematic pronunciation over and over again (i.e. an action). Also learners who have to encourage themselves to speak in front of an audience make use of a learning strategy – here a purely mental picture – to overcome their anxiety. On this ground, mental strategies should be included in the general definition of language learning strategies, exactly as Cohen (2003) states. Since the line between language learning strategies and language use strategies cannot always be that easily drawn, both kinds of strategies will be included under the general label “language learning strategies”. These learning strategies can either consciously or unconsciously be employed. The number and type of strategies that learners dispose of depends on the language
learning situation (SL [second language] or FL [foreign language] context), as well as on their proficiency level, field of study, gender, age and personal learning style.

Of all typologies above, the one proposed by Oxford (1999, as cited by Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2005) seems to be the most useful one since it allows a precise classification of language learning strategies in six different categories: cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, compensation and memory strategies. When thinking about the strategies that are central to pronunciation training, both the direct and indirect strategies tend to dominate: cognitive-memory strategies (particularly repetition), social and possibly also affective strategies. Even though it may seem as if pronunciation training only requires productive language learning strategies, one should also not lose sight of the receptive strategies, which may be very useful in practising sound discrimination – a crucial skill in acquiring a foreign pronunciation. Contrary to the approach of Leaver et al. (2005), the term communication strategies should not be confused with compensation strategies. In this study, communication strategies will therefore be defined otherwise (i.e. in a sense closer to social strategies).

Strategic competence (i.e. the knowledge to select the correct learning strategy for a particular situation or learning task) should be preferred over the random use of numerous strategies. Here, some explicit learner instruction on strategy use may turn out to be useful, in order to positively influence the learning process.

2.7 The relationship between learner beliefs and language learning strategies

It cannot be denied that learner beliefs have an impact on a language learner’s strategy use. This correlation has in particular been demonstrated by Yang (1999) and other researchers such as Abraham & Vann (1987), Horwitz (1987-88) and Wenden (1986-87) (all as cited by Yang, 1999). As already revealed in the previous sections purely cognitive beliefs influence a learner’s motivational beliefs. The latter in their turn influence one’s learning behaviour, i.e. one’s actual use of language learning strategies (Dweck & Legett, 1988, as cited by Yang, 1999). Yang (1999)
also cites Pintrich et al. (1989-90) to illustrate the way in which learning strategies can be affected by the beliefs of a learner. Intrinsically motivated learners or learners possessing a high sense of self-efficacy (both motivational beliefs) will make better use of (meta)cognitive learning strategies, while anxious learners will automatically have less control over their learning and as a result, their selection of (meta)cognitive strategies will be less effective. The same reasoning can be found in Lee & Oxford (2008). Beliefs of the type “learning English is important” (cognitive belief concerning the value of the target language) or “I am highly proficient in English” (motivational belief concerning one’s self-efficacy) have a positive effect on a student’s strategy use.

An interesting observation on the link between learner beliefs and language learning strategies has been made by Yang (1999), who particularly focuses on learning spoken English. Learners who hold positive self-efficacy beliefs are said to prefer functional practice strategies. These learners actively look for opportunities to improve their pronunciation skills in real-life situations (for example by starting conversations in English, seeking native speakers as conversation partners or watching English TV-programmes) (Yang, 1999). When students have strong beliefs about the value of learning spoken English, they tend to be in favour of formal-oral practice strategies, such as imitation and repetition. These students are for example convinced that an excellent English pronunciation is essential and will therefore focus on the formal aspects of English when practising their pronunciation, by means of repeating the pronunciation of new words or trying to imitate native speakers as much as possible (Yang, 1999). Consequently, when the self-efficacy beliefs of a learner are much stronger than those about the value of the target language, he will automatically opt for functional, communicative practice.

Already in 1988, Horwitz was convinced that learner beliefs can affect strategy use, but Yang (1999) qualifies Horwitz’ observation by stating that the relationship between beliefs and strategies is probably reciprocal. The selection of learning strategies can thus also have an impact on a learner’s beliefs. Especially functional practice seems to be helpful in increasing a student’s self-efficacy level (Pintrich, 1989, as cited by Yang, 1999). Of course, any type of well-chosen language learning strategy leads to successful practice, helps in improving the learners’ self-perception.
of their own language proficiency and consequently enhances their motivation (Yang, 1999).

Yang (1999), however, correctly asserts that the training of oral skills (such as pronunciation) evokes contradictory feelings with language students. On the one hand, they realise that oral practice is absolutely necessary to reach a certain proficiency level. On the other hand, they are often anxious about it and their concern and shyness frequently hinder their learning progress (Yang, 1999). Students overcome with fear will not opt for functional practice, for example, but their fear can partly be overcome by using the following strategies: trying to relax and encouraging oneself to speak (Yang, 1999).

In brief, research by Yang (1999) and others revealed that a strong relationship can be observed between learners’ beliefs and their use of language learning strategies. When following Horwitz’s (1988) and Yang’s (1999) reasoning, it almost seems as if both correlations are mutually exclusive, as if a high sense of self-efficacy necessarily comes with a preference for functional practice and excludes the selection of any formal-oral strategy. Or as if a student who attributes high value to spoken English only focuses on the formal aspects of the English pronunciation and does not care about its communicative function. Of course, this is certainly not always the case. It is true that anxious learners (with a lower sense of self-efficacy) tend to avoid functional practice, but it should also not be forgotten that oral proficiency training can be compared to the two sides of a coin. On the one hand, it is felt to be a major cause for concern, while it can also be seen as a necessity at the same time. It is therefore possible that learners are so strongly convinced about the value of learning spoken English, that they are prepared to carry out any type of practice (formal as well as functional). Probably, some of these students absolutely want to overcome their fear of functional practice, because acquiring proper pronunciation is so important to them, and consequently increase their self-efficacy level due to their perseverance.

Another objection to a strict separation of formal-oral and functional strategies on the basis of learner beliefs is related to the language leaning context. EFL students with a very high self-efficacy level may be forced to use mainly formal-oral strategies for training their pronunciation, since in foreign language contexts fewer opportunities arise for communicative practice.
When discussing the relationship between learner beliefs and learning strategies, one should therefore always take into account that the learner’s actual strategy use depends on the dominating belief (either the anxiety for oral practice or the high valuation of learning spoken English) as well as on the language learning context.
3 Methodology

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the research questions posed in this paper. The methods and instruments used for data gathering and analysis will also be presented here.

3.1 Research questions

The central focus of this study is of course on the learners’ beliefs about pronunciation training. The beliefs enquired for were mainly motivational (self-efficacy, anxiety, extrinsic or intrinsic motivation, instrumental motivation, integrativeness and opinions about classroom-related factors), but also the purely cognitive beliefs (about the difficulty and value of learning English pronunciation or about certain language learning strategies) were taken into account. The first research question is hence:

What beliefs do Flemish university students of English hold about their pronunciation training?

The second aim of this study consists in enquiring into the actual use of two different types of language learning strategies crucial in pronunciation training: formal-oral practice and functional practice. Furthermore, there will be an attempt to describe the precise relationship between both types of strategies and their corresponding beliefs: does a strong sense of self-efficacy automatically go hand in hand with a more extensive use of functional strategies? And does a high valuation of spoken English automatically lead to greater employment of formal-oral strategies? For this reason, the second research question is formulated as follows:

What language learning strategies do these students actually employ to train their English pronunciation? And how do these strategies relate to the beliefs held?

The final goal of this study is to reveal the learners’ opinion about certain concrete pronunciation tasks, most often in relation to their pronunciation course. Finally, the
students were also asked to evaluate the pronunciation training that they received. Therefore, the third research question is the following:

*What is the learners’ opinion about certain concrete pronunciation tasks and how do they evaluate the pronunciation training they received at university?*

### 3.2 The quantitative and qualitative approach combined

Many linguists involved in researching learner beliefs acknowledge the importance of both quantitative and qualitative methods to generate more reliable results. Bernat (2005) remarks that a person’s belief system is extremely “rich”, so rich it that is hard to provide a truthful description of it only by means of a quantitative approach (such as a questionnaire). Lee & Oxford (2008) therefore suggest to integrate open questions in a questionnaire, for not being completely dependent on the respondents’ judgements about normative statements. Another more popular suggestion is to combine qualitative with quantitative research methods in studies that enquire for personality-related characteristics of language learners. Lightbown & Spada (2006) mention that one’s personality has the greatest impact on the acquisition of conversational skills, for example pronunciation. They come to the conclusion that quantitative methods are useful to “measure” the presence of beliefs, but that only a qualitative approach allows an adequate description of personal variables. Cotterall (1999) also proposes to combine closed- and open-ended questions, in both questionnaires and interviews. Chang (2007) follows the same reasoning, suggesting to first conduct quantitative research (such as a questionnaire) to obtain general information, followed by a qualitative study (by means of an interview, for example) which is “vital to provide a clearer, more complete picture of the research findings”. When doing qualitative research, the researcher should formulate his interview questions and select his interviewees on the basis of the qualitative results obtained (Chang, 2007).

For this reason, the present study will be conducted in two phases: a quantitative phase (by means of a written questionnaire), which will then be complemented by qualitative data obtained in supplementary interviews. In the data gathering, the questionnaires will play a more substantial role than the interviews.
Answers to a questionnaire may of course not always be reliable, because it is possible that a respondent misunderstands the statement/question or does not completely intend it in the same way as the researcher does. Such misunderstanding can partly be avoided through interviews in which the interviewee can ask for explanation when s/he does not understand, while the interviewer can reformulate a statement/question or can make a request for further information.

Even though it is possible to reduce the number of misunderstandings, the question still remains whether the answers given in a questionnaire or interview always form a faithful reflection of a learner’s thoughts and actions. Some respondents may agree with certain statements (for example: “I practise my pronunciation every day”) or give certain answers because they are convinced that these are the “right” ones, while this reaction does not truly reflect their actual beliefs or behaviour. This phenomenon is often called the “social desirability bias” (Nederhof, 1985).

3.3 Design of the questionnaire

The questionnaire presented to the students (see appendix part A) contains two major parts:

1. the actual questionnaire about beliefs, strategies and pronunciation tasks
2. a background questionnaire

In the actual questionnaire, three conceptual areas can be individuated: beliefs, strategies and opinions about concrete pronunciation tasks. In the appendix (part B), an alternative version of the questionnaire can be found in which the theoretical classification of each question is indicated.

The classification of the statements about beliefs happened according to the BALLI-structure [Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory]. BALLI is a research device first developed by Horwitz in 1988 to assess student opinions about language learning in five major areas: difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, motivations and expectations (Horwitz, 1988). In this type of questionnaire, in which there are no correct or incorrect answers, students were asked to indicate whether they (strongly)
agreed or (strongly) disagreed with certain statements about language learning (Horwitz, 1988). From 1988 onwards, Horwitz’ invention has frequently been used as a research tool in studies on learner beliefs. The most interesting areas for enquiry were selected on the basis of Yang’s study (1999) on the link between beliefs and strategies of EFL learners, in which BALLI was also employed: beliefs about the difficulty of language learning and expectations; beliefs about the value and nature of learning spoken English; beliefs about learning and communication strategies. Another classification taken into consideration for structuring the questionnaire statements about beliefs, was Dörnyei’s motivational construct. Subject-related factors (extrinsic and intrinsic motives, instrumental motivation), learner-related factors (anxiety and self-efficacy) as well as classroom-related factors (practice with peers, tapes and instructor) will all be examined by means of the questionnaire. (Items that enquired for the degree of integrative motivation were part of the background questionnaire, not in the actual questionnaire). Figure 1 illustrates the classification underlying all items (of the actual questionnaire) that enquire for learner beliefs.
Figure 1: Theoretical design of the questionnaire (beliefs)
The second part of the questionnaire, on the actual use of language learning strategies, was originally structured according to SILL [Strategy Inventory for Language Learning]. With a design similar to BALLI, SILL was developed by Oxford in 1990 as a research tool to investigate the use of six types of language learning strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, social, affective, memory-related and compensatory strategies (Lee & Oxford, 2008). Here again, the questionnaire design for this paper was based on Yang's work (1999) who also distinguishes six categories of strategies that were modelled on, but somewhat different from the SILL-structure. Three of his categories showed to be particularly useful for research about pronunciation training: functional strategies, formal-oral strategies and social strategies. The theoretical structure at the basis all questionnaire items about strategy use is visualised in Fig. 2.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2:** Theoretical design of the questionnaire (strategies)

The third part is intended to reveal the learners' opinion about the pronunciation training they received and the following concrete pronunciation tasks: ear training, segmental and suprasegmental practice, awareness raising, transcription exercises, minimal pair exercises; as well as about the integration of English songs in pronunciation class and the importance of feedback. Students are also asked whether they prefer to work towards a native-like or intelligible goal. The structure of
the third conceptual area of the questionnaire can thus be visualised as follows (see figure 3).

![Diagram of the third conceptual area of the questionnaire](image)

**Figure 3:** Theoretical design of the questionnaire (opinions about pronunciation tasks)

However, this original structure (see appendix part B for a classification of the questionnaire items according to topic) is not visible in the actual questionnaire presented to the students. All statements and questions were put in a random order in order not to reveal the theoretical design of the study. To facilitate the processing of the questionnaire, all questions were ranked according to type. Four different types of questions can be individuated.

**A.** 45 statements in which the respondent is asked to indicate his agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree)

**B.** The respondent is asked to rate the importance of individual items (again on a 5-point Likert scale)

**C.** The respondent is asked to rank individual items depending on their importance (by means of a score ranging from 1-3) (1 = most important; 3 = less important)

**D.** Open question
The background questionnaire was included to obtain the necessary demographic and personal information. The following items were enquired for:

- age
- sex
- mother tongue (to be able to exclude native speakers of English and other non-Dutch speaking learners)
- stays in an English speaking country for over two weeks
- previous experience with studying English
- contacts with native speakers of English
- possibility of a future career as an English language teacher
- familiarity with the concept “language laboratory”

Most statements and questions in this questionnaire are based on or adapted from previous studies on learner beliefs or attitudes. Some items have been reformulated by the author to make them refer more explicitly to the training or acquisition of pronunciation, others have been slightly adjusted to increase their clarity and ensure maximal understanding. In the appendix (part C), the source(s) of each questionnaire item is/are indicated.

In part A of the actual questionnaire, three pairs of statements have been included to check if the participants selected their answers consciously or randomly. Each couple of items enquired for the same subject, and logically requires corresponding answers.

- control pair 1:
  item A38: *Communicating is much more important than sounding like a native speaker of English.*
  ~ item A24: *When I am speaking English it is more important to be intelligible than to have an excellent pronunciation.*

- control pair 2:
  item A17: *Acquiring proper pronunciation in English is important to me.*
  ~ item A5: *It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.*

- control pair 3:
  item A20: *I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in pronunciation class.*
  ~ item A36: *I feel confident when I speak in pronunciation class.*
If clear contradictions were spotted in two out of these three instances, the respondent’s questionnaire was excluded from analysis because it was highly probable that the answers in it were not very reliable. None of the questionnaires had to be excluded from analysis due to clear contradictory answers spotted by means of the control pairs.

3.4 Design of the supplementary interviews

The supplementary interviews were designed to resolve obscurities that arose after the analysis of the quantitative data, either by asking in what why the interviewee did interpret a certain item in the questionnaire, by reformulating questions or statements from the questionnaire or by eliciting extra information on certain topics already touched upon in the questionnaire.

In these interviews, the three main conceptual areas from the questionnaire have been retained: beliefs, strategies and opinions about concrete pronunciation tasks and the course. As opposed to the questionnaire, this theoretical structure has been retained in the actual interview sessions and questions were grouped according to these three themes. All questions are designed specifically for the present study and can be found in the appendix (part D), in the order in which they were posed by the author during the interview session. In that same document, the indications between brackets next to most questions signal to which item in the questionnaire this particular question refers back.

3.5 Participants, data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was presented to a class of English language students who had at least reached Bachelor 2 [Bachelor 2] level at Ghent University in Flanders (Belgium). The quantitative data were collected halfway through the second semester, because the English Proficiency II course on pronunciation was only organised in the second half of the academic year. Before distributing the questionnaire, it was stressed that participation was completely voluntary, that all
results would be processed anonymously and that there were no clear-cut right or wrong answers to the questionnaire. Thirty-seven respondents participated on a voluntary basis.

Only the questionnaires filled out by native speakers of Dutch were taken into account, since this study examines the learner beliefs of Flemish university students who are learning English. As a result hereof, the response rate decreased to thirty-six (one of the respondents indicated he was a native speaker of German). Another criterion established for the data analysis was that all respondents were presently enrolled in or had already followed the English Proficiency II course, i.e. a BA2 course partly devoted to the training of writing skills and partly to the practice of speaking skills in which pronunciation training was included – mainly by means of language laboratory practice and individual tutorials. Of course, the questionnaire-items exclusively referred to that part of the English Proficiency II classes meant for improving the student’s oral skills and pronunciation in particular. All answers given to the questionnaire were manually processed and all percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

The students who were interviewed also did this on a voluntary basis. Four respondents indicated in the questionnaire that they were interested in collaborating, but only two of them (one male, one female) were actually prepared to take part in the supplementary interviews. A preliminary analysis of their answers to the questionnaire revealed that the two interviewees had a different profile. Student X is a BA2 student who strongly agreed that acquiring proper pronunciation is important to her, while student Y (a postgraduate student) indicated that acquiring proper pronunciation does not matter that much to him and that being able to communicate intelligibly should be the central aim in pronunciation instruction.

The interview sessions were held three to four weeks after the administration of the questionnaire, to allow the researcher to formulate the interview questions on the basis of the quantitative results obtained. Both interviews were tape recorded to facilitate the analysis of the qualitative data.
4 Interpretation of the results: questionnaires

In this chapter, all quantitative data obtained in this study will be presented and interpreted. To facilitate the discussion of the questionnaire results, the questionnaire items are here grouped according to the subject that they enquired for. As a result, the order in which these results are discussed clearly reflects the theoretical design of the questionnaire that can be consulted in the appendix (part B).

The response rate for questionnaire items A1 to A45 can be found in the table on the following pages.
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<td>2. A native-like English pronunciation will help me get a good job.</td>
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<td>4. To train my English pronunciation it is important to repeat and practise a lot.</td>
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<td>5. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.</td>
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<td>6. The language lab and the teacher’s assistance help a lot in improving one’s pronunciation.</td>
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<td>7. I usually record my own voice when I practise my pronunciation.</td>
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<td>8. The repetition of basic theoretical concepts is useful in this pronunciation class.</td>
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<td>9. I practise the sounds of English.</td>
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<td>10. I practise my English pronunciation with other students.</td>
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<td>11. I’d like to sound as native as possible when speaking English.</td>
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<td>12. It would be useful if awareness raising (i.e. explanation about the positioning of the speech organs when pronouncing a certain sound) was part of our pronunciation training.</td>
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<td>13. It would be useful to have more minimal pair exercises as part of our pronunciation training.</td>
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*Note: for A1-A38: 1= strongly agree; 3= neither agree nor disagree; 5 = strongly disagree*
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<td>17. Acquiring proper pronunciation in English is important to me.</td>
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<td>18. To train my English pronunciation it is important to practise in the language laboratory.</td>
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<td>19. It is important to practise your pronunciation with cassettes, tapes or CD-ROMs.</td>
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<td>20. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in pronunciation class.</td>
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<td>21. Having my pronunciation evaluated by others is scary.</td>
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<td>22. I prefer a pronunciation class in which I can work with other students in pairs or groups.</td>
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<td>23. I look for people I can talk to in English to train my pronunciation skills.</td>
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<td>24. When I am speaking English it is more important to be intelligible than to have an excellent pronunciation.</td>
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<td>25. I am satisfied with the pronunciation training I received.</td>
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<td>26. If I learn to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.</td>
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<td>27. I want to improve my accent when speaking English.</td>
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*Note: for A1-A38: 1= strongly agree; 3= neither agree nor disagree; 5 = strongly disagree*
28. I would feel uncomfortable about my English pronunciation under any circumstances.

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29. Having my pronunciation evaluated by others is helpful.

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30. I pay attention when someone is speaking English to imitate his/her pronunciation.

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31. I encourage myself to speak even when I am afraid to make a mistake.

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32. Considering the amount of time I worked on my English pronunciation, I am satisfied with my progress.

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33. The English education I receive at university will be sufficient to learn to speak English very well.

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34. I am concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English.

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35. I will never be able to speak English with a good accent.

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36. I feel confident when I speak in pronunciation class.

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<td>8</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37. I believe I can improve my pronunciation skills in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>10</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38. Communicating is much more important than sounding like a native speaker of English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39. How important is the factor “fulfilling the requirements of the course” for you in improving your pronunciation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: for A1-A38: 1 = strongly agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 5 = strongly disagree
for A39-A40: 1 = highly; 3 = sufficiently/medium; 5 = not at all
### Table 2: Response rate: items A1-A45

* Note: for A39-A40: 1 = highly; 3 = sufficiently/medium; 5 = not at all
for A41: 1 = very well; 3 = sufficiently; 5 = very bad & for A42-A45: 1 = extremely, 3 = sufficiently; 5 = not at all
4.1 Background questionnaire

Next to the subject’s age, gender and mother tongue, the background questionnaire also enquired after further personal information that could have an impact on the data presented in this study.

The demographic results of the background questionnaire showed that 8 of the participants were male (22%) and 28 female (78%) (see table 3), with ages ranging from 18 to 24 (see table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sex</th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Demography: gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>age</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Demography: age

Almost all learners indicated that they had already studied English before coming to university (see table 5), which points at a great degree of familiarity with the English language and pronunciation, and which could possibly facilitate their foreign language learning at university level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you have any experience in studying English before coming to university?</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Background: previous experience with studying English
36% had already attended language laboratory sessions (mostly at university level for other foreign languages than English) (see table 6). It is clear that for these students, their familiarity with the concept could decrease their anxiety level, but their previous experience could also positively/negatively colour their perception and expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before coming to this class, were you already familiar with the concept “language laboratory”?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Background: familiarity with language laboratory

More than 40% of the students asserted that they are planning to become an English language teacher and 19% is still undecided (see table 7). It is important to take into account the fact that the majority of the students are potential future teachers, since their beliefs about pronunciation training can possibly influence their future students and teaching practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you planning to be an English teacher?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Background: future career
4.2 Beliefs

4.2.1 Difficulty of language learning and expectations

Almost half of the respondents (47%) find the English pronunciation difficult to learn (item A16), but about one fifth (19%) does not think that this is the case. When compared to other studies, the percentage of agreement with the statement *The English pronunciation is difficult* is considerably high. Yang (1999) for example noticed that Taiwanese students have more optimistic opinions about the difficulty of English. However, item A16 in this questionnaire specifically referred to the difficulty of the English pronunciation, while most of the other studies exclusively enquire for the difficulty of the English language in general.

Horwitz (1988, as cited by Yang, 1999) observed that the learners’ perception of the difficulty of the target language affects their commitment to the learning process. When a learning task is considered to be (too) difficult, their motivation will decrease and they will only put moderate effort in it. Particularly those respondents who have indicated that the English pronunciation is difficult are thus sensible to demotivation.

Exactly 80% of the students (strongly) believed that they will ultimately learn to speak English very well (item A1), while only one student did not. This percentage roughly corresponds to the responses given in Yang’s study in 1999 and points at a relatively high self-efficacy level.

Riley (2006) asked the same question to first year university students in Japan. Here, only a slight minority was convinced that they would ever become proficient speakers of English. Of course, it should be noted that these first year student are still relatively inexperienced and unsure about what to expect from their foreign language instruction. Second year or more experienced students are probably more confident about their own ability because they have already been exposed to the English language at university level for at least one year. Lightbown & Spada (2006) noticed that “language distance affects pronunciation”. One could therefore also argue that the linguistic distance between spoken Japanese and English is much greater when compared to Dutch and English, and that native speakers of Japanese would
therefore automatically be less optimistic about learning English pronunciation. When following this reasoning, the same would then also be true for Taiwanese learners of English. Nevertheless, the results of Yang’s study (1999) clearly show that native speakers of a tone language (such as Thai, in: Leaver, Ehrman & Shekhtman, 2006) can be as optimistic about their future proficiency in spoken English as Dutch-speaking learners are.

To enable them to learn to speak English very well, about half of the students (45%) express their confidence in the English education received at university (item A33). One quarter of them did not, probably because they endorse the importance of a more spontaneous immersion in the target language outside class – an assumption that could be further investigated in the interviews. However, it is clear that most students attach considerable importance to the education that they receive at university and this comes of course with high expectations.

The majority of the students involved in this study seem to hold fairly positive views about their future as a proficient speaker of English and about the role of university education in achieving this aim. At the same time, half of the respondents signalled that they considered the English pronunciation to be difficult, a conviction that could possibly lead to minimal expense of efforts and demotivation. Another factor that could contribute to a possible delusion of these learners is their optimism. If their expectations are too high, they also risk in ending up having lost all motivation (Horwitz, 1988).

Notwithstanding their optimism about learning spoken English, the respondents of this study seem to be relatively susceptible to demotivation. However, the fact that many students realise that the English pronunciation will be not that easy to learn, shows that they are not too optimistic. This realism could also stimulate them to work even harder on their speaking skills, especially since their strongest belief consists in a positive expectation about their own ability to learn spoken English (as revealed by the response rate to item A1).
4.2.2 Value and nature of learning spoken English

All participants (strongly) agreed with the statement *I want to learn to speak English well* (item A3). In Yang (1999) and Bernat (2005) similar response rates can be found. Bernat (2005) observes that a high valuation of the target language results in a greater desire to learn and consequently in higher motivation. Learning spoken English is clearly very highly valued by all respondents to this questionnaire. When following Bernat’s reasoning, this percentage also predicts that the learners involved will be highly motivated.

The same observation is valid for the following statements: *Acquiring proper pronunciation in English is important to me* (item A17) (95% agreed) and *I want to improve my accent when speaking English* (item A27) (91% agreed). Here again, a strong desire surfaces to acquire an appropriate English pronunciation, a desire that is even slightly stronger with regard to learning spoken English in general. 75% of the students even (strongly) agree with the statement *It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation* (item A5).

However, the responses given to item A34 (*I am concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English*) apparently contradict the observations made above. Only 42% agrees with that statement, while the other half seems to adopt a rather indifferent attitude towards their progress in English pronunciation. Such an indifference could result in a more problematic language learning process, especially since clear engagement with one’s progress in pronunciation is said to lead to higher proficiency (Elliot, 1995).

In general, the overall majority of participants strongly endorses the value of learning spoken English and acquiring a proper pronunciation. These beliefs testify to a great desire and interest in learning the language. Almost all students all students holding these beliefs will consequently be highly motivated, which will positively affect their proficiency level.

Acquiring a “proper” pronunciation (confirmation rate of 95%) is clearly more important than speaking with an “excellent” accent (confirmed by 75%).
difference can probably be explained by the growth of English as an international language. Bernat (2005) explains that as a consequence of this growing role, priority is given to intelligibility because in an international context the main aim consists in being intelligible and not in having a native-like pronunciation.

However, only slightly more than 40% of the respondents express their concern with their progress in the pronunciation learning process. A surprising result, since we would not expect this from students who are strongly convinced about the value of proper pronunciation. A possible explanation could be that the respondents understood the words “concerned with” in item A34 as “worried about”, instead of “interested in, ready to work on, motivated for”. Therefore, during the interview sessions, it may be useful to check whether a misunderstanding has happened by asking interviewees for their interpretation of the phrase.

**4.2.3 Learning and communication strategies**

With regard to learning strategies, all learners (100%) believe that it is important to repeat and practise a lot to train their pronunciation (item A4). 66% of them agrees that language laboratory practice is an important form of pronunciation training, yet 17% is not convinced about the importance of language laboratories for pronunciation training (item A18).

Despite the fact that most respondents strongly endorse repetition and practice to improve their pronunciation, pronunciation practice by means of cassettes, tapes or CD-ROMs is thought to be less important: only 42% agreed with statement A19 (compared to more than 70% in Yang, 1999), while almost the same percentage remained undecided on this topic. Many learners probably do not exclusively believe in repetitive drill when it comes to practising their pronunciation, but also believe in the strength of functional practice and more communicative strategies. This hypothesis can be verified in the supplementary interviews, as well as by means of the quantitative results about the actual use of language learning strategies.

It is clear that every respondent is strongly convinced about the importance of repetition and practice in pronunciation training. When learners are in favour of these
formal-oral methods, one would also expect them to often use these types of practice. Language laboratory practice is perceived to be more interesting than working exclusively with recordings, probably because learners are more often corrected by the teacher during language laboratory exercises, especially when compared to their (individual) practice with recordings at home. Notwithstanding the high importance attributed to repetition and practice, a considerable amount of learners seems to be aware of the fact that those formal-oral strategies are not the only way in which pronunciation can be improved.

4.2.4 Motivational subject-related factors: extrinsic, intrinsic, instrumental motivation and integrativeness

In improving their pronunciation, the learners’ extrinsic motivation (item A40) showed to be about as strong as their intrinsic motivation (item A39). Nearly 80% of all participants believes that the will to fulfil the requirements of the course is considerably important for the improvement of their pronunciation, while 70% attributed the same degree of importance to “pronunciation learning is fun”.

Asking the respondents in the background questionnaire for the number of stays (over two weeks) in English-speaking countries and their contacts with native speakers of the English language, helped to get a clearer insight in their actual degree of integrativeness. Only 22% had ever stayed in an English-speaking country for more than two weeks (see table 8), but more than half of the participants (56%) keep contact with native speakers (see table 9). One could therefore conclude that the degree of integrative motivation is relatively high among these learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever stayed in an English-speaking country for more than 2 weeks?</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22%</strong></td>
<td><strong>78%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Background: stays in English-speaking country
Only about one tenth (11%) of all respondents did not believe that a native-like pronunciation would not be helpful in purchasing a good job (item A2), which points at a relatively high degree of instrumental motivation.

Half of the group reacted positively to the statement *If I learn to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it* (item A26). Again they are fairly positive about the role of English pronunciation as a purposeful instrument, although their doubt is already slightly stronger here.

However, when compared to other studies on the motivational beliefs of English language learners, such as those conducted by Riley (2006) or Bernat (2005), the degree of instrumental motivation measured among Flemish learners is considerably lower.

The primary sources of motivation that can be individuated in this study are integrative and instrumental. However, the students were slightly less optimistic about other opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of spoken English, which is probably due to the fact that they are learning English as a foreign and not as a second language.

Other motives influence the students as well, such as a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motives: most respondents acknowledge that they want to improve their pronunciation because the curriculum requires it, but at the same time they also agree about the fact that they regard pronunciation training as a pleasant experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you have any contacts with English mother-tongue speakers?</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Background: contact with native speakers of English
4.2.5 Motivational learner-related factors: anxiety and self-efficacy

More than 50% of the participants admitted that they were highly to relatively worried about learning English pronunciation (item A43). For 42% of the students learning pronunciation did not form a major cause for concern.

About 40% of all learners gets nervous and confused when they are speaking in pronunciation class (item A20), and logically almost the same percentage disagreed with the statement I feel confident when I speak in pronunciation class (item A36). Remarkably, only 22% among the respondents signal that they feel uncomfortable about their English pronunciation under any circumstances (item A28) and 50% of them indicated that this is not the case.

Clearly, the learners’ use anxiety is considerably lower than their class anxiety. More than one third of all learners do not feel confident when speaking in pronunciation class, while only 22% seems to suffer from use anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) argue that class anxiety appears mainly in test situations. Particularly in the language lab, learners can get the impression that their pronunciation is constantly being “tested” or “evaluated” by the teacher and that it exactly this pressure that causes stress. It is obvious that the students’ primary source of worry can be found in the classroom-situation. However, the precise cause of the anxiety still has to be individuated. Is it the fear of being evaluated by the teacher? Or are the students simply afraid to sound silly in front of their classmates, etc.?

More than half of the students (56%) believe that they will do (very) well in pronunciation class (item A41), and 36% thinks that their performance will be sufficient. Such a response rate points at a fairly high sense of self-efficacy among the learners, which positively influences their motivation and increases their chance of achieving better results (Smit, 2002). In comparison to the response rate of item A1 which enquired for the learners’ self-efficacy with regard to learning spoken English in general, the students apparently have a more limited confidence about their achievements in pronunciation class. This decreased confidence is probably due to the relatively high degree of classroom anxiety and shows that these learners are aware of the fact that their anxiety might affect their performance in pronunciation class.
Nearly 90% is confident about their ability to improve their English pronunciation skills (item A37), while 69% does not agree with the idea that they will never be able to speak English with a good accent (item A35). Both these response rates confirm the relatively strong sense of self-efficacy of most participants.

Approximately half of the students (45%) admitted that they experienced the evaluation of their pronunciation by others as a scary event (compared to only 22% in Cotterall’s study in 1999), while 41% claimed that this is not the case (item A21). The group of respondents appears to be undecided here, balancing between anxiety and self-efficacy. However, almost all of them (89%) recognised that having your pronunciation evaluated by others can also be helpful at the same time (item A29). According to Cotterall (1999) a comparable percentage can be interpreted as an indication of a strong sense of self-efficacy among the respondents.

The majority of the respondents in this study have a strong sense of self-efficacy: they are confident about their own ability to improve their English pronunciation and to eventually acquire a proper accent. Especially in class situations, these learners seem to lose a considerable amount of their self-efficacy and they are well aware of the fact that this anxiety puts at risk their classroom performance. A possible cause for this loss of self-efficacy can be found in being judged by others on their pronunciation, which is perceived to be helpful and scary at the same time. Although learners realise that feedback from others is crucial in improving one’s pronunciation, there is still that fear about being evaluated.

4.2.6 Classroom-related factors: practice with others, tapes and instructor

Over 50% of the learners perceived the language lab practice and assistance of the teacher as helpful elements in the improvement of their pronunciation (item A6), although 17% did not believe that this was the case. When compared to the answers selected for item A18 (To train my English pronunciation it is important to practise in the language laboratory), a similar pattern can be discerned. To guarantee successful language learning, it is crucial that learning strategies that are important to
the learner lead to the expected results. When a particular type of strategy does not fulfil a learner's expectations, h/she will automatically consider that type of practice as less important. This perception will in its turn influence the learning progress and the student risks losing even more of his/her motivation.

Also more than half of the participants (61%) expressed their desire for a pronunciation class in which they can work with other students in pairs or groups (item A22). While the majority of the students seemed to be in favour of pair or group work, Smit (2002) warns us that their grades could possibly get worse if the support of peers is too much emphasised. This is probably due to the fact that in such situations, teachers have to divide their time among the groups which results in fewer opportunities for receiving feedback. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that the integration of some pronunciation exercises in pairs or groups contribute to the variety of tasks in pronunciation class. At the same time, it may be an excellent opportunity to integrate a less structured and more “spontaneous” form of practice in pronunciation class, particularly when students explicitly ask for this type of practice.

Individual practice with the pronunciation CD-ROM ² outside class is considered to be of minor importance by 55% of the respondents (item A44). According to Smit (2002), such a response rate indicates that the degree of learner autonomy is relatively low and that the learners are not ready yet to change their pronunciation by themselves. The reactions to item A7 (I usually record my own voice when I practise my pronunciation) seem to point in the same direction, since slightly more that half of the participants (53%) disagreed with it. Surprisingly, most learners do not seem to make use of this type of practice which provides them with a more accurate view on their own pronunciation, facilitates self-correction and allows them to monitor their own progress in a better way. Even though item A7 did not enquire for a belief about, but for the actual use of a language learning strategy, it does reveal much about the motivation of the learners. Here again, Smit’s theory (2002) predicts that these learners are not yet prepared to learn independently. Lee & Oxford (2008) remarked that in Korea, taping one’s own voice when practising their pronunciation is a language learning strategy mainly employed by high school students. University

students of English tend to make use of “entertaining materials” (such as movies, the Internet, etc.) to familiarise themselves with the English language. It would be interesting to see if this is also the case in Flanders and what the main reason is for not recording one’s voice. This question can possibly be resolved thanks to the qualitative data. Hopefully, the interviews will also provide a clearer insight in the reason(s) why only few learners actually use the pronunciation CD-ROM for individual practice.

According to 53% of the students, the repetition of basic theoretical concepts is useful in pronunciation class (item A8), which confirms the importance of instructor-lead practice. More than one third (36%) remained undecided. Those students probably acknowledge the importance of a solid theoretical basis for pronunciation training, yet attaching more importance to the actual practice.

Interpretations above showed that overall the students attach more importance to their practice with an instructor (for assistance and feedback in the language lab, and the repetition of basis theoretical concepts) and peers (for pair or group work). However, they seem to be less willing to work individually on their pronunciation with tapes, as revealed by the limited number of respondents that use the pronunciation CD-ROM or record their voice when practising their pronunciation. It is clear that the motivation of these learners is higher during classroom practice and will decrease when they are confronted with individual practice.

4.3 Strategies

4.3.1 Formal-oral practice

Approximately three quarters of all respondents (72%) declared to practise the sounds of English (item A9), but only 53% said to pay attention to the pronunciation of native speakers of English to be able to imitate their speech (item A30). In Yang’s
study (1999) slightly more Taiwanese (86%) agreed with the first statement, while no less than 94% agreed with the second.

The responses given by the participants of this study again emphasise that repetitive practice is a frequently used learning strategy to practise pronunciation, while imitation of native speakers is less popular.

4.3.2 Functional practice

Slightly less than 40% of the students actively look for people to talk to in English to train their pronunciation that way (item A23).

A more popular functional language learning strategy consists in encouraging yourself to speak even when you are afraid of making a mistake (item A31): 83% frequently employs it.

Both these observations correspond to those made by Yang (1999). Encouraging oneself to speak is a useful strategy to overcome anxiety, and logically reveals the learners' willingness to overcome their classroom anxiety. The first strategy (i.e. looking for native speakers of English to practise one's pronunciation) is of course less practicable in foreign language context and is therefore less often employed.

4.3.3 Social strategies

Only a limited number of participants (19%) said that they practise their pronunciation with other students (item A10), 53% did not. This result does not correspond at all to the response rate in Yang's Taiwanese study (1999) in which three out of five respondents indicated to train their pronunciation with peers. Therefore, it may be interesting to try to reveal by means of interviews what the reason is for the rather limited popularity of peer practice.

In the theoretical part of this paper, the correlation between learner beliefs and the actual use of language learning strategies has already been explained elaborately.
The next step is to check whether the correlation between self-efficacy and functional practice, as well as between the valuation of spoken English and formal-oral practice can also be demonstrated in this study. Learning spoken English and acquiring a proper pronunciation are highly valued by the overall majority of participants. Consequently, they also strongly endorse the importance of formal-oral strategies such as repetition and practice to improve their pronunciation. At the same time, these learners also have a fairly strong sense of self-efficacy, but this belief does not seem to result in a more extensive use of functional practice. This preference for formal-oral practice over functional strategies is not caused by use anxiety, since the results show that the nervousness of the learners is classroom- and not use-related. Possibly, the difference in frequency is due to the foreign language context in which the students find themselves. In Flanders, the opportunities to practise their English by means of conversations with native speakers are rather limited and as a result learners are automatically forced to rely more heavily on the formal-oral practice of the classroom. In interviews, it may be interesting to enquire for the actual role of functional practice in the pronunciation training of the interviewees, as well as for the actual influence of the EFL context.

4.4 Opinions about pronunciation tasks and general evaluation

More than 70% of all participants were (strongly) convinced about the usefulness of ear training (by means of recordings) for pronunciation training, while only one respondent was not (item A42). Cenoz & Lecumberri (1999) investigated learners’ views about pronunciation acquisition and their respondents labelled ear training as the most important factor in the acquisition of the pronunciation of a foreign language. Already in 1932, Gullette warned that imitative practice only would not suffice to improve one’s pronunciation. Even language learners who received specific training in spotting their own pronunciation errors, kept making the same mistakes as soon as they were no longer supervised in the language laboratory.

The importance attributed to ear training once again underlines the significant role of formal-oral practice according to the subjects of the present study. In an EFL context, tapes and recordings may function as an important substitution for the lack of
contacts with “real” native speakers, and probably Flemish university students of English are aware of this. However, the students do not seem to be very enthusiastic about practising with tapes during individual work outside class.

Item B asked the respondents to rate the importance of segmental (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmental (stress and intonation) features for pronunciation training. The response rate for this item is given in the table hereunder. In general, segmentals were perceived to be more important than suprasegmentals; vowels were more important than consonants and stress was more highly rated than intonation. This division clearly corresponds to the classical hierarchy in pronunciation teaching practice in which traditionally more attention is devoted to the training of segmentals (Cenoz & Lecumberri, 1999).

Both segmental and suprasegmental features are considered to be crucial in pronunciation training, according to the overall majority of the respondents - especially when one counts the number of respondents that attributed high to medium importance to vowels (92%), consonants (91%), stress (97%), intonation (84%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses item B</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>vowels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>consonants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>stress</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>intonation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: 1 = crucial; 5 = not important at all*
Nearly 90% of the students signalled that they try to sound as native as possible when speaking English (item A11). This result once more shows that almost all of the respondents highly valued the importance of learning spoken English. Although most learners strongly endorse speaking with a native-like accent, a considerable number among them still seems to give priority to intelligibility and consequently agreed with the following statements: *When I am speaking English it is more important to be intelligible than to have an excellent pronunciation* (item A24) (56% agreed) and *Communicating is much more important than sounding like a native speaker of English* (item A38) (67% agreed).

To the majority of learners involved in this study, the native-likeness of their pronunciation is very important, but prior weight is still given to intelligibility to guarantee successful communication. This shows that students are aware of the fact that a native-like pronunciation very likely will enable a foreigner to be intelligible and communicate successfully with native English speakers.

More than half (58%) of the respondents find that transcription exercises are (very) helpful in improving one’s pronunciation and about 30% is convinced that these type of exercises are of medium importance (item A45). In Cenoz & Lecumberri (1999) however, Spanish and Basque learners of English tend to perceive transcriptions as less influential.

Transcription exercises are particularly useful because the learner’s reception of foreign sounds is trained and thus form an alternative to more productive-centred practice. For this reason, Lowie (2004) pleads for the introduction of transcription exercises in pronunciation training.

Exactly half of the participants reported to be in favour of including awareness raising in their pronunciation training (item A12). Awareness raising consists in providing an explanation about the positioning of the speech organs when producing a certain sound (Lowie, 2004), if necessary complemented by photographs to illustrate the way in which the speech organs function. Lowie (2004) argues that
awareness raising shows to be particularly useful to learn the exact difference between voiceless and voiced sounds, such as /t/ and /d/ or /θ/ and /ð/. Another argument presented by the same author is that some theoretical knowledge about the English pronunciation training facilitates actual productive practice. Gullette (1932) adds that the descriptions used for awareness raising should be kept as simple as possible, because too technical or unfamiliar terms impede comprehension and lead to even more errors. The author also remarks that the exclusive use of this type of training can lead to unsatisfactory results, particularly since the “setting” of a learner’s speech organs is often heavily influenced by his/her native language. Certain “native” pronunciation features may be therefore very difficult to eradicate, even with the help of awareness raising.

Again half of the respondents requested more minimal pair practice (item A13), while 25% believed that a sufficient number of minimal pair exercises (i.e. exercises contrasting “two words in which only one phoneme differs” (Henderickx, 1981) are included in their pronunciation course. In their paper on discrimination training, Mueller & Niedzielski (1986) list the merits of this type of practice: it can be used in self-study contexts and improves the learners’ discrimination ability which in its turn positively influences their articulatory abilities and performance in the language laboratory.

Over 40% of the students hold a positive opinion with regard to the introduction of English songs in pronunciation class and 22% do not (item A15). In the article “Using English Songs: An Enjoyable and Effective Approach to ELT”, Shen (2009) defends the integration of English songs in English language teaching and enumerates various reasons to motivate this incorporation. First of all, song texts are examples of expressive language use and do not differ that much from everyday language use (particularly its rhythm reflects the cadence of conversational speech). For this reason, Shen describes English songs as a “preparation for the genuine English language”. They make learners aware of the nature of connected speech and in making them accustomed to phenomena such as assimilation, voicing, aspiration,
etc. Moreover, English music offers a broader cultural perspective to the students. The pleas for equality and respect incorporated in Afro-American music for example, reveal something about the American culture in general. Listening to these songs in the foreign language will also be perceived as a form of “entertainment” rather than as a traditional language learning task. Since it is felt to be a more spontaneous form of contact with the foreign language, students will probably unconsciously pick up certain language rules and be less anxious about this form of practice. With regard to the role of English songs in the acquisition of pronunciation, Shen remarks that particularly those songs performed by native speakers of English help increasing the native-likeness of the pronunciation of the students. The author even gives proof for this advantage by presenting the results of an experimental study which demonstrated that exposure to English music eventually leads to a more accurate and fluent pronunciation. Another advantage of using English songs in pronunciation training is that listening to the music and lyrics automatically triggers imitation – some learners will be inclined to sing along and improve their pronunciation skills in that way.

The university students involved in this study seem to embrace the idea of integrating English songs in pronunciation class, but not that enthusiastically. Do these students believe that such practice better fits in evening class and that it does not fit in a university setting? Or do they find that the variety of accents in English songs (native, non-native; British, American, etc.) obstructs the selection of a reliable model? Nevertheless, when taking into consideration the considerable number of advantages and the fact that English music occupies a central position in international youth culture, it is worth the effort to integrate some songs in pronunciation training courses, on the condition that it alternates with more traditional forms of practice.

Nearly all learners (97%) expressed their desire for immediate feedback in pronunciation class (item A14), a result confirmed by the responses given to item C (see table 11) in which the learners were asked to rank three different sources of feedback according to their importance. 88% of the participants gave “feedback from the teacher” the highest score (compared to only 63% in Cotterall’s study in 1999), while feedback from others and self-evaluation were generally ranked lower.
It is clear that these students consider the teacher to be the most influential source of feedback. They also have a slight preference for feedback given by others over self-evaluation of their pronunciation. These learners seem to believe that self-correction is not very effective in pronunciation training (as already observed by Gullette in 1932), and that external feedback is always necessary. Madden, Matt, Moore & Zena (1997, as cited by Robertson, 2003) add that among university students the need for the correction of their pronunciation does not only occur in class, but also outside class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses item C</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>feedback by the teacher</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feedback that I give myself</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feedback by others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Table 11: Response rate item C: importance of feedback
* Note: 1 = most important; 3 = less important

Overall, most participants strongly rely on error correction for the improvement of their pronunciation (as also confirmed by the response rate to item A29) and the role of the teacher herein is particularly emphasised. Morley (1991, as cited by Robertson, 2003) describes the role of the teacher in pronunciation class in terms of a type of “coach” who functions as a model, provides further info and is able to encourage his/her learners by giving constructive feedback.

However, it may be interesting to ask the learners whether they are satisfied with the amount of immediate feedback that they receive from the teacher, especially since most of their pronunciation training takes place in larger groups.

Slightly less than half of the students (42%) reported to be satisfied with the pronunciation training they received (item A25), but 28% ended up dissatisfied and 31% remained undecided. When considering the amount of time invested in their
pronunciation (item A32), the learners are slightly more positive: 58% indicated that the amount of effort invested lead to satisfactory progress, while 36% still remained in doubt.

Of course, the possible reasons for this fairly low satisfaction rate should be further examined, preferably in the interviews. Is it a lack of group and pair practice or a need for more immediate feedback? Do the learners would like to see more functional practice in their pronunciation course? Do they put their expectations too high? Or is it the course material (in particular the pronunciation CD-ROM) that is perceived to be less useful?

The pronunciation exercises that most students classified as particularly helpful were the pronunciation tutorials (mentioned by 10 participants) as well as the recording of a text and subsequent feedback by the teacher (mentioned 6 times). The following types of practice were also mentioned: minimal pairs (4 times); presentations (3); opportunities to speak spontaneously (3); transcription exercises (2); contact with native speakers (2) and the pronunciation CD-ROM (1). Minimal pairs were said to be particularly useful for the training of the /θ/-/ð/ contrast and the students also appreciated the peer-to-peer assessment in the oral presentations. Others remarked that the language laboratory practice in general and the degree of variation in the exercises also contributed to the improvement of their pronunciation. The answer pattern to item D corresponds to the observations made before about the learners' preference for certain types of pronunciation tasks. It also confirms that practice with the pronunciation CD-ROM is not thought to greatly contribute to the improvement of pronunciation.

**Summary**

After examining the opinions of the participants about concrete pronunciation tasks, ear training (by means of recordings) seems to be considered most influential. The degree of importance attributed to this type of practice is obviously in line with the beliefs of the learners, who strongly endorse the value of repetition and practice in
improving one’s pronunciation. In general, these students also adapt a fairly positive attitude towards minimal pair exercises, transcriptions, awareness raising and the use of English songs, which clearly reveals the need for variation in the types of pronunciation practice offered in class. The students agree that both segmental and suprasegmental practice are crucial in improving their pronunciation, even though a slightly higher degree of usefulness is attributed to segmental practice which is again confirmed by the fact that half of the participants would prefer more minimal pair practice.

The majority of the subjects in this study underline the importance of sounding as native-like as possible, an attitude which again clearly reveals that they strongly believe in the value of learning spoken English. Of course, they also acknowledge the priority of being intelligible over sounding native-like, but they also seem to be aware of the fact that a native-like pronunciation guarantees a high degree of intelligibility and thus they set a higher aim than simply being understandable. Error correction is crucial in pronunciation training and logically almost all learners endorsed the importance of external feedback, of the teacher in the first place (in the pronunciation tutorials and by means of the feedback on readings in the language lab), but also of their classmates (on oral presentations).

However, the satisfaction rate with the pronunciation training received is relatively low and the exact cause(s) should be individuated if one wants to be able to increase the rate.
5 Interpretation of the results: interviews

In this chapter, all qualitative data obtained during the supplementary interview sessions will be presented and interpreted. The interview questions are here grouped according to subject, in an order similar to the one established for the discussion of the interview items. The reason for this order is that the design of the interviews was based on the structure of the questionnaire. It also helps in signalling which questionnaire items were studied in depth by means of the interviews. As already mentioned before, these oral interviews with two participants (here called X and Y) were conducted to get in-depth information on certain beliefs or on the strategy use of the learners.

5.1 Beliefs

5.1.1 Value and nature of learning spoken English

Student X explained that she interpreted the word “concerned" in item A34 (I am concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English) both in the sense of “engaged with, ready to work on” and “worried about”, because she believes that as a non-native speaker of English you should always put effort in the improvement of your pronunciation. In that sense, she sustains that it also best to be slightly “worried” about your pronunciation and to always feel that there is still room for improvement, since it will help you to aim at a more accurate pronunciation.

The other interviewee, however, clearly stated that he interpreted it in the second sense (i.e. “engaged with, ready to work on”), because he thinks that for most university students practising their English pronunciation is no major cause for concern.
Particularly through the response of student X, it becomes clear that some participants who completed the questionnaire possibly interpreted the word “concerned” in the sense of “worried” and that, as a result, the response rate to item A 34 did not correspond to those of the related items (A3, A17 and A27). If the term “concerned” would have been replaced by “engaged with”, the response rate would probably be much higher. Nevertheless, this misunderstanding revealed that the sense of engagement of many of these students with their English pronunciation is stronger than their sense of worry about it; an observation that was also made by both interviewees.

5.1.2 Learning and communication strategies

Student X expressed her preference for a more communicative approach in pronunciation teaching, for a type of practice where students can interact more freely and where a teacher is present to correct their mistakes. She does not think that it is possible to correct your own pronunciation errors and is therefore not convinced about the usefulness of individual repetitive practice (with the CD-ROM for example). Student Y endorsed the importance of interaction in pronunciation training as well, because it comes closer to real-life situations. Furthermore, he also agreed that individual practice may be for instance useful to work on personal pronunciation problems.

Both interviewees strongly prefer a communicative approach over individual practice with tapes, because the former is more life-like and comes with teacher presence. This choice reflects the following hypothesis formulated on the basis of the questionnaire results, i.e. that the subjects of this study are aware of the fact that the use of formal-oral methods only is not sufficient for successful pronunciation training.
5.1.3 Motivational subject-related factors

Two main reasons for improving her pronunciation given by student X were the following: the fact that sounding like a near-native speaker is one of the requirements for university students of English and the idea that a native-like pronunciation facilitates international contacts (for example in the professional world).

Student Y explained that he would like to work on his English pronunciation because on the basis of one’s pronunciation, one can most easily distinguish the speakers with an average proficiency from those that really master the language.

As already predicted by the quantitative data, the types of motivation to work on their English pronunciation possessed by the Flemish learners seem to be quite varied: extrinsic (the curriculum requires it, it is the duty of a university student of English) as well as instrumental (a proper English pronunciation helps in building international relationships). As the answer of the second interviewee reveals, an excellent pronunciation can be a means to be classified as a competent speaker and even to be ranked par with native speakers of the language. This belief points at the presence of a certain degree of integrativeness.

5.1.4 Motivational learner-related factors: anxiety

The first interviewee said that she does not feel worried about her pronunciation when having to speak in smaller groups. In larger groups, however, her anxiety level rises. She does not feel comfortable when having to speak in front of others, particularly when she has the impression that her pronunciation would be a cause for concern.

The other participant does not feel particularly nervous when he is speaking in pronunciation class, but signals that he is more worried about speaking in general and that this fear does not exclusively appear in classroom contexts. However, he does not think that this nervousness has a considerable effect on his performance in class. In general, he feels quite confident about his pronunciation, particularly
because it does not impede his communicative competence in English. Neither of the participants reported to be worried about learning pronunciation. Student X even expressed her confidence in the possibility to attain a near-native proficiency level in English pronunciation.

Classroom anxiety in pronunciation class seems to appear mainly when students have to talk in front of large groups. As already suggested in the previous chapter, their nervousness is probably due to a fear of being evaluated by other and being looked at as a non-competent speaker. Nevertheless, both respondents do not have the impression that these feelings of anxiety hinder their progress and consequently they are fairly relaxed and even optimistic about learning pronunciation.

5.1.5 Classroom-related factors: practice with others and tapes

According to interviewee X, not only language laboratory practice helps in improving her English pronunciation, but also listening to those university teachers who are native speakers of English. She says that outside class English-spoken TV-programmes – even when subtitled – can have a positive effect on one’s pronunciation skills. More spontaneous forms of contact with the English language outside class are thought to have a more long-lasting effect compared to the practice in pronunciation class.

The second participant (a postgraduate student) explained that participating in an Erasmus exchange programme contributed enormously to the improvement of his foreign language pronunciation. Other English courses at university are not that influential on one’s pronunciation, since most classes are non-interactive. According to this student, English TV-programmes help in becoming aware of the language, but he does not consider them to be extremely helpful in improving pronunciation, particularly since it is difficult to come across a proper pronunciation model (due to the fact that many of these programmes contain dialectal features).

According to student X, it would not be a bad thing to spend more time on pair or group work in the pronunciation course. She also described the division of the groups
for the pronunciation tutorials as being somewhat problematic. Certain time slots were almost immediately occupied and as a result some students did not get the opportunity to work on those sounds that were most problematic to them. Respondent Y added that he would appreciate it if a wider range of conversational topics were offered for the group or pair work in pronunciation class.

The two interviewees sometimes record their own voice when practising their pronunciation. Respondent X remarks that, even with the help of these recordings, she finds it difficult to know what exactly is going wrong and how she can improve her pronunciation of problem sounds. Interviewee Y does not always tape his own voice, because it takes more time.

Participant X never used the pronunciation CD-ROM to practise her pronunciation, because she felt that attending the pronunciation classes and tutorials, in combination with individual practice with the handbook, provided her with sufficient opportunities to practise her pronunciation. Student Y used the CD-ROM more often, about once a month.

Both respondents are convinced that spontaneous contacts with the English language (for example interactions with native speakers during an exchange programme or watching English-spoken TV-programmes) help most in improving one’s pronunciation, particularly when compared to more “artificial” classroom practice. They also agree that there is still room for improvement in the group practice, which could do with a better grouping of the learners (according to their pronunciation problems) and a slightly more individualised approach, as well as with some more variation in the conversational topics.

According to the participants, the two disadvantages of recording one’s own voice are the following: it is more time consuming and it is difficult to evaluate one’s own pronunciation, even with the help of tape recording. Practice with the CD-ROM is not felt to contribute that greatly to better pronunciation skills, probably because the
language lab and pronunciation tutorials combined with individual practice at home already considerably help in developing a more accurate pronunciation.

5.2 Strategies

5.2.1 Functional practice

Both interviewees do not actively look for native speakers of English to practise their pronunciation with, but when they do have the chance to communicate in English (for example with exchange students, such as signalled by participant X; or with a friend who is a native speaker of English, as mentioned by student Y) they are definitely prepared to make the most of this opportunity.

The above explanations of the both participants illustrate that they do not use functional strategies that often to practise their English pronunciation, which is of course due to the foreign language context. It can be assumed that most other Flemish students of English find themselves in a similar situation.

5.2.2 Social strategies

Interviewee X only practises her pronunciation with other students in class context, because she feels that it would be somewhat awkward to have a conversation in English with her Dutch-speaking friends.

The same is true for the second interviewee, who adds that he would probably practise his pronunciation outside class with his peers if he had known them better.
As the response rate to questionnaire item A10 already revealed, practising your pronunciation with other students is not conceived to be a crucial language learning strategy. This unpopularity is probably mainly due to the foreign language context in which the use of English in everyday conversations would sound somewhat unnatural, even for educational purposes.

5.3 Opinions about concrete pronunciation tasks and general evaluation

According to participant X, the primary goal of pronunciation training should consist in becoming an intelligible speaker of English. However, people who are studying the English language at university level should sound as native-like as possible.

Her opinion is shared by respondent Y, who notes that the pronunciation of most Flemish learners who come to university is already (highly) intelligible thanks to their preceding English formation at high school. For this reason, university students of English should aim at a native-like accent. (In the questionnaire, on the contrary, the same respondent indicated that – to him personally – acquiring proper pronunciation in English was not that important.)

These qualitative data confirm the quantitative data which already signalled that almost all university students of English involved in this study aim at a native-like pronunciation.

Consonant practice is perceived to be most useful by interviewee X, because she is convinced that the English stress and intonation patterns do not differ that much from Dutch. She also believes that learners more quickly pick up suprasegmental features when listening to native speakers, while it is more difficult to imitate the exact pronunciation of individual phonemes.

According to respondent Y, segmentals and suprasegmentals are equally important in pronunciation training.
The opinion of interviewee X is in line with the general opinion of the respondents to the questionnaire. The slight preference for segmental practice may be explained by the fact that the English suprasegmental patterns (stress and intonation) are relatively close to the Dutch ones, as respondent X mentioned. Individual English sounds which are not present in Dutch, such as /θ/ or /ð/, probably catch the eye – or ear – of EFL learners more easily and as a result thereof they are considered to be of greater importance in pronunciation practice.

Participant X felt that she received enough immediate feedback from the teacher in her pronunciation class and attributed more than considerable importance to this external feedback, in particular because she realises that for non-native speakers it is not always that easy to hear what elements of their pronunciation are still open for improvement.

Yet respondent Y believes that the opportunities to get immediate feedback on your pronunciation are rather limited when the pronunciation classes take place in larger groups. He also remarks that the feedback that is given is mostly based on artificial language use, on sentences that were specifically designed for pronunciation practice. He thinks that an evaluation of your pronunciation in more spontaneous speech is much more helpful.

This external feedback is especially necessary in the beginning, since at that moment learners do not yet know what the criteria are to evaluate their own pronunciation, what their weaker points are and how to work on them. Once the students have familiarised themselves with these steps, self-evaluation of one’s own pronunciation is certainly possible, according respondent Y.

Just like in the questionnaires, the interviewees underline the crucial role of feedback (particularly from the teacher) in pronunciation class, either because they do not believe in self-correction or because they are convinced that the teacher should first set out the necessary guidelines for self-correction. However, one respondent also indicates that the amount of individual feedback received from the teacher is rather limited when the pronunciation practice takes place in larger groups.
Interviewee X does not object to the *integration of English songs in pronunciation training*; however, she notes that the accents of most English singers are not very “RP-like” and that it would probably be difficult to find a proper pronunciation model among them.

Participant Y is also in favour of using English songs, because he believes that it can be a useful manner to improve one’s pronunciation and because “it would definitely be a fun way to learn the right pronunciation”.

Both participants would like it if English songs were used in pronunciation class, but one of them also signals that she finds the variety of accents encountered in these songs could cause confusion when learners are looking for a proper pronunciation model – which could be a possible reason why a considerable part of the questionnaire respondents remain sceptical of such an inclusion.

Participant X expressed a desire for more opportunities to practise her pronunciation by means of spontaneous conversations on the condition that this type of practice is teacher-supervised, preferably by a native speaker.

Interviewee Y also remarks that some of the more imitation-centred pronunciation training can easily be substituted by a more communicative way of practising pronunciation. It is particularly important that students should learn to pay attention to their accent not only under formal or artificial circumstances, but also in more informal situations.

As already hypothesised on the basis of the questionnaire and now confirmed by the quantitative data, most students think that artificial imitative practice only is inadequate to improve their pronunciation. For that reason, they ask for more spontaneous, communicative classroom practice, preferably supervised by the teacher.
In the opinion of respondent X, the pronunciation tutorials were not always that helpful for some students, because their real pronunciation problems did not tend to be remedied since they were not able to practise in the group of their first choice. After a diagnostic pronunciation tutorial, students were asked to list their names for the following sessions. Each of these tutorials was devoted to different problem sounds and only a limited number of students could attend each session – this of course to allow a more personalised approach.

A similar reasoning is made by interviewee Y, who comments that he perceived all pronunciation exercises that were not immediately applicable to your personal pronunciation problems to be less useful.

The description of the pronunciation tutorials by both interviewees revealed that they see the tutorials as a helpful factor in improving their pronunciation, mainly because they received individualised immediate feedback from the teacher and students had the opportunity to especially work on their problem sounds. Nevertheless, respondent Y also touches upon a problem that respondent X had already mentioned. Several students did not get optimal individual practice due to the fact that they were forced to attend a session that did not particularly focus on their problem areas because certain time slots were extremely quickly occupied.

Here again, the learners’ strong desire for more individualised practice (adapted to the individual needs of every learner) and teacher-given feedback clearly surfaces.

Respondent X believes that she could use some more intensive pronunciation training. Consequently, she would like pronunciation to continue throughout the entire Bachelor course. She stresses that already from the first year on, more emphasis should be given to the practical side of English proficiency, such as pronunciation. This view is shared by the second participant, who suggests that pronunciation training in Bachelor 1 should particularly be centred on informal communication, and on more formal situations in later years.

Participant X commented to be satisfied with the pronunciation training she received. Interviewee Y also says to be “relatively pleased” with his progress.
The fact that your specific pronunciation problems were individuated and the fact that you got the opportunity to work on them was said to be a positive aspect of pronunciation class (according to respondent X). Another positive element listed by the same respondent was the smaller scale setting of the pronunciation tutorials thanks to which the students do not have to speak that often in front of the whole class. Learner Y also approved of the alternation between more individualised practice and training in larger groups, although he remarks that they are not always that well balanced.

According to interviewee X, the group organization of the tutorials should be improved. The same is said about the technical aspect of language laboratory practice (i.e. the use of headphones, computers and recordings) which could have been restricted. A final suggestion for improvement made by respondent Y is to focus more on informal settings when training the English pronunciation.

The interviews provided a better insight in the relatively low satisfaction rate that appeared in the questionnaires. Both students expressed the need for a better balance between individualised and group practice, as well as for a different system for the appointment of the time slots of the pronunciation tutorials. The latter is of course a very practical, technical and especially local problem. Classroom practice should be somewhat more communicative. However, the fact that their pronunciation module alternated more individualised training (by means of the tutorials) and practice in larger groups is considered to be a positive aspect.
6 General discussion

The Flemish learners of English involved in this study generally hold optimistic beliefs with regard to pronunciation training. Although a majority among them considers the English pronunciation to be difficult, the students overall seem to have a high sense of self-efficacy, i.e. they are fairly confident about their ability to become near-native speakers of English. However, it should be noted that if these students set their expectations too high, they risk ending up deluded. Another element that could possibly hinder their progress is their considerable degree of class anxiety. In all, however, their positive beliefs seem to be most influential and stimulate them to work on their pronunciation rather than to worry about it.

Considerable importance is attributed to the acquisition of proper pronunciation (with “proper” here being synonymous to “native-like”). Repetition and practice are considered to be extremely important factors in the improvement of pronunciation, which signals that these students find it highly important to learn spoken English. Their belief in the strength of repetitive practice also automatically leads to an extensive use of formal-oral strategies. However, mere imitation and individual practice with tapes (such as practising with the pronunciation CD-ROM or taping one’s own voice) are perceived to be less useful than language laboratory practice with teacher assistance. Feedback from the teacher is considered to be particularly crucial for the improvement of their pronunciation. Most learners heavily rely on external feedback - notwithstanding their relatively high self-efficacy - because they do not seem to believe in self-correction (certainly not without preparatory guidelines from the teacher).

No main motivational pattern could be individuated in this study. The students seem to have several different reasons for improving their pronunciation of English: instrumental (mainly because it is useful in international contacts or guarantees better job opportunities), intrinsic and extrinsic. Their fairly high level of integrativeness should also be taken into consideration when discussing the influential motivational factors. Many students express a strong desire to communicate with native speakers, a desire which is also visible in the relatively high number of students that maintain relations with native speakers of English. This degree of integrativeness again points at a considerably high motivation.
Even though the learners possess a considerable degree of self-efficacy and integrativeness, they do not very often make use of functional strategies because in a foreign language context, the opportunities for spontaneous contact with foreign language are considerably limited. Probably for this reason, many students are in favour of getting more chances for communicative practice in pronunciation class (for example by means of group or pair work). Social language learning strategies are even less popular than functional practice.

As already mentioned above, the overall majority of the students thinks it is important to sound as native-like as possible; and that being intelligible is a crucial, but transitional stage towards the attainment of a near-native accent. Near equal importance is attributed to segmental and suprasegmental practice, with a slight preference for the former. Particularly ear training – as could be expected from learners that strongly endorse repetitive practice – and discrimination training (by means of minimal pairs) are considered to be helpful for the amelioration of their pronunciation. The students also indicated that the pronunciation tutorials helped a lot in acquiring a more native-like accent. This conviction again illustrates that external feedback is seen as most helpful in the first place and that particularly the teacher plays a crucial role in it.

Notwithstanding their prevailing positive beliefs about pronunciation training, only about half of the learners said that they were satisfied with the pronunciation training they received. This lower satisfaction rate is probably due to the high expectations that these students have and the problematic reservation system for the pronunciation tutorials. However, these students also seem to realise that a single semester of pronunciation training cannot work miracles and fortunately, they are willing and even suggest to engage in pronunciation training throughout the entire Bachelor course.
7 Conclusion

This paper examined the beliefs of Flemish university students of English with regard to pronunciation training. It also investigated their actual use of language learning strategies as well as their opinions about certain pronunciation exercises and the pronunciation training they received. An elaborate literature review on these topics served as background for the actual qualitative and quantitative research. The data obtained in the questionnaires were complemented by information derived from supplementary interviews.

In general, the learners involved in this study hold fairly positive beliefs about learning pronunciation: a strong confidence in their own ability to become a near-native speaker of English, a high valuation of spoken English and a considerable degree of motivation. The reasons for improving their pronunciation seem to be mainly instrumental and integrative, but also extrinsic and intrinsic motives do play a role. Notwithstanding their optimism, these students suffer from class anxiety as well, especially when they have to speak in front of larger groups, but this fear shows to be not that dominating. The subjects emphasise that external feedback on their pronunciation is absolutely indispensable. They strongly endorse teacher-assistance and are less enthusiastic about individual practice.

Their high degree of self-efficacy and integrativeness does not result in extensive use of functional strategies, due to the foreign language context. For that reason, formal-oral language learning strategies prevail. Students therefore suggest to have more communicative-centred practice in pronunciation class in order to compensate the lack of “real-life” contact with English that is typical of an EFL-context.

The learners endorsed the attainment of a native-like pronunciation and traditional forms of practice, but they agree that this type of training alone does not suffice and that a variety of pronunciation training tasks is more agreeable and useful. Learner satisfaction rate with their pronunciation training is not that high, probably because their expectations are somewhat too high for what can be realised in a single semester of pronunciation training and because the pronunciation tutorial system did not always offer solutions for the individual pronunciation problems of all students.
If we want to increase the satisfaction rate, we should in the first place remember to provide the learners with frequent personal feedback from the teacher – which is of course not always that practicable in larger groups – and to provide them with sufficient opportunities for more spontaneous, communicative pronunciation practice.

It should be noted that the present study only examined learner beliefs and strategy use on a small scale. It could therefore be interesting to administer the questionnaire to for example all second-year students of English at our university and to interview more respondents. Another possible viewpoint could consist in the comparison of the beliefs about pronunciation training held by university students with those held by students of English at college \(^3\). One could also collect data in as many universities and colleges as possible to try to outline common beliefs of advanced Flemish learners of English. Adopting a diachronical perspective by detecting the changes in learner beliefs about pronunciation training during their course of study could possibly form another interesting research angle.

Notwithstanding its small-scale approach, the present study hopefully functioned as a first step towards a more extensive research into learner beliefs about pronunciation, and consequently will contribute to a better understanding of the figure of the language learner and to even more effective pronunciation instruction - not only at Ghent University, but also in general.

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\(^3\) In Dutch called “hogeschool”, i.e. an institution for higher education studies, where students follow a more professionally oriented study programme (for example in preparation for a future career as an interpreter or translator, or as a language teacher in secondary education).
Appendix

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Please read the following statements or questions carefully when filling in the questionnaire.

A. Select only one out of the following five options. Choose the one which is closest to your own opinion.

1= strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = disagree; 5 = strongly disagree

1. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.
   1  2  3  4  5

2. A native-like English pronunciation will help me get a good job.
   1  2  3  4  5

3. I want to learn to speak English well.
   1  2  3  4  5

4. To train my English pronunciation it is important to repeat and practise a lot.
   1  2  3  4  5

5. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.
   1  2  3  4  5

6. The language lab and the teacher’s assistance help a lot in improving one’s pronunciation.
   1  2  3  4  5

7. I usually record my own voice when I practise my pronunciation.
   1  2  3  4  5

8. The repetition of basic theoretical concepts is useful in this pronunciation class.
   1  2  3  4  5

9. I practise the sounds of English.
   1  2  3  4  5

10. I practise my English pronunciation with other students.
    1  2  3  4  5

11. I’d like to sound as native as possible when speaking English.
    1  2  3  4  5

12. It would be useful if awareness raising (i.e. explanation about the positioning of the speech organs when pronouncing a certain sound) was part of our pronunciation training.
    1  2  3  4  5
13. It would be useful to have more minimal pair exercises as part of our pronunciation training.
   1 2 3 4 5
14. In class, the teacher should give as much immediate feedback as possible.
   1 2 3 4 5
15. I would like it if English songs would be used in pronunciation class.
   1 2 3 4 5
16. The English pronunciation is difficult.
   1 2 3 4 5
17. Acquiring proper pronunciation in English is important to me.
   1 2 3 4 5
18. To train my English pronunciation it is important to practise in the language laboratory.
   1 2 3 4 5
19. It is important to practise your pronunciation with cassettes, tapes or CD-ROMs.
   1 2 3 4 5
20. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in pronunciation class.
   1 2 3 4 5
21. Having my pronunciation evaluated by others is scary.
   1 2 3 4 5
22. I prefer a pronunciation class in which I can work with other students in pairs or groups.
   1 2 3 4 5
23. I look for people I can talk to in English to train my pronunciation skills.
   1 2 3 4 5
24. When I am speaking English it is more important to be intelligible than to have an excellent pronunciation.
   1 2 3 4 5
25. I am satisfied with the pronunciation training I received.
   1 2 3 4 5
26. If I learn to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.
   1 2 3 4 5
27. I want to improve my accent when speaking English.
   1 2 3 4 5
28. I would feel uncomfortable about my English pronunciation under any circumstances.
   1 2 3 4 5
29. Having my pronunciation evaluated by others is helpful.
   1 2 3 4 5
30. I pay attention when someone is speaking English to imitate his/her pronunciation.
   1 2 3 4 5
31. I encourage myself to speak even when I am afraid to make a mistake.  
   1 2 3 4 5

32. Considering the amount of time I worked on my English pronunciation, I am satisfied with my progress.  
   1 2 3 4 5

33. The English education I receive at university will be sufficient to learn to speak English very well.  
   1 2 3 4 5

34. I am concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English.  
   1 2 3 4 5

35. I will never be able to speak English with a good accent.  
   1 2 3 4 5

36. I feel confident when I speak in pronunciation class.  
   1 2 3 4 5

37. I believe I can improve my pronunciation skills in English.  
   1 2 3 4 5

38. Communicating is much more important than sounding like a native speaker of English.  
   1 2 3 4 5

1 = highly; 2 = very much; 3 = sufficiently/medium; 4 = not very much; 5 = not at all

39. How important is the factor “fulfilling the requirements of the course” for you in improving your pronunciation?  
   1 2 3 4 5

40. How important is the factor “pronunciation learning is fun” for you in improving your pronunciation?  
   1 2 3 4 5

1 = very well; 2 = well; 3 = sufficiently; 4 = bad; 5 = very bad

41. How well do you think you will do in pronunciation class?  
   1 2 3 4 5

1 = extremely; 2 = very; 3 = sufficiently; 4 = not very; 5 = not at all

42. How useful is ear training (by means of recordings) in improving pronunciation?  
   1 2 3 4 5
43. How worried are you about learning pronunciation?
1 2 3 4 5

44. How important has practising on your own (outside class) with the pronunciation CD-ROM been for you in working on your pronunciation this semester?
1 2 3 4 5

45. How useful are transcription exercises in improving pronunciation?
1 2 3 4 5

B. Rate the importance of the following areas for pronunciation training.
(1 = crucial; 5 = not important at all)

- vowels
  1 2 3 4 5
- consonants
  1 2 3 4 5
- stress
  1 2 3 4 5
- intonation
  1 2 3 4 5

C. Rank the following sources of feedback on your pronunciation in order of importance.
Use each number only once.
(1 = most important; 2 = of medium importance; 3 = less important)

- feedback given by the teacher: ....
- feedback that I give myself (I know how well I am doing and I can correct my own mistakes if necessary): ....
- feedback given by others: ....
D. Which exercises in your pronunciation classes did you perceive as particularly helpful?
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Background questionnaire

▪ age: ......
▪ sex: male / female
▪ mother tongue: ........................................
▪ Have you ever stayed in an English-speaking country for more than 2 weeks? yes/no
  If so:
  where? ........................................
  how long? ........................................
▪ Do you have any contacts with English mother tongue speakers? yes/no
▪ Did you have any experience in studying English before coming to university? yes/no
▪ Are you planning to be an English teacher? yes/no
▪ Before coming to this class, were you already familiar with the concept “language laboratory”? 
  Have you already attended such classes? yes/no
  If so:
  for which language(s)? ........................................
  how often? ........................................

Please fill in your name and e-mail address if you want to participate in a supplementary interview.

▪ name: ........................................
▪ study programme: ........................................
▪ e-mail: ........................................

Thank you very much for your cooperation!
Appendix B: Theoretical design of the actual questionnaire

BELIEFS

Classification based on Yang (1999)

1) Difficulty of language learning & expectations
   - Difficulty of language learning:
     item A1: I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.
     item A16: The English pronunciation is difficult.
   - Expectations:
     item A33: The English education I receive at university will be sufficient to learn to speak English very well.

2) Value & nature of learning spoken English
   item A3: I want to learn to speak English well.
   item A17: Acquiring proper pronunciation in English is important to me.
   item A27: I want to improve my accent when speaking English.
   item A34: I am concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English.

3) Learning & communication strategies
   - Learning strategies:
     item A4: To train my English pronunciation it is important to repeat and practise a lot.
     item A18: To train my English pronunciation it is important to practise in the language laboratory.
   - Communication strategies:
     item A19: It is important to practise your pronunciation with cassettes, tapes or CD-ROMs.

Classification based on Dörnyei (1994) & Smit (2002)

1) Subject-related factors
   - Instrumental motivation:
     item A2: A native-like English pronunciation will help me get a good job.
item A26: If I learn to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.

**Extrinsic motives:**

item A39: How important is the factor “fulfilling the requirements of the course” for you in improving your pronunciation?

**Intrinsic motives:**

item A40: How important is the factor “pronunciation learning is fun” for you in improving your pronunciation?

2) Learner-related factors

**Anxiety:**

item A20: I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in pronunciation class.

item A28: I would feel uncomfortable about my English pronunciation under any circumstances.

item A36: I feel confident when I speak in pronunciation class.

item A43: How worried are you about learning pronunciation?

**Self-efficacy:**

item A21: Having my pronunciation evaluated by others is scary.

item A29: Having my pronunciation evaluated by others is helpful.

item A35: I will never be able to speak English with a good accent.

item A37: I believe I can improve my pronunciation skills in English.

item A41: How well do you think you will do in this pronunciation class?

3) Classroom-related factors

**Practice with others (peers/language lab):**

item A6: The language lab and the teacher’s assistance help a lot in improving one’s pronunciation.

item A22: I prefer a pronunciation class in which I can work with other students in pairs or groups.

**Practice with tapes:**

item A6: I usually record my own voice when I practise my pronunciation.

item A22: How important has practising on your own with the pronunciation CD-ROM been for you in working on your pronunciation this semester?

**Practice with instructor:**

item A8: The repetition of basic theoretical concepts is useful in this pronunciation class.
STRATEGIES: actual use

1) Formal-oral practice
item A9: I practise the sounds of English.
item A30: I pay attention when someone is speaking English to imitate his/her pronunciation.

2) Functional practice
item A23: I look for people I can talk to in English to train my pronunciation skills.
item A31: I encourage myself to speak even when I am afraid to make a mistake.

3) Social strategies
item A10: I practise my English pronunciation with other students.

OPINIONS ABOUT PRONUNCIATION TASKS & GENERAL EVALUATION

Ear training:
item A42: How useful is ear training (by means of recordings) in improving pronunciation?

Segmental or suprasegmental practice:
item B: Rate the importance of the following areas for pronunciation training: vowels, consonants, stress, intonation

Intelligibility or native-like accent?
item A5: It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.
item A11: I’d like to sound as native as possible when speaking English.
item A24: When I am speaking English it is more important to be intelligible than to have an excellent pronunciation.
item A38: Communicating is much more important than sounding like a native speaker of English.

Awareness raising:
item A12: It would be useful if awareness raising (i.e. explanation about the positioning of the speech organs when pronouncing a certain sound) was part of our pronunciation training.
Transcription exercises:
item A45: How useful are transcription exercises in improving pronunciation?

Minimal pair exercises:
item A13: It would be useful to have more minimal pair exercises as part of our pronunciation training.

Importance of feedback/error correction:
item A14: In class, the teacher should give as much immediate feedback as possible.
item C: Rank the following sources of feedback on your pronunciation in order of importance:
feedback given by the teacher, feedback that I give myself, feedback given by others

Integration of English songs in pronunciation class:
item A15: I would like it if English songs would be used in pronunciation class.

General evaluation of the course and identification of activities perceived as helpful to improve pronunciation:
item A25: I am satisfied with the pronunciation training I received.
item A32: Considering the amount of time I worked on my English pronunciation, I am satisfied with my progress.
item D: Which pronunciation exercises in your pronunciation classes did you perceive as particularly helpful?
Appendix C: Source(s) of questionnaire items

*Note: Adaptations with regard to the original are signalled by means of square brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire item</th>
<th>Source(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part 1: Actual questionnaire</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3. I want to learn to speak English well.</td>
<td>Yang (1999), Bernat (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4. To train my English [pronunciation] it is important to repeat and practise a lot.</td>
<td>Horwitz (1988), Bernat (2005), Riley (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.</td>
<td>Horwitz (1988), Yang (1999), Bernat (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8. The repetition of basic theoretical concepts is useful in this pronunciation class.</td>
<td>Smit (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A11. I’d like to sound as native as possible when speaking [English].</td>
<td>Elliott (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A14. In class, the teacher should give as much immediate feedback as possible.</td>
<td>Smit (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A17. Acquiring proper pronunciation in [English] is important to me.</td>
<td>Elliott (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A18. To train my English [pronunciation] it is important to practise in the language laboratory.</td>
<td>Horwitz (1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A19. It is important to practise your pronunciation with cassettes, tapes or CD-ROMs.</td>
<td>Yang (1999), Bernat (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A21. Having my pronunciation evaluated by others is scary.</td>
<td>Cotterall (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A22. I prefer a pronunciation class in which I can work with other students in pairs or groups.</td>
<td>Smit (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A23. I look for people I can talk to in English [to train my pronunciation skills].</td>
<td>Yang (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A25. I am satisfied with the [pronunciation training] I received.</td>
<td>Riley (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A26. If I learn to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.</td>
<td>Horwitz (1988), Riley (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A29. Having my pronunciation evaluated by others is helpful.</td>
<td>Cotterall (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A30. I pay attention when someone is speaking English [to imitate his/her pronunciation].</td>
<td>Yang (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A31. I encourage myself to speak even when I am afraid to make a mistake.</td>
<td>Yang (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A32. Considering the amount of time I worked on my English [pronunciation], I am satisfied with my progress.</td>
<td>Riley (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A33. The English education [I receive] at university will be [sufficient] to learn to speak English very well.</td>
<td>Riley (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A34. I am concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of [English].</td>
<td>Elliott (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A35. I will never be able to speak [English] with a good accent.</td>
<td>Elliott (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A37. I believe I can improve my pronunciation skills in [English].</td>
<td>Elliott (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A38. Communicating is much more important than sounding like a native speaker of [English].</td>
<td>Elliott (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A39. How important is the factor “fulfilling the requirements of the [course]” for you in improving your pronunciation?</td>
<td>Smit (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A40. How important is the factor “pronunciation learning is fun” for you in improving your pronunciation?</td>
<td>Smit (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A41. How well do you think you will do in [pronunciation class]?</td>
<td>Smit (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A42. How useful is ear training (by means of recordings) in improving pronunciation?</td>
<td>Cenoz &amp; Lecumberri (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A44. How important has practising on your own [outside class] with the pronunciation [CD-ROM] been for you in working on your pronunciation this semester?</td>
<td>Smit (2002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Rate the importance of the following areas for pronunciation training: vowels, consonants, stress, intonation
   *Cenoz & Lecumberri (1999)*

C. [Rank] the following sources of feedback on your pronunciation in order of importance.
   *Cotterall (1999)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2: Background questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever stayed in an English-speaking country for more than 2 weeks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Smit (2002)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any contacts with English mother tongue speakers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Smit (2002)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have any experience in studying English before coming to university?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Riley (2006)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you planning to be an English teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Smit (2002)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before coming to this class, were you already familiar with the concept “language laboratory”? Have you already attended such classes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Smit (2002)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Design of the interviews

BELIEFS

VALUE AND NATURE OF LEARNING SPOKEN ENGLISH

In the questionnaire, there was a statement that said: I am concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English. How did you interpret the word “concerned” here? In the sense of “worried about”? Or as “engaged with”? (item A34)

MOTIVATION

Why do you want to improve your English pronunciation? What is your (main) motivation for it? (item A26)

ANXIETY

What causes you to feel nervous and confused in pronunciation class?
- Is it the idea of your pronunciation being evaluated?
- Are you afraid to sound silly?

Under what circumstances do you become nervous?
Do you think it will hinder your progress/performance in pronunciation class? (item A20; item A41)

Do you feel uncomfortable about your English pronunciation under any circumstances?
If so: For what reason do you think that is? (item A28)

Are you worried about learning pronunciation?
If so: Why is that? (item A43)

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Do you prefer individual practice with tapes, CD-ROMs etc. or a more communicative approach (a class in which you get the opportunity to speak more freely and interact with others) to practise your pronunciation? (item A19)
PRACTICE WITH OTHERS

Next to the language lab sessions and the pronunciation classes, are there other elements here at university that help in improving your pronunciation? Other courses for example?
And outside class? English music, movies, programmes, etc.?
Which factor do you think helps most to improve your pronunciation: training in class or “spontaneous” contact with English outside class? (item A33)
Do you think that in pronunciation class there are enough opportunities to work in groups or pairs on your pronunciation? (item A22)

PRACTICE WITH TAPES

Do you record your voice when practising your pronunciation?
If so/ if not: Why? (item A7)
If not: Is it for example maybe too time consuming?

How often have you used the pronunciation CD-ROM outside class for individual practice?
Why did you use it? Why not? (item A44)

STRATEGIES: actual use

FUNCTIONAL PRACTICE

Do you look for native speakers to train your pronunciation skills?
If so: Where do you find these people? (item A23)

SOCIAL STRATEGIES

Do you practise your pronunciation with other students?
If so: In what way? If not: Why? (item A10)
OPINIONS ABOUT PRONUNCIATION TASKS

Do you have the feeling that you receive enough immediate feedback from the teacher in pronunciation class? (item A9)
Do you believe it is possible to evaluate your own pronunciation or is external feedback always needed? (item C)

Should your pronunciation training focus on intelligibility (making yourself understood) or on the reduction of a foreign accent (i.e. aim for a native-like pronunciation)? (item 24)

Do you prefer to work on the pronunciation of vowels and consonants or more on stress and intonation patterns of words and sentences? What seems most useful to you? (item B)

Would you like it of English songs would be used in pronunciation class?
If so: Why? If not: Why? (item A15)

What are the “pronunciation tutorials” like? How did that go? Could you describe them? (item D)

Are there enough opportunities for you to talk freely to practise your pronunciation that way?
(item D)

Were there pronunciation exercises that were not helpful at all? Could you give some examples?
(item D)

GENERAL EVALUATION

Do you think you need more pronunciation training for English?
Would you like it if this type of pronunciation training continued in BA3? Or do you believe that is it better to start already in BA1 with pronunciation classes?

Are you satisfied with the pronunciation training you received:
If so: Why? What were the positive aspects?
       Do you have some suggestions for improvement of the pronunciation training here at university?
If not: For what reason mainly? How can it be improved?
(item A25)
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