SPEAK OUT!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IATEFL PRONUNCIATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

September 2011 Issue 45

Notes from the Coordinators

As many of you will already know, I have for some time been looking for someone to take over from me as Coordinator of the PronSIG. It's been a long search and there have been a couple of false starts along the way, but I'm very pleased to say that I have now found the right person at last. Wayne Rimmer joined me as Joint Coordinator as from the Brighton conference in April, and the plan is that we will work together for an interim period of one year before I finally bow out completely.

The PronSIG, like all the IATEFL Special Interest Groups and indeed the rest of the Association, relies on volunteers to keep it running – with the superb support of the salaried staff at Head Office – and I'm sure you will join me in welcoming Wayne and applauding the commitment he has made.

At the time of writing we are still very keen to hear from anyone who might be willing to take on the responsibilities of organising events and attracting sponsorship for the PronSIG.

Jonathan Marks

I have been a member of the PronSIG since 1994 when I was just starting out on my teaching career. PronSIG was a lifeline for me then as a struggling teacher in a difficult environment. Things have changed in ELT, notably the impact of technology, but most teachers still find pronunciation a challenging and even daunting area. In my current job as Director of Studies at International House in Moscow, I can see new, and not so new, teachers who really need the blend of expertise and support that the PronSIG provides. Pronunciation remains a high priority in most language teaching contexts so the PronSIG is as relevant as ever.

I am very proud now that I have the opportunity to put something back into the PronSIG. Over the years, I have certainly benefited from some excellent learning opportunities through the PronSIG, especially through the pages of *Speak Out!* Looking forward, we need to increase our membership and the range of member benefits we offer. As Jonathan writes, we would like to expand the committee and get mote members actively involved. This is your SIG so help us to take it in the direction you want.

Wayne Rimmer

Notes from IATEFL

Contribute to our Wider Membership Individual Scheme

Launched at the Aberdeen conference, this initiative is the next phase of our Wider Membership Scheme. It is designed to enable individual IATEFL members to sponsor memberships for colleagues in the less economically developed world where there are no local TAs who are Associates of IATEFL.

Currently, we are focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa. A number of members of the profession have agreed to be scheme founders and have started a fund which we will used to match members' donations. So by donating £25 you can enable a teacher from Africa to become a full IATEFL member. However smaller donations are also very welcome.

Please contact Glenda Smart, <glenda@iatefl.org>, if you would like to donate or visit the donations section on our website at: https://secure.iatefl.org/onl/donate.php

Find out more about IATEFL SIGs

If you would like more information about IATEFL's Special Interest Groups you can visit the website at http://www.iatefl.org/membership-information/iatefl-membership or contact the coordinators of each group at the relevant email address for details

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From the editor

There are headaches when editing a newsletter such as *Speak Out!*, but there are rewards. Of the headaches I will only say that I'd be lost when it comes to copy editing without the generous and expert help of PronSIG member Jean McCutcheon. Thank you, Jean.

And the rewards? Contact with active members such as Piers Messum, who reports on the successful PCE he and Roslyn Young ran at Brighton, plus meeting new faces, as with Joann Chernen, who agreed to convert her IATEFL poster into the article we carry here. A special reward has been contact with Tracy Derwing and Murray Munro. They found time in busy schedules to give us an insight in to the important work they have been doing on intelligibility and accent, whilst discussion board moderator Alex Selman looks at the prosody of reported speech. Finally, Mark Hancock ties sounds to spelling for another practical look at pronunciation teaching.

Editorial Office
Correspondence relating to the content of *Speak Out!* should be sent to the editor by email at robin@englishglobalcom.com

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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!* you should contact the Reviews editor, Mikhail Ordin, at <mikhail.ordin@gmail.com>, copying the editor in to any correspondence.

Copy Deadlines
46 March–April 2012: November 1st 2011
47 September–October 2011: May 1st 2012

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Intelligibility, comprehensibility and accent: their relevance to pronunciation teaching

Tracey M. Derwing & Murray J. Munro

For several years we have conducted research on the intelligibility, comprehensibility and accentedness of second language (L2) speech in ESL settings, where immigrants interact with native speakers of the local varieties of English, as well as with other L2 speakers. We have carried out numerous listening studies with a wide range of speakers, listeners, and task types; our key finding in all of these studies is that intelligibility, comprehensibility and accent are related but partially independent dimensions of speech.

Of course, our research goals are determined by the contexts in which we live and work, and as a result, some of our findings may not apply elsewhere. However, our context does not differ greatly from that of many other immigrant–receiving countries where English is the dominant language. Moreover, the importance of the concepts of intelligibility and comprehensibility transcends individual contexts. It is virtually impossible to imagine situations in which these constructs are not essential to communication.

Definitions

We have defined *intelligibility* as the degree to which a listener actually understands the speaker's intended message. It can be measured by having listeners complete dictation tasks, comprehension questions, true/false tasks and summaries. *Comprehensibility* is the listener's assessment of how easy or difficult L2 speech is to understand. It is commonly measured with a scale; in our studies, listeners use anchor points of 'very easy to understand' and 'extremely difficult to understand' on a 9-point scale. Similarly, *accentedness* is measured with ratings, such that listeners determine where a speech sample fits on a scale of 'no accent' to 'extremely heavy accent'. Both native listeners and highly proficient L2 speakers of English are capable of making fine distinctions on these scales and show very high rates of inter-rater reliability (Derwing & Munro, 1997; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Derwing & Munro, forthcoming; Munro & Derwing, 1995a). Although 'accent,' 'intelligibility,' and 'comprehensibility' are sometimes used interchangeably, in fact the three concepts are partially independent. In other words, a speaker can be completely intelligible and easy to understand, yet have a heavy accent. Also, some speakers may be intelligible, but not very easy to understand (Munro & Derwing, 1995b). However, if an L2 speaker exhibits repeated instances of unintelligibility, he or she will regularly be rated as being very difficult to understand (low comprehensibility) and as having a very heavy accent. These findings matter to language teachers, because it is important to distinguish between those aspects of an accent that affect intelligibility (e.g., primary stress, Hahn, 2004) and those that may be noticeable but which have little impact on understanding (e.g., English interdental fricatives, Munro & Derwing, 2006). Regardless of whether a teacher integrates pronunciation into a speaking or general skills class or is teaching a stand-alone pronunciation course, the greatest benefits for learners occur when the instructor emphasizes those elements of speech that will positively affect intelligibility and comprehensibility.

Does pronunciation instruction work?

In order to evaluate the success of pronunciation teaching, we must be clear on the goals of the instructor and the students. During the Audio-lingual era, for example, there was a strong focus on achieving a native-sounding accent – a goal that proved unrealistic. Although some L2 adults do sound like native speakers, they have usually learned an L2 that is very similar phonologically to their L1 (Bongaerts, Mennen & van der Slik, 2000) and have typically had access to massive amounts of interaction in the L2 (Piller, 2002). A few learners also appear to have an exceptional phonological aptitude for learning L2 pronunciation (Ioup, Boustagi, El Tigi, & Moselle, 1994). Generally, however, adult language learners retain aspects of their L1 sound system for the rest of their lives (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam 2009; Flege, Munro & Mackay, 1995). Thus, if we take a native-like accent as the goal, pronunciation teaching seems destined to fall short.

If, however, we choose enhanced intelligibility and comprehensibility as our aim, the likelihood of success is

Taking pronunciation further with oral journals

Joann Chernen

In the literature, oral journals are known variously as audio journals, taped journals, or oral dialogue journals. What they all have in common is a back-and-forth exchange of audio-recorded messages between instructor and student. In a writing program, student writing, instructor feedback, and meaningful exchanges are recorded in print for future reference, reflection, and analysis. In a pronunciation or oral skills program, however, student speech, instructor feedback, and meaningful exchanges are often transitory words that are difficult to capture and recall for future reference, reflection, and analysis. The oral journal is one way to archive communication that is normally fleeting.

I began using oral journals as a technique in my own teaching about 8 years ago within the context of a content-based program of instruction. When I first joined this program, I had never read about oral journals being used, nor did I know of anyone else using them.

As I began working with the journals, it became apparent that the oral journal process was popular with my students, particularly to help them with pronunciation, an area I had not set out to target. Since I began, I have refined the procedure and not only continue to use it as a teaching–learning tool, but have instituted it as the cornerstone of a community college pronunciation course for which I have been project coordinator.

After consistently receiving positive student responses and results from oral journals, I decided to explore possible reasons for these reactions. This article provides a summary of my findings, together with a brief overview of oral journal use, particularly as practiced in the Pronunciation Course in the English Language Skills Department at Vancouver Community College (VCC) in Canada.

Oral journal use in general

A comprehensive look at published and Web-based literature turned up isolated and incidental mention of oral journal use as a supplementary instructional technique in a variety of settings, including classes for teacher education, oral skills, pronunciation, and writing. Oral journals are being used for:

- avoiding convergence on first-language (L1) pronunciation patterns and characteristics (Walker, 2005)
- critical reflection in content-based English courses (Dantas-Whitney, 2002)
- oral–aural expression and practice (Hughes, 2001)
- helping learners build confidence in their spoken English (Bradford, 1995)
- engendering teacher–student rapport (Henry, 1994)
- drawing attention to and correcting errors in all, one, or any combination of grammar, lexis, and pronunciation (Allan, 1991)

Without exception, all commentary about the potential benefits of oral journals for students is extremely positive. Furthermore, almost all of the methodological descriptions, regardless of specific objectives or target audience, identify the same three characteristics as being the most valuable features:

- the provision of a non-threatening environment for communication
- individualized feedback
- student–teacher rapport building

Oral journals are also described as time-consuming for the instructor, however. I will address this issue later in this paper, and I will make specific suggestions about how they can be made manageable for teachers.

Context

Background

Five years ago, I was asked to develop a new pronunciation course for intermediate- and advanced-level students. When I conducted my research, there were 545 full-time equivalent students in the English Language Skills department, the mandate of which is to address the English-language needs of adult immigrants in the

Investigating the prosody of reported speech

Alex. L. Selman

Reported speech, quotation, and characterised utterances are a common feature of natural conversation – we talk about things we heard on the news, what our friend said, we repeat jokes and enact invented conversations. This article was motivated by the rarity of such language use by my language students. It investigates the prosodic marking of quotes and reported speech. Examples from a radio show are examined, and implications are discussed.

Quoting and reporting carry a high risk of miscommunication concerning fundamental information about who said what, when, and what judgement is being cast on the comments. The grammar of indirect reported speech is difficult to produce in conversation, due to the changes required in tense, pronouns, time references, etc.; direct quotation, on the other hand, requires vocal marking, and is thus perhaps even more hazardous.

What is reported speech?

In its broadest sense, reported speech is the inclusion of utterances or thoughts from other people or times in one's own talk. It is hard to envisage a language without this function, and it is strongly argued to be a universal of languages (Cacchione 2006). The presentation of reports, and particularly the grammar of indirect reports, varies significantly between languages. The analyses in Coulmas (1986) show there is variation in tense and person change, and that aspects such as honorifics can complicate reporting. Attempts to transfer conventions between languages may well result in miscommunication.

Mainstream English Language Teaching

Converting between direct and indirect reported speech is one of those solidly 'teachable' parts of the English language curriculum. It has clear rules about tenses and pronouns, and even the exceptions, such as not changing tense when referring to habits or future events, seem logical enough. The changes become a little more complex when reporting questions and imperatives indirectly, but it can still all be laid out as rule-based and predictable in grammar books.

Readers will be very familiar with the main points covered in most ELT materials:

- Tense is moved back one step when reporting indirectly, with exceptions if the reference is to a habit, to the future or to something that is still true.

- Pronouns, and time and place references should be altered to the perspective of the present interaction.

- Commands and questions require special treatment.

More specialised ELT materials

While reported speech in English has received attention in research into spoken grammar (e.g. McCarthy 1998), the focus has been on tense aspect and reportative verb choices. The related pronunciation patterns have not been focused on except in a limited number of pronunciation guides such as Hancock (2003).

Reported speech does not receive direct analysis in Brazil's (1997) model of intonation at the level of discourse. However, his discussion of direct and oblique orientation can be adapted to examine the important differences between quotes presented as tokens, compared with the re-enactment of conversations. The model further classifies 'sayings' and other ritualised, repeated language as a form of oblique orientation. The expected intonation patterns in these cases are a) flat and falling tones, and b) multiple prominences in the tone unit.

The data set: "The News Quiz"

"The News Quiz" is a BBC Radio 4 topical panel quiz. Four panellists answer news-related questions set by the chair. The participants are comedians and presenters. The chair has a script but frequently ad-libs. The participants are not told the questions beforehand, but will be aware of topics that are likely to come up and will have planned some material. Between rounds, cuttings are read by news readers. The focus of the show is comedy, but the news topics mean that discussion and political comment are common. During the show's season (a 6-8 week period), it is recorded in front of a studio audience on Thursday evening and then edited for broadcast on Friday evening.

The data is not 'natural conversation'. The participants are performing, which may lead to unnatural language use, and it is heavily edited from a 90-minute live show to a 30-

PronSIG Track IATEFL Brighton

Jonathan Marks

The 2011 conference attracted a smaller number of pronunciation proposals than IATEFL conferences in recent years, and the Pronunciation SIG programme on the second day of the conference consisted of just five presentations plus the Open Forum. However, highlighting the 'I' in IATEFL, all the speakers were from different countries, and they provided us with a good variety of content and style of presentation.

Hatice Altun Evci (Turkey) talked about 'International English teachers' perceptions of English as an international language'. Her research among 448 teachers in 71 different countries found that a clear majority of teachers believe that their teaching should be influenced by the concept of English as an international language (EIL) in various areas, including pronunciation.

Ahmad Al-Hassan (Jordan) asked the question 'Spelling is chaotic: what facts lie behind this popular judgment?' He emphasised the fact that the relationship between spelling and pronunciation in English is actually much more regular than commonly believed, especially if we consider how spellings are related to syllable structure and phonotactics.

Meenu Bajaj (India), in 'Communicative pronunciation ... with a difference', told us about how she integrates pronunciation work into speaking skills activities, and showed us some clips of obviously happy students acting out dialogues in the classroom. This was the first of two presentations which highlighted the kinaesthetic element in pronunciation work.

Charles Goodger was unfortunately unable to attend the conference for family reasons, but his colleagues Eric Laake-Cervinskis (Latvia), Emelie Loeb and Valentina D'Errico led a participatory workshop on 'Fun Songs – combining TPR with music', which provided a welcome opportunity for participants to get out of their seats and make use of movement and song.

Shigeo Kato (Japan), in 'Developing lower-level processing skills in English L2 reading', discussed the links between phonological processing, word recognition and early reading skills in L2 English, and showed us an array of exercise types designed to strengthen these links.

All the presentations attracted good-sized audiences, which included familiar and unfamiliar faces. Some attended just one of the presentations, while there were a few die-hards (including me!) who were to be seen in the 'pronunciation room' for more substantial parts of the day, resisting the temptation to stroll or sit on the seafront, or even lie on the beach, in the unseasonably warm sunshine.

Anyone is welcome, of course – not only to come along, but also to put in a proposal for the Pronunciation SIG programme day. The deadline for proposals for the 2012 conference in Glasgow is the 16th of September, and if you want your proposal to be considered for a SIG programme day, all you have to do is tick the relevant box.

At the PronSIG Open Forum at the end of the day, it became clear that it would be a good idea to continue the momentum generated by the PCE (which you can read about elsewhere in this issue) and invite the same presenters back next year for a PCE, which will be a second step for those who attended this year, but which will also give those who missed this year's event an entry into the principles and practice that were introduced there. Look out for more information about the 2012 PCE in due course.

Jonathan Marks is a founder member of the PronSIG and is one of its current Joint Coordinators. He is the author of *Elementary Pronunciation in Use* (CUP 2007) and has contributed pronunciation lessons to Macmillan's website, 'One-stop-English'.

Email: jonathanmarks@wp.pl

Non-imitative ways of teaching pronunciation

Piers Messum and Roslyn Young

Around the world, the basic paradigm for teaching pronunciation is 'listen and repeat'. In PronSIG's one day pre-conference event at the 2011 Brighton conference, we justified and demonstrated teaching through an alternative paradigm: one in which students do not imitate a teacher or a recording, but instead work with awareness on what they need to do with their lips, jaw, tongue, larynx and the rest of their bodies in order to learn the motor skills required to pronounce English well.

Very many of the exercises teachers use for pronunciation come down, in one form or another, to 'listen and repeat'. It's believed that students will learn to pronounce this way because it is generally thought that this is what young children do when they learn to pronounce their mother tongue.

Surprisingly, there is no evidence at all – not a mite! – that young children learn to pronounce this way. They do, of course, learn how to pronounce *individual words* by copying them, but how they learn *the system*, including the qualities of the speech sounds within words and the timing patterns of speech, remains unknown. Piers showed in his thesis (Messum 2007) why it is unlikely that these aspects of pronunciation are learnt by imitation, and described the other mechanisms through which learning the system more plausibly takes place.

To elaborate this a little, let us first consider the learning of speech sounds and then consider the learning of timing patterns.

It is clear that when we learn the pronunciation of a new word, 'horripilation' for example, we do so by first parsing it: we recognise the 3 or 4 speech sounds that make it up (perhaps 'ho' 'ri' 'pi' 'lation'). Then we reproduce these speech sounds in the right order in our own voices with speech sounds we know to be equivalent to the ones we heard. This is imitation in the sense of a straightforward reproduction of a series of events. But how did we come to know as children what to produce that would be taken by our listeners to be equivalent to what they said for 'ho', etc? This is the real issue, and while it, too, might be achieved by imitation – in this case by a different form of imitation, a process of acoustic matching – it most probably is not.

The most likely alternative is that when an infant is making sounds, he notices that on some occasions his caregivers make sounds in response. He realises, from the way they are acting, that they are imitating him. (This kind of imitative game – with the caregivers doing the imitation – will be familiar to all parents and is well documented in the literature.) So the child concludes that his caregivers regard his and their speech events as equivalent, and that he can use his sound whenever his caregivers use the one that corresponds to it. (The mechanism is more fully described in Messum (2007, 2008)).

With respect to 'timing' patterns, like the differing length of English vowels in certain contexts, the 'rhythm' of English, and so on, the longstanding assumption is that children observe these effects in the speech of those around them, and then copy the underlying timing in some way.

However, no one imagines that a child learns the 'rhythmic' nature of an activity like walking in this way. We all know that a child walks as he does for good biomechanical reasons, which he discovers for himself. He is not imitating the timing of his parents' walking when he starts to walk.

That said, once we know how to walk, we can, at that stage, start to consciously copy the way others walk, including peculiarities of timing, etc., but this is not how the skill is initially acquired.

Walking provides a useful example for understanding speech, but with a major difference: the breath control of speech is invisible, so very few people have considered how it is learnt, and then considered the effects this has on the pronunciation of different languages. The 'pulsatile' style of speech breathing that English demands from its young learners (in order to reproduce stressed syllables in the West Germanic way) provides a much better explanation for the appearance of many timing effects than the conventional imitative account (which is really only an assumption) (Messum 2007, 2008).

How we teach

The non-imitative approach to teaching pronunciation that we use was originally developed by Caleb Gattegno (e.g. 1962, 1970). In it, the teacher does not provide a vocal model for the language, either in person or using recordings. Instead, he is a 'silent' (but not mute) coach, who acts like a gymnastics coach, encouraging his gymnasts to do what he sees is necessary in relation to

Pre-Conference Pronunciation Symposium, July 2, 2012

Teaching and learning pronunciation: local and global perspectives on research and practice

ACTA International Conference, July 3 – 5, 2012

TESOL as a Global Trade - Ethics, Equity and Ecology

www.astmanagement.com.au/ACTA12/

We are pleased to announce a one-day symposium on teaching and learning English pronunciation to be held in conjunction with the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) conference in Cairns in July 2012.

This symposium will bring together invited experts in different aspects of research and practice in the field and will explore a range of topics related to teaching and learning pronunciation in both local and global contexts. It will feature a half-day colloquium (morning session) followed in the afternoon by concurrent sessions in two streams: one targeting classroom teachers and one targeting researchers and teacher educators.

It represents an exciting opportunity to explore this crucial part of learning English and will be of great benefit to researchers, teachers and teacher educators. For symposium registrants who desire further opportunity to explore pronunciation research and practice, the ACTA conference will follow with a dedicated pronunciation stream and plenary speaker Professor Tracey Derwing.

We are delighted to the have the involvement of the following experts in the field:

Professor Tracey Derwing, Department of Educational Psychology (TESL), University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

Tracey has published extensively in collaboration with Murray Munro and other colleagues, and has researched many aspects of teaching and learning pronunciation in an ESL context. She has carried out research related to fluency and pronunciation and has investigated the relationship between accent and intelligibility, as well as different approaches to teaching pronunciation in the English classroom. Tracey has also examined the role of the native speaker interlocutor in L2 speaker-monolingual native speaker communication success. Tracey's work with Murray Munro has had a major influence on L2 pronunciation research and has shaped the way accent and intelligibility are now studied. She has also conducted large-scale studies of immigrant settlement in Canada. Her research has been informed by her holistic approach to L2 speakers' integration into the larger community. Tracey will also be a plenary speaker at the ACTA conference following the symposium.

Dr John Field, Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), University of Bedfordshire, UK.

John is a member of CRELLA, a research unit at the University of Bedfordshire, UK, which focuses on English language learning and assessment. He also teaches cognitive approaches to Second Language Acquisition at the Faculty of Education, Cambridge University; and until recently taught psycholinguistics at the University of Reading, UK. His interests lie in second language listening and in applying ideas from cognitive psychology to an understanding of second language skills. His most recent book, *Listening in the Language Classroom* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), argues for a radical rethinking of current methodology in the teaching of L2 listening. He is also the author of a reference work on psycholinguistics (Routledge 2004) aimed at non-specialists.

In an earlier life, John was an ELT materials writer, teacher trainer and consultant. He wrote national coursebooks for Saudi Arabia, TV materials for Mainland China and two radio series for the BBC World Service. He worked with teachers in many parts of the world including Saudi Arabia, Oman, Hong Kong, and Tanzania; and was an inspector of UK private language schools.

Dr Helen Fraser, Independent researcher

Helen taught linguistics and phonetics at the University of New England (Australia) for 18 years, till she left in 2008 to pursue an independent career. Her research focuses on

Teaching the pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca

Reviewed by Richard Cauldwell

Robin Walker (2010). *Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 224 pp. (paperback and Audio CD)

This is an important and well-written book. I don't agree with all of it (as will become clear below), but I regard it as an essential read – perhaps the best 'first-publication-to-read' about the English as a Lingua Franca movement (ELF).

I embarked on this review with some timorousness, as I had gathered the distinct impression that, as far as ELF was concerned, you had either to be a committed 'ELFer' or run the risk of being labelled an old benighted colonial relic. In which case I would belong in the latter category.

The author of *Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca* is a proponent of ELF, whereas I am an interested spectator who is intrigued by many of the developments and a user of some of the components. But I wish that the discourse around the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) was articulated in a different way. However, I believe the ELF movement certainly raises issues on which every professional who teaches pronunciation should have a point of view.

There are six chapters. Chapter 1 'English: changing roles, changing goals' reviews the growth and spread of English over the last four centuries, and suggests three goals for pronunciation teaching: mutual intelligibility, identity, and teachability. Chapter 2 concerns the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) and I will come back to this later.

The key for me in getting over my timorousness was Chapter 3 'Adopting an ELF Approach'. This is a most welcome chapter as it addresses many of the issues that have arisen in the decade or so that ELF has emerged as a movement. It is in two parts: the first addresses ten concerns that have been expressed about ELF; the second addresses six benefits of adopting an ELF approach to pronunciation teaching. The concerns include the accusations of: lowering of standards, leaving students without a reference model, allowing students no choice. The benefits include: a lighter workload, and a lighter learning load (in the LFC, vowel reduction, word-stress, stress-timing, weak forms, connected speech features, and tone are regarded as 'not important'), making it easier for a non-native speaker to be a good instructor, a re-positioning of the role of the mother tongue from enemy to friend, and viewing the process of pronunciation learning as one of accent addition rather than accent elimination.
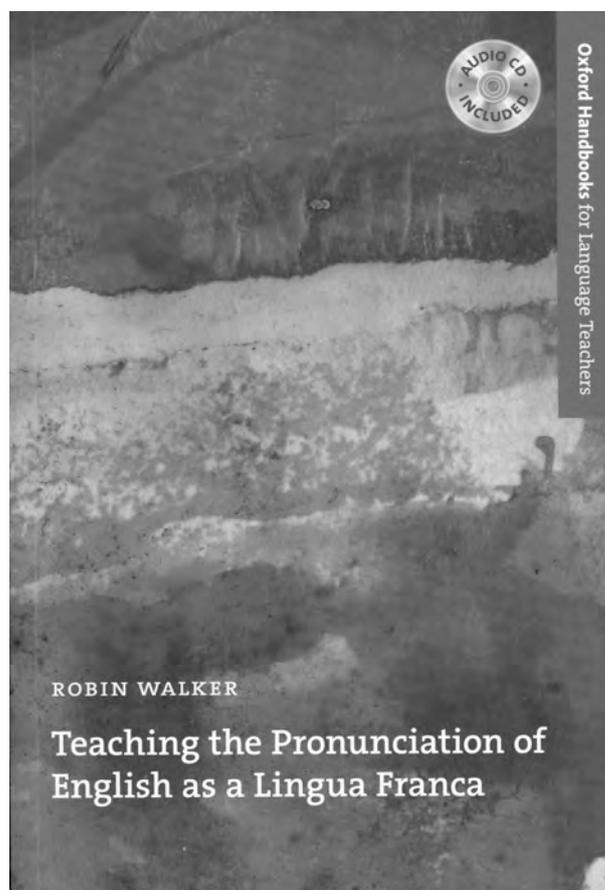
I value the ELF approach for:

- recognising the importance of the fact that there are far more non-native speakers of English than native speakers

- recognising that many speakers of English will be using English with fellow non-native speakers with no native speakers around

- the distinction between using 'the native speaker standard' as a reference model rather than a goal that we insist learners should continue striving to reach

- recognising and celebrating the achievement of people who have reached a level of international intelligibility while retaining their national/social identity in the form of a national accent

- liberating non-native speaker teachers from their sense of guilt at not reaching a native speaker standard

- its suggestion of making the processes of accommodation/convergence amenable to deliberate strategic manipulation so that speakers (native speakers included) can consciously adapt their speech to the needs of the listener.

Chapter 2 presents the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), which lies at the centre of the ELF approach. The LFC is a model of speech for pronunciation purposes which provides a syllabus which is shorter and simpler than those based on native speaker models. For example, here are three things that the LFC allows that would not be in a conventional native speaker syllabus: intelligible variations of the canonic pronunciations of /θ/ and /ð/ such as /f/ and a 'd-like sound' respectively; variations in vowel quality, except for /ɜː/ (but LFC does insist on the short/long distinction); insertion of vowels into consonant clusters, thus increasing the number of syllables in a word. The corollary of the 'core' concept is that there are some 'non-core' items, such as vowel reduction, weak forms, word-stress, and stress-timing, which are not taught because they either do not contribute to, or actually harm, intelligibility.

I get a bit tetchy (the words 'old' and 'relic' are increasingly accurate descriptions) about the inadequacy of the models of the spoken language used in ELT, and the LFC is no exception. While they offer good advice for clear pronunciation, they misrepresent speech as a listening experience. I have a (probably naive) hope that we can have a single model of speech which can encompass/ capture both (a) pedagogic advice for maximal clarity and intelligibility in pronunciation on the one hand, and (b) the speeds, reductions, disfluencies and lack of clarity of spontaneous speech for listening on the other hand. I fear the LFC is making my hope rather more distant.

I also feel uncomfortable about the way in which some of the statements about the LFC are formulated: the LFC is on the one hand an open set of proposals 'part of an on-

going empirical description of how non-native speakers achieve mutual intelligibility' (p. 44), but at other times it is presented as a human agent which 'requires' (p. 29, p. 34) a level of compliance, when, as yet, the evidence base is still under development.

The remaining three chapters discuss techniques and materials (Chapter 4), provide a description of how the phonologies of ten languages (including Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish) 'can help or hinder learners of ELF' (Chapter 5), and explain how to plan and assess ELF teaching (Chapter 6). There is an accompanying CD which provides a source for listening and discussion: there are thirty tracks in all, ten tracks of an elicitation paragraph, and twenty tracks of spontaneous speech.

The great thing I got from reading this book is that you can get value from the ELF approach without having to wait for further LFC evidence to emerge. But you should read it and make up your own mind. The ELF movement is important, and you need to have thought about it, and to have developed your own point of view.

Richard Cauldwell has taught in France, Hong Kong, and Japan. He worked for eleven years at the University of Birmingham's English for International Students Unit. He is now freelance author and publisher of electronic materials.

Email: richardcauldwell@me.com

At the talk face 6

Mark Hancock

Sound and spelling puzzles

I suppose that most students study English through the printed word, and spelling influences their pronunciation. However, the relationship between English spelling and pronunciation is not simple. Puzzles such as the ones on the opposite page are designed:

1 - to raise students' awareness of the sound/spelling distinction;

2 - to help students to notice some common spelling patterns.

1 Add a Sound

Ask students to create new words by combining the sounds in the black section with the words in the white section. Make sure that they think of the pronunciation of the words, rather than the spelling. For example, /k/ + *aim* makes *came*. Notice here the two different ways of spelling the sound sequence /eim/.

Key
1 = came, game, climb, care, cake, quite, queues, quarter, clues, glues
2 = worth, weighed, heart, highs, wise, hear, year, we're, hate, wait, your, war, hair, wear
3 = late, rate, leg, rail, lie, rose, rows, lows, rare, lake, rake

2 Change a Sound

In these two puzzles, students have to say what new word will be created if you change the vowel sounds as indicated. For example, if you change the vowel sound in *pan* to /ei/, you get *pain*. Notice that in both puzzles, the first phoneme is a short vowel sound and the second phoneme is the way that vowel letter is pronounced in the alphabet. In doing the puzzle, students should notice some spelling patterns such as the silent final e 'making the letter say its own name' in words like *plane*.

Key (There are other possibilities, but they are less frequent words).
1 = pain, plane, ate/eight, made/maid, main, tape, rain, hate
2 = read, beat, cheek, feel, mean, sweet, wheel, seat, feed, meet, meat, plane

3 Beginnings and Endings

Students make as many words as possible matching the beginnings in the black box with the endings in the white box. They should then classify their words according to the vowel sound. This activity should help them notice some sound-spelling correspondences relating to the letter i.

Key
win = wit, lit, fit, sit, quit, will, mill, fill, wish, fish, fin, tin, sin

wine = light, might, night, fight, tight, sight, wife, life, mice, nice, line, mine, nine, fine, mile, file, tile, wide, tide, side, site, quite

4 Digraph Search

Ask students to find as many words as possible containing the digraphs EA or OU from the letters in the black ovals. Then they should classify the words into the five different possible pronunciations of the digraph below.

Key
EA: 1 = eat, east, heat, sea; 2 = wear, swear, 3 = ear, hear, 4 = earth, 5 = sweat
OU: 1 = rough, touch, tough, 2 = cough, 3 = out, hour, our, 4 = ought, tour, court, 5 = though

5 Mirror Word Crossword

In this crossword, the clues are the words pronounced backwards. In other words, the order of the phonemes is reversed. For example, *Kate's* consists of four phonemes /k/ /ei/ /t/ /s/. If we reverse the order, we get /s/ /t/ /ei/ /k/, which is the pronunciation of *steak*. This puzzle obliges the student to clearly separate in their minds the spellings from sounds.

Key
Across: 3 = steak, 4 = eat, 5 = seen, 7 = speak, 9 = name, 13 = nice, 14 = feel, 15 = time
Down: 1 = dates, 2 = meets, 3 = style, 6 = nine, 8 = knife, 10 = ace, 11 = meet, 12 = late

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Mark Hancock is author of *Pronunciation Games* (CUP), *English Pronunciation in Use Intermediate* (CUP) and co-author of the adult coursebook series *English Result* (OUP).

Email: markhancock@telefonica.net

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