



SPEAK OUT!

NEWSLETTER OF THE IATEFL PRONUNCIATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

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Disclaimer

Views expressed in the articles in *Speak Out!* are not necessarily those of the Editor or the members of the PronSIG committee.

Contributions

Speak Out! encourages the submission of previously unpublished articles on topics of significance to its readers. If you wish to contribute, you should first send the Editor an outline of the proposed article. If you are interested in reviewing a book for *Speak Out!* contact the Editor at <robin@englishglobalcom.com>.

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From the coordinator

As this goes to press, two exciting events are imminent. The first is a webinar, *The Melody of English: Research and Resources for Teaching the Pragmatic Functions of Intonation*, presented by Tamara Jones and Marnie Reed, a welcome look at an area which many find hard to teach, at least in an interesting way. The second is a face-to-face event in London, *Accentuate*, featuring plenaries by David Crystal & Ben Crystal and Adrian Underhill as well as presentations and workshops on a range of topics. There will be full reports in SO! 53, our Facebook page and website but a big thank you in advance to everyone involved in making these events happen, especially Alex and Piers.

I mentioned the website and Marina Cantarutti has done a tremendous job in redesigning it and adding new content. Do check it out at the new site of <http://pronsig.iatefl.org/>. Marina would love to hear from you if you have any comments or suggestions. She takes over responsibility for the website from Jane, who stays on the committee in an ex officio capacity. Jane has a long connection with PronSIG, including a period as Coordinator, so her continuing contribution is valued. In fact, Jane will be presenting at our PCE, *Practical Pronunciation Teaching*, in Manchester. Details can be found on the [IATEFL website](#) of what will be a great curtain-raiser to the main conference. We also have a strong PronSIG day on the Monday of the conference so watch out for that in the programme.

A slightly disappointing connection with the conference is the fact that there was very little response to the *Brita Haycraft International House Better Spoken English* scholarship. This is the third time we have run the scholarship and Marina was the winner last year, giving a very well-received presentation in Harrogate. It was decided by the scholarship committee to extend the award to members of the International House organisation and the winner was Anastasia Ignatenko. We will look at ways of advertising our scholarship more effectively as it is a very valuable opportunity to present at our showpiece event. In the meantime, good luck to Anastasia and we look forward to seeing her in Manchester.

Joining Jane as presenters at the PCE will be Robin and Laura. This issue of SO! marks the last under Robin's stewardship and the baton passes to Laura's capable hands. Robin has worked tirelessly to make SO! so much more than a SIG newsletter but his input and influence on the SIG have reached out to everything we've done. A memorable example was the PCE on ELF he ran in Liverpool. I'm glad to say Robin remains on the committee so we can have his help and advice to move forwards.

Wayne Rimmer

From the editor



Even if you weren't there, you will have probably heard that the 2014 conference in Harrogate was a rather special affair for the PronSIG. It kicked off with a thought-provoking PCE, where we unexpectedly found ourselves talking about life after 'Listen- and-repeat'. But the real buzz came on the PronSIG day, which proved to be one of the best of recent times. There was variety. Then again there usually is. And there was quality, just as there always is. Above all, however, there was an intoxicating energy and freshness that only comes with the arrival of new blood.

So exciting was it to see so many young members take the stage, grounded in but not trapped by the past, that I resolved there and then to dedicate *Speak Out!* 52 to these new voices, and, cap in hand, went begging for papers. The speakers' responses, and a taste of their energy and originality, are here in this issue in article form. Though this isn't the same as watching the authors live, the articles from Marina Cantarutti, Catarina Pontes, Arizio Sweeting, Kristýna Poesová, Katy Simpson and Laura Patsko, give a real flavour of the renovation that is taking place within the SIG, whilst the contribution from Alice Henderson and her colleagues speaks eloquently of the energies still to be tapped.

A second thing that becomes apparent when you come face to face with such a torrent of drive and enthusiasm – is that just as there is a time for arriving, there is one for leaving. Ideally these will coincide so as to facilitate the transition from the old guard to the new. So when Laura Patsko accepted the opportunity to take over from me as editor of *Speak Out!*, I knew that this was the ideal moment for me to stand aside.

If I say I've enjoyed these seven years as editor, it won't be entirely untrue. More important, however, is how much I've learned in this time, and how privileged I feel to have met so many outstanding experts in our field, even if in some cases, only by email. I've also had the enormous pleasure of working alongside fellow IATEFL staff and volunteers, to all of whom I owe a huge debt, though most especially to Jean McCutcheon for her invaluable contribution to *Speak Out!* as copy editor.

A privilege and a pleasure, then, and the joy of watching the newsletter grow.

Robin Walker

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E-portfolios for pronunciation practice and assessment

Marina N. Cantarutti

Speaking is a 'fleeting' product: as soon as we produce it, it is magically gone! This reality has major implications for assessment of pronunciation, let alone the learning process. Being able to record speech allows teachers and students alike to recapture the moment of production and get a 'snapshot' of what processes have been at play, what went right, what would need further attention. The possibility of setting up e-portfolios for students to collect all their records of oral performance online allows for a process-based, learner-led form of evaluation that may eventually favour the development of self-monitoring skills. The technical opportunities that online speech platforms such as Audioboom and Soundcloud offer can prove to be a proper home for the E-portfolio experience.

We teachers are used to grading written work. We input our own comments, our own voices in red ink, in pencil or typed in a different colour. Students grab the product, read the comments (hopefully), or simply scroll down to see their grade and, if required, produce an improved version. The written product is there, lying as evidence.

Oral tasks, on the other hand, pose a number of difficulties, assessment-wise. The moment the sounds and words are uttered, they disappear. The student is probably hardly aware of what and how these ideas were produced, and the teacher relies solely on his/her ear and a one-off chance to capture what was said, and how. This time, the student is left with *only* a grade, with no evidence of performance except maybe a few written notes, and there is nothing to go back to for improvement. The opportunity of having some sort of trace of student performance in the shape of a recorded/videotaped file enables both teachers and students to grab a reliable piece of evidence of learner process and progress, as well as a starting point for further correction and development.

Having established some of the reasons behind the importance of recording oral tasks, I will consider the benefits and technical alternatives for setting up E-portfolio assessment experiences for oral work in general, and pronunciation instruction in particular. I will also make a short account of the practical application of this form of evaluation in some of my pronunciation courses at two teacher training colleges and translation programmes in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and I will introduce a final conclusion based on my students' appraisal of the experience and my own professional growth through it.

Portfolios for pronunciation practice and assessment

A portfolio, defined as a systematic collection of student work that 'illustrates students' talents, represents their (...) capabilities, and tells their stories of school achievement' (Venn, 2000 in Valenzuela, 2007), has become more and more popular in the ELT world as an alternative form of assessment over the traditional, product-based tests. Among its advantages lies the fact that learners can 'treasure' their best productions and reflect upon their selection criteria, whilst also actively participating in feedback-giving processes. Another positive aspect of portfolio-oriented work is connected to the possibility of having a clear record of the initial and medial milestones in the process. These can be compared with later productions, and progress tokens, however big or small, can always be used to motivate learners when frustration or plateaus affect the process. In addition, portfolio assessment could be said to be an effective way of providing individualized follow-ups, as well as of reducing the negative effects that standing up in front of an audience may bring for some learners. Moreover, if planned holistically, the portfolio experience can involve students in the construction of their own learning route, and help them to keep track not only of the tasks they have completed, but, more importantly, of the *processes* involved in the production of these oral tasks, and of the results achieved.

Components of an oral portfolio

What would a holistic oral production portfolio look like, then? A portfolio of oral production and pronunciation work could take many forms, but it would normally include all or some of the following components:

- **Audio or video recordings of oral tasks**, e.g.: repetition of drills, production of minimal pairs, reading aloud of sentences, productions of answers to a recorded stimuli, oral presentations, role plays...
- **Written or recorded reflection/learning diary tasks**: the collection of articulatory habits or auditory cues or multisensory 'tips and tricks' that were applied in carrying out the task; pictures or webcam captures of specific moments in the development of the task; a narrative account of how the task was approached, difficulties encountered, etc.
- **Written or recorded self-assessment of the production**: presentation of a list of errors and difficulties spotted, alternative versions, list of positive points in the task, completion of a self-assessment form...
- **Recordings of improved versions**, produced after teacher or peer-led feedback is issued, or later in the course.

Portfolios and the nature of pronunciation practice

The first aspect to be considered in this form of evaluation is the value and relevance of the contents to be included in the portfolio. In the case of the development of oral skills, and particularly of pronunciation work, the final tasks should be as important as the **reflection and self-evaluation tasks** aimed at documenting the development of *prioperception* (Underhill, 2014) and *self-monitoring* and *self-correction* skills (Celce-Murcia et al., 2006) as they are gradually developed in the course.

As a cognitive and motor activity, pronunciation rests upon the ability to create suitable mental images of L2/FL inventories, and to control the movements of the muscles and organs involved in speech production, and this involves not only learning articulatory habits which are different from those in the learner's L1, but also, in many cases, 'fine-tuning' or 'unlearning' previous habits, particularly when fossilization is operating. In order for this passage from controlled to automatic processing (Rumelhard & Normal, 1978, in Celce-Murcia et al, 2006: 25) to be successful, there are three key stages in the learning cycle that need to be completed, as stated in Zimmermann's self-regulatory learning model, adapted to pronunciation learning below (see Figure 1. Cantarutti, 2012).

The maintenance of a portfolio that involves recording oral tasks makes it possible for learners to: a) contrast the taken-for-granted articulatory and intonational habits of the L1 against the new challenges of L2/FL; b) put the different metaphonological information and 'gestures' that were systematized in the lessons into action in their own time, either at home or at the language lab, and as many times as necessary (at least before a given deadline); c) continue giving shape to these newly-acquired habits by devising improved versions of speaking tasks already recorded and graded, or performing them in less controlled environments. The possibility of experimentation, and also editing, that recording practices and tools allow, favours the re-structuring and tuning processes, though only if accompanied by suitable reflection and prioperception-enhancing tasks.

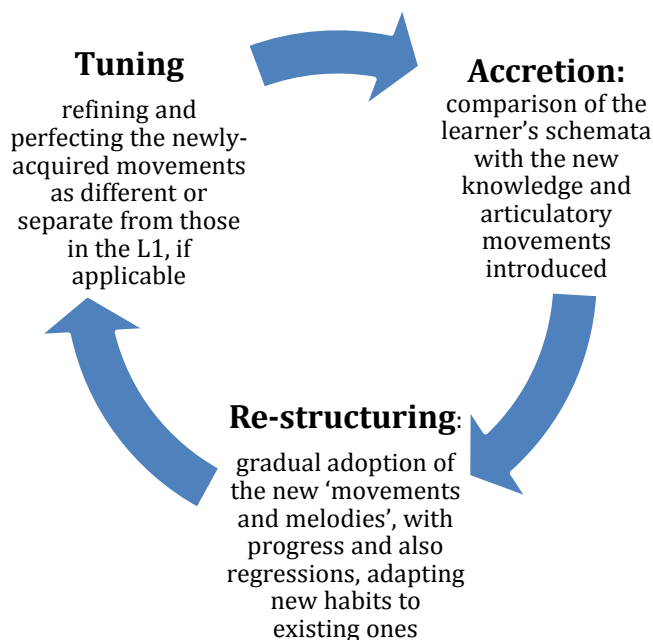


Figure 1. Stages in self-regulatory language learning (Zimmermann, 2000 in Wolters, 2010, adapted in Cantarutti, 2012)

The successful journey from the mere transfer of pronunciation and intonation features of an L1 towards a L2 inventory, then, is highly dependent on how much of this process is done consciously, and systematically. Engaging students in producing oral work which requires not only performing a set of instructions for an oral/pronunciation activity, but also keeping a diary of how these products have come to be, make an invaluable contribution to the students' portfolio, and to the process of finding and tuning in to their own 'English voice'. So the reading aloud of a dialogue, a role play or a short repetition activity, for example, can become meaningful learning products if the learners are asked to discuss, for example, what 'tips and tricks' for pronunciation work they have applied for the successful articulation of a sound, what the strong points in their production have been, what sounds or specific features still need further work. 'Selfies' of lip or jaw positions produced for particular features, or even the real-time monitoring of articulation by recording the oral tasks while watching their mouth through the webcam or a mirror, can be enriching additions to the portfolio. When it comes to intonation, for example, the production of a particular set of pitch patterns can be checked in real time with software like UCL's RTPitch or WASP. These reflection activities, which focus on the process as it is being carried, out require, in a way, a state of *mindfulness*, since part of the success in self-monitoring lies precisely in being present and aware of what is happening in each and every moment. And this, in turn, is what truly enhances the gradual transition towards automatic processing.

The sequencing of tasks is another important component in the development of a portfolio experience, since the progression towards self-regulation can be suitably supported if tasks follow the order suggested by Pennington (1996: 225): *mechanical* > *contextualized* > *meaningful* > *realistic* > *real*. Thus, a pronunciation or intonation feature may be isolated and practised on its own, in short snippets, and then included into contextualized, freer practice tasks, and finally recorded in different unstructured sessions. Part of the reflection process invited for portfolio assessment may include questions as to how easy or difficult it was to move from the mechanical to the real application of pronunciation features in oral practice, and why. After all, it is only when the student manages to self-monitor their production in real time that the cycle towards automatic processing can be said to be complete.

Platforms for E-portfolios: *Audioboom* and *Soundcloud*

The rise of social networks in the last few years has not been restricted to the written medium only, and a number of web platforms like *Audioboom.com* (formerly *Audioboo.fm*) and *Soundcloud.com* have enabled users all over the world to record their voices and share them on their personal profiles as a chronological sequence of recorded posts, in a *podcast* fashion. Both of the platforms mentioned allow audio recordings to be either made on the spot, or uploaded from mobile or desktop devices. Teachers and students can 'follow' one another, 'liking', 'reposting' and even commenting on each other's productions, interacting both privately and publicly and making it possible to "converse" about performance objectives and results.

As regards the technical possibilities of these tools for the type of portfolio work described above, Table 1 describes a few of the most important functionalities of both tools. Readers are also invited to refer back to *Speak Out* 48: 29 for a more thorough description and screen captures of the platforms in operation.

In spite of the fact that these platforms work similarly, there are a few differences that may make *all* the difference. For instance, the pop-up comment function that *Soundcloud* offers is a great option for students to type their positive remarks, their articulatory tips and tricks, as well as their mistakes, along the waveform of their audio file, and to see these popping up as they listen.



Portfolio component	Audioboom 	Soundcloud 
Recording of oral/pronunciation tasks	<p>Unlimited number of uploads (to date) – 10 minute limit/upload.</p> <p>Formats: MP3, WAV, FLAC, AAC, OGG, and others.</p> <p>Identify files by #hashtags and categories.</p> <p>All files are public.</p>	<p>Uploads limited to 3 hours altogether (free version).</p> <p>Formats: AIFF, WAVE (WAV), FLAC, ALAC, OGG, MP2, MP3, AAC, AMR, and WMA .</p> <p>5GB per file maximum.</p> <p>Identify files by tags or genres.</p> <p>Private files allowed.</p>
Reflection and self-assessment tasks	<p>Uploaded as a separate audio file or as a written comment below the audio player for the oral task.</p> <p>Comments below the audio file player.</p> <p>One image upload possible for each audio file.</p>	<p>Uploaded as a separate audio file, or as text on the description of the file.</p> <p>Comments included as written remarks on the waveform, as 'pop-up' messages.</p> <p>One image upload possible for each audio file.</p>
Feedback	<p>'Like' button, comment box or a private recorded message.</p> <p>Share to Facebook, Twitter.</p>	<p>'Like' button, pop-up comment box or private recorded or typed message.</p> <p>Share to Facebook, Twitter or embed in blog.</p>
Selection of productions	Inclusion of selected audio files in a 'playlist'.	Inclusion of selected audio files in a 'playlist'.

Table 1. Comparison of Audioboom and Soundcloud platforms for E-portfolio use.

On the other hand, for the completion of reflection tasks, the use of images is limited in both platforms, and neither of them allow video recordings yet, but these can be uploaded to another platform (YouTube, for example) or cloud service, and for easy access the link can be pasted in the comment or description box of the oral task in question.

E-portfolios and pronunciation: a personal experience

During the school years 2011–2014 I have applied the E-portfolio experience in my pronunciation classes at the teacher training colleges and translation programmes I work at in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Over 300 students have opened their profiles in the platforms mentioned during these four years and they have all received feedback from me and my student assistants, or occasionally from other students. In addition, the students themselves have also provided feedback on their own productions in both the written and recorded form. However, due to the formal requirements of the institutions I am employed at, the E-portfolio was not the sole means of evaluation of the course, though it was genuinely considered as part of the course grade.

The experience has had different degrees of success, but student appraisal has been overwhelmingly clear: 88% of the students surveyed agreed that they would have not got the same results if they had not been exposed to the E-portfolio experience. When asked about the skills that this way of assessment had empowered them with, over 60% of the students explained that the E-portfolio had been a defining factor in the ability they had acquired to self-monitor their pronunciation and to listen to themselves, as well as to understand what their weak areas were. As an additional comment, students expressed their belief that oral feedback was more effective than written feedback, and that they were appreciative of the oral comments made by the teachers.

On a negative note, many students did not see their self-esteem improved by the experience in spite of being referred back to their first recordings for comparison purposes, and most learners admitted to keeping their E-portfolio updated only because it was a course requirement and not necessarily because they saw the need to practise pronunciation in this way. As a personal reflection, as harsh as it may sound, I feel that at times what does not get graded, does not get given proper attention by students. Addressing these shortcomings in order to enhance the E-portfolio assessment project, together with building an increasing focus on the process over the product, have been priorities in my teaching during the 2014 school year, and will continue to be a focus during future courses.

A personal conclusion

Based on my experience as a young learner at a language school where feedback on speaking tasks was merely a quickly forgotten nod of the teacher's head, as an older learner at my College's Language Lab, where recording was a must and getting used to my 'English voice' a requirement, and as a much older learner and teacher who has employed the E-portfolio means of assessment for a number of years, I support the

recording of oral tasks entirely. I am a better speaker, and I have a far more acceptable pronunciation – to my own standards at least – because I have been asked to capture my voice, and in so doing, take special care of the way I produce my lexico-grammatical strings, and more importantly, my pronunciation. I have gone from finding my English voice strange and foreign, to developing some narcissistic enchantment over it (debatable as this may be!).

The E-portfolio experience in my courses has resulted in a lot of extra work for me: grading was taken to a different level, not only because I did more of it, but mostly, due to the fact that it became a shared activity: students and teacher together, listening to voices trying out English sounds and intonation patterns, engaging in dialogue, experimenting on different tips and tricks, on new mouth and pitch movements, consciously and carefully. And as the experience evolved, I noticed that the important thing was not my students' final product per se. I realised that a job well done stood for something quite different: it meant a growing ability to listen, to be *mindful*, to self-correct and, later on, self-monitor performance; and this was a key feature of the *process*. So if there is something that leads me to recommend this form of E-Portfolio, 'voice selfie' experience, particularly with a focus on reflection and self-assessment, is precisely this belief: *Take care of the process, and the product will take care of itself*.

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PEPFT – a pronunciation course for teachers

Catarina Pontes

In EFL classrooms all over the globe, pronunciation teaching tends to be rather overlooked. Ranging from a possible lack of time in the syllabus to teachers' lack of confidence to teach phonology effectively, the reasons for pronunciation teaching being so frequently neglected are many. In order to get to the root of this problem, mostly aiming at improving teachers' knowledge of phonology and phonetics, and broadening their teaching techniques repertoire, a pronunciation course for teachers has been designed and implemented at Cultura Inglesa São Paulo. After three years of implementation, results have shown that the course has come to significantly contribute to building up teacher confidence and to improving the student learning experience.

It was back in college, in my sophomore year, that I fell in love with phonology. I can vividly remember how I started looking at the English language in a different way, and how I began to feel more independent and autonomous whenever I needed to refer to the dictionary for the pronunciation of a new word. Learning about segmental and suprasegmental features of phonology certainly shed light on my learning experience and paved the way to helping me become a more successful communicator in English. About one year later I started teaching English and I remember making references to phonemic symbols in my lessons and how my students seemed to enjoy and profit from that as well.

A couple of years after that I got into teacher training. Here, when I was observing lessons, I felt that there had been so many overlooked opportunities for teachers to tackle pronunciation in their lessons that I started investigating what the reasons for this might have been. Based on teachers' comments during feedback sessions, it was more and more evident that they could benefit from more input on the theoretical background to phonetics and phonology, and would certainly profit from practical ideas on how to both teach and correct different aspects of pronunciation in their lessons.

Designing a pronunciation course for teachers

The idea for the design and implementation of a pronunciation course for teachers came from different needs: a need to bridge a gap in terms of formal knowledge about the phonological system, especially considering teachers with different educational

backgrounds; evidence collected from lesson observations; teachers requesting the creation of a course with this focus; and the need to provide models of how to deal with pronunciation at different moments in a lesson (from incidental language, to language noticing and error correction during feedback slots). With this scenario as its background, PEPFT – Practical English Pronunciation for Teachers – was designed so that teachers would receive both moments of input and suggestions of (very) practical activities they could make use of in their lessons.

The course has been structured in a way that both segmental and suprasegmental features of phonology are covered, and each of the 14 two-hour sessions provides teachers with theory and practice of the lesson's target features. In the very first encounter, teachers are introduced to the scope and sequence of the course, together with a suggested list of reference books. Pronunciation teaching beliefs are discussed (adapted from Thornbury, 1997), and it is a fascinating moment to diagnose why pronunciation teaching is so often overlooked in class (e.g. 'elementary learners are not supposed to be taught phonemic symbols'), and how much of the basic terminology teachers are familiar with, or not. All the materials used in class are later made available on a Moodle platform, where teachers can also interact in discussion forums.

A needs analysis questionnaire is carried out on the first day as well, and it is an important moment for teachers to reflect upon their knowledge of phonology, to state their own objectives for the course, to align their expectations with the tutor's, and for them to devise an action plan in order to meet their objectives with the tutor's guidance and support. In my experience, teachers may be overcritical of their knowledge and tend to say they 'know nothing' or that they 'do not have any spare time to teach pronunciation in their lessons'. It is a good thing, then, that their perceptions change throughout the course, and that they perceive these changes.

Approach chosen for pronunciation teaching and training framework

An effective way to make pronunciation teaching more practical and perhaps less challenging for learners to deal with, is to make it visual and physical. Following Underhill's (2005) idea that pronunciation teaching should 'get out of the head and into the body', the activities proposed in the course suggest making sounds 'visible', so that the segmental features might become less challenging for learners to master. Some of his suggestions include making use of mime and gesture to help learners see sounds. In only a couple of lessons, teachers already feel at ease resorting to such techniques and are able to perceive certain progress regarding their own learning. Changes in their perceptions of the challenges related to pronunciation teaching are also apparent, as they report reproducing the very same techniques with their learners with no major setbacks.

Our training initiatives at Cultura Inglesa São Paulo always aim at involving the use of loop input (Woodward, 1991) in order to provide teachers with models of what we expect them to replicate in their lessons. PEPFT is no different, so lessons include theoretical input, language noticing and analysis, practice activities which are then followed by a decompression moment (Hughes, 2010) and homework assignments (well, why not?).

With the aim of providing teachers with a good teaching practice model, all suggested activities are planned in a way that helps teachers to profit from them beyond the main focus of the course. The ways in which teachers are grouped, how contributions are acknowledged, and how feedback is given should all happen in a manner that will contribute to teachers broadening their repertoire of teaching techniques. In order to make sure all teacher-students are aware of the procedures that were carried out in the lesson, and of the rationale underlying the activities and the way they were done, the whole lesson is revisited during the decompression moment.

Making pronunciation visible: materials used in the course

In order to cater for the approach chosen for this course, which is to make the teaching of pronunciation visual and physical, the use of simple but effective objects was included in the lessons. To help teachers to better understand the articulation of sounds, small mirrors were used. After covering vowels, for instance, and understanding the rationale for their organisation in the vowel quadrant, teachers used small mirrors to focus on lip rounding/ spread, as well as on jaw and tongue position, and were better able to 'see' the sounds being produced. Work on vowels also included the use of rubber bands for teachers (and consequently learners) to 'see' long and short vowel sounds, as they were stretched horizontally to indicate a long sound. Later on, when working on word stress, rubber bands were also used to indicate stressed syllables (stretching the band vertically on the stressed syllable).

Cuisenaire rods were used regularly throughout the course as well, both when covering segmentals and suprasegmentals. When working on connected speech, for instance, cuisenaire rods of different colours were used to show consonants disappearing in elision, changing in assimilation, being added in liaison, and becoming one in gemination. The use of cuisenaire rods caters for visual learners the most, especially because of the obvious focus on colour; it was quite widely adopted by course participants since most branches in the institution had a box of rods in the staff room available for use in the classroom.

Because the vast majority of teachers attending the course usually brought mobile devices to the lesson, these were also used to help them raise awareness of their own

pronunciation, helping them identify positive aspects on the one hand, and areas for improvement on the other. Apart from using online dictionaries to check the pronunciation of words, or even specific websites such as <http://www.howisay.com> (a very practical, user-friendly pronunciation dictionary), teachers also used the *Sounds* app (Macmillan) whenever they needed to double check on individual phonemes. Later in the course, the use of the devices happened mostly during work on suprasegmental features, when teachers were asked to record short paragraphs and listen to themselves. If you have audio-recorded your lesson before, you know this can be a traumatic experience. Nevertheless, it can be a revealing one as well. Peer feedback was encouraged when these recordings were done in class, and this was a moment for teachers to work on their choice of words when giving feedback, and on their attitude when receiving it. Whenever necessary, teachers were encouraged to record themselves again, as this was the recommended procedure when they tried the activity with their own learners in their own classes. When a recording was assigned for homework, they used <http://www.vocaroo.com> to do it. Vocaroo is a very easy-to-use website that saves your recording online and sends a link for the receiver to listen to it.

Having access to these recordings was a good opportunity to provide teachers with feedback on their performance, especially because receiving individual feedback was one of the main requests made by participants in previous PEPFT courses. Unfortunately, not all teachers were able to send their recordings in, but they were able to profit from whole group feedback during the lessons, too.

Results and perceptions

Teachers give informal feedback on the content of sessions, the relevance of topics, and the applicability of the ideas throughout the course. However, there is a more formal moment for feedback by way of a 'user-satisfaction' survey halfway through the course. This proves to be a good opportunity to revisit objectives, and perhaps focus on areas that might not be meeting teachers' needs and expectations. It was rewarding to see that teachers perceive they are developing their teaching repertoire, not only with regard to phonology, but also with respect to general teaching skills, and that they notice they are receiving feedback on a regular basis during the course. This is one of the things teachers are supposed to do in their lessons as well.

Another highlight of the course is to see how beliefs and perceptions change, especially with regard to teaching segmentals, and how it does not take that much time out of a lesson to cover some pronunciation features (especially when it comes to incidental language moments). Towards the end of the course, teachers also claim to be better able to come up with arguments to explain to learners the importance of being intelligible in

communication, rather than sounding American or British – and they also become more acquainted with numerous accents, both dominant and the less dominant, too. As Walker (2010: xvi) points out, it is important to help learners to ‘accommodate more easily to different accents’, especially because these make up the real world out there.

A range of lesson observations were carried out at Cultura Inglesa and they revealed that teachers who have taken PEPFT are now dealing with pronunciation-related issues more frequently – and more confidently – in their lessons. This can only reinforce the idea that, by building up teachers’ formal knowledge about phonology and providing them with simple yet effective teaching techniques, we can improve the learners’ experience of the pronunciation of English in the classroom.

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Awakening *Sleeping Beauty*: Pronunciation instruction beyond ‘Listen and repeat’

Arizio Sweeting

As a teacher educator, I had used ‘listen and repeat’ to teach pronunciation with limited success until the day I began to reflect on whether there were other alternatives. In my search for these alternatives, I have discovered new ways of teaching pronunciation, somewhat like Sleeping Beauty waiting to be awakened from slumber. In this article, therefore, I will discuss the reasons why I believe ‘listen and repeat’ continues to hold pronunciation back, and describe some alternative techniques that teachers and teacher educators could consider to move away from such a technique. I will also share an informal experiment I have conducted in Brazilian Portuguese as an awareness-raising exercise with English native speaker teachers in Australia. The experiment shows the importance of exploring the learners’ first language (L1) phonology to teach second language (L2) pronunciation. The article will then conclude with individual teachers’ reactions to this experiment.

To ‘Listen and repeat’ or Not to ‘Listen and repeat’? – That’s the question!

One of the funniest film scenes I have ever seen comes from the comedy *The Pink Panther* (2006). In this scene, the clumsy French police inspector, Jacques Clouseau, played by the American actor, Steve Martin, is trying to learn to speak English with a ‘flawless’ American accent. Having found himself the perfect accent coach, Clouseau achieves nothing but sheer frustration when he struggles mightily to pronounce the sentence ‘I would like to buy a hamburger’. After several unsuccessful attempts to model and drill the sentence, the coach suggests that they should give up, to which Clouseau responds, ‘No! We don’t quit. We do not quit. Again! Again!’ Clouseau’s experience with trying to learn English pronunciation is not too dissimilar to the predicament of many English language learners around the world, for whom the first encounter with English pronunciation often is ‘listen and repeat’.

A relic from the time of audiolingualism, ‘listen and repeat’ is still ‘the basic paradigm for teaching pronunciation’ (Messum, 2011: 20), and the preferred model of pronunciation

instruction emphasised in well-known pre-service teacher training programmes in English language teaching (ELT) around the world. The image of learners parroting chants such as 'the rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain' (Jones, 1997: 105) still remains *en vogue* in the foreign and second language classroom and in pre- and in-service training programmes globally (Buss, 2013; Henderson et al., 2012) despite the fact that audiolingual approaches to pronunciation had long lost their credibility due to the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1970s.

Unfortunately, imitative techniques such as 'listen and repeat' sometimes lead teachers and learners to believe that pronunciation is a rather tedious and demotivating experience (Baker, 2014), possibly because of 'over-routinisation' (Prabhu, 1992: 239). Besides, as Fraser (2006) points out, because 'listen and repeat' tends to generate limited successful results, it thereby creates a misguided image that pronunciation instruction can only be done if one possesses specialist knowledge of phonology and phonetics. In my opinion, this is possibly one of the reasons why many teachers tend to play safe and stick to conventional 'auditory matching' (Messum, 2012: 154) techniques such as 'listen and repeat'.

Furthermore, Messum and Young, other trenchant critics of 'listen and repeat', state that 'it is a mistake to base normal classroom pronunciation teaching on something that demands an unrealistic level of teacher expertise and student time and commitment to be successful' (2012: 4). They argue that pronunciation teachers should instead coach learners to work on their pronunciation by focusing on how their mouths work.

With this context in mind, it seems that it is time for those stakeholders involved in teacher education in the discipline of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) to re-evaluate the way it approaches pronunciation in teacher preparation programmes so that novice teachers are better equipped with a more versatile repertoire of techniques rather than 'listen and repeat'. This would be particularly beneficial for novice teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where the native-speaker model retains control over pronunciation instruction and teaching materials, and is viewed as the ultimate goal of speech production (Sifakis, 2014).

Alternative techniques to 'listen and repeat'

Some alternatives to 'listen and repeat' come from approaches which treat pronunciation as a motor skill and deal with it kinaesthetically. In these approaches, the teacher plays the role of 'the coach' not 'the model'. Thus, imitation is limited and the dependency on 'nativism' is lessened.

a. The Silent Way, from Piers Messum and Roslyn Young's PronSci

In Messum and Young's adaptation of Gattegno's Silent Way (Young & Messum, 2011), teachers approach pronunciation teaching 'silently' (the teacher doesn't model but isn't mute), and encourage learners to produce sounds using trial and error with the aid of coloured charts or International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols and Cuisenaire rods. The teacher's role is to give the learners feedback on their production, which they can take out of the classroom. This is done using gestures, diagrams and other means of providing the learners with the 'know-how' to produce a sound. Teacher models are viewed as ineffective.

Messum and Young's (2012) approach is based on Gattegno's assertion that 'humans learn through their awareness and their awarenesses. Learners are given the opportunity to become acquainted with their own articulators and make these work towards the target sounds without being distracted by the teacher's 'model' (Messum & Young, 2012: 12).

b. Sound Foundations, from Adrian Underhill

An approach which has also been influenced by the work of Gattegno is Adrian Underhill's Sound Foundations. In this approach, Underhill (2005) suggests that pronunciation cannot be learnt without the body, and thus learners need to become familiar with the muscles that make a difference to their pronunciation. Underhill's metaphor that 'pronunciation is like an extraordinary dance, which has sequence, coordination, grace and beauty' (2010: 1) draws an effective parallel with pronunciation learning and teaching. As Underhill sees it, teachers should encourage their learners to use their 'inner ear' and 'inner voice' to learn sounds. For instance, Underhill (2013) suggests that learners should be given the opportunity to prepare for production by thinking about the sounds in their minds, applying different aspects to them such as stress and intonation before saying them, and calls this process 'the Inner Workbench' (Underhill, 2013: 207).

c. Performing English, from Peter Copeman

In his performance theory approach, Copeman (2012) uses several voice training techniques commonly used by actors, as well as kinaesthetic feedback, to help students improve their segmental intelligibility.

Copeman's (2012) techniques focus on posture and the resetting of articulatory kinaesthetic, breathing and intentionality, prosodic enhancement through kinaesthetic engagement, and techniques involving gestures, social distance and body language. The motto of Copeman's work is to 'fake it till you make it' (p. 22).

As an example, a technique Copeman (Ibid.) uses for getting learners to distinguish between /r/ and /l/ is to encourage the learners to get into the position for the sound /f/, and by exaggerating it in a Bugs Bunny's buck-toothed grimace with the help of a mirror, attempt the sound /r/. According to Copeman this snarling position tends to naturally make the learner's tongue retract and miss the alveolar ridge, thus producing the targeted prototype sound /r/. Having deconceptualised the habit, learners are then encouraged to keep practising until they are ready to drop the snarl and work on the other problematic sound /l/. It seems that Copeman's approach to pronunciation provides a useful alternative to the traditional modelling and drilling techniques, as it encourages learners to focus on particular interim sounds as a means to facilitate the production of target sounds such as in the /r/ and /l/ example as described.

d. The First Language Point of Reference (L1 POR), from Michael Carey

One approach which I have been exploring more closely recently is the pragmatic and innovative approach to pronunciation instruction proposed by Carey (2004: 11) known as 'the first language point of reference approach for the instruction of pronunciation', hereafter referred to as the L1 POR.

In L1 POR, the learner is placed at the centre of the pronunciation teaching and learning experience, and the teacher is encouraged to take a creative, flexible and non-nativist perspective towards pronunciation instruction without the need for 'listen and repeat'.

An L1 POR experiment with Australian teachers

To exemplify how I am experimenting with the flexibility of the L1 POR approach, I have completed an experiment with English teachers in Australia in order to show them the benefits of using the learners' first language for pronunciation instruction. In this experiment, I teach the teachers how to use English articulatory settings to help them pronounce common functional exponents in Brazilian Portuguese (BP). The following is a BP interaction:

A: Oi! Tudo bem.

B: Tudo bem. E você?

A: Tudo bem.

This interaction would translate into English as:

A: Hi! How are you?

B: Fine. And you?

A: *Fine.*

The experiment is divided into three distinct phases. Phase 1 focuses on the English articulatory settings. Phase 2 focuses on word stress and vowel duration. Phase 3 brings in prosody, i.e. sentence stress and intonation. I will now describe each phase individually.

Phase 1 – English articulatory setting sounds

The first step is to write words from the teachers' first language on the board. These words will require the teachers to shape their mouths in the appropriate articulatory setting for producing the target sounds.

E.g. boy tour doer bay in see volley say

In pairs or groups the teachers are then asked to pronounce the words. As they do so, I get them to think about what is happening in their articulatory apparatus (e.g. tongue, lips, jaw, throat, etc.) with the support of feedback and hand gestures. For instance, I get them to pronounce boy /bɔɪ/ and then drop the initial /b/ sound so as to achieve the diphthong /ɔɪ/. This sound will be a close approximate of the way that the word 'Oi' would be said in Portuguese.

It is important to point out that I remain silent during this process, only speaking to assist if necessary, e.g. 'Drop this sound /b/ (pointing to /b/ on the board)'. Also, if any sound deviations occur, I get the teachers to reshape their articulators accordingly, until an intelligible pronunciation is achieved.

Phase 2 – Word stress and vowel lengthening

In this phase, the focus is on word stress and vowel lengthening. For this, I use a combination of bold or underlined letters and symbols (Figure 1). For instance, if the word in question is 'tudo', I would write the words 'tour' and 'doer' on the board and highlight the sound in the word which will receive the prominence; in this case, 'tour'. Next, I get the teachers to drop out sounds in the words which are not relevant to the process; in these two words, the schwa /ə/.

While avoiding modelling the sounds, I would provide guidance by asking questions such as 'Is there more than one way to say *tour* (pointing to the word)'? The reason for doing this is that /tʊər/, the way Australians often pronounce 'tour', contains the sound that is required for intelligibly producing 'tu' in 'tudo'. This would not be the case if the sound in question came from the alternative pronunciation /tɔːr/, often used by British English speakers. The same process would be used for the production of the syllable 'do', except that it would not receive any highlighting, as it is a reduced syllable in the word.

Once the teachers are able to shape their articulators around the individual sounds for 'tudo', I focus them on the bold or underlined syllables in the word and ask them to say the word and making the bolded syllable – e.g. 'tudo' – louder. With the help of hand gestures or a metal pointer, I get the teachers to practise placing the word stress on this word several times until they feel confident with its production.

As for vowel lengthening, a similar process to that described above takes place. The only difference is that in order to focus the teachers on vowel lengthening, I use an arrow symbol underneath the relevant sound. For instance, to get the longer sound /ee/ in the Portuguese word 'você', which means 'you', I get the teachers to drop the sound /leɪ/ in 'volley' and /s/ in 'see' and then link the two to form /vɒse/. After that, using an arrow symbol above or underneath the sound /se/, I get the teachers to elongate the sound and produce [ee]. Once again, with guidance, I get them to achieve a rounder vowel sound that would approximate the desired Portuguese vowel sound.

The process is repeated until all the words are produced and the teachers feel comfortable enough to reproduce them without the written input.

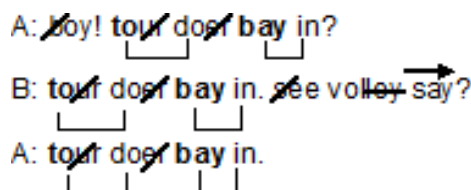


Figure 1: Using symbols to mark word stress and vowel length

Phase 3 – Intonation

In this final phase of the experiment, I focus the teachers on intonation. To do that, I use punctuation marks such as full stops (.), exclamation marks (!) and question marks (?). By placing them on the board, I get the teachers to notice that these express three different things: one is a statement, the others an exclamation and a question, respectively.

The teachers are asked to imagine that this is a communicative interaction between two people, A and B. I then ask them to practise the conversation in two different scenarios: the first scenario is a conversation between two people who are happy to see each other, and the second scenario between two people who are unhappy to see each other. With the support of the metal pointer and questions/prompts – e.g. 'Does your voice go up or down here?' (to the question 'E você?') or 'Say this with a smile' – the teachers practise

the conversation several times until they feel they are confident to reproduce it without the written input.

Until now, I have obtained positive results with this experiment and they seem to indicate that teachers are generally responsive to an approach in which pronunciation is taught by a 'coach' and not a 'model'. It also shows that teachers seem to value the respect that L1 POR pays to the phonology of the learners' first language.

Future research

My next step is to investigate further how this approach can be used to teach English pronunciation with multilingual groups, a concern raised in the comments of some of the teachers who have participated in this experiment.

Teacher 1

L1 specific approach. I love this. It's respectful of the learners ...it's a fun mnemonic as well...bound to remember more because of the L1 approach to it.

Teacher 2

Excellent...very useful. Need to rely on a large number of languages.

Teacher 3

Will certainly use it! highly useful, it's such a respectful way to incorporate the learners' L1, making them feel valued & not inferior as NNS; give them confidence!...requires investigation on part of the teacher a willingness to learn more about learners [sic] L1, but can be challenging in a multi-lingual classroom though.

Teacher 4

This is a very good activity. Understandable way of bring (sic) the L1 to enable the L2. I would definitely use this with a class of students.

Conclusion

As idealistic as it may seem, ELT needs to review the way pronunciation teaching is approached in teacher education programmes in order to take it beyond the boundaries of 'listen and repeat' methodologies. Whilst it may take time for pronunciation to fully rise from its *Sleeping Beauty* status, there is certainly new potential for it within the current and changing CLT landscape. Nevertheless, for such an 'awakening' to happen, ELT education needs to ensure that 'listen and repeat', or metaphorically speaking, pronunciation's *Wicked Stepmother*, relinquishes its control over classroom practice.

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Under the baton of schwa

Kristýna Poesová

Raising students' awareness about the unique character and multifarious functions of the neutral vowel schwa in the English sound system lies at the core of the schwa-centred approach, which looks at selected pronunciation aspects, specifically the English vocalic inventory, lexical stress and rhythmic structure, from the schwa perspective. The reduced vowel schwa, in layman's terms also referred to as 'important nothing', becomes powerful as it interacts with other pronunciation features. The main aim of this paper is to draw attention to the relational nature of the target sound, which may help students coming from schwa-less linguistic backgrounds better understand how prominence patterns in English work and become more confident users of it.

The schwa-centred approach is not an approach in its own right. In fact the term covers a set of recommendations and practical tips that take schwa as a starting point, and aim at incorporating schwa-related aspects into classroom practice. It draws on the findings of dissertation research, the topic of which was the effectiveness of pronunciation teaching (Poesová, 2012), as well as on the comparison of L1 (Czech) and L2 (English) sound systems and long-term teaching experience involving various age and proficiency groups of Czech learners. The motivation behind this paper also stems from the concept of socially meaningful anglophony, which focuses on what specific anglophone codes have in common and identifies salient features that capture the nature of sounding English (James, 2013).

What is schwa like?

I can hear my university students answering in unison that it is never stressed, hopefully as a result of my unrelenting effort to illustrate this inherent property of schwa using, amongst other examples, an adorable image of a penguin which is accompanied by two captions; the first placed in the centre expressing the animal's wish 'I want to be a schwa' and the second at the bottom explaining why 'It's never stressed'. The list of schwa's peculiarities does not end here. The sound's characteristic features seem to be best described when compared with other vocalic elements. Schwa occurs in English far more frequently than individual full vowels, it is represented by a greater variety of graphemes (Cruttenden, 2014) and it has got its own name. Last but not least, it goes beyond the segmental level and plays an indispensable part in creating natural rhythmic patterns. Most of these and further facts about the target vowel can be transformed into simple

awareness-raising activities or discovery tasks that count upon students' active participation. Some examples will be demonstrated throughout the article.

Phonetically and phonologically speaking

The full definition of schwa goes as follows: neutral mid-central lax vowel. None of these descriptors need to be used when addressing our students as long as the content is properly mediated. *Neutral* refers to no activity of lip-shaping muscles; the lips are neither rounded nor spread. The term *lax* characterizes the relaxedness of articulatory organs, which distinguishes schwa from its tenser and longer counterpart /ɜ:/. The attributes *mid* and *central* depict the tongue position in the mouth, which can be visualised by intersecting the horizontal and vertical axes of the imaginary quadrilateral representing the vocalic space in the middle.

Students can feel the schwa position when they observe the tongue movements during alternate productions of schwa and the peripheral full vowels or vice versa (Catford, 1988) – e.g., /ə i: ə i:/ /ə æ ə æ/ /ə u: ə u:/ /ɑ: ə ɑ: ə/ /e ə e ə/. Students can be encouraged to mentally explore their oral cavities and give feedback about their sensations by questions such as *Where does your tongue go when you produce the sequence /ə i: ə i:/? Does it go up or down, to the front or to the back?* Not only will the schwa position become more tangible in this way, students will also physically map the whole vocalic space. Most importantly, they won't be experiencing the production of vowels in isolation but in mutual relationships, which can be later elaborated on by supplying words or phrases corresponding to the practised pairs and directing students' attention to different levels of prominence.

The resulting shape of the oral cavity obtained by the above-described configuration of modulating organs creates the vital prerequisite for schwa timbre, whose acoustic structure involves a balanced layout of the formants. Nevertheless, this ideal distribution does not correspond to speech reality in which contextual variability often overpowers the quality of schwa. The reduced vowel absorbs the features of surrounding elements to a larger extent than full vowels in stressed positions, particularly its second formant (Kondo, 1994). As an example we can mention the phenomenon of vowel harmony, which shows how the phonetic quality of a stressed vowel regressively influences schwa in unstressed grammatical words. The schwas in *to the* /tə ðə/ display frontness in the phrase *to the hill* and backness in *to the park* due to front /ɪ/ and back /ɑ:/, respectively (Ogden, 2009:74). From the auditory point of view schwa is perceived as being shorter, quieter and lower as opposed to the longer, louder and higher characteristics of vowels in stressed syllables. The acoustic correlates of prominence cues are duration for length, intensity for loudness and fundamental frequency for pitch. The phonemic status of schwa can be defended by

its ability to create contrasts with unstressed /ɪ/ or a phonological zero; however, the number of minimal pairs seems to be smaller compared to other vocalic elements.

The following list suggests five stages in developing students' awareness of the English vocalic system in such a way that it can be immediately or later related to the notion of prominence patterning:

Step 1 *Exploration of the oral cavity (observing the tongue and lip movements)*

/ə æ ə æ ə æ/ /ə u: ə u: ə u:/ /ɑ: ə ɑ: ə ɑ: ə/ /i: ə i: ə i: ə/

Step 2 *Supplying words and phrases containing the practised sequences*

/dʒə'pæn/ /fə'sæm/ /bə'lu:n/ /ət'nu:n/ /bə'nɑ:nə/ /hə'ti:tʃə/

Step 3 *Introducing the prominence principle (schwa in unstressed syllables, full vowels usually in stressed)*

/dʒə'pæn/ /bə'lu:n/ /bə'nɑ:nə/ /'ti:tʃə/

Step 4 *Drawing students' attention to prominence properties (auditory point of view)*

quieter, lower, shorter (schwa) vs louder (full vowel), higher, longer

Step 5 *Establishing the basic prominence unit: schwa + full vowel, which can be constantly referred to during further pronunciation practice.*

The relationship between schwa and full vowels epitomizes the process of vowel reduction, which leads to the neutralization of vocalic contrasts in unstressed positions (Laver, 1994) and is required by the rhythmic makeup of the English language. As the stress shifts from the second syllable in *Japan* to the third in *Japanese*, the vowel quality changes, too, and the open front /æ/ turns into schwa: /dʒə'pæn/ → /,dʒəpə'ni:z/. Simultaneously, schwa in the first syllable of *Japan* changes to a fully produced vowel in the derived adjective *Japanese* because it occurs in the syllable carrying secondary stress: /dʒə'pæn/ → /,dʒæpə'ni:z/. Schwa, being the main – but not the only – representative of vowel reduction processes, thus becomes an important (non)-prominence indicator. On both word and sentence level schwa largely helps stressed parts stand out in the speech signal and create prominence contrasts crucial for smoother word recognition and message decoding. The frequent juxtaposition of schwa and full English vowels within words and phrases is by no means accidental. By shortening, lowering, quietening and obscuring the vowel quality in unstressed syllables, speakers can effectively signal the arrival of a stronger beat.

As the perceptually motivated concept of stress-timing has failed to be instrumentally verified and the division of languages into syllable- or stress-timed families is nowadays

viewed as less categorical, the interpretation of English rhythm for teaching purposes favours improving the ability to perceive and produce prominence contrasts between stressed and unstressed elements rather than achieving isochrony (Lane, 2010). It follows that schwa should not be treated separately but in the context of neighbouring syllables. In connected speech where the prominence cues of stressed syllables get sometimes blurred, schwa may remain the last resort in perceived prominence.

Potential problems of speakers from schwa-less languages

The following language-specific outline revolves around the Czech sound system; however, the anticipated problems may ring a bell for all speakers whose L1 belongs to a schwa-less language family, and for whom the concept of vowel reduction, involving the centralization of peripheral vowels into schwa, is entirely unfamiliar. English and Czech stress systems do not coincide, the former being wholly unpredictable for a Czech speaker with the experience of a fixed-stress mother tongue and a very limited space for vowel reductions. Except for colloquial variants, standard Czech lacks schwa and requires full vowel quality in both stressed and unstressed positions (Palková, 1994). As a result, Czech users typically face two potential areas of difficulty.

From the perception point of view, Czech listeners are likely to experience one type of speech illusion (Gallés, 2004), during which the schwa sound is filtered through the sieve of Czech vowels /i, e, a, o, u/. For example, schwas in the first syllables of the words *ago*, *surprise* and *photographer* are typically heard as /e/, /u/ and /o/ by Czech listeners. Although the inaccurate schwa recognition does not hinder the understanding of individual words, the weakened perceptual sensitivity may lead to problems in coping with the natural flow of continuous speech where schwa often occurs in unstressed syllables and weak forms of grammatical words.

Unsurprisingly, in the area of production Czech users of English frequently substitute schwa with full vowel qualities. This tendency is manifested in the insufficient differentiation of vowels in stressed and unstressed positions and the lack of prominence contrast caused mainly by equalizing the duration of vocalic elements in syllables with a different degree of prominence (Volín, 2005). Not only do Czech speakers struggle with vowel reduction, the prominence features of stressed syllables are largely absent too, mainly due to negative transfer. In Czech, stressed syllables do not stick out at all and the acoustic manifestations of prominence are rather impalpable. The smoothing out of all differences may end up in monotonous expression and lead to worsened processing of the speech by listeners. This tendency is likely to be further reinforced by highly irregular grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences of schwa.

Effectiveness of pronunciation teaching – research design

What did the research conducted in two seventh forms of a Czech lower-secondary school tell us about the examined area? In short, the above-mentioned assumptions and observations were more or less confirmed. At a closer look, the data provided some interesting and didactically valuable insights into participants' speech behaviour. The principal objective of the three-month research project was to find out whether regular and systematic training of schwa (in its complexity) induced any improvement in 13-year-old pupils' perceptive and productive skills. The adequate method to fulfil the goal proved to be a before-and-after teaching experiment. The respondents were divided into experimental and control groups; in the former the teachers integrated five-minute long activities focused on schwa and related aspects in every English class, whereas in the latter the pupils remained uninstructed in this respect. The data collected via specifically devised perception and production tests at the beginning and end of the experiment then underwent a comparative analysis separately in both domains.

Due to the limited space of this paper, neither the measuring tool nor the battery of schwa exercises implemented in the English classes can be discussed. However, I will briefly comment on the evaluation of the production test, which comprised participants' recordings of repeated and read words and phrases, as it brings us back to the central theme of this paper. Instead of comparing individual acoustic correlates of prominence, that is to say duration, intensity and fundamental frequency, the ratios or differences of these acoustic parameters in stressed and adjacent unstressed syllables were calculated and compared. This method seems to better reflect the relational character of the target phenomenon and to capture the pupils' ability to create local contrasts between prominent and non-prominent elements. The vowel quality was assessed perceptually, although current phonetic research offers other techniques, for example, the measurement of the spectral slope features in weak syllables, a technique which was successfully employed in the investigation of Czech-accented speech (Volín et al., 2013).

Did perception and production of the reduced vowel improve?

The pupils from the experimental groups got better at discriminating schwa in two-syllable content words and weak forms of grammatical words. The statistically significant improvement shows that incorporation of schwa activities into English classes resulted in higher perceptual sensitivity to vowel reduction. In other words, the children's ears got tuned to vowel reductions in certain contexts and thanks to the experimental plan the perceptual illusion imposed by L1 was partially suppressed.

The research yielded less conclusive results in the area of production. Substantial differences were found only in the temporal domain, the vowel quality in unstressed positions got obscured to a lesser degree, and pitch and loudness were not utilized at all. To sum up, the pupils exploited only one parameter to signal (non)-prominence and their speech behaviour was dominated by two types of incomplete vowel reduction. The first involved shortening of the vocalic element in unstressed syllables but maintaining full vowel quality. In the second the respondents managed to produce schwa quality, but this change was not accompanied by adequate shortening. Neither model was identified in weak forms of grammatical words. In the follow-up study exploring prominence patterns in native and Czech-accented English, similar conclusions were drawn. While Czech speakers' production illustrated a certain degree of fragmentation and low interconnectedness of the acoustic features for signalling (non)-prominence, native speakers exploited them in a more cohesive way (Weingartová et al., 2014).

Teaching implications

What message can teachers carry away from the findings within the given research format? Firstly, schwa teaching turned out to be more beneficial in the area of perception. Taking into account the order of phonological acquisition, perception preceded production in our sample. Secondly, pronunciation teaching triggered subtle changes in pupils' speech behaviour in the right direction. The production data revealed the respondents' improved ability to express local prominence contrasts via temporal manipulations. This tendency accords with Setter's claim that temporal contrasting is relatively easy to learn (2006) and Silverman's observation about temporal modifications that represent a key step in the process of vowel reduction (2011). Had the schwa training been longer and/or more intensive, the temporal reduction might have been marked by the obscuration of vowel quality more consistently. All in all, teachers need to be very patient with their students' performance, as it takes a considerable time to escape the grip of the L1 speech habits. Finally, teachers should be on the alert for the damaging impact English spelling can exert on both perceptive and productive skills, particularly in words which have Czech counterparts.

A schwa-centred approach

In a schwa-centred approach, the potential of the reduced vowel to interact with higher units of the sound system is recognized, emphasized and systematically worked with. Teachers do not have to study anything new; they are simply encouraged not to ignore schwa when teaching word stress and rhythm, and to draw students' attention to the function of schwa in creating prominence contrasts. A small-scale research of contemporary English textbooks available in the Czech Republic indicated that these

domains are frequently kept apart and practised separately, e.g. students are asked to identify stressed syllables in one exercise and then after several units they are instructed to identify schwas in a different activity.

A schwa-centred approach requires the performance of these tasks on the same set of words and recommends marking the prominence units. Obviously, there is nothing wrong about practising the perception and production of schwa and word stress on their own as long as the teacher brings the phenomena together at some point (the earlier the better) and makes their mutual relationship clear. In addition, producing schwa in isolation does not pose any difficulty for Czech speakers; it is predominantly the ability to reduce properly in the right place and to overcome numerous discrepancies between the spoken and written form that provides a significant challenge and needs to be addressed in the classroom.

The choice of the following teaching tips was motivated by the research findings. However, the activities leave a lot of space for individual adaptation. They all aim at raising student awareness about schwa, which tends to go unnoticed in the speech signal but becomes a powerful element once it enters a partnership with stressed syllables.

Firstly, there is a technique called partial transcription (Volín, 2002), which uses a normal spelling except for the schwa symbol, e.g. *Brazilian children can draw amazing parrots*, or preferably uses the schwa symbol together with stress marks: *Brəˈziliən ˈchildrən cən ˈdraw əˈmazing ˈparrəts*. The schwa symbol is written in a smaller font in order to visually support its reduced character. Partial transcription of a short passage can nicely illustrate how frequently schwa occurs in English. Furthermore, it successfully suppresses the negative influence of the written form which often overrode the students' ability to perceive and produce schwa in the research data. Prominence units can be found both within words (*Brəˈziliən*) and between words (*cən ˈdraw*).

The **second** task is perceptually oriented and involves noticing the difference between words that exist in both English and L1, e.g. *photographer* /fəˈtɒɡrəfə/ and its Czech equivalent *fotograf* /ˈfotograf/. Students come up with a list of similar words, listen to their English and Czech pronunciations and try to reveal why they sound different. Their attention can be further directed to the fact that in English stressed syllables are very often flanked by schwas or other weak vowels.

The **third** activity, called 'energy profile', was devised through joint efforts at the Institute of Phonetics in Prague, and draws on students' playfulness and willingness to experiment. The goal is to move a stressed syllable forward and backward within a word and observe how it affects the neighbouring syllables, e.g. *umbrella* /ʌmˈbrelə/ → /ˌʌmbreˈlə:/ → /ˈʌmbrelə/. By distorting the canonical stress pattern students learn that

stress in English is not tied fixedly to a single syllable as in Czech and that its shift provokes changes in the prominence profile of the word.

The **fourth** recommendation reflects one particular research finding. While at word level prominence contrasts got better, at least in the temporal domain, this tendency was not exhibited at all at sentence level. Consequently, by establishing analogies between stressed and unstressed syllables and words in the form of a matching exercise, e.g. *Brazil* /brəˈzɪl → *for Jill* /fəˈdʒɪl; *engineer* /ˌendʒəˈniə/ → *Ben was here* /ˈben wəz ˈhiə/ or homophrases (Lane, 2010), e.g. Mr Bay can cook bacon /ˈbeɪkən/, this relationship can be strengthened.

The **fifth** tip concerns weak and strong forms of grammatical words and focuses primarily on perception. In the activity called ‘Strong or Weak?’ students listen to short phrases and write S if they hear the target word in its strong form and W if a weak form is produced, e.g. *What **were** they eating?* said as /ˈwɒt wə ðeɪ ˈiːtɪŋ/ or /ˈwɒt wɜː ðeɪ ˈiːtɪŋ/. The main aim of the activity is to direct their attention to the fact that grammatical words can have more than one pronunciation, and that weak forms contribute to creating natural rhythm.

The **last** suggestion in the list plays with prominence clues. Students are instructed to produce the first syllable of a nonsense word *dooby* (Hancock, 1995) very long and the second extremely short, the first as loud as they can and the second in a whispery voice, the first very high and the second much lower. The desirable outcome is a vivid prominence contrast achieved by clustering the features.

Conclusion

Developing phonetic awareness about schwa and its role in co-creating English rhythmic patterning constitutes the underlying principle of a schwa-centred approach, which brings into focus the hidden strength of this inconspicuous sound. Teachers are advised to get students actively engaged in noticing, observing and identifying prominence units in diverse language material. The knowledge acquired hopefully imprints in students’ minds and gradually begins to mirror in their perceptive and productive skills, as the research presented here suggests. To what extent they succeed in handling vowel reduction processes in both domains depends on many factors, the context in which they use or will use their English being one of them.

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Practical pronunciation ideas for teaching in an ELF context

Katy Simpson & Laura Patsko

The ever-increasing use of English as an international language of communication, often without any native speakers present in these interactions, presents some interesting new challenges for teaching pronunciation. It questions the traditional assumption that all learners of English will interact with and/or want to sound like native speakers of English. The authors have been working for some time with students whose goal is to use English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). This article will suggest some practical ideas for how to help learners develop intelligible pronunciation for the use of English in this specific context.

Identifying goals and needs

The use of ELF is widely understood to be the most prevalent use of English in the world today. Non-native speakers of English vastly outnumber its native speakers (Crystal, 2008: 6) and increasingly fewer interactions in English involve any native English speakers at all (Graddol, 2006: 87). When speakers do not share any other language, English becomes ‘the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option.’ (Seidlhofer, 2011: 7)

It is therefore highly probable that many learners today will need to use ELF. To determine whether this is the case for one’s own students, the topic could first be broached by explicitly discussing why they are learning English, who they use it with (or intend to use it with), and so on. Since some students may not have ever considered the range of varieties of English around the world, you could raise their awareness by introducing them to statistics on English usage. For example:

Speaker group	Speaker population
American English	230 million
British English	57 million
BBC English	1 million

Indian English	200 million
Native speakers of English	400 million
Non-native speakers of English	1200 million

Table 1 Source: Walker, R. (2010). Teaching the pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca. Oxford: OUP. (Data from Crystal, D. (2003), English as a Global Language (2nd ed.). Cambridge: CUP.)

If you discover that an ELF-oriented approach is more appropriate for your students than a more traditional, native speaker-oriented one, you may wish to complete a diagnostic test which incorporates the use of ELF. In a multilingual class, it is possible to gain evidence of how successful your learners already are (or are likely to be) at communicating intelligibly in an ELF context by arranging a student-student dictation activity¹, as follows:

1) Each student has a short sentence (about 15 words is probably enough) which he/she reads out to the rest of the class, who write down what they hear. These sentences would ideally include pronunciation features which are crucial to intelligibility in ELF (see below), but to avoid creating new materials you could also use sentences from a coursebook. To complete their notes, provide students with a table such as the one below:

Student's name	What did he/she say?
Mario	
Renata	
Sergey	
Yuriko	
Jason	
Ying	

In terms of procedure, there are three important points to remember:

- The students must have time to prepare their sentences (e.g. marking where they should pause, checking the pronunciation of any unfamiliar words, etc.).

¹ A video recording of the activity described here, conducted with an intermediate-level general English class of 5 students, is available at <http://youtu.be/GTQvcCXVzAY>

- You should avoid introducing/explaining the sentences in any way beforehand, or else the students may rely on context to help them understand, rather than focusing purely on sound.
- Each sentence should be read twice, at reasonably natural speed. Students can ask for clarification of particular words later, within reason.

2) Take your own notes while the students are reading their sentences to compare later with the notes from the rest of the class. Mark anything which seems significant (e.g. difficulty with a particular sound, cluster, etc.), as you will be able to determine later the true significance, based on how the other students perceived the sound.

3) Once the students have finished, allow time to discuss the sentences for meaning, like any other speaking activity. Then collect their notes from the dictation.

Turning to the analysis of the data collected, you now need to apply a sort of ‘ELF filter’. Rather than comparing and contrasting your students’ pronunciation with a native-accent model (such as Received Pronunciation), you need a guide that is more relevant to the needs of students who are using or intending to use ELF. Such a guide exists in the form of the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000), a set of pronunciation features which research has shown to be crucial for mutual intelligibility within ELF interactions. Briefly, the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) includes:

- most consonant sounds
- consonant clusters (especially at the start and in the middle of words)
- one vowel sound: /ɜ:/ (as in ‘bird’)
- vowel length (especially before voiced/unvoiced consonants, e.g. the vowel in ‘back’ is slightly shorter than the one in ‘bag’)
- placement of nuclear stress (e.g.: Let’s visit your MOTHER next Saturday. as opposed to Let’s visit your mother next SATURDAY.)

(For more details and explanation of the LFC and other aspects of ELF intelligibility, see Walker’s *Teaching the pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca*, OUP, 2010).

The advantage of this type of diagnostic test is that it provides a rich set of data for the teacher to identify students’ problems both in understanding others and in making themselves understood. This activity is particularly valuable for predicting ELF intelligibility issues when used in a multilingual classroom, where the students are by definition already using English among themselves as a lingua franca. In the monolingual classroom, the teacher may need to rely more on their own perception of where the students diverge from

the LFC, because, while students of the same L1 background might understand each other's pronunciation, ELF users from other L1 backgrounds might not. Fortunately, if the teacher shares the students' L1 in a monolingual setting, he/she should be well-placed to determine the students' likely areas of difficulty.

Teaching techniques

After identifying ELF pronunciation priorities for your class, how can you help students develop these areas?

One point highlighted by ELF research (e.g. Jenkins, 2000) is the importance of working on phonetic (not just phonemic) aspects of pronunciation, and raising learners' awareness of particularly salient articulatory features, such as voicing. Attention to *how* particular features of pronunciation may be produced, understood and modified will help your students take a flexible approach to pronunciation, adapting and accommodating to their interlocutors as necessary.

Fortunately, however, it is not necessarily to completely overhaul normal classroom practice. Walker (Ibid: 71) reminds us that taking an ELF approach to pronunciation is more a case of 're-thinking goals and re-defining error'. This means there are many traditional pronunciation teaching techniques and activities which will be equally useful when adopting an ELF approach.

For example, since pronunciation requires a degree of automatisisation, traditional drilling techniques remain important. Basic discrimination exercises are also helpful, e.g. with identifying the placement of nuclear stress and its associated meanings. While you may wish to create your own activities to focus on specific areas, there is no reason not to use existing published material (see below) even if it was not designed with students using ELF in mind.

Filtering the coursebook

Many teachers are required by their institution to use a specific coursebook in class. To our knowledge, no coursebook has been written which focuses on the use of ELF. It is rare, though, to find a coursebook which fully addresses one student's specific needs since they are, by nature, a generic product. Because of this, teachers need to be selective when it comes to vocabulary, grammar and skills work, and to vary how much they focus on different parts of a coursebook, depending on students' needs. So it is with pronunciation.

When considering the needs of students using ELF, teachers may find it useful to contrast the coursebook with the Lingua Franca Core. More time can then be dedicated to parts of the coursebook which focus on the features of the LFC known to be crucial for intelligibility.

However, this is not to say that the rest of the coursebook's pronunciation exercises are redundant. Instead, consider whether the exercise is aimed at developing students' receptive or productive skills, or both. Parts of the coursebook which focus on features excluded from the LFC are likely to be valuable in developing students' bottom-up listening skills, for example, decoding features of connected speech. The question is whether the aim of the exercise relates to your students' needs, and if not, whether it can be adapted to do so.

In classes where students have different needs or goals, the same exercise may be approached productively by one student but receptively by another. For example, they could work in a pair, and while the first student speaks, the other listens. To facilitate this kind of differentiation, a certain element of learner training may be necessary to raise students' awareness of ELF and encourage them to reflect on their own needs.

Two more tools that are particularly useful for a class with mixed pronunciation needs are on-the-spot correction and homework. Once a student is aware of an issue with a particular sound, an indication from the teacher with just a small gesture (for example, by pointing to the lips or teeth) can often be enough to remind the student of their individual area of focus. In terms of homework, students can be directed to specific parts of the coursebook that address the individual area they need to work on. It may also be necessary to provide the student with supplementary material for homework.

Supplementing the coursebook

Just as many teachers adapt their use of a coursebook to suit students' particular needs, they may wish to use extra materials, as well. However, supplementing the coursebook does not necessarily mean making new materials: once familiar with the LFC, it is simply a case of looking through the index of pronunciation books for exercises which work on the relevant areas.

There are two long-standing favourites we have found particularly useful in helping students whose goal is to use ELF: *Ship or Sheep?* (Baker, 1981) and *Pronunciation Games* (Hancock, 1995).

Ship or Sheep? focuses on minimal pairs, which are particularly pertinent when it comes to ELF since the LFC includes most consonant sounds, as well as the difference in short and long vowels. *Pronunciation Games* also includes similar discrimination activities, and two of our favourites are 'Pronunciation Journey' (see Fig. 2) and 'Intonation Directions', which work on minimal pairs and nuclear stress placement, respectively.

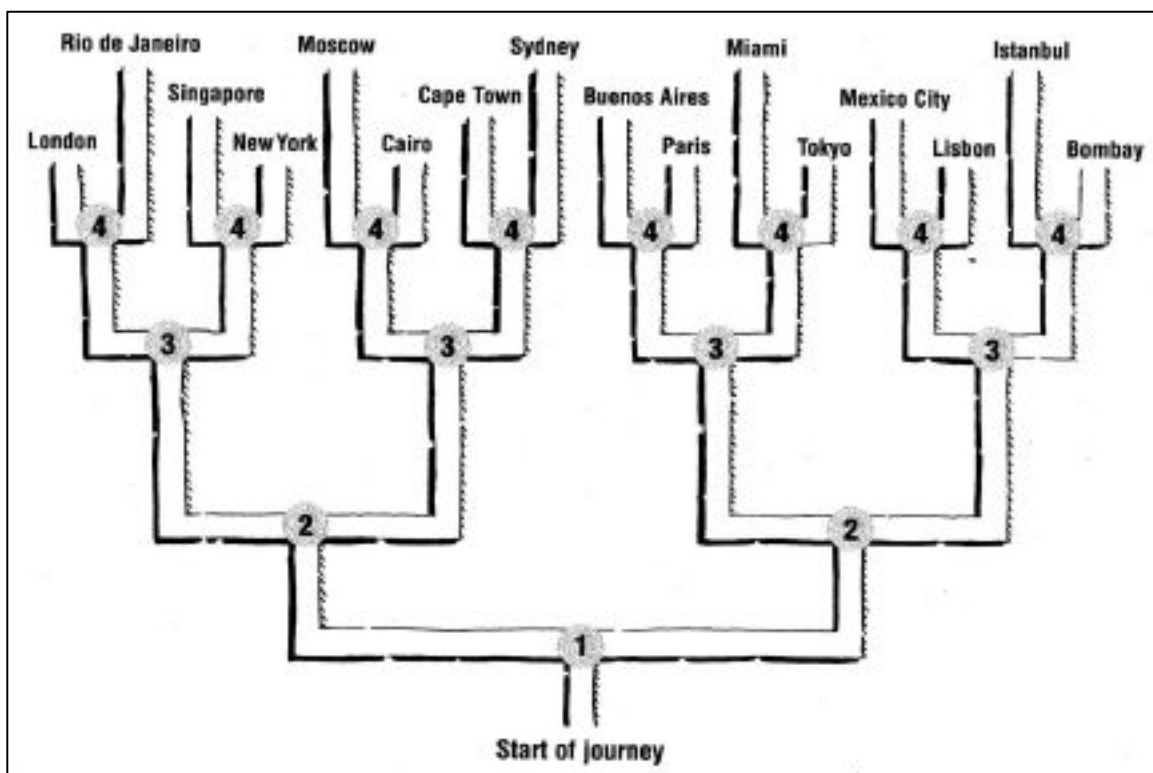


Figure 2. *Pronunciation Journey*. (Hancock. 1995. © Cambridge University Press)

In addition to published ELT materials, supplementing the coursebook will almost certainly require the use of authentic video and audio if students are to become familiar with a range of accents, which is a key consideration if they are to communicate successfully in an ELF environment.

Authentic material is often assumed to mean 'material from the English-speaking world'; but in ELF interactions, what matters isn't so much where people are, but who is speaking to whom. Indeed, from an ELF perspective, the learner is not assumed to interact mainly with native speakers of English. As such, we interpret 'authentic' to refer more broadly to material which has been produced in English but not designed specifically for learning English. This view provides a much wider range of material to choose from.

For example, with our own students we have made extensive use of the website www.ted.com, which features talks on a wide variety of topics from a wide variety of speakers of English, both native and non-native. We would also recommend The Speech Accent Archive (<http://accent.gmu.edu/>) and the International Dialects of English Archive (<http://www.dialectsarchive.com/>). These are both searchable websites of a wide variety of speakers of English, both native and non-native, with audio files and accompanying transcripts. For non-internet dependent audio resources, we would recommend the CD which accompanies *Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca* (Walker, 2010). It provides unscripted authentic recordings of speakers from various language backgrounds, with annotated tapescripts including notes on the speakers' pronunciation.

The ideas in this article were originally presented by the authors as part of the 2014 IATEFL Conference and the British Council 2013–14 Seminar Series. You can watch the recordings and find more information about these presentations via the authors' blog: <http://elfpron.wordpress.com>

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Pronunciation in an EFL setting: What's going on inside & around European classrooms?

**Alice Henderson, Lesley Curnick, Dan Frost, Alexander Kautzsch,
Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova, David Levey, Elina Tergujeff, Ewa
Waniek-Klimczak**

Over the past 30 years, numerous studies have looked at how English pronunciation is taught around the world, examining teaching practices, materials, training and attitudes to native speaker models from both the teachers' and the learners' perspective. Although these studies have examined important aspects of pronunciation teaching, the majority were restricted to English-speaking countries. Consequently, a group of us working in Europe felt it would be useful to compare how pronunciation is taught in Europe. Starting in 2009 we collectively designed an online survey called the English Pronunciation Teaching in Europe Survey (EPTiES), which we used over a period of two years to compile data about teaching practices (Henderson et al., 2012). This paper provides a brief overview of our results for seven countries about three interrelated aspects: the training teachers received to teach English pronunciation, what they say happens inside and outside the classroom. Further results and more detailed analyses can be found in the authors' various publications.

Survey and participants

The EPTiES includes 57 multiple-choice, Likert-scale, open-ended questions, grouped into nine categories. We obtained responses from 843 teachers in 31 European countries; however, the present paper is based on the 640 respondents from the countries where at least 20 teachers completed the survey, that is, Finland (FI, n=103), France (FR, n=65), Germany (DE, n=362), Macedonia (MK, n=36), Poland (PL, n=20), Spain (ES, n=20) and Switzerland (CH, n=23).

Most participants were female non-native speakers of English and worked in the public sector. The age groups they taught were: primarily adults in Switzerland; mainly adults and a smaller percentage of young adults in France and Spain; mostly young adults and, to a lesser degree, children in Finland, Germany and Macedonia; people from across the entire age spectrum in Poland.

Results and analyses

Training received to teach English pronunciation

Apart from some participants in Switzerland and Finland, none of the respondents have specific EFL/ESL qualifications. Thirteen respondents from Switzerland described themselves as TEFL-trained (e.g., DipTEFL, CELTA, MEd in TESOL) and 94% of respondents from Finland had at least an MA degree (Finnish EFL teachers are expected to hold an MA degree in English with a minor in pedagogy). The Polish respondents are either recent graduates or are still doing MA courses. All the Macedonian respondents have BA degrees, one has an MA degree, and one has a CPE certificate. In the case of Spain, all respondents except one have undergraduate degrees, and a further 25% also have an MA or PhD. More than half the respondents in France and 97% in Germany have passed national competitive exams for recruiting teachers, and many other different levels and types of qualifications were listed.

Participants described their training by referring to either general phonetics or pronunciation courses, or to pronunciation modules in CELTA-type courses or MA programmes. Many also mentioned having had little or no training. Nevertheless, they tended to rate their training positively, as in, for example:

- I didn't get much training but I had an excellent phonetics teacher.
- [Courses were] theoretically based without any practical classroom application but a good overview of the IPA and the different terms related to the mouth along with the restrictions some speakers may have.

Many of the respondents (only 10% of whom were native speakers) simply described how they had practiced their own pronunciation or mentioned undergraduate courses: 'a few classes about the pronunciation of English, intonation etc., but just the theory and no actual demonstration of how to teach them.' As another wisely remarked: 'knowing about something is certainly not the same as knowing how to teach it.' Knowing how to speak fluently is still perceived as sufficient to teach pronunciation:

- I went to study abroad, one year in Australia. Best pronunciation training ever.
- None at all, but I lived in GB for a year.

On the other hand, one participant likened pronunciation teaching to 'wandering around in the dark' and another admitted to shying away from it for her entire career. Yet another spoke of 'a vicious circle' in which she does not feel she truly understands phonetics and

phonology, but she has never tried to learn more about them because she does not feel any obligation to teach pronunciation.

Inside the classroom

Materials

The EPTiES asked teachers about their use of published and on-line materials, and their access to language laboratories and/or via portable sound players. Their replies indicated that textbook and dictionary use is much lower in France (49% and 69% of respondents, respectively) than in the other six countries (means of 97% and 90%, respectively), whereas CDs and DVDs are widely used in all seven countries. The most popular on-line resources are specific language learning websites (76%), such as *Voice Of America* and *BBC Learning English*, followed by websites not specifically intended for this purpose, such as *YouTube* (64%). Substantial minorities of respondents said they use pre-existing modules (45%) and podcasts (37%).

Access to multimedia and/or digital language labs varies from 7% in Germany to 100% in Switzerland. Portable sound players are also widely available and frequently offset limited use of a separate lab. It is a positive sign that over half the respondents said they had sufficient access to technical support.

Teaching methods

Almost 80% of respondents claimed to devote up to a quarter of their weekly teaching time to teaching pronunciation. According to just over half the respondents, a quarter of weekly class time is sufficient, whereas a third would like to devote up to half their class time to it. Communication is often considered a higher priority than pronunciation work: 'I believe Polish students don't have problems with pronunciation, they are easily understood.' and 'My students are more interested in communication than pronunciation.' Several Macedonian participants stressed the importance of communication, considering that English 'needs to be learnt' because it is 'the language of global trade' and 'all information is in English'.

Even when pronunciation work is seen as desirable and teachable it may not be perceived as learnable: 'I enjoy teaching pronunciation, the difficult part is that the students find it difficult to grasp.' and 'the phoneme is too abstract and the syllable is more intuitive.'

Three-quarters of respondents use ear training, but use of phonetic symbols is a more contentious issue: 'they will not need to know how to write them. They will only need to be

able to recognise them.’ Another participant was certain that ‘it helps learners get a feeling for the differences in writing and speaking’. In general, respondents are twice as likely to teach symbol recognition vs. writing, which they see as a way of promoting autonomy among learners, who can become ‘independent and with a good dictionary should be able to pronounce any word, known or unknown’. The influence of language-specific features on teachers’ decisions was most obvious when participants referred to teaching symbols only for ‘difficult’ sounds or those absent from learners’ native language(s). Age was another factor, as a few participants felt that, for older students, ‘it’s too late in their studies’. Confidence in their professional skills was another factor, as several teachers admitted they feel uneasy using symbols. Several justified their avoidance of pronunciation work by expressing a conviction that pronunciation cannot be taught without technology and/or that technology in the learners’ hands makes teaching pronunciation unnecessary: ‘(Teaching pronunciation) is very – too – time-consuming. Now they use on-line dictionaries and listen to the pronunciation of words’.

Assessment

Most of the respondents who said they use an established national or international assessment scale referred to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001). This is good news because studies have suggested that the CEFR is not widely used in Europe (European Commission 2012, 65). However, only a minority of respondents use an established assessment scale, the highest percentages being in Switzerland (36%), France (31%), Spain (27%) and Finland (23%).

Responses to questions about the practical aspects of assessment showed that the most common choice is during-course assessment (mean 49%), followed by the choice of ‘a combination of continuous and end-of-course assessment’ (mean 33%). Only one third of respondents said they use diagnostic assessments. Evaluating learners only at the end of a course is quite rare (6% on average, 0% in Macedonia, Spain and Switzerland).

Type of assessment→ ↓Type of Activity	Diagnostic (before)	Formative (during)	Evaluative (at the end)
Oral performances	28%	78%	70%
Reading aloud	28%	73%	56%
Listening comprehension	23%	65%	58%
Oral exams in pairs	15%	46%	53%
Individual oral exams	15%	37%	42%
Written work	9%	18%	18%
Other	5%	11%	7%

Table 1. Percentages of respondents using different tasks to assess pronunciation skills

The most popular assessment activities are oral performances (presentations, sketches, dialogues), closely followed by reading aloud and listening comprehension. Testing learners in pairs is relatively common in both formative assessments and evaluative assessments. Written tasks (e.g., transcription) are used less frequently, even though most of the teachers were trained in transcription. This may be related to the stated communicative objectives of many European curricula. Although no language teaching method is imposed, the European Union seeks to promote 'a broad holistic approach to teaching in which emphasis is placed upon communicative ability and multilingual comprehension. The great majority of educational systems issue recommendations to attach equal emphasis to all four communication skills' (European Commission, 2012, 82). Hence, it would be logical for teachers to prefer assessing learners' pronunciation in situations resembling real-life communication rather than via transcriptions.

Outside the classroom

Television and cinema

The European Commission's 2008 paper to the European Parliament, *Multilingualism: an asset and a commitment*, recommended using subtitles to translate films and television programmes. In addition, the European Union has approved several measures promoting

the languages of member states, including the *Télévision sans frontières* (TVSF) directive. This directive obliges member states to ensure that at least 51% of all television programmes, including those broadcast via satellite, Internet, etc., are made in the country. Despite this, the majority of films shown in cinemas are foreign (and mostly American), the average European domestic film market share being only 13% (Finnish Film Foundation 2013: 5).

	FI	FR	DE	MK	PL	ES	CH
YES+SOME replies combined	99%	89%	42%	97%	88%	27%	85%

Table 2. Percentages of respondents who say their learners are exposed to English outside the classroom via subtitled films in the cinema

*The very high percentages for Finland, Macedonia and Poland might be due to participants misunderstanding the question as concerning subtitles in English, instead of dubbing; a better question might have been to ask whether films are subtitled or dubbed. In other words, do they provide opportunities to read English and/or to hear it? In all the countries surveyed, foreign films are subtitled in the local language(s) and sometimes in English. In Macedonia, where there is only one national language, foreign films in cinemas are subtitled in Macedonian. An American film shown in Finland as a 'foreign language film' has Finnish and Swedish subtitles but learners hear English. In Germany foreign films may be presented either in their original language, in their original language with German subtitles, or in *their original language with English subtitles*. In Spain, dubbing is more expensive than subtitling but it is culturally and historically established. Switzerland juggles with different languages in both subtitles and dubbing; outside urban centres, films are dubbed in the regional language but in cities, they are shown in their original language with subtitles in two of the official languages.*

	FI	FR	DE	MK	PL	ES	CH
YES+SOME replies combined	98%	49%	24%	97%	57%	31%	51%

Table 3. Percentages of respondents who say their learners are exposed to English outside the classroom via subtitled TV programmes

When asked whether learners have access to television programmes subtitled in English, positive answers were given by the vast majority of participants in Finland and Macedonia,

and by roughly half of participants in France, Switzerland and Poland. (The fact that no Finnish TV-programmes are subtitled in English points again to a potential misunderstanding of the question by participants, so these figures must be treated with caution.) Substantially fewer participants in Germany and Spain provided positive answers to this question. Berentzen (2009) noted that in Germany it is rare for films and television programmes to be subtitled. Where subtitles are provided, they are 'primarily intended for the hearing-impaired. In contrast, in Scandinavian countries most television programmes are provided with subtitles in the country's native tongue(s). This greatly helps immigrants learn their new country's language' (Ibid.). In Scandinavia, subtitling helps Scandinavians learn each other's languages, thus promoting a degree of regional multilingual awareness.

The idea of using television to improve language learning recently motivated the French national channel *France2* to show an English-language television series every Monday night in English with French subtitles. They have done this despite national language policy, as exemplified by the 1994 Toubon Law which stipulates that 'the French language is a fundamental element of French heritage and national identity' and that it is 'the language of teaching, work, exchanges and public services'. A series of more recent laws reinforces these principles, for example the 2010 law which declares that one of the missions of the French media is 'the defence and illustration of the French language and culture' (law n° 2010-788 , July 12, 2010).

Paradoxically, Switzerland's multilingualism may explain why only half of the participants there indicated that subtitled television programmes provided exposure to English. The Federal Radio and Television Act of 24 March 2006 requires the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation to provide programming to the entire populace in the three official languages and at least one radio programme in Romansh. In regions of language contact, programmes are broadcast in the two languages. Public channels broadcast in the national languages but people may also choose from numerous international channels. In general, the advent of cable and digital TV now often allows viewers throughout Europe to choose between dubbing or subtitles, regardless of national language policy.

The results for availability of media in English partially correlate with results for estimated frequency of exposure. Frequency of exposure via subtitled TV programmes was estimated to be highest in Finland and Macedonia and to be lowest in Germany and Spain. In Poland, the 'voice-over' technique is the most popular means of adapting foreign programmes on television, with one speaker voicing all the characters. However, this is not done in Polish cinemas, which may partly explain why the percentage of participants in Poland who said their learners had access to English via subtitled films in the cinema

was higher even than in Finland. The lowest figures for frequency of exposure to English via subtitled cinema films were for Germany and Spain.

	Exposure to English via. ..	FI	FR	DE	MK	PL	ES	CH
FREQUENTLY +SOMETIMES replies combined	Subtitled TV	98%	39%	11%	86%	38%	28%	44%
	Subtitled cinema	91%	52%	7%	61%	94%	17%	68%

Table 4. Percentages of respondents who estimate their learners' exposure to English

To summarise, when comparing these seven countries, learners in Finland and Macedonia have greatest potential access to English via subtitled TV programmes, whereas learners in Finland and Poland have greatest potential access to English via films in the cinema. On the other hand, it would appear that learners in Germany and Spain have to rely on other sources to hear or read English.

Face-to-face and online interactions

Participants were asked to estimate how frequently their learners were exposed to English outside the classroom via face-to-face interaction or via on-line resources such as e-mail, forums and chatrooms.

	Exposure to English via. ..	FI	FR	DE	MK	PL	ES	CH
FREQUENTLY +SOMETIMES replies combined	Face-to-face interaction	61%	35%	17%	29%	38%	55%	84%
	On-line interaction	88%	69%	48%	82%	69%	59%	68%

Table 5. Percentages of respondents who estimate their learners' exposure to English

Not surprisingly, learners are thought to have more opportunities for communicating in English via on-line media than via face-to-face contacts. The exception is Switzerland, which has four national languages (three official ones) but where English is often used as

a *lingua franca* by Swiss people who want to communicate with people from another language area. We have not found an adequate explanation for the low results in Germany (17%).

The similarity between Finland and Macedonia in terms of frequency of exposure via on-line opportunities (88% and 82%) is interesting. Participants in these two countries also provided similar ratings of the perceived status of English in relation to other languages, giving ratings of 4.65/5 in Finland and 4.69/5 in Macedonia (Henderson et al., 2012). Respondents in Finland frequently mentioned the status of English as a global language, and in Macedonia they mentioned the economic and communicative relevance of English as a world language. However, one Finnish respondent pointed out that 'English is not the only foreign language people should learn', reflecting the fact that Finns value foreign language skills in general. Foreign language skills may be equally valued in Macedonia but the country does not have vast resources to invest in language education.

Conclusion

EPTiES highlights important features of pronunciation teaching in seven European countries and reveals a number of areas requiring further research. However, it does not allow direct causal relationships to be established between factors.

Although self-taught enthusiasts are important players and are often excellent teachers, most teachers can benefit from professional training. Respondents seemed generally satisfied with the training they had received, even if it did not involve much practice in teaching pronunciation. Unfortunately, old myths persist, notably about how spending time in an English-speaking country equates with pronouncing English well and that knowledge of phonetics and phonology equates with being able to teach pronunciation.

Use of established assessment scales is limited and further research is needed to determine whether assessment is holistic or centred on specific aspects of pronunciation. It is encouraging that the most frequently used assessment tasks are those that focus on communication skills, communication being the main purpose for which European pupils learn English. Nevertheless, one essential feature of communication that is not always treated as such is pronunciation.

Analyses of aspects outside the classroom should encompass national language policy, issues of language status, and regional and national imperatives – both official and de facto. In the years to come, it will definitely be worth keeping an eye on how on-line opportunities are fulfilling a role that other language learning outlets are failing to satisfy.

Acknowledgements

EPTiES has been a team effort from the start and originally involved Una Cunningham, Deirdre Murphy and Rias van den Doel. We would like to thank all the teachers who responded to the survey.

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English English App

Reviewed by Marina Cantarutti

<http://englishenglish.net>

Available from iOS and Google Play stores at £1.49

Description

The *English English* app, ‘the word on the street’, is aimed at learners of English to help them develop more realistic communication skills for everyday situations.



All the materials in the application revolve around a set of three real-life interactions in London. These previously unscripted situations on video – related to giving directions, selecting among different types of tea, and hearing about London life – are then exploited to introduce communicative formulas and socio-cultural knowledge. A script is given and a colour code guides users towards the explanation of usage.

What I found useful

The fact that you can read the script of these authentic English conversations as you hear makes this an asset for listening comprehension training with all its ‘squeeze zones’. Furthermore, with the teacher’s support, these could be great models for the re-creation of real life situations in the classroom as well. The companion website gives teachers access to further teaching materials based on a resource called *All Talk*.

What I would add

The application does not deal with pronunciation explicitly. As there are very appealing realistic conversations with common combinations such as *cup of tea*, or formulaic expressions such as *Excuse me...*, it would be great to add a section for intonation, accentuation and rhythm.



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Pronunciation and phonetics: a practical guide for English language teachers

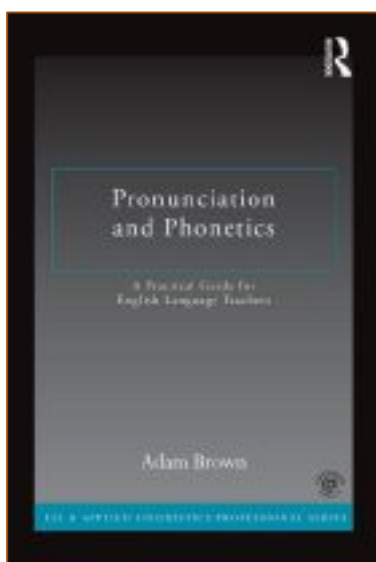
Reviewed by David Deterding

Adam Brown (2014).

Routledge ESL & Applied Linguistics Professional Series, 312pp.

ISBN: 978-0-415-72276-6 Paperback. £27.99

ISBN: 978-0-415-72275-9 Hardback. £90.00



The teaching of pronunciation is an area that is typically neglected by English teachers, often because they do not know how to go about it, and this book aims to provide practical information that will help them to overcome the problem. It is divided into three sections, the first dealing with phonetics, the second discussing approaches and issues in pronunciation teaching, and the third offering a set of exercises and games that teachers might make use of in their classes.

The first section, on phonetics, is the longest. It contains 23 chapters dealing with such things as airstream mechanisms, the pronunciation of vowels and consonants, the structure of syllables, the nature of phonemes and allophones, connected speech processes such as assimilation and elision, stress placement, intonation, rhythm, and the differences between accents.

Throughout the first section, a wealth of material is presented clearly and with authority, though some teachers might wonder if they really need to know all of it. For example, some might question whether they need to be aware that most speech is produced with a pulmonic egressive airstream (page 15), that a uvular approximant instead of a post-alveolar approximant tends to be used for [r] in the northeast of England (page 52), or that a voiced palatal lateral occurs at the start of the Catalan word *lluna* 'moon' (page 59).

Then, on page 64, the rules for syllable structure in English are explained in some detail: if there are three consonants in the onset for a syllable, the first must be /s/, the second should be a plosive /p, t, k/, and the third must be an approximant /l, r, w, j/, and, for final consonant clusters consisting of three or four consonants, the third and fourth consonant must be one of /t, d, s, z, θ/. While all of this is undoubtedly true and while many readers will find it fascinating, others might ask if it actually enables them to become better teachers. But this book is probably not suitable for anyone who lacks interest in background knowledge about phonetics and who is merely looking to develop a few pedagogical tricks to use in the classroom.

Something that makes the material in the first section of the book distinct from that in other textbooks on phonetics aimed primarily for teachers, such as Roach (2009), is the extensive reference to spelling, especially regarding the ways that the various sounds are represented by letters, and this is something that many teachers will appreciate. In this respect, it is maybe a bit surprising that the discussion of spelling is not extended to a substantial consideration of phonics, something that is nowadays promoted in primary schools in many countries around the world. However, one might alternatively argue that phonics is connected with learning to read and it is not usually designed to help improve pronunciation, so perhaps one can agree with the decision not to discuss it in detail in this book. Furthermore, phonics represents a practical methodology providing techniques for use in the primary classroom, and this book offers knowledge about pronunciation and phonetics rather than practical teaching techniques. Although the second part is concerned with approaches to teaching pronunciation, the twelve chapters deal with such things as the effectiveness of pronunciation teaching, motivation, fossilization, first language influence, literacy, nonverbal communication and testing, and it does not seek to offer practical classroom tips. Nevertheless, many readers will appreciate the depth with which all these background issues concerning the teaching of pronunciation are dealt with.

Those who are looking for practical materials to use in the classroom are likely to find the third section the most useful, with its exercises, games and puzzles, and with pages that can be photocopied and used directly in the classroom (a mode of presentation that is almost certainly modeled on the splendid materials made available in Hancock 1995). Although it is the shortest section in the book, with just 32 pages, many teachers will value these materials.

Most of the material in this book is presented with admirable clarity. Occasionally, the explanation is a little confusing, as for example when the explanation for magic 'e' refers to the distinction between *mating* and *matting* (p. 208), because for many readers the link

with magic 'e' may not immediately be apparent from these two words, neither of which actually has an 'e' in them. Then on the next page, words such as *radish*, *melon*, *limit* and *manor* are listed to illustrate exceptions to the rules for the doubling of consonants, and this would benefit from a bit of further explanation regarding short vowels, since otherwise it may not be clear to some readers why doubled consonants are expected in these words. But these are minor blemishes in what is generally a lucid coverage of some complex issues.

Inevitably, with so much detailed material packed into the book, there are a few errors: on page 40, it is stated that a glottal stop may be inserted syllable-finally in words such as *absolutely* when in fact the potential glottal stop is at the start of the word; on page 42, the transcription for *amber* is shown as [ʌmbə]; on page 107, I was rather perplexed by a reference to 'the quotation at the beginning of the chapter' concerning the assimilation of the nasal in *input*, and it took me a while to find the relevant quotation as it is actually at the start of the previous chapter; on page 128 it is stated that the stress in words such as *brutality* occurs on the 2nd-to-last syllable when it should, of course, be the 3rd-to-last; and in the exercises on page 130, *John* is transcribed as [dʒɒn] even though it is claimed that British transcription is being used for that exercise. But these issues are rather minor, and in fact the text should be commended for having so few errors.

In conclusion, this book represents an exceptionally valuable source of background material on phonetics that many teachers will find really valuable. While some might question if they need to know so many details, and others might regret the lack of practical tips for teachers, many will appreciate the depth of detail about phonetics, the clarity with which issues about teaching pronunciation are presented, and the valuable games and exercises in the final section of the book.

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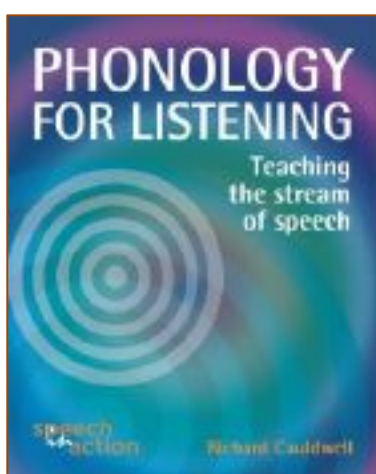
Phonology for listening

Reviewed by Robin Walker

Richard Cauldwell (2013).

Speech in Action, 332pp.

ISBN-13: 978-0954344726 Paperback. £26.90



In the PronSIG open forum at IATEFL Liverpool in 2014, there was some discussion as to whether or not the SIG should change its name, given the complex interplay between listening and pronunciation. In the end the committee decided to keep the existing name and mission statement, but to give listening greater visibility within the work of the SIG. What better way of generating this increased visibility than the publication of PronSIG member Richard Cauldwell's Phonology for listening, the aim of which 'is to improve the teaching and learning of listening in English'?

Phonology for listening is divided into four parts. In the first of these Cauldwell introduces his window on speech, a framework for the rest of the book that is designed to represent the rhythm and intonation of spontaneous speech in writing (although all of the samples analysed in the book can and should be downloaded for listening purposes). Since Cauldwell worked side-by-side with David Brazil at Birmingham University, we can expect the author's window on speech framework to be precise and, at the same time, accessible. We are not disappointed. In fact, precision and accessibility are hallmarks of the whole book.

The second part of *Phonology for listening* goes about the crucial business of describing spontaneous speech. Crucial, as Cauldwell points out, because, although conventional phonology courses do a very good job at describing language 'as it ought to be' (p. 4) through a 'careful speech model', the listener needs a description of speech as it really is when produced naturally. Cauldwell offers readers this description through his 'spontaneous speech model'. At the same time he warns them that '[t]he spontaneous

speech model is a counterbalance to the careful speech model. It is not something to copy, or emulate' (p. 62). ELT authors, materials writers and trainers please take note.

Part 3 (Chapters 11–15) could well be the section of *Phonology for Listening* that readers pay least attention to. For me, however, it was refreshing to see accents, identity and emotions being covered in such an up-front way. They are often relegated to a marginal position in pronunciation teaching, but it is not enough to put one or two non-standard accents into an ELT coursebook and think that you've dealt with variety in speech. As Cauldwell points out, accents are the norm, whilst standard accents are an idealization of reality. In that respect his attention to variety in Part 3 is simply a question of coherence with his spontaneous speech model.

The five chapters in Part 4 of *Phonology for listening* could well be the part that the busy teacher or trainer heads for first. Starting from a review of the issues and difficulties that underlie the teaching of listening in the ELT classroom, Part 4 goes on to look at the need to change our mindset when it comes to listening, and to learn to see the 'messiness' of spontaneous speech as the norm. The remaining three chapters then go on to look at ways in which students' and the teacher's voices can be used to create and 'savour' the changes in the soundshapes of words that are likely to occur in spontaneous speech (Chapter 18), at how technology helps us to help our learners become familiar with these changes (Chapter 20), and at ways teachers can adapt traditional listening comprehension materials to provide learners with that vital window onto spontaneous speech.

There is so much that I like about this book that it is hard to know where to begin, but first Cauldwell has to be congratulated for making everything in *Phonology for listening* accessible to its intended readership through clear, jargon-free language. Many handbooks for teachers make grim reading, but this isn't one of them. Equally commendable is the way that on page 13 Cauldwell openly invites readers to go through the book in their own way once the key concepts in Chapters 1 and 2 have been assimilated.

But there are numerous other positive qualities to this book. My own favourites include the way the author debunks a number of pronunciation myths. I'm not sure how many times we're going to have to tell teachers that the syllable-timing/stress-timing opposition doesn't reflect reality. However, if you find yourself dragged back there during future training work, you could do worse than turn to pages 141–142 of *Phonology for listening*.

Equally valuable is the treatment of tones and attitudinal meaning, and the lack of any causal relationship. This is an issue that also needs disseminating more widely among

ELT professionals (and which Cauldwell dealt with in some depth in *Speak Out!* 50). Undoubtedly, a given tone in a given context carries a specific meaning, but as Cauldwell makes clear in section 15.2, '[t]here is no one-to-one relationship between vocal effects and attitudes. Instead there is a 'many-to-many relationship': any single vocal effect can occur with many different attitudes and any single attitude can occur with many different vocal effects'.

And invaluable, in my opinion, is the treatment of accent in Part 3. This goes beyond a superficial comparison of the prestige accents from either side of the Atlantic, and (too?) briefly enters the difficult waters of identity, emotion, and prejudice. PronSIG members will remember Cauldwell's candid exploration of this issue in *Speak Out!* 48, and will not be surprised to see the same honesty here: '... every accent will have – somewhere – a social group which has a prejudice about it' (p. 210).

Because of my own research interests, I was inevitably drawn to Chapter 14 on global English accents. It was interesting to see these dealt with from different perspectives. As an exercise it certainly brings out what a bad investment of time an accent-reduction approach is for ELF users of English. But I wonder if one day we'll reach the point at which authors will deal with all accents, NS or NNS, in the same way. It would be interesting to see Chapter 14 re-written, for example, with the sort of comments that characterize the previous two chapters on the accents of Britain and North America.

With *Phonology for listening*, Cauldwell contributes to a growing interest in the teaching of listening, though unlike Field (2008) and Vandergrift and Goh (2012), he limits his attention to the pronunciation side of decoding the speech stream. But this focused attention is born out of a wealth of knowledge and an enviable capacity for clear thinking, and so the book handsomely achieves its stated aims.

For teachers preparing people who are going to work in an English-L1 environment, *Phonology for listening* is essential reading. It will be especially helpful for those who have to prepare learners for one-way listening, as in university lectures, for example. And, whilst not directly relevant to ELF contexts (where interlocutors have to learn to accommodate to each other), *Phonology for listening* indirectly shows ELF practitioners how to help their learners to deal with speech streams where the citation forms are squeezed and mangled into all sorts of unexpected shapes because of L1-transfer. In short, *Phonology for listening* is a title that should be on every teacher's bookshelf.

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