Prosody for all the skills:

How to integrate the “music” of language into any lesson

Joy Mills
joy.mills@gmail.com
This Webinar: Aims

To raise awareness of the importance of prosody in language processing

To share ideas for integrating prosody into your classroom
This Webinar: Outline

● What is prosody?
● Why does prosody matter?
  ○ Speaking/listening
  ○ Reading/writing
    ■ Questions?
● Ideas to integrate prosody into skills lessons
  ■ Questions?
What is Prosody?

Rhythm
Stress
Pitch
Speed
Intonation

Why does prosody matter?

**Fluency!**

Prosody is a predictor of fluency across skills.

If it’s so important, why don’t we know about it?

- Lack of self-awareness
- Difficult to isolate
Why does prosody matter? - Speaking & Listening

- Comprehensibility

- Disambiguation:
  - real-world disambiguation
  - complex sentence processing.

(Jackson & O’Brien 2011)
Why does prosody matter? - Reading & Writing

Writing:

● Prosody: The origin of **Punctuation**!

Reading prosody (explicit and implicit) is linked with comprehension

● L1 reading: **children**
● L1 reading: **teenagers** and **reading comprehension**
● L2 reading: appears to be **different**
Questions?
Applications: CONTEXT

By including context you are more likely to expose learners to prosody, and learners are more likely to learn prosody when it is presented in context (Hardison, 2005).

Including communicative purpose is also more likely to elicit correct prosody!
Applications: Caution

Be careful of “teaching correct prosody”

● Careful Speech Model (Cauldwell, 2018) - tempting but dangerous!
  ○ For example: WH-questions go down, yes/no questions go up

Instead: raise awareness

● Use authentic materials wherever possible
● Give exposure, practice and feedback on prosodic features
Applications: Caution

Remember, Prosody is *hard*.

- Research has shown that L1 interference still exists even in very advanced speakers.
- It can be difficult for learners to identify their own prosodic mistakes.
Idea for activities:

These are not about:
- Lexical stress (teaching the stress of individual words)
- Lexical tones (in tonal languages like Chinese)
- Emotional expression

These are aimed at:
- Sentence processing
- Fluency and comprehension
- Parsing
Ideas for activities: Speaking

- Visual Feedback: Electronic (using Praat or other free software) or even the teacher drawing what they hear.
  - Note: learners are often not able to hear this themselves. It should be external feedback.
  - See Lengeris (2012) for a review

Hello, can you actually record me? That’s amazing.
Ideas for activities: Speaking

- Social deduction games:
  - Spyfall, Werewolf

- Sentence-level drilling

- Imitating conversations without words
Ideas for activities: Listening

A Syllabus for Listening - Decoding by Richard Cauldwell

- “Botanic Walk:” Greenhouse, Garden and Jungle
- “Word Crusher:” teaching new soundscapes
- Gap fill from the jungle

And many others. Highly recommended!
Ideas for activities: Reading

Silent reading:

**Assisted Reading:** Combining timed silent reading with audio, and repeating the same texts.

Reading aloud:

Vocabulary in context: pair reading

*note: this should be communicative, NOT performative!*
This was what Leeds City Council said about Moose’s work: ‘Leeds residents want to live in clean and attractive neighbourhoods. We view this kind of advertising as environmental damage and will take strong action against any advertisers carrying out such campaigns.’ It seems that no action was taken against the advertisers – no fines nor any other punishment – but Moose himself was ordered to ‘clean up his act’.
Ideas for activities: Writing

● Speak first, write second
  ○ Using recording devices, listen to themselves and write what they said!
  ○ Helps strengthen the connection between prosody/sentence structure.

● Out-loud editing:
  ○ Have students work in pairs and edit writing out loud - listen for what doesn’t SOUND right, including punctuation.
  ○ Alternatively, the teacher reads out loud and the class corrects.
Summary

Prosody is an important part of language processing, but many students and teachers don’t incorporate it into language learning practice. Raising awareness, both for students and for teachers, will lead to improvements in fluency and comprehension outcomes in the future.

The conversation isn’t over! Experiment and share ideas and feedback here:

https://padlet.com/joy_mills/ozn3juor089i
Questions?
References


References


