

Understanding intelligibility in pronunciation instruction

Victor Medina

vhmedinasoares@gmail.com

Cultura Inglesa Minas Gerais, Brazil

IATEFL PronSIG

IATEFL PronSIG Webinar
Online | 19 February 2022

Outline

The role of L1 transfer

Intelligibility

English as a Lingua Franca

Teaching pronunciation
reflectively?

The role of L1 Transfer (Best, Tyler, 2007)

A learner's L1 and L2 phonological systems are not completely separate.

- Phonological contrast
- Phonetic gradience

The use of L1 cues for categorising L2 sounds.

What does it mean
to say we
understand
someone in English?
(Derwing, Munro,
2009; Kachru,
Smith, 2008)

To what extent does your listener
actually understand what you say?

INTELLIGIBILITY

How much of an effort is made by
your listener to understand what
you say?

COMPREHENSIBILITY

How much do you understand of
what speakers mean by what they
say?

INTERPRETABILITY

English as a Lingua Franca (Derwing, Munro, 2009)

English in global communication.

What aspects are fundamental for pronunciation teaching?

Pronunciation goals that do not cause discomfort regarding a learner's identity.

English as a Lingua Franca (Jenkins, 2009)

The *Lingua Franca* Core

- Most consonant sounds
- Aspiration
- Vowel length (but not quality)
- Most consonant clusters
- Word stress

Non-core?

- Receptive repertoire

English as a Lingua Franca (Jenkins, 2009)

Accommodation

- Native speakers: Affective reasons (the desire to be liked)
- Non-native speakers: Communicative efficiency (the desire to be understood)
- Convergence in ELF? (focus on the target)

What do we need to do be understood?

Teaching pronunciation reflectively? (Levis, 2018)

1. Goals

“Using language is a social activity, and pronunciation is the most public face of language”. (p. 79)

The way speakers speak a language vs how they are understood

ACCENT VS INTELLIGIBILITY

Teaching
pronunciation
reflectively?
(Celce–Murcia,
Brinton & Goodwin
2010)

2. Frameworks

Communicative teaching and
the use of
non-communicative
activities.

Integrated Skills:
Pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation reflectively? (Celce–Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin 2010)

2. Frameworks

What the teacher needs to know

- Knowledge of the pronunciation features
- Awareness of potential student problems
- Pedagogical priorities

Teaching
pronunciation
reflectively?
(Celce–Murcia,
Brinton & Goodwin
2010)

2. Frameworks

- Description and analysis
- Listening discrimination
- Controlled practice
- Guided practice
- Communicative practice

Teaching pronunciation reflectively?

3. Reflection

At which moments of my lessons do I usually approach pronunciation?

Why do (not) I teach the pronunciation items in the materials I work with?

What are my biggest concerns about teaching pronunciation?
(Levis, 2018)

Teaching pronunciation reflectively! (Levis, 2018)

One cannot speak without pronouncing.

Everyone speaks with some kind of accent.

Different factors influence L2 pronunciation, including age, aptitude and the speaker's L1.

Teaching pronunciation reflectively! (Levis, 2018)

Some pronunciation differences may make the speaker unintelligible to the listener, while others will not. Differences that affect intelligibility are the most important.

Each learner and class will have unique needs that should be assessed.

Teaching pronunciation reflectively! (Levis, 2018)

Pronunciation teaching will be most successful when it involves a variety of ways to practice.

Pronunciation teachers can improve their practice through reflective practice.

References

- Best, Catherine & Tyler, Michael. (2007). [Nonnative and second-language speech perception: Commonalities and complementarities.](#) DOI: 10.1075/llt.17.07bes.
- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M (2010). *Teaching Pronunciation: a course book and reference guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Derwing, Tracey & Munro, Murray. (2009). [Putting accent in its place: Rethinking obstacles to communication.](#) *Language Teaching*. 42. 476 - 490. 10.1017/S026144480800551X.
- Kachru, Yamuna & Smith, Larry. (2008). [Cultures, Contexts, and World Englishes.](#) 1-231. 10.4324/9780203891346.
- Jenkins, Jennifer. (2009). [Teaching pronunciation for English as a Lingua Franca: A sociopolitical perspective.](#)
- Levis, John (2018). [Effective and reflective teaching of pronunciation.](#) *Issues in Syllabus Design*. 77 - 89.