SPEAK OUT!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IATEFL PRONUNCIATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

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Notes from the Co-ordinators

Dear PronSIG member,

We've reached another SIGnificant number - this is the 40th issue of the IATEFL PronSIG's newsletter, and another opportunity to reflect on how far this publication has come since the humble beginnings described in the previous issue ('Michael Vaughan-Rees and Speak Out!', issue 39).

The PronSIG event 'Perspectives on Pronunciation: where theory meets practice', hosted by Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL) in Turkey, on 21st November 2008, was a great success, and you can read more about it in Jon Fiteni's report in this newsletter. Our thanks go to Hande Mengu and her team in Turkey for initiating and organising this event. If you, wherever you are, would be interested in putting on an event in association with the PronSIG, please get in touch.

The 2009 IATEFL annual conference will be in Cardiff, Wales, UK. On the day before the actual conference, Tuesday 31st March, we are holding a PCE (pre-conference event) entitled 'Lessons from Spontaneous Speech for the teaching of Listening and Pronunciation', with Richard Cauldwell. Many of you will already know Richard, who has been a regular presenter at IATEFL conferences and PronSIG events for many years. This will be an opportunity for an in-depth experience of the innovative work he has been doing in the overlapping fields of listening and pronunciation. Here is his outline of the PCE:

Spontaneous speech is the most common form of any language: it is unscripted, spoken at a wide variety of speeds, in a wide variety of accents, using vocabulary in 'inventive' ways. It is delivered and received with varying degrees of clarity, and often very unclearly. It is a rough-and-tumble product, which often seems to have only a distant relationship (and sometimes no relationship at all) to the rules of correct speech.

It provides challenges for language description, for teacher-training, and for the teaching of listening and fluent pronunciation.

This will be a workshop which teaches you:

1. Ways of describing spontaneous speech – you will develop a 'teacher-talk' which enables you to explain to students what is going on

2. Hi-tech and low-tech ways of using recordings of spontaneous speech to improve the teaching of listening – to make learners familiar and comfortable with the rough and tumble of spontaneous speech

3. To use the evidence of spontaneous speech to help learners become more fluent speakers of English.

At the conference, there will be the usual day of pronunciation-related presentations, as well as numerous other presentations of interest to PronSIG members. To register for the PCE and/or the conference, or to find out more about the conference, go to the IATEFL website: www.iatefl.org

We'd like to hear from more of our members via the discussion list, managed by Alex Selman and accessible via the PronSIG website. Feel free to respond to postings from other members, write in with questions or topics for discussion, or just introduce yourself and tell us what you're doing.

Please let the IATEFL office know if you change your email address. And please do get in touch about any PronSIG-related issue by email to PronSIG@iatefl.org.

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From the editor

Speak Out! 40 brings together an apparently eclectic selection of articles from around the world. But despite this disparity, there are certain common themes, beginning with reading. Picking up on a remark she made at the end of her IATEFL presentation in Exeter, Catherine Walter reveals a crucial link between reading and pronunciation. Judy Gilbert also looks at reading in her review of research on literacy and rhythm. In the third article on reading, whilst José Tiziani looks at what happens when we read aloud. This is a skill that is heavily dependent on intonation, which is our second theme. Focussing on this, Alex Selman applies David Brazil's discourse model to what happens in complex interactions and finds it wanting. Staying with intonation, Mark Hancock looks at contrastive stress and launches 'At the talk face'. This regular feature is aimed at teachers and trainers and will offer classroom activities accompanied by photocopiable material. Intonation is also present in Mikhail Ordin's review of 'Streaming Speech', Richard Cauldwell's online pronunciation package. In an entirely different kind of review, Vicky Kanellou offers us a summary of current teaching manuals and their position on various issues central to the teaching of pronunciation. One of these is learner targets and models, a complex and sensitive area which Madalena Cruz-Ferreira looks at from a multilingual prespective.

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If you are interested in reviewing a book for *Speak Out!* you should contact the Reviews editor, Mikhail Ordin, at <ordin@zmail.ru>, copying me into any correspondence.

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Teaching phonology for reading comprehension

Catherine Walter

My research has shown that intermediate second language (L2) learners can understand each sentence of a text without being able to build a mental representation of the overall text. This failure is linked to the development of L2 processing abilities. My latest study (2008) shows that a factor in poor L2 processing of written text is, counter-intuitively, an unreliable L2 phonological inventory. This suggests strongly that teaching phonology will help L2 learners *read* better.

The received wisdom about L2 reading comprehension is wrong

Some things that second language (L2) teachers are told about reading comprehension are: (1) reading comprehension skills are transferred from the first language (L1) to L2; (2) learners need to be taught to recognise the main points in L2 texts; (3) readers process written texts visually in order to understand what is in the text and to integrate it with their world knowledge.

None of these three statements is true.

We don't transfer comprehension skills

Morton Ann Gernsbacher and her colleagues (MacDonald and MacWhinney, 1990; Gernsbacher, 1990, 1997; Gernsbacher, Varner and Faust, 1990) have provided evidence that comprehension – the building of a mental structure corresponding to a narrative or expository account – involves the same cognitive mechanisms and processes whether this comprehension is based on listening, reading, looking at picture stories or watching silent films. Note that the last two input modes do not necessarily involve language at all. In other words, comprehension is not *in* the L1. Comprehension skills develop at the same time as the L1, but these general cognitive skills develop independently of language, and so cannot be *transferred to* the L2. Rather, readers of L2 who comprehend well are able to do this because they have reached a point where they can *access*, from the L2, their already existing skill in building mental structures. I have demonstrated this in Walter (2004), where lower-intermediate L2 learners had no difficulty either with decoding individual sentences in a text, or with the ideas in the text, but had difficulty in building mental structures corresponding to the whole text when they read it in L2. (An interesting corroboration of this work is the functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study of Robertson, Gernsbacher, Guidotti, Robertson, Irwin, Mock and Campana (2000), where sentence-level comprehension was associated with increased activity in the left frontal lobe and text-level comprehension was associated with increased activity in the right frontal lobe.)

Recognising main points is a by-product

Gernsbacher's (1997) Structure Building Framework has been extensively elaborated and tested over the past twenty-five years. In common with most accounts of comprehension, the Structure Building Framework involves the building of a mental representation (structure) corresponding to the heard/read/seen narrative or exposition. Good comprehenders build highly hierarchical structures, where nodes corresponding to new ideas link to already-existing nodes. Whenever a new node is added to the structure, it activates the more fundamental nodes in the part of the structure that it links to. This means that the most fundamental nodes in a good hierarchical structure are activated the most often. Because of this, they retain a higher base activation, and are easier to recall. These most fundamental nodes correspond to the main ideas in the narrative or exposition. It is the spreading activation in the mental structure, and not any consciously learnt skill, that makes the main ideas easily accessible to good comprehenders.

In Walter (2007) I gave a group of lower-intermediate learners stories to read in L1 (French) and in L2 (English). The stories were initially written in English, carefully tuned to the proficiency level of the lower-intermediate learners both for grammar and for vocabulary, and then translated into French. All learners read all the stories, half in L1 and half in L2, with the language of stories counterbalanced so that half the learners read story A in L1 and half in L2, and so on. The catch was that all but one of the stories contained contradictions, and the learners' task was to detect when a statement in a story contradicted an earlier statement in the same story. The learners did well in detecting main-point contradictions in L1, and slightly less well in detecting

Rhythm and phonemic awareness as a necessary pre-condition to literacy: recent research

Judy B. Gilbert

Pronunciation teachers are generally aware that second language learners tend to continue to rely on their first language rhythm (Aoyama et al, 2007) and this clearly affects their intelligibility. It seemed to me that this same tendency might interfere with learning to read in English, so I have been reading lately in the literacy field.

It has been well established that dyslexia can be connected with impaired timing or motor deficits (Thomson et al, 2006), so it would seem reasonable to assume that learners listening to a new language within the constraints of their first language rhythm might also be struggling with faulty timing when learning the 'phonemic awareness' which is necessary before a person can connect sounds to letters.

Bits from my recent reading

1. 'Reading is about gaining access to meaning from printed symbols. To access meaning from print, the child must learn the code used by their culture for representing speech by a series of visual symbols. The first steps in becoming literate, therefore, require acquisition of the system for mapping distinctive visual symbols onto units of sound (phonology)' (Ziegler & Goswami, 2006: 429).

2. 'Rhythm sensitivity precedes and is correlated with phonological awareness' (David et al, 2007).

3. 'It would seem that speech rhythm sensitivity precedes phonological awareness, but speech rhythm is also an index of the phonological construction of language. So, perhaps in becoming sensitive to speech rhythm, our attention is directed towards features of phonology, ultimately enhancing our phonological awareness' (Wood, 2006: 271).

4. 'The ability to detect speech rhythm is... intimately linked to vowel perception and production. It follows that the auditory cues contributing to speech rhythm may be important for representing the syllable in terms of onset-rime segments' (Goswami, 2003).

5. 'In speech, a syllable's duration can also affect its salience, and links between duration discrimination and reading and spelling were indeed found for the adults tested here... An insensitivity to the auditory rhythmic cues of speech could be the result of early motor difficulties in producing actions/sounds with differential rates of onset/degrees of salience... Perception and production of rhythm are intimately related. There was some evidence that rhythmic auditory and motor skills remain coupled and linked to literacy skill, even in adulthood' (Thomson et al, 2006: 346).

6. 'English depends on stress patterns to help the listener determine where words begin' (Cutler and Norris, 1988). 'English speakers effectively use the stress rhythm to segment speech by assuming that strong syllables are word-initial' (Cutler and Otake, 1994: 825).

7. 'Given the importance of speech rhythm in oral language, particularly in stress-timed languages such as English and Dutch, perhaps speech rhythm, such as stress or prosody, would be a productive area of investigation' (David et al, 2007: 180).

8. 'Memory and attention are intrinsically rhythmic processes' (Di Matteo, et al, 1997).

Different scripts

Current brain research suggests that people coming from languages which use a non-alphabetic script (e.g. Mandarin) may have learned to use different parts of the brain than those who learned to read from an alphabetic script (Tan et al, 2005; Wai et al, 2008). Here is an intriguing passage from Tan and his colleagues in Hong Kong:

> Language forms come to shape cognitive and learning strategies, which in turn alter the neural circuits involved in language processing. For children learning to read English and other alphabets, the most popular and effective approach emphasizes children's awareness of the phonological structure of speech, because this awareness helps establish the relationship between graphemes and phonemes and facilitates reading development....

Prosody in a read-aloud narrative: implications for the ELT classroom

José Tiziani

Prosody has long been attested to expound discourse units in speech larger than the clause or even the clause complex. The notion of 'paratone' was advanced over 30 years ago to refer to speakers' organisation of their speech into topic blocks whose beginnings and ends are signalled to listeners by prosodic means. This paper explores the potential of selected prosodic features to signal transitions between stages in a narrative text. Both auditory and instrumental analyses seemed to confirm the presence of significant changes in pitch range and pause at key transition points in the text. Suggestions are provided to improve EFL learners'/teacher trainees' reading-aloud in the classroom.

Introduction

Prosody has long been claimed to signal discourse units larger than the clause or even the clause complex. A sudden shift up in pitch from the end of a sentence to the beginning of another one – **pitch reset** – is typically credited with indicating patterns in text. It is this step up in pitch which seems to be used by speakers to signal 'the organisation of units of discourse around a single topic' (Wichmann, 2000:24). The **paratone** – a term proposed by Yule in 1980 as claimed in Wichmann (2000) – stands as 'a prosodic unit which spans a topic or a sub-topic in speech, roughly equivalent to a paragraph in writing' (Ibid:24).

Pauses seem to be of two types: *filled* – or 'voiced' – and *unfilled* – or 'silent'. Filled pauses include a common type of hesitation sound involving an unrounded central vowel; unfilled pauses, however, can only vary in terms of their inherent length. Functionally, pauses may also be credited with a discoursal view, working with other prosodic features – such as pitch range, for example – to segment discourse into semantically self-contained units larger than the single sentence. They have been claimed to enter into semantic contrasts by signalling different degrees of separateness among 'chunks' of text: Both Brown et al. (1980) and Tench (1990) concur on the significance of pause-length contrasts to signal the boundaries of sentences and paragraphs.

What was of interest here is the extent to which *conceptual* rather than *typological* paragraphs are expounded by prosody – i.e. whether the different stages of the selected narrative text (once identified) were marked prosodically in this way or whether the reader-aloud strictly followed the typological organisation of the text. Eggins (1994) proposes to analyse the schematic structure of narrative texts in terms of six basic stages: *Abstract, Orientation*, *Complication*, *Resolution*, *Evaluation*, and *Coda*. Butt et al. (2000), however, suggest that the **defining** or **obligatory elements** of the narrative genre are its *orientation, complication,* and *resolution* stages, with the other three elements – *abstract, evaluation,* and *coda* – remaining optional choices.

It was hypothesised that certain prosodic features – pitch range and pause – would be largely responsible for signalling boundaries between narrative stages. This was confirmed by both auditory and instrumental analyses, which seemed to reveal the presence of a cluster of prosodic features at the major identified junctions in the schematic structure of the narrative under analysis.

Prosody and Pause in *The Unicorn in the Garden*

First, a schematic structure for the text is suggested on the basis of the systemic-functional model proposed above. Immediately after, the role of pitch range and pause in signalling structure above the single tone unit will be analysed, especially in relation to the prosodic realisation of the suggested schematic structure.

A schematic structure for *The Unicorn in the Garden*

Leaving aside the title, which has great semantic importance since it has been considered a topic marker in discourse (Wichmann, 2000), the following stages – based on the syntactic-semantic criteria outlined under above – could be identified in the short story:

Communicative intonation in complex interaction

Alex L. Selman

To study intonation, it is necessary to look in the places where intonation is likely to be exploited to its full extent as a tool for communication. Rather than looking at read or elicited data, in this article I discuss data from a radio panel game to examine how intonation is used when participants are engaged in a task and have something to win or lose from the interaction.

This paper is drawn from my MA TESOL dissertation, which was motivated by difficulties I had trying to teach Brazil's Discourse Intonation (DI) (Brazil et al. 1980) to upper intermediate learners of English. I began trying to teach DI because I felt that intonation was an important part of spoken language, and DI has received fairly good press (e.g. Chun 2002), particularly in comparison to other models. DI consists of only 5 tones and 3 levels of key – how difficult could that be? And yet, still the reaction from students was, 'How are we supposed to think of all this when we're communicating?' and my feeling was that I could not hear the patterns in anything but the simplest of speech situations.

The central problem of Discourse Intonation is, I believe, that it states that nothing other than the discourse processes they describe should be referred to as intonation: 'when intonation seems to fulfil different functions, this is because of other factors in the *situation* and not because of intonation at all.' (Brazil et al. 1980: 98, emphasis in original). This leads to important questions – how does situation affect the use of intonation? What general patterns can be identified?

The Data Set: "Just a Minute"

'Just a Minute' is a popular BBC Radio 4 panel, based on an original idea by Ian Messiter, in which participants attempt to speak on a given topic for one minute without hesitation, repetition or deviation. The participants are comedians, and TV and radio presenters, thus the monologues generally aim for humour. If one of the rules is broken, other participants 'buzz' to challenge, and the ensuing discussion is a major part of the comedy. The topics are fairly random but are

often chosen to relate to the place of recording or to the participants. This edition was recorded in London and includes topics such as 'Old Father Thames' and 'the Serpentine'.

The artificial rules and the presence of both studio and radio audience mean that this data cannot be considered in any way as 'natural conversation' – however, the speech is real, spontaneous. Most importantly the presence of microphones is authentic to the situation and does not inhibit the speakers, and the task itself is authentic to the speakers. These last two points are vital to the study of intonation because if speakers feel inhibited, or if they feel that what they are doing has no meaning to them, they are unlikely to use their full range of communicative tools. My contention is that to study intonation, it is necessary to look in places where full use of intonation is likely to be found.

The edition of the show that I chose to analyze was first broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in February 2005. It is particularly interesting due to the range of accents of the participants. They are:

1. Nicholas Parsons: 'BBC Accent'. He was born in Grantham, Lincolnshire.
2. Paul Merton. From London, his accent displays many features of 'Estuary English' (see Rosewarne 1994).
3. Graham Norton: born in County Cork, Ireland.
4. Ross Noble: from Cramlington, Newcastle.
5. Sue Perkins: born in London.

There is not space to give a full description of their voices here, and I suggest readers who are not familiar with the accents should look them up on the Internet. Recordings of all of them can be found in video sharing sites.

Data analysis

The analysis of the data combined impressionistic and analysis using speech analysis software. In the extracts from the show given here, I have used minimal annotation to allow easier reading of the speech.

Speech types in the data

The format of the game results in three distinct categories of speech according to the type of turn. These are procedural speech, long turns and interaction over challenges. The purpose and situation of speech in these categories are very different and give insight into the uses of intonation.

The practice of pronunciation teaching in current ELT manuals and handbooks: a review

Vasiliki Kanellou

Which pronunciation areas shall I concentrate on? Which pronunciation teaching techniques shall I employ? Which pronunciation model(s) shall I use? And, which pronunciation performance target(s) shall I set for my learners? These are all questions that may plague any ELT teacher in any teaching situation. This paper will present answers to these questions as provided by authors of recently published ELT manuals and handbooks.

Introduction

The use of appropriate pronunciation teaching techniques and activities and the choice of appropriate pronunciation models and performance targets are not only complex issues but also controversial ones; they have engendered heated discussions among researchers and teachers in various ELT settings and despite the considerable body of published literature that exists on those issues, they have not been resolved yet. So, what is an ELT teacher to do? An appropriate starting point for both novice and experienced teachers who wish to either acquire information or extend their knowledge on such topics would be to consult recently published manuals and handbooks on English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics. However, time constraints and access issues may prevent many ELT teachers from doing so. Thus, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive summary of current thought on the practice of pronunciation teaching by drawing together the main ideas and arguments presented in 18 ELT manuals and 5 book chapters that have been published within the last decade.

All the manuals and handbooks I will refer to are used either as reference books or in teacher training courses and are

commercially available; I have searched the TEFL market in order to identify them. The quest for relevant books has been greatly assisted by the well-developed websites of all major publishing houses in the field of language teaching. Overall, I am going to look at 18 books and 5 book chapters that have fulfilled the set criteria: they have been published within the last decade (the vast majority have been published from 2000 onwards) and they focus on English language teaching (even the few books whose aim is to address second/ foreign language teaching in general, such as *Introducing Second Language Teaching* by Saville-Troike (2006), make specific references to English language teaching). The books I will examine can be divided into three categories; those that are dedicated to the skill of listening, those that are dedicated to the skill of speaking and those that deal with a wide range of language teaching issues. A complete list of all the books and book chapters I will examine can be found in the 'References' list at the end of this paper.

For the purposes of this paper the main ideas presented in each book and book chapter will be drawn together in the form of six themes. Each one of those themes will be analysed and exemplified.

Theme 1: Phonological Perception & Production

A distinction is drawn between receptive and productive phonology and proficiency in both phonological perception and phonological production is recognised as a prerequisite for successful communication in many manuals (Harmer, 2007; Saville-Troike, 2006; Scrivener, 2005; Baker and Westrup, 2003; Riddell, 2003).

> Listening is good for our students' pronunciation, too, in that the more they hear and understand English being spoken, the more they absorb appropriate pitch and intonation, stress and the sounds of both individual words and those which blend together in connected speech. Listening texts are good pronunciation models, in other words, and the more students listen, the better they get, not only at understanding speech, but also at speaking themselves. Indeed, it is worth remembering that successful spoken communication depends not just on our ability to speak, but also on the effectiveness of the way we listen.
>
> Harmer, 2007: 133

Also, according to many manuals, receptive awareness precedes productive competence in L2 phonology (i.e. Harmer, 2007; Scrivener, 2005; Riddell, 2003). For example, Riddell points out that 'students need to get the chance to

Multilingual accents

Madalena Cruz-Ferreira

Speaking of 'foreign' accents in an international language does not make sense. International languages have no 'native' and 'non-native' users either. I discuss the impact of these observations on the current teaching and learning of monolingual English, and I propose treating multilingual accents as both learning tools and learning goals.

English monolinguals and English multilinguals

We know that the prime generators of variability within a language are its accents. There are, for example, archives dedicated to English accents (IDEA, ongoing) though none, to my knowledge, to English morpho-syntaxes or semantics. We also know that the accents of classroom learners of a language, that is, 'non-native' accents, are the prime generators of impaired intelligibility across users of that language. The message seems to be that non-native accents are obstacles to fluent communication in a language, whereas native ones are not. Going by the impressive diversity of English accents on record, native as well as non-native, this message cannot be telling the whole story.

The issue cannot be that the foreign accent is undesirable because it impairs intelligibility. Intelligibility does not operate in a vacuum, because people are (not) intelligible *to* other people. Impaired intelligibility is also true among monolingual users of a language, and also primarily because of accent. The distinction that must be understood here is not the traditional one between native and non-native users of a language, but between monolingual and multilingual users. In the literature, 'native speaker' continues to be used to mean, in fact, 'monolingual speaker', and 'non-native' to mean multilingual speaker. Native speakers of English, i.e. those who learn the language from birth, who are also native speakers of other languages for the same reason, are less native than other natives, in an Orwellian sense. The literature is rife with paradoxical assumptions of this kind, opposing bilinguals/multilinguals to monolingual 'native speakers' and thus denying linguistic nativeness to users of more than one language.

Nor can the issue be that the accent is there at all, because everyone speaks their language(s) with an accent. Part of being a skilled user of a language, whatever the number of languages in your repertoire, consists in the ability to make sense of accents that are different from yours. Speakers naturally *find the common ground that they know is there*, because they share a language. The issue is rather that the accent that is there is portrayed as unshared ground. If you are told that you have a 'foreign' accent, then you are told that your accent does not belong to the language that you are attempting to make yours through learning it. In other words, you are told that the language cannot be made yours: it is alien to you because your accent is alien to it.

Accents as liabilities

The 'foreign' nature of learner accents is what spawns their portrayal as either lacking (and so in need of 'addition') or excessive (in need of 'reduction'). In both cases, the learners' own accent is ignored, not in the sense that it is not compared to the target product, which it often is, but in the sense that comparison is all there is. Learner accents are put to use in the learning process, but only as evidence of what is not meant to be part of the final product. Comparing learner accents with textbook-prescribed targets will of course uncover many differences and very few similarities. Despite a rapidly expanding population of learner candidates, and an equally expanding diversity in their linguistic backgrounds, we can anticipate more of the same, as far as accent teaching goals and target accents are concerned. Jenkins (2006) makes this point perfectly clear. Learner accents will continue to be seen as a liability, for two reasons.

Firstly, because learner accents are treated as deficit accents. Accent additions and/or reductions can only be understood against the background of someone else's accent, one which the learners fail to match. Accents acquired in a classroom are forever doomed to 'non-nativeness' (or intriguing constructs like 'near-nativeness'), because they were not acquired at home. Secondly, because foreign language teaching (FLT) preoccupations about learners single out the complexity of their linguistic disparity, resulting in statements about the unmanageable quantification thereof.

Choosing to focus on unmanageable disparity is true of concerns voiced about other multilingualisms, too. In bilingual acquisition, for example, each language pair poses 'a unique learning problem because languages can be similar or different', as does 'the heterogeneity that can exist among bilingual groups and bilingual individuals' (Werker & Byers-Heinlein 2008: 147).

Perspectives on pronunciation: where theory meets practice

Jonathan Fiteni

IATEFL events are not uncommon for Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL), which has hosted a number of them, but the recent PronSIG event represented a milestone in that it was the first ever PronSIG meeting to take place in Turkey. It reflects the institution's commitment to putting pronunciation more firmly on the teaching map in Turkey and it gave participants an opportunity to develop their theoretical and practical ideas on various aspects pronunciation teaching.

Key names in the field contributed to the event through a series of plenary talks and workshops. Professor John Wells gave the first plenary titled 'Overcoming Phonetic Interference: English Pronunciation for the Turkish Learner', in which he identified the problematic sounds for Turkish learners and in doing so gave instructors some practical ideas on how they could raise students' awareness of these sounds and then work on them to improve student ineligibility.

Gerald Kelly, in his plenary titled 'The Ups and Downs of Teaching Intonation' and his workshop 'Planning for Pronunciation', stressed that pronunciation teaching should and could be integrated into teaching practice and got the audience doing a number of very practical activities aimed at achieving this.

Michael Vaughan-Rees' plenary gave us some 'Powerful Rules for Teaching English Pronunciation' and his workshop on 'Rhymes and Rhythm' focused on practical ways of teaching different areas of pronunciation in the classroom and demonstrated and shared with the participants a variety of activities ready to use in the classroom.

To complement the event's focus on the practical, the session given by Allan James of the University of Klagenfurt prompted a number of questions. His session 'Where Theory Meets Practice: Which Theory? Which Practice? Moving with the Times in Pronunciation Teaching' encouraged participants to reflect on how to approach the teaching of pronunciation in a world where the local accent or dialect is gaining recognition.

The event was held on November 21st, 2008 at the Bilkent Hotel, Ankara, and attracted 199 local instructors and 9 from overseas (including the plenary speakers). The local interest in the event reflected the demand for pronunciation teaching suggestions and activities for integrating pronunciation into the classroom.

The sponsors were Pearson Longman, The British Council, and Oxford Publishing, and their contribution and commitment to the development of language learning in Turkey was instrumental in realising this first for Turkey, for which both BUSEL and the participants were very grateful.

Jonathan Fiteni works at BUSEL and is a tutor on the DELTA course there. As well as teacher development, his interests include learner motivation and using the internet in language instruction. He regards pronunciation teaching as fascinating but challenging and is keen to find novel, engaging ways of presenting it to learners.

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At the talk face 1

Mark Hancock

Activities for working on tonic stress

English word order is relatively fixed compared to many languages, but in compensation, the tonic stress is more moveable. This can be a problem for learners whose mother tongue uses changes in word order for the same nuances, and where frequently tonic stress falls on the last word regardless of meaning. Since tonic stress is acknowledged to be necessary for intelligibility in EFL, as well as ESL and ELF, it is important that learners receive abundant and varied practice in recognising tonic stress, in understanding the meanings behind specific choices for tonic stress, and in placing tonic stress at will so as to create specific meanings. The following activities are designed with these points in mind.

1 Stress gym

The aim of this activity is to help students get the knack of moving the tonic stress around, without for the moment having to think about the differences in meaning that this causes. As the title 'gym' suggests, the activity is more physical than intellectual!

Photocopy the table opposite, or write it on the board. You could just put up the three columns to begin with, and then start writing in the contents as the activity progresses. Each of the sentences in the table contains three syllables, and the idea is to show that the tonic stress can fall on any one of the three. Read out *A b c*, stressing the letter A (you may like to use the metaphor of 'underlining' with your voice to explain this to students). Get the students to copy you. Then do the same for *a B c* and *a b C*.

Now do the same thing for the first sentence *Jim was here*, *Jim was here* and *Jim was here*. Show how the stress pattern is identical to the three *a b c* patterns.

The main part of the activity is this: you call out one of the *a b c* patterns, and the students have to respond by calling out the corresponding *Jim was here* pattern. For example:

Teacher: a B c!

Students: Jim WAS here!

Do this for a while and then move on to the next sentence, and so on. Finally, students could work in pairs, one calling out the *a b c* pattern and the other responding with one of the sentence patterns. *Note: this activity first appeared in the TESOL Spain newsletter.*

2 Guess and stress Game

Tell the class that Jim and Ana are playing the guessing game opposite. Ask the students to explain why Jim stresses the underlined words. (Answers: *black* and *short* are stressed because they contrast with an opposite adjective in the previous question; *long* is stressed because it is the only new word in a question which is otherwise identical to the previous one)

Invite the students to play the game with a partner, remembering to think about which words they stress.

3 Contrastive stress minimal pairs

The table opposite contains exchanges between a customer and a waiter. In each exchange, the waiter gives an identical response in both column A and column B, but the stressed word is different. Ask students to explain why this is the case. Then test the student's receptive ability by saying some of the waiter's replies from either column A or column B, and the students have to say which by identifying the stressed word. Students could then similarly test each other, with one saying the waiter's reply and the other saying A or B.

4 Stress role-play

As a continuation from activity 3, students could do the role-play opposite. Before acting out the dialogue, they could underline the stressed words. Alternatively, they could produce their own restaurant dialogues inspired by some of the exchanges in the box in activity 3.

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Streaming speech

Reviewed by *Mikhail Ordin*

As a student struggling with English pronunciation and later as a pronunciation and phonetics teacher trying to help my students comprehend native and non-native English, I was always on the lookout for new and effective techniques to inspire the learner and enhance the teaching process. As a student I placed great hopes on new information technologies, computer-based systems and different gadgets.

After a while, I found to my surprise that the hardware and software available did not facilitate pronunciation acquisition for me. I thought I was stale and had got used to more traditional means of learning, and that was the reason these things did not work for me. Later, I started my teaching career, and tried to implement new technologies in my pronunciation classes. As with any novelty, using software systems boosted the interest and motivation of the students, but this interest faded after a while, and the efficiency of the classes left much to be desired. In the end, I finally refused to use IT, and turned back to more traditional teaching tools. Nevertheless, I felt strongly that phonetics and pronunciation classes cried out for new technologies and methods to facilitate acquisition. Yet I had no idea what these could be until, fortunately, I stumbled on the *speechinaction* website. This was just the kind of thing I had been longing for.

The site is actually web-based courseware called Streaming Speech. It provides courses designed to help the learner acquire pronunciation and listening skills. At present, four courses are available, and one more is being developed (eager beavers can use the demo version of the course, which is under construction).

The courses available are British and Irish Pronunciation, US and Canadian Pronunciation, Accents of the USA, and Accents of the British Isles. The courses pursue two major aims: a) to improve the user's pronunciation competence; and b) to improve the user's listening comprehension skills. The courses are built around the concept of Discourse Intonation, which has already generated a lot of research into natural speech, and has already been used to create educational materials.

The major courses (British and Irish Pronunciation and US and Canadian Pronunciation) are based on either RP (and

one chapter on Irish pronunciation), or GA (and Canadian) pronunciation models, respectively. Each course is made up of several lessons. Each lesson is built around an interview with a native speaker and presents a fine example of natural speech. The tempo of speech increases as the course progresses.

During the first exposure to the story the students have to answer a couple of comprehension questions. Complete understanding is not required in order to answer these, but answering them can ease the students' anxiety, which usually soars in a classroom where the teacher uses authentic and not classroom-oriented speech.

When the learners have attempted the questions, they are presented with the opportunity to review their answers whilst listening to and reading the extracts from the interview. The extracts can be listened to line by line and as a whole. When necessary, cultural notes accompany the text to enable learners understand every detail of the interview.

The following section in each chapter is devoted to the discourse features that have arisen in the extracts analysed. The pronunciation details that make the speech sound authentic are discussed. The users have a lot of opportunities to listen, repeat, and record themselves, and to compare their pronunciation with the model. This is the time to practice elisions, assimilations, epentheses, reductions and other processes typical of spontaneous speech. Then the students have time to concentrate on certain pronunciation points, e.g. vowels, consonants, clusters,

rhythm, and practice these first in isolated words, and then in words in context (tone-units extracted from the interview). In the final section the learners listen to one part from the interview again and then have to repeat the whole extract watching all the peculiarities of the pronunciation.

After each section the users are assessed or carry out self-assessment (by comparing the recording of their performance with the model), and after all the activities have been completed, the final grade is produced together with a recommendation. The student is advised either to go on or to review the whole chapter once again.

The courses Accents of the British Isles and Accents of the USA are built around non-standard regional varieties of British and American English. Each chapter in the course focuses on a separate urban variety from the following areas: Birmingham, Newcastle-upon-Type, London, Middlesborough, Manchester, Glasgow, South Wales, Ireland, Leeds for British varieties; and Texas, Georgia, California, Tennessee, New Jersey, South Dakota, Virginia for the USA varieties.

Although mastering regional pronunciation is rarely an aim nor an achievable target for EFL learners, imitating a different accent enables learners to master better the target pronunciation variety and greatly enhances listening comprehension competence.

Throughout the courses all regional and colloquial vocabulary is explained to remove comprehension difficulties related to new words. The course also develops the cultural and lingua-cultural awareness of the learners. The interviews are live, the topics discussed are interesting. Notes on linguistic realities and vocabulary remove possible difficulties. Pictures are also provided of the areas where the speakers are from, as well as maps that show the locations the speakers are from.

Each chapter in every course contains the full transcript of the interviews first as normal script and then in Disciurse Intonation transcription. The transcript can be used to develop further listening exercises and other activities.

Besides an individual mode, StreamingSpeech also offers a classroom mode. In this mode the students have passwords and logins, and the teacher can monitor their progress and the time each student spends on the exercises. The teacher can also administer the course according to an individual student's needs and aims.

The StreamingSpeech webware is highly recommended and definitely the number one of those on the market.

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