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SPECIAL ISSUE: PRONUNCIATION

John M. Levis, Ana Wu, and Donna M. Brinton, Guest Editors

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Pronunciation—Research Into Practice

and Practice Into Research..... 1
John M. Levis and Ana Wu

The field of second language (L2) pronunciation is attracting researchers with many interests, as well as the teachers who have always been interested in the field. Evidence is growing that pronunciation teaching is successful at promoting greater intelligibility, and that pronunciation learning is not strongly constrained by the age at which learning takes place. The importance of pronunciation in current approaches to language means that L2 pronunciation has a strong teaching-research connection, in which teaching practices are influenced by research, and research agendas are explicitly influenced by practical questions. This growing interest is visible in the field's dedicated conferences, in growing numbers of scholarly books, and in increasing kinds of other scholarly and pedagogically oriented publications. This article suggests that the interface of research and practice with pronunciation learning is seen in attention to 6 areas: teachers, learners, pronunciation features, teaching and learning contexts, pronunciation materials, and types of pedagogical practices.

Keywords: L2 pronunciation, pronunciation teaching, teaching materials, pronunciation features, research-teaching connections, intelligibility, teachers, learners, accent

FEATURE ARTICLES

Powerful and Effective Pronunciation Instruction:

How Can We Achieve It?..... 13

Isabelle Darcy

Pronunciation instruction is still underemphasized in many language programs as well as in teacher-training curricula despite reports of significant improvement from many studies. Three factors may account for this resistance and for the difficulty of making pronunciation instruction an integral part of language teaching: the time obstacle, the methodology obstacle, and the curricular obstacle. I will outline why these obstacles have emerged, and suggest specific solutions to work around them, with the goal of achieving powerful pronunciation practices in the classroom. The approach taken draws on psycholinguistic research about the mechanisms of phonological acquisition in second language (L2) learners (in both in-class and out-of-class learning contexts).

Keywords: pronunciation instruction, perception, feedback, pedagogical priorities, curriculum integration

Embodied Pronunciation Learning:

Research and Practice47

Marsha J. Chan

This article summarizes research on body language, embodiment, and the incorporation of proprioception, physical movement, gestures, and touch into second language education, particularly with regard to the pronunciation of English. It asserts that careful attention to breathing, vocalization, articulatory positions, pulmonary and tactile pressures, pitch and duration, scope and synchrony of body movements, in addition to the systematic use of gestures, enables more effective pronunciation. It presents ways that teachers of English can embody features of pronunciation—making them more perceptible and representing them in clear and obvious ways to enhance perception, pronunciation, and retention. Classroom techniques described include pronunciation workouts such as breath training and articulator exercises; the use of simple devices, hands, and fingers to illustrate aspects of articulation and prosody; and larger body movements, such as the “Stress Stretch,” “Haptic Syllable Butterfly,” and “Rhythm Fight Club” to improve stress and rhythm.

Keywords: pronunciation, embodiment, gestures, movement, haptic

Integrating Pronunciation Into the English Language Curriculum:

A Framework for Teachers.....69

Alison McGregor and Marnie Reed

Research provides evidence of effective factors in pronunciation teaching and learning. However, incorporating research into classroom practice is a challenge left to instructors, often without the help of a systematic framework for integrating pronunciation into a curriculum. This article, informed by work with international teaching assistants, offers such a framework. Developed over a 10-year period, the framework was tested in a pre-post classroom-based research study that indicated significant pronunciation improvement. The authors guide classroom instructors and teacher trainers through a 5-stage curriculum-design process for the integration of pronunciation, and they exemplify the use of the framework via the development of an English for Specific Purposes curriculum for international teaching assistants. Each stage includes guiding questions, related research, and demonstration of the outcomes through examples from a curriculum designed for international teaching assistants. The framework provides a practical approach to integrating fundamental building blocks of effective pronunciation instruction into the curriculum design process.

Keywords: pronunciation, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), curriculum design, international teaching assistants

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Alene Moyer

Age of onset has long been assumed to predict outcomes in second/foreign language accent. Yet beyond early childhood, acquiring a new accent has much to do with social-affective factors such as learner identity and motivation, as well as cognitive factors such as learning strategies (Pfenninger, 2017). Newer perspectives acknowledge this complexity, emphasizing learner experience and orientation instead. This article contextualizes the age factor and prioritizes self-concept, given that those with a strong affinity to the target language and culture end up sounding more authentic, that is, closer-to-native, than those with a more conflicted sense of second language (L2) self (see Moyer, 2004). Given the connections between self-concept and self-regulated learning, age actually confers two benefits: self-awareness and metalinguistic knowledge, which can be channeled into strategies such as goal setting and self-evaluation. Pedagogical strategies can facilitate the development of a strong L2 self-concept as well as an appreciation for the importance of accent in the target language.

Keywords: age of acquisition, pronunciation, self-concept, self-regulation, motivation

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Sinem Sonsaat

This study explores native and nonnative English-speaking teachers’ expectations of teacher’s manuals accompanying general English skills books and pronunciation teaching books, as well as their impressionistic evaluation of a printed and online teacher’s manual. The study has a mixed-methods design incorporating an online survey and 2 interviews. Findings showed that teachers expected a teacher’s manual to provide additional guidance on which pronunciation features to teach and how to present them effectively. The online teacher’s manual was preferred over the printed one by most of the teachers because of its technological design features. This study suggests that both native and nonnative English-speaking teachers welcome online manuals because of their increased accessibility and practicality. Additionally, greater amounts of guidance can be given in an online teacher’s manual and this guidance can be presented in different modalities, such as in printable text, audio, or video.

Keywords: pronunciation teaching, teacher’s manual, teachers’ expectations, native English-speaking teacher (NEST), nonnative English-speaking teacher (NNEST)

**Teaching High-Value Pronunciation Features:
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John M. Levis and Greta Muller Levis

Pronunciation features are not equal in how they affect listeners' ability to understand. Some are low value, while others are high value. This study explores whether contrastive stress is high value. Previous research has shown that identification of contrastive stress is learnable (Pennington & Ellis, 2000), and that explicit teaching about contrastive stress patterns can improve production for advanced learners (Hahn, 2002; Muller Levis & Levis, 2012). To test whether instruction on contrastive stress improved comprehensibility and fluency in spontaneous speech, we developed a 3-week class for intermediate ESL learners, whose pre- and posttest productions were rated by native listeners. Ratings for fluency showed no improvement. Ratings for comprehensibility significantly improved for the experimental group while control participants showed no improvement. Improvement resulted both from better contrastive stress and greater comfort with producing grammatical frames to express the contrasts. The article concludes by discussing the importance of high-value pronunciation features for improved comprehensibility.

Keywords: comprehensibility, contrastive stress, fluency, pronunciation teaching

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Christine Lewis and David Deterding

Traditionally, pronunciation was taught by reference to native-speaker models. However, as speakers around the world increasingly interact in English as a lingua franca (ELF) contexts, there is less focus on native-speaker targets, and there is wide acceptance that achieving intelligibility is crucial while mimicking native-speaker pronunciation is not important. However, if there is no clear model to refer to, how do we give guidance to students about how to improve their pronunciation, and how do we determine what needs to be fixed in order to enhance intelligibility? This article considers teaching pronunciation in ELF contexts, making reference to a corpus of interactions recorded in Brunei involving 41 speakers from various countries in Southeast Asia, particularly focusing on stress patterns, to see what impact variant stress has on intelligibility. It is found that there is some evidence that word stress may contribute to misunderstandings occurring in ELF interactions.

Keywords: pronunciation, word stress, intelligibility, misunderstandings, English as a lingua franca (ELF)

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Taylor Anne Barriuso and Rachel Hayes-Harb

This review of high variability phonetic training (HVPT) research begins by situating HVPT in its historical context and as a methodology for studying second language (L2) pronunciation. Next we identify and discuss issues in HVPT that are of particular relevance to real-world L2 learning and teaching settings, including the generalizability of learning to new situations, in addition to variations in how HVPT is implemented that may promote optimal learning. Primarily, we focus on the relatively limited research that has explored the use of HVPT as a pedagogical tool. We conclude with recommendations for the future regarding the applicability of HVPT to L2 learning and teaching in the real world.

Keywords: High Variability Phonetic Training (HVPT), English as a second language, vowel perception, vowel production

SPECIAL ISSUE EXCHANGES

Choosing Technology Tools to Meet Pronunciation Teaching and Learning Goals.....195

Marla Tritch Yoshida

For decades, researchers and teachers have suggested ways to apply technology in teaching and learning pronunciation, and there are many useful tools that can be used for this purpose. However, many teachers feel unsure about how to teach pronunciation at all, and the idea of using computers, mobile devices, or other technology may make pronunciation teaching seem doubly intimidating. If we look at technology from a different viewpoint, focusing first on the pedagogical tasks that teachers need to perform and then choosing the most effective tools to support each one, we can achieve better results for both teachers and learners. Based on both research and the classroom practice of experienced teachers, this article evaluates a range of available tools to accomplish tasks such as providing a pronunciation model, recording and responding to learners' pronunciation practice, and offering independent practice. The focus is on tools that are readily available to most classroom teachers, practical to learn and use, and free or inexpensive.

Keywords: pronunciation, pronunciation teaching, pronunciation pedagogy, computer-assisted pronunciation teaching (CAPT), automatic speech recognition (ASR), apps for teaching, technology, (computer-assisted language learning (CALL))

Using a Study Circle Model to Improve Teacher Confidence and Proficiency in Delivering Pronunciation Instruction in the Classroom213

Andrea Echelberger, Suzanne Gilchrist McCurdy, and Betsy Parrish

Adult English language learners are hungry for pronunciation instruction that helps them to “crack the code” of speaking intelligible English (Derwing, 2003). Research indicates benefits of pronunciation instruction with adult learners, yet many teachers believe they lack the knowledge and background to make sound instructional decisions (Baker, 2014). This article looks at a professional-development initiative in which 12 practicing adult English language teachers participated in a 5-week study circle on research-informed, integrated pronunciation instruction. The study circle included readings on current research, workshops on teaching strategies and techniques, speech-sample analyses, classroom implementation tasks, and peer observations. Throughout the process, data were gathered including pre- and post-surveys, speech-analysis logs, and a delayed focus group session to evaluate the impact of participation on teaching practices. Findings indicate an increased ability to diagnose and accurately describe pronunciation issues, integrate pronunciation instruction into the existing curriculum and classroom routines, and apply research-informed practices within the classroom.

Keywords: pronunciation instruction, study circle, professional development, adult ESL, ESL teachers, teacher learning

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Erin Zimmerman

Novice teachers often look to textbooks and teacher's manuals for guidance when preparing courses, learning course content, and delivering instruction to students. In the field of pronunciation, however, materials creators face an unusual difficulty when designing resources because beginner teachers often are not truly novices: They might have limited experience teaching pronunciation content but be experienced teachers in other language fields, such as writing, reading, or ESL. This article examines 8 pronunciation texts (5 textbooks and 3 corresponding teacher's manuals) to discover what guidance is offered to teachers. In particular, the researcher, a writing instructor who recently tutored pronunciation, offers insights into an analysis of this support for different types of beginner teachers—novice, advanced beginner, and competent. The findings include recommendations for authors and publishers of such materials as well as for program directors and teachers to enhance and ensure the usefulness of these resources for all instructors.

Keywords: pronunciation instruction, materials creation, textbooks, teacher's manuals, novice teachers

**Pronunciation Tutorials: Not Only Sounds, But Also
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Shem Macdonald

An exploration of pronunciation tutorials designed for speakers of English as an additional language (EAL) in a university context in Australia suggests that developing abilities to speak clearly involves more than just focusing on the sounds that are uttered. Students' comments and observations collected during pronunciation tutorials highlight factors that are important for understanding how these speakers successfully manage their spoken interactions. This article reports on what these students say about their experiences and strategies for communicating clearly and effectively at university and while in their professional placements. Implications for the ways that pronunciation tutorials are run include the need to focus not only on the sounds that the speakers make, but also to provide opportunities for them to develop awareness of themselves as speakers and to develop their understanding of the speaking contexts and the associated pragmatic language skills that are required for becoming clearer and more confident speakers.

Keywords: pronunciation, speaking, English as an additional language (EAL), ESL, EFL, oral communication, academic language, adult education, migrant education

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Murray J. Munro

Mid-20th-century scholars argued that second language (L2) instruction should be rooted in a comparison of the structural characteristics of the first language (L1) and L2. Their enthusiasm for a “scientific” approach to errors reflected the view, based on the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH), that learners’ difficulties could be predicted through purely linguistic analyses. Pronunciation seemed particularly amenable to this treatment. If teachers knew their learners’ problems in advance, they could presumably design curricula and activities to address their students’ needs. Although it soon became clear that many aspects of CAH were seriously flawed, interest in a linguistic account of L2 pronunciation difficulties has persisted. This synthesis of empirical findings from pronunciation research demonstrates that the enthusiasm for error prediction has been misguided, largely because of 2 erroneous beliefs: the *assumption of uniformity* and the *assumption of equal gravity*. The need for an alternative perspective promoting evidence-based teaching practices is demonstrated.

Keywords: contrastive analysis, errors, pronunciation

Reconciling Theory and Practice.....283

Donna M. Brinton

The nature of second language pronunciation research often precludes its application to the classroom. And even when research findings do have direct applicability to classroom practice, open channels of communication between researchers and practitioners are often lacking. We have subtitled this issue of The CATESOL Journal “Pronunciation: Research Into Practice, and Practice Into Research”—indicating our belief that research and practice comprise a 2-way street, with research results definitely informing practice but with practice helping to confirm these results and providing an additional, real-world test of their validity. The contributing authors of this theme issue (both researchers and practitioners), through their research and insights into best classroom practices, provide teachers of pronunciation much to ponder. This article seeks to draw from the authors’ insights a set of core principles, firmly anchored in research results, on which to base pronunciation teaching decisions.

Keywords: contrastive/error analysis, intelligibility, self-concept, functional load, common core, multimodal learning

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