



SPEAK OUT!

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IATEFL PRONUNCIATION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

February 2014 Issue 50

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Notes from the Coordinator

There have been a few times when there has not been much to report from the SIG but this is definitely not the case this time. Pride of place of course goes to the magnificent achievement which is *Speak Out!* 50. Robin has done an amazing job in getting together a stellar cast of the leading figures in our field to collaborate in the wide-ranging and lively content which has been a hallmark of all fifty issues. The opening article by longstanding former coordinator, Michael Vaughan-Reeves, highlights the significance of *Speak Out!* and the debt we owe to Robin.

This is the last paper issue and the first digital one as PronSIG moves, a tad reluctantly, into the electronic age. The fact is that *Speak Out!* will be more accessible as a digital product and it fits into our commitment to making the entire archive available online. If you have looked at the website recently, you will have seen that Laura Patsko has made an index of past issues so this is a plan which is being realized, with Piers' generous assistance, despite some technical issues.

Also on the technology side, we have launched the Facebook page and this has gathered momentum with regular updated content. Our Webmistress Jane was instrumental in setting up the page and another keen member, Louise Guyett, has been very active in supporting it.

On Facebook you will see a picture of Jane with Marina Cantarruti, worthy winner of the second Brita Haycraft Better Spoken English Scholarship. Marina will be speaking on the PronSIG day in Harrogate and I'm really looking forward to her talk as part of a really exciting day. Before that, there is the PCE on Integrated Pronunciation Teaching with contributions from Richard Cauldwell, John Field, Alan Tonkyn, Robin and myself. Details of both can be found on Facebook and the website.

If our IATEFL presence is as successful as the September event in Bath, we are in for a great week. Bath was fully subscribed and we were treated to a wonderful day of input and activities from Ed Hughes, Mark Hancock, Ray Parker and Adrian Underhill. You will have read about the event in *Voices*, thanks again to Louise, and on Facebook. I am grateful to Lucy Palmer from Teachit for organising the event so smoothly.

Face-to-face events are great but in reality most SIG members cannot get to them. For this reason, we have been working on developing online opportunities in conjunction with SPLIS, our counterpart in TESOL. I'm very pleased to say that as this issue goes to press, two webinars have

been organized in January and May with Char Heitman and Luke Harding, respectively. Tamara Jones from TESOL and our discussion list editor Alex have worked really hard to make this happen and it looks like a wonderful direction for both organisations.

Looking back, looking forward, a very appropriate way to approach this landmark issue

Wayne Rimmer

PronSIG Coordinator

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From the editor

Fifty is a special number, and so it was evident to everyone involved in the running of the PronSIG that the 50th issue of *Speak Out!* had to be special too. But how can this best be done? Well that was quite a challenge.

One early idea was to re-publish a selection of the many excellent articles that *Speak Out!* has carried over these past 27 years. However, with the recent PronSIG decision to digitalize all of our back numbers, this option gradually gave way to the idea of inviting previous contributors to submit something special from their own work.

The response from everyone we contacted was humbling. Top names from the world of pronunciation agreed to find time – in many cases stolen from frantic academic agendas – to write specifically for *Speak Out!* 50, or to re-write earlier publications, but either way, to freely share their knowledge and experience with PronSIG members.

Experts from the world of pronunciation, on the one hand, but colleagues from around the world, on the other, since a second aim of this celebratory issue was to offer a global vision of what is a hugely important area of ELT. Naturally, the UK and the US are strongly represented in this vision, but other major centres have lent their voice too, and whilst articles from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand complete the Inner Circle map, contributions from Brunei, Brazil and Poland show us just how alive the Outer Circle is today.

A third aim for this 50th *Speak Out!* was to give us all the chance to reflect on where we are. This requires us to look back, and there is nobody better qualified to help us do that than PronSIG founder, Michael Vaughan-Rees, particularly when supported from across 'The Pond' by Judy Gilbert, a founder member of SPLIS.

Donna Brinton also looks back, but not without an eye to a future that Peter Roach helps us to glimpse with his critical assessment of two major internet pronunciation resources. Reflecting on our current position, Mark Hancock offers us a map of the increasingly complex landscape we inhabit, while Elizabeth Pow and Jonathan Marks share routes both taken and to be taken in the area of teacher training.

But don't think that map in hand, the remaining terrain in this 50th *Speak Out!* will be easy to navigate. Far from it. In fact, prepare yourself to go 'off road' with Tracy Derwing and Murray Munro, David Deterding, Richard Cauldwell, John Levis, John Field, Helen Fraser and Graeme Couper. Again and again their authoritative voices challenge the status quo and ask us to re-think our Poles before continuing our journey and mapping the brave, new world of pronunciation.

Many thanks, then, to everyone who helped to make this 50th issue possible – to authors, to committee members, and to colleagues. The future is here if you dare to read it.

Robin Walker

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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 Editor at <robin@englishglobalcom.com>.

Copy Deadlines

Speak Out! 51 September 2014: May 1st 2014.
Speak Out! 52 February 2015: November 1st 2014.

A brief history of *Speak Out!*

Michael Vaughan-Rees

A meeting to see if people were interested in a SIG concentrating on pronunciation was held in April 1986 at the annual IATEFL conference. On June 25 a dozen of us turned up at International House to discuss various matters, the first being 'the Formal Setting Up Of the Group', as my tattered copy of Brita Haycraft's minutes reminds me. It was agreed that I would continue as 'Secretary for the time being', with Brita assisting 'time permitting'. Jonathan Marks 'expressed an interest in undertaking a variety of tasks', while Adrian Underhill 'took a supportive stance' and Eryl Griffiths 'was also keen on some involvement'. We decided to produce a Newsletter which would be sent to those attending 'as well as to the other 30–40 who had written to [me] from Britain as well as overseas'.

In December, Jonathan and I put together and distributed the first newsletter of what we originally called the PHONOLOGY GROUP, though, starting with the 'Bumper Teaching Tips Issue of August 1994', 'Pronunciation' replaced 'Phonology', which a number of members found off-putting. (I'd originally rejected 'pronunciation' on the grounds that to many people, the word just meant 'vowel and consonant sounds'. Indeed, one early contributor actually referred to 'problems of pronunciation, stress and intonation'.)

Before that, however, for Issue 3 Adam Brown had designed a splendid logo featuring a side view of the articulatory organs from which the words SPEAK OUT! proudly emerged. This became a familiar sight until IATEFL decided that newsletters should be more uniform.

By this time it was becoming easier to find contributions, as people with ideas about the place of pronunciation in TEFL began to realize that there was a friendly forum for their writings. Among these was Bryan Jenner who, in Issue 4 (April 1988), examined what he called the 'common core' of pronunciation teaching, an attempt to determine 'what all native speakers of all varieties have in common which enables them to communicate effectively with native speakers of varieties other than their own'. Barbara Bradford, in Issue 6 (July 1990), went on to draw up two versions of the 'essential ingredients' of a pronunciation programme, one for a multi-lingual class, the other for a group of Japanese speakers.

In these and later attempts to decide what a pronunciation syllabus should contain, two things seemed to be happening. On the one hand we were pushing for the *suprasegmentals* to be accorded their due rights; on the other we were attempting to *simplify* what needed to be

taught – couldn't the apparent complexities of the intonation system be reduced to a basic binary choice, for example? And what about vowel quantity rather than quality?

Meanwhile, we were gradually working out ways in which we could incorporate topics of interest to other groups. As early as Issue 3 (April 1988) Jonathan Marks and Lindsay Ross were looking at the role of pronunciation on initial teacher training courses; in Issue 4 (January 1989) Don Porter and I contributed pieces on the topic of pronunciation testing; Issue 5 (August 1989) included a joint piece by Jonathan and Vic Richardson on learner independence; Gloria Gaston Dwyer (of Rutgers University, New Jersey) sent us 'News from the USA' for Issue 6 (July 1990); and Issue 7 (December 1990) featured an article called 'Talking Business' in which my Eurocentres colleague Richard Spoor (then coordinator of the Business English group) and I wrote about our contention that, on special courses, too much attention was paid to what was said rather than how it was said.

By our fifth anniversary we had got into the habit of producing two substantial issues a year: typically, a mixture of various articles and reviews in the winter and a single-topic issue in the summer, the latter often in co-operation with another group or groups. Table 1 shows the single-topic issues produced under my editorship (with guest editors duly acknowledged).

As early as Issue 3 (April 1988) Jonathan and I decided that our readers should also become listeners when necessary, sending out a cassette tape (eventually a CD) to illustrate certain contributions. Three years later the 90-minute tape accompanying *Rhymes and Rhythm* was an essential element of the package. The then Chair, Alan Maley, was so supportive of the project that IATEFL co-financed the production of 2,000 packages, all of which sold, giving both parties a hefty profit. A tape also accompanied the equally profitable *Changes in Pronunciation* (Issue 18), produced to celebrate our 10th anniversary with major contributions from Barbara Bradford, Richard Cauldwell & Martin Hewings, David Crystal, Bryan Jenner, Jennifer Jenkins, Peter Roach and David Rosewarne.

At this stage we were well enough known to attract contributors from far and wide, with an increasing international presence. The *Technology* issue introduced readers to the work of the indispensable Judy Gilbert, who forged a link with TESOL leading to the joint session at Long Beach three years later and the *Americas* issue in 2000. It also made us familiar with the work of Richard Cauldwell who, in his article 'Of streams and bricks: new ways of presenting the spoken language to learners', showed us how to demonstrate what actually happened in the stream of speech.

By the mid-90s, then, we were happily investigating how to integrate pronunciation into mainstream teaching and finding new ways of understanding just what native speakers do when they speak. Which is when Jennifer

Jenkins (in the *David Brazil* issue) came along and initiated a massive rethink by adapting Jenner's 'common core' for a world in which English was no longer the private domain of native speakers.

Issue	Date	Title
8	08/91	Rhymes and Rhythm.
10	08/92	The Technology of pronunciation teaching: from low to high tech.
12	08/93	Coping with the pronunciation problems of specific L1s. (ed. Jonathan Marks)
14	08/94	The Bumper Teaching Tips issue.
16	08/95	Proceedings of the TESOL-IATEFL Pre-Convention Institute held at Long Beach, Cal on 28 March 1995. (ed. MVR & Judy Gilbert)
17	01/96	The David Brazil Memorial issue.
18	08/96	Changes in pronunciation. (10 th anniversary celebration issue)
20	08/97	Testing Pronunciation.
22	07/98	Alternative Approaches to Pronunciation Teaching. (ed. Bryan Jenner)
24	08/09	Pronunciation in Teacher Training. (ed. Barbara Seidlhofer)
26	08/00	The Americas. (General editor. Bryan Jenner; editor, South and Central America, Camilla Dixo-Lieff; editor, North America, Judy Gilbert)
–	06/02	Talking Computers. (ed. Dede Teeler)
32	11/04	Independently Speaking.
34	01/06	Intonation: Ways and Meanings. (ed. Paul Tench) (Issue with CD)
36	12/06	Changes in pronunciation standards. (20 th anniversary celebration issue)
38	12/07	From Poland with Phon. (ed. Magdalena Wrembel, with help from Jonathan Marks)

Table 1. Single-topic issues of *Speak Out!*

One effect of this new approach was that people began to reassess the role and importance of the vast majority of teachers in the world who are not native speakers. At a conference in Vienna in 1996 the much-missed Camilla Dixo-Lieff proclaimed that 'we [NNS teachers] come with an intuition. Let us take advantage of that.' Someone who agrees is the current editor, Robin Walker. Writing in Issue 28 (Sep 2001) he stated that 'until now it was too readily assumed that native speakers were [good instructors of the pronunciation of English] because of the mere fact of being native speakers.' He went on to point out that NNS teachers are 'only too aware of the psychological difficulties in learning a second language pronunciation, and so potentially have greater empathy with their learners and problems [and] often have first-hand experience as to what is or is not intelligible to other users of English, be these L1 or L2 users'.

This article, 'Pronunciation priorities, the Lingua Franca Core, and monolingual groups', contained the thinking which led to Robin's acclaimed "Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca", (OUP 2010) just as the reaction to Jennifer Jenkins' 1996 article encouraged her to make it into a book, as she was kind enough to tell me.

"Twenty years hard labour" is how I headed the editorial of Issue 36, which celebrated 20 years of the IATEFL PronSIG. Hard it may have been, working as co-ordinator as well as editor for most of that time; but looking back, I feel proud to have been able to spot new trends and new talent, and I am pleased that the group and what is, surely, much more than a simple 'Newsletter', are both in the safest of hands.

Michael Vaughan-Rees has taught EFL and Linguistics/Phonetics at all levels, most recently as Guest Lecturer at the Free University, Berlin. He is probably best known for "Rhymes and Rhythm", recently republished by Garnet Education, and is currently working on an area of language which has nothing to do with pronunciation: the importance of Latin and Greek elements in formal English.

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Memories and conclusions from across the Pond

Judy B. Gilbert

I was delighted to be invited to contribute to this major anniversary of *Speak Out!*, a newsletter that has been such a resource for me, as well as so many others. Actually, I don't remember how I discovered the PronSIG and came to know founder Michael Vaughan-Rees from afar. Since then I've been able to attend two PronSIG meetings and several lunches at Michael's house to meet other PronSIG members.

In 1994 I showed the newsletter to a TESOL group of pronunciation people and told them about the SIG. The reaction was immediate: 'Why don't WE have such a group?'. So we started collecting names on petitions at every TESOL and sub-TESOL meeting we attended. In 1995, Michael and I, representing the PronSIG and our hoped-for TESOL version, put on a well-attended pre-convention institute at TESOL in Long Beach. Then Michael and Jane came to visit us in San Francisco. It was a celebratory time, made especially wonderful because while here they got the news they were hoping for – that their bid for the cottage in Aylesbury had been successful. I've since visited the cottage which they've made into a magical place. Almost Beatrix Potter, and certainly wonderfully historical, as it originally was the gate house for Chequers. A great treat to visit.

The TESOL efforts took 3 years, because there was a lot of resistance to our forming such a Section (to share budget and slots on the yearly program). Various PronSIG people helped us with letter-writing to officers of the other TESOL Interest Sections, putting forth various arguments for the value of teaching Pronunciation. It seems odd to normal people that this should be a hard sell, but it was. We were given official status in 1998 and have our own newsletter, but I still think that *Speak Out!* continues to be the premier international source of information about teaching pronunciation.

Meanwhile, what have I been learning from *Speak Out!*, from colleagues, and from teacher feedback all these years? Here are a few items I now think teachers should think about:

1. Students (and many teachers) do not really understand that the spoken language is different from the written language. I had an odd indication of this one time when I was invited to speak about English as a second or foreign language to a regular English class at a local college. After I finished, the professor thanked me and

said that my comments on contractions were interesting, but added "As for me, I don't ever use contractions." The class started to giggle, having recognized that she had, indeed, used a contraction. I think the point is that she didn't realize that it was automatic in normal speech. This kind of difference between the spoken and written language is a great source of confusion by learners trying to understand spoken English.

2. The same people do not know consciously how their own language signals which word is most important; they assume all languages must work the same, 'natural' way. Here are 3 examples of how different languages signal the most important words:

Japanese (post-word particle *-ga*)

Kore-ga watashino kaban-desu.
(**THIS** is my bag.)

Spanish (grammatical construction: mainly word order)

Al contrario, la culpa la tiene él.
(No, it's **HIS** fault.)

French (grammatical construction: mainly word order)

C'est mon stylo à moi!
(It's **MY** pen!)

3. Students do not understand how suprasegmental / prosodic signals can change the way words and segmentals (individual sounds) sound in real speech. We do not actually speak like books. The pressure of making the emphasis in a sentence very clear through 'music signals' pushes some words to be smaller and some sounds to change. The use of **contrast** works by reducing, or 'slurring' some parts in order to highlight the important words. This is done mostly by rhythm and melody, and affects all of the sounds in the sentence. THIS IS AUTOMATIC. Therefore, if learners are taught how English relies on this contrast, they will not only be more intelligible, but will have better listening comprehension. Here is a graphic to show how vowels are changed by the need to make stress / emphasis clear (taken from Gilbert, *Clear Speech From the Start: Pronunciation and Listening Comprehension in North American English*, CUP 2012).

Strong	Regular	Weak
		
a i o u	a e i o u	ə ə ə ə
Very easy to hear	Easy to hear	Hard to hear

4. For various reasons, pronunciation has been neglected for 50 years, so teachers have little confidence in how to teach it. *Speak Out!* 9 (December, 1991) published a report by Barbara Bradford and Joanne Kenworthy. They had informally surveyed a number of British ESL/EFL teachers, asking them how they felt about their training for teaching pronunciation, and the result could be summed up as “not good”. Little has changed.

A couple of months ago I took two grandchildren to my very favourite bookstore, Waterstone’s on Piccadilly. They studied the children’s section while I went to see what was new in the English as a Foreign Language Department. It was quite discouraging to see that the pronunciation sources were limited to *Ship or Sheep and Tree or Three*. This was after the publication of all sorts of fine modern pronunciation learning books by PronSIG folks, (Bradford, Cauldwell, Dalton & Seidhofer, Hancock, Hewings, Kenworthy, Marks, Roach, Underhill, Vaughan-Rees and so on). The nice clerk said to my sad comment, ‘It’s the market.’ Oh sigh.

I reported on the loss of attention to pronunciation for the last 50 years, in *SO!* 43 under the title “Pronunciation as Orphan: What can be done?”. It was clear that not only had teacher training been neglecting the subject for various historical reasons, but that any relevant research was only published in journals not typically accessible to language teachers (or not written in intelligible language). I also reported that, even more troublesome, pronunciation has largely been left out of course books. So teachers have been left mostly on their own, and thus made uneasy about doing anything about pronunciation in their classes. Occasional efforts to use minimal pair drill tend to produce few lasting results, and worse still, tend to make a class doubt this use of their limited time. This naturally discourages teachers. Fortunately, the situation is gradually changing with new approaches making the teaching of pronunciation a more successful endeavour.

5. The most commonly feared part of pronunciation teaching is intonation. I think that’s because the standard analyses of intonation have basically been too complicated to teach (Halliday et al). Brazil was more on target, in my opinion, but the explanation was meant for fairly high-level English learners.

Since my concern has always been to make the contrastive use of musical signals (suprasegmentals / prosody) easy to understand, I have suggested the use of the following simple graphic image to explain the different levels of speech that create the highlighting of the peak of information, sometimes referred to as the nucleus. This pyramid was shown in my *SO!* 2010 article, as part of the answer to the question: What can be done? It is from *Clear Speech: Pronunciation and Listening Comprehension in North American English*, (2012, CUP) and is meant to show that all of these levels work together. Since we cannot teach all the aspects at once, I suggest teaching a useful template

sentence (e.g. How do you spell ‘easy?’) by choral repetition so that it can be learned ‘like a little song’. Then, when it is absorbed into long-term memory, the individual aspects can be addressed – e.g. why ‘do you’ becomes one syllable, or why the pitch changes on ‘ea’ and the vowel is extra clear and typically lengthened, or how attention is called to the focus/main word. The ‘ea’ vowel sound is the peak of information.



6. Where will pronunciation instruction be in the future? I’m pretty confident that the importance of intonation / suprasegmentals will be much better understood by the whole profession, including researchers and coursebook planners. Also, it seems likely that classroom instruction will be greatly enhanced by internet applications, games, etc. This is in its infancy at the moment, and most of the offerings seem to be long on sales gimmicks and technical pyrotechnics, but short on real understanding of what can be taught usefully in this way. There are glimmers of hope as computer science is now beginning to be partnered with pedagogically savvy people. That combination will make a real difference and, I believe end the long neglect of this crucial element of language learning.

Thanks to everybody in PronSIG who has contributed to my thinking as I have searched for simplicity and effectiveness in the presentation of pronunciation.

JUDY B. GILBERT is the author of *Clear Speech from the Start*, (2nd edition) and *Clear Speech*, (4th edition), both from Cambridge University Press, 2012, and co-author (with Pamela Rogerson) of *Speaking Clearly*, also from Cambridge University Press, 1990.

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A map of pronunciation teaching

by Mark Hancock

Introduction

There is an Indian parable in which a number of blind men set out to discover what an elephant is like. Each feels a different part of the animal and comes away with an entirely different impression of its form. For example, the one who touches the trunk thinks its like a snake; the one who touches its tusk thinks it's all hard and bony. I sometimes feel something similar happens in our field of pronunciation teaching. How can accent and identity, jazz chants and discourse intonation possibly be part of the same animal? It's easy to become blind to the whole.

But is this a problem? After all, to make any important advances in any field, we have to specialize. My answer is that, while it may not be a problem for the specialist, it *is* for the teacher. The teacher must weigh up all the different angles and approaches which compete for attention and make considered, pragmatic choices. The teacher needs to see the whole elephant at once, so to speak, or, to change the metaphor, the teacher needs a bird's-eye view of the whole territory – a map. I have attempted to create such a map, and in this article, I will present and explain it. But first, let us look at some potential problems resulting from working without a view of the big picture.

What's the problem?

Here are three examples of problematic classroom scenarios which will serve as a starting point.

Problem 1: I had been studying an aspect of phonology and had become very excited by it. I decide to apply it directly in my pronunciation class, with disappointing results. It turns out that, while the theory was very elegant, it proved impossible to explain to the students, and moreover, they clearly regarded it as superfluous to their needs.

Problem 2: I found a pronunciation game which looked great fun and I really wanted to try it out in the classroom. Unfortunately, I didn't study the pronunciation point of the game before the lesson, and when the students started asking about apparent exceptions to the rule, I had to start improvising explanations of dubious accuracy. A whole lesson was taken up on what, at the end of the day, was only a minor pronunciation point.

Problem 3: Over time, I had become convinced by certain articles and conference presentations that the aims of pronunciation teaching, as had traditionally been described before, were misguided. I wanted to apply the insight to my teaching. Unfortunately, my students were confused because I didn't seem to be giving them any clear guidelines as to what they were supposed to be aiming at. Moreover, my lessons were rather unstructured. without much variety of task type.

In each of the scenarios above, the problem is not what I did, but what I didn't do. There can surely be nothing wrong with studying an aspect of phonology in detail, searching out enjoyable classroom material, or refreshing one's outlook through articles and at conferences. But what I didn't do was *balance* these with other considerations prior to classroom application. This question of balance is the first issue the map will address, and it will do so by dividing the territory into three regions.

A question of balance

Let's assume that we aim to create pronunciation classes which are accurate, effective and useful. Those three adjectives, *accurate*, *effective* and *useful*, will be handy in our first marking out of the territory:

- *Accurate* relates to the content of what we are teaching – the phonology; the answer to the question *What are we teaching?*
- *Effective* relates to the process of teaching/learning – the pedagogy; the answer to the question *How are we teaching it?*
- *Useful* relates to the educational aims – the syllabus; the answer to the question *Why are we teaching it?*

The map will be marked out into three principal regions accordingly, and these will be called *What*, *How* and *Why*. All three regions are essential – any pronunciation teacher will have to have a theory for each area; an answer for each of the three questions. These may be something the teacher has formulated explicitly. However, they may equally well be implicit and unexamined – a default position that the teacher is unaware of. For example, a teacher may take it as given that the objective is for learners to acquire native-like pronunciation, without explicitly selecting this as an objective or considering any alternatives. A map may help to fix this neglect of the *Why* Region, if only by reminding us that it exists. Let us review the three problems I introduced above in this light.

What's the solution?

Returning to the three problems described above, we can now propose three potential solutions, expressed in terms of the regions of the map:

Accent and intelligibility: cracking the conundrum

Tracey M. Derwing and Murray J. Munro

Second language (L2) ‘accent’ comprises the noticeable differences between L2 users’ speech and a local language variety. No accent is inherently better than any other. However, L2 accent has been blamed for miscommunication, used as a cover-up for racism and other forms of discrimination, and even viewed as a disorder needing remediation. Our goal in this paper is to discuss research findings that help us sort through the misconceptions about L2 accent and clarify its relevance to pronunciation teaching. Because we work in Canada, an immigrant-receiving country, most of our research is conducted in an ESL context; some of our findings are not bound by context, but others may be.

Numerous studies have documented people’s remarkable ability to detect speakers from different L1 backgrounds. For example, Flege (1984) found that listeners distinguished native English from French accented speakers when he played them 30 ms speech samples. Our own work (Munro, Derwing & Burgess, 2010) shows that listeners can even detect an L2 accent in backwards speech. Success rates are above chance even for a single word played backwards, despite the absence of segmental or suprasegmental information (see Figure 1). In such cases, listeners may rely on differences in voice quality.

Another surprising research outcome is that listeners can distinguish foreign-accented speech from native-produced samples in languages they do not even speak (Major, 2007). Taken together, these studies show that accent is exceptionally salient and that people are skilful at detecting linguistic ‘outsiders’ by their speech. However, the fact that accents are easily detectable does not mean that communication problems are inevitable. Having an accent doesn’t *necessarily* impinge on communication, though sometimes it does.

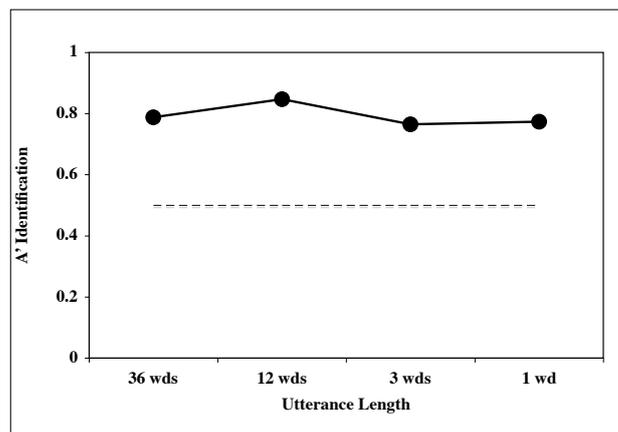


Figure 1. Foreign accent detection in backwards speech on an A' scale in which '1' is a perfect detection rate. The dotted line indicates chance performance (Munro, Derwing & Burgess, 2010)

Definitions

Like many other researchers, we have operationalized constructs pertaining to L2 speech in terms of listeners’ perceptions. *Accentedness* is the result of differences in speech patterns compared to a local variety and can be assessed through listeners’ ratings on a Likert scale. We define *comprehensibility* as listeners’ perceptions of how easy or difficult it is to understand speech. This dimension is a rating of difficulty and not a measure of how much is understood.

Listeners, native or non-native, generally agree with each other strongly on who has a heavy accent and who doesn’t, and who is easy to understand and who isn’t (Derwing & Munro, 2013). Reliability is typically high, with intraclass correlations of above .9. Moreover, when listeners evaluate multiple speakers from a single L1 background at any one time, ratings are not influenced by differential bias against particular accents. From our perspective, listeners’ judgments are the only meaningful window into accentedness and comprehensibility and thus comprise the gold standard measure; what listeners perceive is ultimately what matters most. In numerous studies using a wide range of speech samples, different L1s, and different listeners, we have obtained robust, replicable findings. Despite certain limitations, rating scales are a reliable approach to assessing accentedness and comprehensibility.

Intelligibility, our third, and in some ways, most important construct, is distinct from the other two. Broadly defined, it is the degree of a listener’s actual comprehension of an utterance. To evaluate it, we have presented listeners with recorded L2 speech and counted the percentage of words they transcribed correctly; in other studies, we’ve asked them to indicate whether L2 sentences are true or false. We have also had listeners answer comprehension questions and write summaries to determine how well they actually

Is English really crazy? Insights into grapheme/phoneme correspondence

Donna M. Brinton

The British playwright George Bernard Shaw once claimed that the word *fish* could just as well be written *ghoti*: **gh** as in *tough*, **o** as in *women*, and **ti** as in *nation*. Shaw's quip has promoted the view that English spelling is nonsensical or at best highly arbitrary. What Shaw is alluding to, of course, is the lack of a direct symbol-to-sound (or grapheme/phoneme) correspondence in English, a characteristic that distinguishes English from languages such as German, Spanish, and Finnish, where there is a more transparent correspondence.

English today remains notoriously inconsistent in its spelling; a given phoneme is often represented by a variety of spellings. The consonant /ʃ/, for example, has fourteen possible spellings (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010): *shoe*, *sugar*, *issue*, *mansion*, *mission*, *nation*, *suspicion*, *ocean*, *nauseous*, *conscIOUS*, *chaperon*, *schist*, *fuchsia*, and *pshaw*. The opposite also holds true – i.e., a grapheme can represent numerous phonemes. For example, the letter **a** can represent /æ/ in *cat*, /ɛ/ in *many*, /ɔ/ in *call*, and /ɑ/ in *father*, while the grapheme combination **gh** can represent /g/ in *ghost*, /f/ in *enough*, /p/ in *hiccough*, and be silent in *high*.

As pronunciation practitioners, we can only wish that English spelling were more logical and easy to teach. However, there *is* an underlying logic that is firmly rooted in the history of the language; thus English spelling is *not*, as popular belief might have it, crazy. In this article, I provide some explanations for the origins of English spelling that can hopefully assist us in the task of providing more coherent explanations to our second language (L2) learners.¹

¹ An earlier version of this paper entitled 'English Spelling: Is there any Rhyme or Reason to it?' appeared in 1997 in the *Journal of Learning and Evaluation*, 31, 88–97.

Historical reasons underlying the irregularity of English spelling

According to Crystal (2003), the irregularity of English spelling can be traced to its long and varied process of development, beginning with Christian missionaries who (not altogether successfully) used the existing 23-letter Latin alphabet to transcribe the 35 phonemes of Old English. The spelling system subsequently underwent far-reaching changes as a result of the Norman Conquest, during which Old English spellings such as *cw* (as in *cwic* 'quick' or *cwen* 'queen') were replaced by *qu*.² Only after the introduction of the printing press in the late 1400s did English spelling begin to stabilize; however, by that time its spelling already represented a complete amalgam of Old English and French, with numerous other irregularities introduced by classical scholars (who sought to change the spelling of English words of Greek or Latin origin to more clearly demonstrate their origin) and by early printers (who tended to impose their own idiosyncratic spelling conventions).

Attempts to reform the American English spelling system

Prior to the publication of Noah Webster's first dictionary in the Americas, spelling in the New Colonies was erratic at best. In a frequently cited example, Lewis and Clark, in their diaries documenting the 1804–1806 Corps of Discovery Expedition, used over 26 variants to spell the word *mosquito* (an insect that plagued the expedition), including *mesquetoe*, *mesquetor*, *misqutr*, and *musquetor*. Webster began applying his efforts to reforming the English spelling system with the goal of simplifying English spelling, ridding the language of its many archaic spellings, creating a system with a more transparent grapheme/phoneme correspondence, and in general distinguishing American spelling from its British counterpart. The end product of his efforts was the *Spelling-Book*, published in 1783, which led to the subsequent publication of his *American Dictionary of the English Language* in 1828 (Launsbach, 2013). Today, the revised Webster's dictionary is still the standard spelling reference used throughout the U.S.

Webster's attempt to revolutionize American spelling was only partially successful, since many of the new American citizens resisted his suggestions. Webster did, however, succeed in implementing the following changes, most of which today differentiate American spelling from the British version (Brinton & Arnovick, 2011; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010):

² Other examples are the replacement of **gh** for **h**, **ch** for **c**, and **ou** for **u** (Crystal, 2003).

Consonant cluster simplification and intelligibility

David Deterding

It is well-known that most speakers of English tend to simplify some word-final consonant clusters. Schreier (2005: 27) suggests that consonant cluster reduction is a shared property of all varieties of spoken English, and furthermore that it is a process of simplification which characterises the historical development of the language.

Cruttenden (2008: 303–304) offers a long list of phrases in which speakers of RP British English tend to omit the /t/ or /d/ at the end of a word when the next word begins with a consonant, including *first light, soft centres, pushed them, mashed potatoes, old man, bold face, moved back* and *loved flowers*; and Deterding (2006a) shows that broadcasters on the BBC World Service similarly often omit word-final /t/ and /d/ in phrases such as *last night, first morning, most people, looked back* and *trapped by a fire*. Note that the omission of the /t/ or /d/ occurs whether it is part of the root word (e.g. *first light, bold face*) or it constitutes an -ed suffix (e.g. *pushed them, loved flowers*).

Despite this evidence that it is normal to omit final /t/ and /d/ under some circumstances, teachers of pronunciation often focus on word-final consonant clusters, insisting that retention of all the underlying sounds is essential for intelligibility, especially if the sound represents a past-tense suffix; and Deterding (2006b) reports that speakers in China are reluctant to omit word-final sounds, even when it is demonstrated to them that such omission routinely occurs in native speech, as they are convinced that it represents lazy pronunciation.

So, the question arises: how important is the retention of word-final /t/ and /d/ in consonant clusters for maintaining intelligibility? Should learners of English be encouraged to produce these sounds even in cases in which native speakers omit them? Jenkins (2000) argues that retention of all the sounds in word-final consonant clusters is not important for speakers of English who are using the language in an international setting, and she excludes final consonant clusters from the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), the features of pronunciation that she suggests are essential for maintaining international intelligibility. However, Seidlhofer (2011) contends that speakers of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) should not be bound by the same rules as native speakers of English, so it could be argued that if

retention of all the sounds in word-final consonant clusters enhances intelligibility for listeners around the world, then learners of English might be discouraged from omitting any of the sounds.

Here I will consider research that investigates misunderstandings in conversations between a range of ELF speakers. Classifying the speakers according to the Three Circles model proposed by Kachru (1985), they come from Outer-Circle places like Brunei, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Nigeria as well as Expanding-Circle places such as Indonesia, Taiwan and Laos, and my investigation attempts to determine what features of pronunciation, grammar and word usage cause misunderstandings to occur. Here I will analyse the impact of the omission of /t/ and /d/ from the end of word-final consonant clusters. A full report of the research can be found in Deterding (2013).

Data

Recordings were made of interactions between two participants. Nine people were involved, five females and four males. Here I refer to them using F or M to indicate their gender and a two-letter code for their country of origin. The five females are from Brunei (FBr), China (FCh), Japan (FJp), Malaysia (FMa) and Taiwan (FTw), and the four males are from Hong Kong (MHk), Indonesia (MIn), Laos (MLs) and Nigeria (MNg). At the time of the recording, most of the speakers were between 22 and 28 years old, though MLs was 34, both FTw and FHk were 56, and MIn was 58.

There are nine recordings, totalling about six and a half hours. The interactions took place in a classroom or a quiet office at the University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD). Each recording lasted between 20 minutes and one hour. Full details of the data can be found in Deterding (2013: 21–23).

Analysis

All the conversations were fully transcribed. In all cases, the participants gave invaluable help in clarifying what they had said and also what they had not understood, and from this feedback I can identify a wide range of incidences of misunderstanding that would not have emerged by simply listening to the data. In total, I collated 183 tokens of misunderstanding, and they are made available in the CMACE corpus on-line at:

<http://www.ubd.edu.bn/academic/faculty/FASS/research/CMACE/home/index.html>

After collecting these 183 tokens of misunderstanding, I tried to determine what had caused each one. In many cases, more than one factor can be identified, so these tokens are cross-classified. Five broad classes were identified: pronunciation, lexis, grammar, code-switching and miscellaneous, and the number of tokens classified under each category is shown in Table 1. (The percentages add up to more than 100% because of cross-classification.)

An impertinent question: what happens in spontaneous speech?

Richard Cauldwell

In the early 1990s at the University of Birmingham I had the privilege of studying both with David Brazil and with the many visiting scholars who wanted to work on Discourse Intonation. David would often lead small seminars in which we would work on each other's transcriptions, and talk about our research. He was a great teacher, and a beautifully tactful person when people asked him difficult or impertinent questions. Below, I shall relate my experience of asking an impertinent question which arose from my experience of transcribing a lot of spontaneous speech. But before that, a reminder and a couple of definitions.

Reminder: Discourse Intonation and tones

Discourse Intonation (DI) holds that intonational meanings are discursual, not grammatical nor attitudinal. For DI, English intonation has five tones: two rising tones, two falling tones and an 'opt-out' level tone. The view is that if a speaker chooses a falling tone, he is projecting the contents of the tone unit in which it occurs as 'news' for the hearer – it is a **proclaiming** tone. On the other hand, a choice of rising tone projects the contents of the tone unit as part of the 'shared world' of both the speaker and hearer – it is a **referring** tone.

Definitions: Thick and thin meanings

The term 'thick meaning' refers to a concrete specific meaning, which people can readily identify as being communicated in speech – meanings such as 'surprise' or 'anger'. In contrast the term 'thin meaning' refers to meanings which are more abstract, less easily identified – meanings such as 'proclaiming' and 'referring'. It seems to me that if tones do indeed carry meanings around with them wherever they go (i.e. they mean 'x' on every occurrence of the tone) then it is likely that those meanings are going to be thin, and not thick meanings. And this is what made DI's approach attractive to me, the meanings it ascribed to tones seemed to me insightful and plausible because of the very fact that they were thin.

An uncomfortable feeling

Nevertheless, after doing a lot of transcription of different types of speech, I developed the uncomfortable feeling that even DI's meanings were too thick. In particular, this statement from Brazil (1985/1997: 67) worried me (I will refer to it below as 'Quote 1') '...the meaning increment that any one of the five tones contributes is the same regardless of the environment.'

The inconveniences of spontaneous speech

Quote 1 worried me because of the sheer number of tones in the recordings of all the types of speech (poetry, interview, spontaneous speech) that I was transcribing. They occur in huge numbers and with a wide range of realisations. Occasionally they occur as clear, steep-contoured shapes, but most often they occur in shallow-contoured versions, which only trained transcribers can hear. And then there will be a large number of indeterminate tones, where even expert transcribers find it difficult to agree what tone was present.

Tones also occur in places which are very inconvenient for the purposes of explanation. For example, if you hold a thick-meaning view of tones and believe that falling tones signal 'completion', there is the inconvenient truth that there are far more occurrences of falling tone than there are of 'points of completion'. Or if you hold that rising tones mean 'uncertainty', there are far more rising tones than there are 'moments of uncertainty'. So the number of occurrences of a tone outweigh (hugely) the number of occurrences of the meanings they are supposed to convey. There are simply too many tones in too many different places for the meaning of a tone to apply to every instance on which it occurs.

Putting the question

So one day I plucked up courage and put the question to David – saying (something like) 'Do you really think that the proclaiming/referring meanings apply on every instance of a tone?' He smiled and licked his lips and said (brilliantly manoeuvring my question into a form he was happy to answer), 'Hmm, yes, I think the question you meant to ask was this: "Why is there this inconsistency in Discourse Intonation between the system of prominence – in which the meanings are all contextual – and the system of tone, in which the meanings are general and are held to apply in all instances?"'

He went on: 'What tones really mean is to be found in the immediate context of interaction: a falling tone means *not what a rising tone would have meant in this context* and a rising tone means *not what a falling tone would have meant in this context*. In other words tones take their meaning from the context in which they occur – they are all local, there are no general meanings. And very often, contextual circumstances are such that it does not matter which tone you use. The reason for my presenting the 'proclaiming' and

New and given information in English: conflicting pedagogical models

John Levis

Intonation is often asserted to be an important pedagogical target in teaching English pronunciation. It is included as a topic in most multi-topic pronunciation textbooks, and it has even been the sole focus of others, such as Bradford (1988) and Brazil (1994). Intonation is also a relatively complex topic in English, since pitch has multiple important forms and functions. Using Halliday's (1967) terminology for the most part, intonation's forms include at least key (pitch range), tonality (division of utterances into tone units), tonicity (prominent syllables), and tone (pitch movement), as in the example in (1).

- (1) Where do I log OUT? ↘ // Oh, HERE it is. ↘ //
↑ Now, can you help me take a SCREENshot? ↗ //

Pitch range is evident in a variety of contexts, but in (1) it may be marked as higher initial pitch at a topic change in the word Now. The tonic is a combination of pitch and length on particular words or syllables (marked above with CAPS). Pitch movement continues on from the focused syllable to the end of the utterance. In the British tradition, the tone includes the tonic and following pitch movement. In the American tradition, the tonic and following pitch movement are separate sources of meaning (see also Ladd, 1996). Pitch movement is typically rising, falling, level, or combinations of falling and rising. In (1), possible pitch movements are marked with arrows.

Intonation's proposed functions also show up in teaching materials for learners of English. One of the most commonly taught functions is how intonation signals whether something should be understood as new or given (old) information. The paper will discuss two pedagogical models of new and given information. One model says that the tonic syllable (or a lack of a tonic) signals new (or given) information. The second model says that new and given information are signalled by the tones, and especially the direction of the final pitch movement.

The paper will start with a brief overview of intonation's role in signalling information structure, and how information

structure has both syntactic and phonological characteristics. Then it will present the two ways of addressing information structure in pronunciation textbooks. Finally, the paper will argue that deciding which of these models is more accurate and teachable cannot be done on the basis of pronunciation alone, but that we need an independent description of information structure to help us determine whether an appeal to tonic syllables or to tones is more likely to help students and teachers present this function of intonation.

New and given information

The role of intonation in marking information structure in English was strongly influenced by the work of Halliday (1967). While Halliday's formal description of intonation was similar to others, such as O'Connor and Arnold (1963), his description of intonation's functions departed significantly from the attitudinal or affective analyses that were commonly attributed to intonation. Specifically, he argued that intonation signalled whether an item in speech was to be interpreted as 'given' or 'new'. According to Brown (1982), Halliday's analysis said that 'the speaker must include in every tone group a chunk of new information, which will be phonologically marked by the tonic pitch movement' (p. 67). This decision to mark information as given or new was determined by the speaker, not the text, an assertion supported by Bolinger (1972), who said one must be a mind-reader to predict what words a speaker will accent.

Intonation's role in marking information structure is closely connected to the constraints on producing spoken language in real time. Chafe (1992) talks about information structure in speech being subject to two constraints: the 'one-idea-at-a-time' constraint and the 'light-subject' constraint' (p. 268). The first constraint suggests that in normal spoken language, speakers include no more than one idea that is new, although they are likely to include other information that is either given or accessible. The second constraint restricts the subject of the spoken sentence to information that is not new. This is important from a teaching point of view because intonation's role in signalling information structure is most clearly seen in spontaneous spoken language. As Chafe (1992) discusses in his analysis of a fundraising letter, the constraints are less obvious in written language, with its greater lexical density.

Can information structure be described apart from intonation, or is it fundamentally a phonological feature of English? Brown (1982) asserted that information structure was fundamentally a phonological category in Halliday's system 'with an auxiliary but never overriding syntactic contribution' (p. 67). This is not an undisputed view, however. Büring (2005) stated that it is a widely held view that 'information structure is an aspect of syntactic representation, which interfaces with the phonological form by rules of IS [information structure] interpretation', even though in English intonation 'is the primary mode of IS realization' (p. 1). However, it is possible to discuss information structure from a strictly syntactic perspective.

What goes in: interfaces between listening and pronunciation

John Field

Over the past 27 years, *Speak Out!* has contributed enormously to our field by way of informed comment and stimulating ideas on the teaching of English pronunciation. The 50th issue is an appropriate milestone at which to look back at the journey travelled and review how far we have come; but it also offers the opportunity of drawing attention to one or two features of the landscape that we may have missed along the way.

This article briefly reviews how attitudes have changed to the role of pronunciation in the acquisition of L2 listening skills. It then goes on to consider the role of listening in pronunciation practice, and identifies a large elephant that remains obstinately in the pronunciation teacher's room: precisely what is it that we expect learners to retain in their minds and draw upon when we teach them to recognise the sound system of a second language?

Pronunciation in listening instruction

Until quite late in the 1990s, there was a received idea that listening was about 'comprehension' (i.e. extracting meaning from a passage), and that consequently the nuts and bolts of the skill in terms of recognising the sounds, words and recurrent phrases of the language were not a major concern. Why bother about problems of receptive pronunciation in listening practice when any misunderstanding at word level could be resolved by drawing upon 'context'? This assumption paralleled a similar argument that viewed reading as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' (Goodman, 1967) where accurate word recognition did not play a major role. It is demonstrably false because:

a) Many errors of understanding in listening originate in misperceptions at the level of the word. So 'comprehension' cannot exist independently of perception.

b) If the listener recognises very little in the speech to which he/she is exposed, where does the 'context' come from that is supposed to save the day?

c) Trying to puzzle out what a speaker is saying by using 'context' is quite demanding in cognitive terms. By contrast, the ability to recognise a spoken word quickly and accurately becomes automatic with time and with exposure to the L2 - and so makes few demands upon expert listeners and allows them to focus on the wider message being put across.

These arguments (for more details, see Field 1998, 2003) seem at last to have prevailed. Materials such as those produced by Richard Cauldwell and Sheila Thorn have demonstrated the value of supplementing longer comprehension sessions with small-scale listening tasks which target perceptual features that cause problems of decoding for the listener. The tasks help learners to identify words that have been reduced in prominence or that are not articulated as precisely as they would be in their citation forms due to assimilation, elision, resyllabification etc.

This new emphasis on perception sits well with a general growth of interest in what goes on in the mind of the language learner when producing and receiving language. Today, teachers and testers have come to see listening as a much more complex operation than they once tended to assume. Cognitive models of the skill (Field, 2008) recognise three distinct perceptual components: *input decoding*, where acoustic cues are interpreted in terms of the sound system of the language, *lexical search*, where groups of sounds are linked to entries in the learner's vocabulary and the meanings of those words are retrieved; and *parsing* where a group of words has to be held in the learner's mind for long enough to recognise a grammatical pattern in them. Even 'comprehension' is not a unitary process. On the one hand, it requires the listener to use inference, world knowledge and context to make full sense of a new piece of information. On the other, it requires the listener to add that piece of information to a developing picture of the whole conversation or talk.

Those who stressed the importance of the perceptual phases of listening were once misleadingly (and sometimes disparagingly) described as taking a 'bottom-up view'. This view was said to include the assumption that a listener operates on a Lego principle, building phonemes into words, words into clauses and clauses into meanings; it was said to contrast sharply with a 'top-down view', where context overrules the evidence of our ears. However, the briefest pause for thought will show that it makes no sense to think of these as independent 'views' or to suggest that they are somehow in opposition to each other. We simply cannot have one without the other. Suppose you hear somebody say the word [mægəʒi:nz]. If listeners operated on a phoneme by phoneme principle, you would be brought to a halt immediately the unorthodox /ʒ/ sound reached your ears. In fact, what happens is that your knowledge of the word *magazines* compensates for the incorrect phoneme - to the point where you may not even notice that a slip of the tongue has occurred. And if that doesn't work, then the context (*they sell newspapers and ---*) or even just an earlier mention of the associated word *newspaper* will do the rest.

When teaching phonology isn't enough: insights from mondegreens

Helen Fraser

All her life, Sylvia Wright had known a sad Scottish ballad with the lines 'They have slain the Earl of Moray, and Lady Mondegreen'. Her discovery that the real words were 'They have slain the Earl of Moray, and laid him on the green' led her to coin the term 'mondegreen', now used for any humorously mis-heard song lyrics. You probably have your own favourites. If not, google 'mondegreen' and you soon will.

Mondegreens are great fun, but, like many kinds of word play, they also give us useful information about speech and how it works. Pronunciation teachers sometimes use them in class to demonstrate linking, schwa, etc. Here I would like to use mondegreens to demonstrate some aspects of speech that one would not teach directly in pronunciation lessons, but that might be useful as background knowledge for teachers, especially when phonology taught in class does not transfer well to learners' spontaneous speech.

Mondegreens and mishearings

What makes a mondegreen funny? Of course the quirky meaning is important but surely a big part of it is how a phrase that seems perfectly obvious to us is heard by someone else in a completely different, yet strangely justified, way. Consider a famous Australian mondegreen: hearing the national anthem as 'Australians all like ostriches' instead of 'Australians all let us rejoice'. The meaning is crazy – yet when you play the phrase over in your mind, you can kind of see how someone might hear it that way.

Strictly, mondegreens involve songs, but something very similar happens in speech. Mishearings of speech are rarely entertaining enough to go viral – though there was a bit of publicity for the teacher who thought he had been asked to send an 'all star female' rather than an 'all staff email'. But mundane mishearings happen all the time. In fact if we pay close attention to our perception we realise we often change our initial interpretation of what was said. For example, listening to the radio recently, I heard 'I'm not getting Zimbabwe'. I soon realised that didn't make sense, and replayed the phrase in 'echoic memory' (our ability to 'hear it again' for a short time) till I found an interpretation that fitted the context better: 'I'm not yet in Zimbabwe'.

Studying mishearings can teach us a lot about speech (Tang & Nevins, 2013). Here I want to concentrate on how they show us a side of speech that is usually hidden to us, and reveal the unnoticed work our minds must do to interpret it. Understanding how our own minds interpret speech gives useful pointers to what and how to teach second language learners.

The double life of speech

When we speak, we feel we are producing a sequence of distinct words, each separate from the others, and each made up of a sequence of distinct phonemes and syllables. However, what comes out of our mouths is quite different to that. You may have observed yourself, for example, that 'did you' often comes out as 'didja'. But the differences go far deeper than that. Speech really has a hidden life of its own, quite different to how it appears on the surface.

It is hard to recognise the true nature of speech just by listening to it as it passes. A better impression can be gained by recording and transcribing (Shockey 2003). Richard Cauldwell's resources give an excellent opportunity to do this yourself (Cauldwell, 2013). If you don't have the patience to transcribe, a quicker way to gain insight into the nature of speech is to make a recording of conversational speech (radio talk shows make a good source) and use a sound editor (such as Audacity) to mark the boundaries between words and phonemes (without transcribing). It seems that should be an easy task, but I can personally attest that it is not.

When I was a graduate student, I was involved in a large project aiming to train computers to recognise speech (or, as we used to say, 'to wreck a nice beach'). At that time, the method involved identifying acoustic cues the computer could use to detect boundaries between words. I spent many hours glued to a screen in the basement, laboriously trying to 'segment' recorded sentences (i.e. locate the boundaries between words, phonemes and syllables). It is not easy to appreciate how hard this is without trying it yourself. When we listen, the boundaries seem quite distinct, but when you go in and look, phonemes, syllables, even whole words are blurred together with no boundaries to be found (one reason that this method of computer speech recognition was abandoned).

Speech is actually a continuous stream of sound. Indeed the existence of mondegreens depends upon that fact. To see that, consider what happens when we misread print, which actually is a sequence of distinct units.

Reading errors usually involve omitting or transposing units [sic]. Hearing errors, however, can give a completely different phrase, composed of totally different units. Consider the mishearing 'Got an opal candy?' for 'Got a notebook handy?'. We could never have a mishearing like that if speech was a sequence of units.

Teaching concepts of pronunciation: syllables, stress and drunk snails

Graeme Couper

At the heart of my research into pronunciation teaching lies the understanding that the way we speak depends on our phonological concepts (phonemes, syllables, stress, etc.). Because these concepts vary from language to language, when we learn to speak a new language we also have to learn the related phonological concepts. These concepts are a pre-requisite to successfully categorising the sounds of the language (Fraser, 2006). Here, I will address the question as to how we as teachers can help learners to form these concepts, taking examples from teaching syllables, supported by the drunk snail game (an information gap activity), and teaching stress.

I will begin with an outline of the theoretical rationale for teaching phonological concepts followed by a very brief summary of findings from my thesis which supported this theoretical position and led to a set of guidelines for teachers. During the course of this research I also developed a particularly successful and popular activity, the drunk snail game, which I would like to share with my fellow teachers. Finally I will present examples from a recently completed research project to show how this approach can be extended to the teaching of stress at both the word and utterance level.

The theory

There is no question that in teaching pronunciation we are interested in the finished product, that is, the degree to which our students achieve their pronunciation goals, whether these are to become more intelligible and comprehensible, or to acquire a certain accent. However, I am also interested in what is behind improving learners' performance. An important source of inspiration for this comes from work done in the area of L2 speech research, most notably Flege's (1995) Speech Learning Model which suggests that adults are able to form new categories, and reset the boundaries of old ones, to cater for the phonemes of other languages. This model suggests that it is possible for adults to learn L2 pronunciation, and it supports usage-based theories of language such as Cognitive Linguistics,

and the related sub-fields of Cognitive Grammar and Cognitive Phonology.

Cognitive Grammar is based on the premise that the cognitive abilities required for language are similar to those used on other cognitive tasks. Instead of beginning with a theory of language acquisition, it begins with what is known about cognition and uses that to build theories of language acquisition. Pronunciation depends on the ability to categorise and is therefore a cognitive phenomenon which is 'grounded in the human ability to produce, perceive, and above all, to categorise sounds, and to form mental representations of sounds' (Taylor 2002:79-80). These mental representations of categories, rather than the categories themselves, are referred to as concepts, and it is these concepts which allow us to categorise (Murphy 2002). Because these phonological concepts are language specific, when we learn a new language we have to learn how the speakers of that language conceptualise, or think about its categories. The question this article addresses is how we as teachers can help learners to form these concepts in order to accurately categorise the sounds of the new phonological system.

Both Langacker (2000) and Taylor (2002) suggest a number of psychological constructs and cognitive abilities which might be relevant to language learning. These include things such as categorisation, figure-ground organisation, automatism, the ability to compare and detect discrepancy, focus on form, social behaviour, and the ability to form mental representations. While Cognitive Grammar provides a useful theory of language, Fraser (2006, 2010) discusses how this theory can be applied to practical classroom situations, i.e. how we can help learners to form concepts of L2 phonology and learn new categories. The idea of concept formation is well established in educational psychology and Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT), leading Lantolf (2011) to propose SCT as the ideal partner for Cognitive Linguistics in the development of language learning theory.

Summary of research findings

The pronunciation focus of the research projects I undertook during my PhD was on the difficulties many learners were observed to have with syllable codas. Specifically they tended to add an extra vowel sound after a consonant, e.g. 'drunk' sounds like 'drunker' (known as epenthesis) and/or inappropriately omit consonants in syllable codas (absence). The learners in all of these studies were adult New Zealand residents with a range of L1s, but predominantly from East Asian countries such as China and Korea. They were taking high-intermediate ESOL classes at a New Zealand university with the intention of pursuing academic study or employment, or feeling more comfortable in New Zealand society.

In the first study of the PhD I analysed data for 50 students who received no explicit instruction in the pronunciation of syllable codas and found there was no change over one

English pronunciation reference sources on the internet

PETER ROACH

We all look things up on the internet. I would like to take a brief look at some of the free reference sources that we and our students are likely to use. The sources I am interested in could be put under two main headings: encyclopedias and dictionaries. The OED defines 'encyclopedia' as "A literary work containing extensive information on all branches of knowledge, usually arranged in alphabetical order", and this definition seems to fit Wikipedia. OED defines 'dictionary' as "A book dealing with the individual words of a language ... so as to set forth their orthography, pronunciation, signification, and use ... the words are arranged in some stated order, now, in most languages, alphabetical". There are some free online pronunciation dictionaries available on the internet, and I will discuss Forvo, Inogolo and Howjsay.

Wikipedia

It makes quite a plausible science fiction scenario: a world in the near future where the official version of all human knowledge is available only from Wikipedia. Already Wikipedia (henceforth WP) seems to be the first port of call for any student with an essay to write on any subject, and even if you don't want to get your information from WP, it is most likely that your search engine will choose it for you. If, for example, you Google 'phoneme' or 'intonation' you will almost certainly find the WP article comes top of the list. It seems likely that around the world, students and teachers working in the general area of EFL and ESL will be making use of WP when they want to learn about or check some factual matter about English, and those with an interest in pronunciation will look at WP articles concerned with phonetics. I would like to concentrate on two main questions: what material is contained in WP, and who writes and edits this material?

What information does WP contain in the field of English pronunciation?

We should start with some basic WP principles that you may not be familiar with. One is the OR principle (Original Research): WP does not allow itself to publish anything that could be counted as new research – only existing and recognized knowledge can be included. Another principle is that contributions are anonymous: the cult of anonymity,

which seems so dear to people who post stuff on the internet, is strong in WP, and it is therefore not usually possible to find out who wrote (or changed) a particular item. I still find it bizarre to be in a discussion about a point of phonetics with someone calling themselves FluffyBunny or DeathStarAvenger. When you read an article in WP you can see at the top of the page that, in addition to the article itself, there is a Talk Page where people can discuss or question material that is (or could be) in the article. This discussion material is sometimes quite amusing and sometimes rather depressing. At times the material is hacked by people who write obscene comments or personal abuse, though this is usually quickly removed by editors.

There is a vast list of WP articles on phonetics and pronunciation – if you want to see the whole list you can find it at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_phonetic_topics. We can start by looking at basic articles on subjects of interest. One of the most ambitious is **English Phonology**. This is a long article which attempts to cover a lot of ground. In some cases (e.g. Intonation) it gives a brief description of a topic that gets a separate article elsewhere. There are many tables (WP authors are very fond of tables) followed by long lists of notes. It can be seen that as far as possible articles on English pronunciation try to cover at least British (RP/BBC) and American (GA) unless the topic is related to one specific accent. Sometimes writers seem to feel that only these two accents need to be covered, so that until recently WP was stating that English is a stress-timed language, without showing any awareness of the many varieties of English pronunciation around the world which clearly are *not* stress-timed.

Those of us involved in teaching British English are likely to be interested in the article on **Received Pronunciation**. This topic tends to attract some very contentious messages from non-specialists on the Talk page, saying how much they hate 'posh talk' and wanting to change what is said about the status of RP to fit their political beliefs.

Non-native pronunciations of English is a topic that should be of interest to pronunciation teachers, but the coverage is very uneven. Arabic, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese are listed, but some of these only have one or two sketchy points of pronunciation to offer. I think this article is crying out for some expert input. There is a similar article on **Anglophone pronunciation of foreign languages** that contains some very odd information about problems that English speakers encounter in learning specific foreign languages.

WP has a lot of material aimed at teaching contributors how to use phonetic symbols. This is seen as important because WP policy is (laudably) that IPA transcription should be used at the beginning of articles if the pronunciation is likely to be difficult for readers. If you look at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPA_for_English, it can be seen that the WP way of doing this involves a diaphonemic representation that is supposed to make it possible to cover all major accents of English with one transcription, instead

Pronunciation and CLIL: designing a speech improvement course for teachers at an international school

Elizabeth M. Pow

The last two and a half decades have seen an increasing demand for international and bilingual schools worldwide, especially in Brazil. Although the first international schools in our country date back to the fifties, they were mostly designed to cater for the educational needs of foreign or expatriate families in Brazil on short to medium term contracts.

More recently, it may be safe to say that such a demand has been caused by parents' growing awareness of the benefits of providing their children – from a very early age – with education in a foreign language so that they are better prepared for today's internationalised world. As a result, pedagogical changes have had to be implemented in school curricula in order that a second language can be used as a medium for teaching social studies, experimental sciences, and maths, in other words, non-language content.

Such changes have given rise to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), a proposal that arose in the nineties (Graddol, 2006:86), and has since been implemented in its various approaches: from full to partial immersions, regular 20–30 minute subject lessons in English, or language crash courses. Basically, CLIL means that subject teachers are required to teach their subject in English, while English teachers may be asked to teach the subject matter, i.e. content, in their English classes.

As can be seen, in terms of teaching standards and requirements, CLIL is most likely to make great demands on teachers, especially on non-native speaker teachers (NNSTs) teaching a range of subjects. NNSTs are not only expected to be qualified to teach subject matter, but also to have well-grounded pedagogical skills and a high level of proficiency in spoken and written English. It is here, in the teachers' language skills, that the focus of this article lies. Firstly, I will report on a speech/pronunciation improvement course specially designed for a group of Brazilian teachers

working at an international school in São Paulo as part of their on-going professional development. Another objective is to reflect on the outcome of such a programme combining Pronunciation for Specific Purposes and Teacher Development.

The school and the students

As an accredited member of the International Baccalaureate (IB), the school offers the IB Primary Years Programme (3- to 12-year-olds), IB Middle Years Programme (11- to 16-year-olds) and IB Diploma Programme (16- to 19-year-olds). In addition, it must ensure that the curriculum and standards established by IB for each programme are strictly adhered to.

Set in a residential area of São Paulo city, the institution had over 600 students and a faculty of approximately 50 members at the time of the research for this paper. Although the student population mostly consisted of Brazilians, there were students of various nationalities, whose families were either permanent or short-term residents in Brazil. With regard to faculty, teachers are hired locally and abroad. Foreign applicants must have at least two years' teaching experience to be considered for a work visa.

Course participants' profile

Six teachers, who taught various subjects such as Biology, Physics, History, English as a Second Language, Social Studies, and Physical Education, took part in the pronunciation course. All of them had teaching qualifications, while one of the teachers – the Head of Science – had a PhD in Biology. One teacher had an MA in History, and two were working towards an MA in Pedagogy and Science, respectively. In addition, the course participants had been through the experience of living and working in English-speaking countries for some years, and had also attended language courses locally and/or abroad. It is worth mentioning that, barring a two-year English course at a language school, one of the teachers was mostly self-taught.

All teachers were committed to a forty-hour working week at the school, which also involved taking part in staff and parent-teacher (PTA) meetings, social and cultural projects, as well as in field trips abroad with students.

As for linguistic competence, the teachers were fluent speakers and competent listeners in English, and were constantly exposed to different varieties of English as part of their daily interactions with native-speaker colleagues from various parts of the world. However, it was felt by the school board that some teachers could benefit from a pronunciation improvement programme, as none of them had previously received pronunciation instruction to address the most common problem areas that were found to affect their speech accuracy and intelligibility as Brazilian educators teaching their subjects through English.

Being trained and being prepared: challenges for pronunciation teacher training

Jonathan Marks

Teaching a language is a complicated craft which draws on a multiplicity of interconnected types of knowledge, skill, awareness and judgement. It's not surprising, in the light of this, that teachers vary greatly in their areas of relative strength and weakness, confidence and uncertainty, skill and incompetence, as evaluated by themselves, by their students, or by other observers.

Nevertheless, one word which crops up noticeably often when teachers, including even those with lengthy experience, talk about their shortcomings, uncertainties, insecurities, blind spots and *bêtes noires*, is 'pronunciation'. This article will attempt to identify some reasons why this is the case, and suggest some ways in which teacher training processes can help to remedy the situation.

Blinded with science

The English language teaching profession is populated by people with an extremely wide range of educational backgrounds but, broadly speaking, arts/humanities tend to predominate over sciences. Some teachers feel de-skilled or put off by what they perceive as the more scientific aspects of pronunciation: the study of the anatomy and physiology of the vocal organs, which they might perhaps associate more readily with the training of doctors or dentists than language teachers. This knowledge is essential, but the good news is that there's really rather little of it (hardly anything, in fact, compared with the study of medicine!).

The challenge for teacher training is to present it clearly and, above all, experientially, so that teachers can relate their knowledge to their awareness of what they actually do when they produce English speech sounds, and what they need to do differently in order to replicate the different sounds they hear when their learners speak English; in this way they will be equipped to help their learners make changes to their pronunciation, instead of being doomed to rely on the frequently *unreliable* 'listen to me and repeat' approach. All too often, teachers learn about the speech

organs and their workings as an external, abstract body of knowledge; they can perhaps draw head diagrams accurately, but their diagrams are as disconnected from their own physical experience as maps of distant galaxies.

Terminology such as 'fricative', 'assimilation' and 'tonic prominence' can also seem intimidatingly scientific to the newcomer, but there's really rather little essential terminology, and the learning of it can be helped by attention to morphology (e.g., comparing 'fricative' with 'friction', 'assimilation' with 'similar', 'tonic' with 'tone') and again, crucially, by introducing the terms as labels for elements of teachers' awareness of their own speech production, rather than as external knowledge. Another, more general, useful terminological strategy is to prioritise the familiar term 'pronunciation' over 'phonetics' and 'phonology', except where these are strictly necessary.

Only slots, or lots?

The next challenge for teacher training is to instil in teachers the habit of integrating a concern for pronunciation into the rest of the syllabus, rather than restricting it to its own little compartment. Teachers, especially less-experienced ones, sometimes include short token pronunciation 'slots' in their lessons. However useful these may be, they tend to isolate pronunciation from the rest of the language being taught and practised, and to project an image of pronunciation as an optional extra, especially since pronunciation 'slots' are often scheduled at the end of a lesson, when they're vulnerable to being dropped if there's no time left and when, in any case, the learners' mouths and minds are perhaps already exhausted!

Whatever the main focus of a classroom activity or a lesson, pronunciation happens all the time, most obviously while learners are speaking – after all, they can't speak without pronouncing, can they? – but also while they're listening (this includes listening to each other or to the teacher, not only doing a 'listening' activity) because their interpretation of what they hear relies on processing the sequences of sounds other people produce. Less obviously, but importantly, pronunciation is also a part of reading and writing – for example, learners might read a difficult stretch of text aloud or subvocalize it as a way of trying to understand it better, or listen in their 'mind's ear' to something they've written, to find out whether they're satisfied with it.

So it's important for teachers to be trained in the habit of taking pronunciation into account in planning any lesson. If the focus is on grammar, for example, they need to ask whether there are any potentially tricky segmental or suprasegmental features associated with the structure(s) they intend to focus on. And then, during the lesson, they should listen critically to learners' production of the target language, and not be satisfied as soon as they manage to assemble the right words in the right order, but push them to produce the language faster, more smoothly, more connectedly, more rhythmically, more confidently. Repetition