



Curriculum Issues in Teaching Pronunciation to Second Language Learners

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L2 Phonology Acquisition
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Outline

1. Introduction

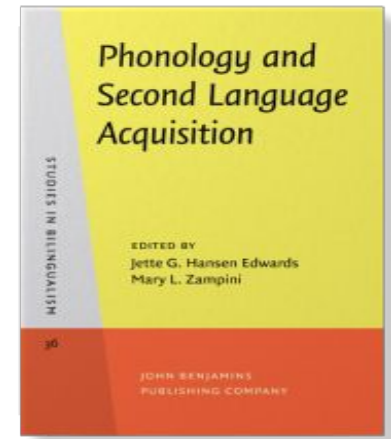
- 1.1 Aims of the presentation
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- 2.3 Pronunciation curriculum development
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Reference



1. Introduction



1.1 Aims of the presentation :

- 1) Examining the current state of second language (L2) pronunciation instruction
- 2) Providing general practice to help L2 learners improve their pronunciation

1.2 EIL, EFL, ESL context



The need for pronunciation practice?

- a) The context in which a learner communicates
- b) The learner's perceived need or desire for pronunciation instruction
- c) The speaker's intelligibility

English as an International Language (EIL)



- ❑ EIL students communicate mostly with other non-native speakers of English.
- ❑ People use as a lingua franca (e.g. Business, politics, diplomacy, or tourists).

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)



- ❑ Environment where English is not spoken
- ❑ People are interested in working with native English speakers in their country, or in English speaking countries abroad.
- ❑ Pronunciation is not a primary issue (e.g. providing reading skills to enable read science-related materials in English).

English as a Second Language (ESL)

- ❑ Move permanently to a largely English speaking country such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States, or Canada
- ❑ Wish to integrate into local society as well as employment
- ❑ ESL students interact with other non-native speakers of English (NNSs) as well as native speakers (NS)
- ❑ English is the key communication in their lives.
- ❑ Good communication skills are extremely useful.

Designing
curriculum for
L2 teaching
pronunciation
is needed

2. Issues in L2 Teaching Pronunciation



2.1 Designing pronunciation courses

For teachers :

- ❑ Students' own perceived pronunciation goals (e.g. speaking like an English native speakers)
- ❑ They felt that they would be respected more if they did not speak with an L2 accent
- ❑ Improving intelligibility within the context
- ❑ L2 learner's speech interfering with a listener's comprehension should be the focal point of any instruction (e.g. suprasegmental features)

2.2 Key factors that affect success in pronunciation



- ❑ **Motivation** (e.g. professional motivation, pronunciation accuracy, progress in other aspects of language learning)
- ❑ **Phonological distance between L1 and L2**
e.g. L2 Dutch speakers from a wide variety of language backgrounds learned L2 in adulthood showed high level proficiency, albeit native-like accents are those whose L1 backgrounds are closely related to Dutch (German and English)
- ❑ **Aptitude** : this justification is intuitively pleasing to teachers who see differences in performance in their classroom that are not easily explained by other factors.
e.g. Two learners from the same L1 background who started learning their L2 at the same time, under similar conditions, share the same level of motivation can be markedly different in their ability to produce their new language with relatively accurate pronunciation.



□ Age

- Critical period for second language learning
- Young children learn L2 before the age of six are identified as NNSs
- Older learners tend to be difficult to understand foreign accents than younger adults

□ **Having a formal pronunciation instruction** (e.g. suprasegmental instruction)

2.3 Pronunciation curriculum development



■ Need analysis

- Individual assessment of students' need
- Many texts provides a diagnostic tool to help teacher identify speech error (e.g. Listening or speaking tests)
- Students' diagnostic profile (e.g individual speech behaviour, speaking with sufficient volume)
- Help teacher monitor several aspects of students' productions as well as perception.

ESL students' difficulties

- Perceptual: hearing differently from NSs (e.g. an L2 sound closes to L1, difficult to perceive a difference)
- Mispronunciation: students may not know how a given lexical should be pronounced.
- Not all speakers of a given language will have these errors (e.g. Cantonese speakers have difficulties in /l/ and /r/)
- Suggestion for teaching : a predictable core set of linguistic features □ segmentals

2.4 Factor influencing pronunciation and intelligibility

- ❑ General speaking habit (e.g. Volume, eye gaze, clarity, speech rate)
- ❑ Voice quality (e.g. Speakers' vocal output related to L2 accents)
 - Teaching suggestion: activities connecting to voice quality and the expression of emotion
- ❑ Several aspects of intonation (e.g. ESL students' intonation in English did not use pitch contrast in the same way as NSs)
 - Teaching suggestion: discourse level approach to intonation and the use of authentic texts
- ❑ Technology in pronunciation teaching to give clear explanation of meaning of intonational choices

2.4 Factor influencing pronunciation and intelligibility

- ❑ Stress and segmental (e.g. minimal pairs)
 - Teaching suggestion : a rank ordering of vowels and consonants
- ❑ Predictability of syntax: grammaticality of utterances
 - “*Familiarity promotes comprehensibility*” (Gass and Varonis, 1984)
 - Teaching suggestion : classroom work on idiomatic expressions, predictable chunks, and oral grammar
- ❑ Choices and discourse markers (e.g. Lexical discourse markers and degree of lexical specificity)

2.5 Instructional Pronunciation Practice

1) Mixed vs same L1 classes : advantages and disadvantages

- Same L1 classes : students share a number of problems at both segmental and suprasegmental
- Mixed L1 classes: the variability at the level of segments is tremendous.
- Help teachers ensure that activities will be beneficial to most of the students in a homogenous class. However, it seems to be easy for teachers to miss individual differences.
- A minor advantage to intelligibility if an L2 learner interacts with someone who has the same L1.
- Mixed L2 classes : listening practice due to variety of speakers' L1 background, and working hard to make comprehensible to other members of the class
- English language media (e.g. radio, television, movies, books, on tape and internet) as well as teacher-directed contact activities.

2) Stand-alone classes vs incorporation into general language curriculum

- ❑ Stand-alone classes : students are supposed to move from controlled practice of pronunciation to communicative activities.
- ❑ Focus on speaking, pronunciation practice is non-existent
- ❑ A set of guiding principles for incorporating pronunciation into ESL/EFL classroom:
 - To aim for a primary though not an exclusive focus on suprasegmentals
 - To maintain a central focus on speaking in the class
 - That pronunciation instruction should fit the constraints of the speaking task.

Incorporation into general L2 curriculum



- ❑ Involving pronunciation as part of the curriculum from the beginning, focusing on meaningful units of speech such as phrases, and short sentences
- ❑ Focusing on rhythm and intonation in a non-technical way at the early stages of language learning
- ❑ Teaching phrases that contain set intonation patterns, such as “in no time” and “for a change” as phonological chunks to help speakers sound fluent.

3) Textbook and Technology



- ❑ General preparation books for second language teachers help pronunciation teaching
- ❑ Focus on segmental materials: *Pronouncing American English: Sounds, Stress and Intonation*
- ❑ Focus on suprasegmental materials : Jazz Chants and Clear Speech are still popular among L2 teachers.
- ❑ Levis (1999) recommends four teaching principles of intonation:
 - 1) Teach intonation in an explicit context;
 - 2) Make learnable and generalizable statements about meaning;
 - 3) Teach intonation in the context of a communicative focus;
 - 4) Teach intonation with realistic language

Technology



- ❑ Without direct supervision
- ❑ Teachers need to pay attention on the electronic programs including advantage vs disadvantage
- ❑ The top ESL programmes:
 - *Streaming Speech*
 - *Connected Speech*
- ❑ A number of training techniques using new technology could be valuable models for commercial development

4) Measuring improvement



- ❑ Progress through awareness: stress makes a difference in meaning (e.g. Does *he* speak Hungarian? vs Does he speak *Hungarian*?)
- ❑ A narrow transcription of students' speech samples
- ❑ Intelligibility and comprehensibility as indicator to measure improvement
- ❑ Feedback from listeners
- ❑ Listener assessments: Dictation tasks, video or audio recording of students presentations, followed by comprehension question
- ❑ Collaboration with L2 teacher preparation program : gaining experience listening in an analytic manner to L2 speech
- ❑ The response of listeners

5) Social issues :

- ❑ Social consequences of having an L2 accent
- ❑ The goal of pronunciation teaching is to enhance the communication experiences that L2 speakers have with their interlocutors.
- ❑ L2 speakers are discriminated because of their accents even reactions by interlocutors may not be aware of themselves (e.g. Rubin's (1992) Caucasian and Chinese rates based on the photograph)
- ❑ Curricula proposes : open discussion of attitudinal research and discussion of strategies for dealing with difficult interlocutors are appropriate



6) Teacher preparation :



- ❑ The individuals who are best suited to provide appropriate instruction are thus second language teachers familiar with second language acquisition theory and practice.
- ❑ Many language teachers have little or no formal preparation to teach pronunciation
- ❑ 30% teachers in Canada had any formal pronunciation teacher training, and limited workshops
- ❑ Conference presentation the only way to enhance
- ❑ Many Australian teachers are quite uncomfortable with idea of teaching pronunciation to their students
- ❑ Called for improving training of English language teachers in pronunciation in Britain
- ❑ Computer labs for pronunciation practice

Insufficient teacher training:



The provision of inaccurate information to L2 students

Teachers tell only about duration e.g. long vs short sounds

Include at least one pronunciation teaching that cover pronunciation curriculum development and a hands-on component in which student teachers could implement some elements of what they are being taught



❑ Strategies :

- 1) arranging for a hands-on experience in an L2 classroom;
- 2) developing case narratives from the perspectives of both L2 speakers and pronunciation teachers;
- 3) helping teachers to assess technologies with a critical eye in order to make most what is available;
- 4) relating pronunciation teaching to current research and practice is TESL generally; preparing teachers to determine their students' needs in authentic speaking situations;
- 5) teaching in styles that enrich graduate students''

Conclusion



- Addressing general overview of the current state of second language (L2) pronunciation instruction
- Providing the context of EIL, EFL, and ESL context and the need of pronunciation instruction
- Highlighting key issues in relevance to L2 teaching pronunciation including factors affecting the success, pronunciation and intelligibility relationships, designing pronunciation courses, promoting students' pronunciation assessments, and instructional practices
- The topic discussion leads to help L2 learners improve their pronunciation

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