Teaching pronunciation for ELF

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In this webinar...

- Learning English in 2017
- Identifying priorities
- What to do in the classroom
Learning English in 2017
Learning English in 2017

- Language of business & tourism (& academia, sport, entertainment...)
- Perceived threat of English to local cultures and languages?
- Paradox: “Why not both?” (Seidlhofer, 2003)
1. For every native speaker of English in the world, there are at least 3 non-native speakers.

2. Approximately 80% of spoken interaction in English takes place with no native speakers present.

3. At least 80% of the English language teachers in the world are non-native English speakers.

(Crystal, 2008; Beneke, 1991; Canagarajah, 1999)
In most interactions in English nowadays, English is not the first language of all or any of the speakers, and they might not share the same L1.

“English is the communicative medium of choice and often the only option.”

(Seidlhofer, 2011, pg. 7)
Embrace variety!
English is unlike any other language in how it’s being used nowadays.
So what is ELF?

- Not a variety
- An emergent phenomenon
- Not ‘any use of English by a non-native speaker’
- Not exclusive to non-native speakers
- Quite possibly a multilingual phenomenon
Identifying priorities
New challenges & aims for ELT

- Focus on intelligibility:
  “the extent to which a speaker’s message is actually understood by a listener”
  (Munro & Derwing, 1999, p. 289)
  Identifying words + understanding the speaker’s intended meaning  (Levis, 2007)

- Choosing (from) materials

- What constitutes an “error”  (Walker, 2010, p. 71)
What matters for ELF intelligibility?

(Jenkins, 2000)

https://elfpron.wordpress.com/2013/11/21/what-is-the-lfc/
What is intelligible in ELF?

• Benchmark is the Lingua Franca Core:
  • Most consonant sounds + one vowel (/ɜː/)
  • Preservation of most consonant clusters
  • Vowel length (especially before voiced/unvoiced consonants)
  • Appropriate word grouping and placement of nuclear stress

(Jenkins, 2000)

https://elfpron.wordpress.com/2013/11/21/what-is-the-lfc/
What to do in the classroom
Evolution, not revolution

- Needs analysis (benchmark: LFC)
- Productive and receptive skills
- Filter & supplement your materials
- Drilling + simple awareness-raising techniques
- Discrimination exercises
- Homework & on-the-spot correction
Raising awareness (Part 1)

- of one’s own voice
- of others’ voices
- of real-world communicative needs
- of language in context

“How would you say [...]? Is it similar or different to speaker X? How? Why? What are some other ways we can say it?”
Minimal pairs

cheap

sheep
Minimal pairs

wet

vet
Minimal pairs

had          hat

ELF10 report: What happens when ELF users try to understand each other’s accents?
- Veronika Thir

https://elfpron.wordpress.com/2017/08/22/elf10-thir/
One interesting thing about the sounds in the Lingua Franca Core is that many learners, from many different first language backgrounds, have difficulty producing certain sounds. So even if you think you don’t know enough about the huge range of potential problems learners can have, you can start with this one and have a good chance that you’ll be doing something relevant and useful!
Raising awareness (Part 2)

- *ng spelling commonly pronounced /ŋ/*

  - *thing language doing*

  - *but not when followed by e! range*

  - /ŋ/ + /k/ often pronounced as /ŋ/ + /k/ think Franca

  - This is true of many languages! tengo Lenka
• 5-step lesson plan
  • Listening (establish context & interest)
  • Noticing (students grab words/phrases)
  • Analysis (compare, identify patterns)
  • Practice (predict + check)
  • Discussion

• https://youtu.be/Dd6wSDIGGVI
  (webinar recording)

https://elfpron.wordpress.com/2015/11/07/helping-learners-understand-different-accents/
Good news!

- Pronunciation is not contagious
- “Being an NNEST or NEST is not a critical factor in teachers being effective pronunciation teachers.” (Levis et al, 2016:25)
- Teachers who share the learners’ L1:
  - Have a bilingual advantage
  - Are good L2 role models
- Narrower focus ➔ more time
- Intelligible to whom?
Over to you!

• Have you ever discussed – not just mentioned, but really discussed! – with your students how they (will) use English?
• How could you use these activities in your context?
• Have you already tried any of these activities? How did it go?
Thank you!

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References & further reading

(1)


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