

Book Review

Alves, Ubiratã Kickhöfel & Jeniffer Imaregna Alcantara de Albuquerque (eds.).

Second language pronunciation: Different approaches to teaching and training (Studies on Language Acquisition 64). Berlin & Boston: Mouton de Gruyter, 2023. ISBN: 978-3-11-073612-0, e-book, 430 pp.

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Teaching second language pronunciation presents multiple challenges, such as the complexity of phonetic distinctions, differences between the first and second languages' phonological systems, and impact of learners' native language pronunciation habits. Furthermore, effective pronunciation instruction typically necessitates personalized feedback and extensive practice, which can be challenging to provide in a classroom setting, especially when some pronunciation features are considered less important than others. This situation makes prioritizing instruction difficult, as educators must decide which aspects of pronunciation to emphasize without neglecting those that could significantly impact intelligibility (Barrera-Pardo 2022). Second language (L2) teachers often struggle with where to begin and how to ensure the accuracy of their instruction (Levis et al. 2022). This book, *Second Language Pronunciation: Different Approaches to Teaching and Training*, helps meet these challenges by showcasing practices that align well with the principles of Lingua Franca Cores (LFC) introduced by Jenkins (2000) by emphasizing the importance of intelligibility (being understood by interlocutors) and comprehensibility (easiness of being understood) over native-like pronunciation. It focuses on the core phonological features essential for clear communication in international contexts. Comprising 13 main chapters, this collection, prepared for the Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée (AILA) Online Convention at the University of Groningen in August 2021, provides practical strategies for teaching pronunciation that prioritize these critical aspects, thereby enhancing the efficacy of pronunciation instruction.

In principle, the chapters are grouped based on four themes. The first one is “Pronunciation Development and Intelligibility: Implications for Teaching and Training Studies” consisting of four chapters. Chapter 1 by Thaís Cristófaró Silva and Wellington Mendes describes an investigation into the intricacies of plural formation in English as experienced by Brazilian Portuguese speakers. They analyze

the challenges learners face due to phonological differences between the two languages and emphasize the importance of targeted teaching strategies to improve learners' ability to form plurals correctly and enhance overall intelligibility in English. Results showed that English learners are more likely to pronounce a vowel when the orthographic pattern is <Ces> rather than <Cs>. These findings are examined in the context of theories suggesting that both phonological and orthographic representations are activated during the production of a second language. By understanding the influence of orthographic patterns on pronunciation, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) researchers can further explore how these patterns affect communication in multilingual contexts. Additionally, this knowledge can assist ELF practitioners in creating more effective teaching materials that consider learners' native language influences, aligning with the principles of fluidity and adaptability typical of ELF encounters.

In Chapter 2, Elena Kkese and Sviatlana Karpava examine how various factors, such as task type, word length, and word frequency, affect speech perception in L2 English learners speaking Greek. They discuss the implications of their findings for pronunciation teaching, emphasizing the need for training programs to consider these factors. By doing so, educators can better equip learners with the skills necessary to perceive and produce speech sounds accurately, improving pronunciation and communication effectiveness. The findings are interpreted using the Native Language Magnet Model, supporting our assertion that L2 data can be examined through various models and perspectives. ELF researchers can utilize these findings to develop adaptable pronunciation training methods that account for task type, word length, and frequency, ensuring better speech perception and production in ELF interactions.

Chapter 3, by Pedro Luis Luchini, Cosme Daniel Paz, and María Claudia Troglia, focuses on the measurement of L2 accented speech by Argentinian pre-service teachers. They conduct an experimental study evaluating English L2 productions by five international students from Argentina, Belgium, China, Japan, and Poland. These productions are assessed for comprehensibility and accentedness by 22 prospective English language teachers from Argentina, whose native language is Spanish. They explore the perceptions and evaluations of accented speech, shedding light on the biases and challenges faced by both learners and educators. The authors identify fluency and prosody as factors that facilitate language acquisition, whereas sounds and lexicogrammar were seen as impeding factors. This chapter's focus on accented speech and the factors facilitating comprehensibility aligns with ELF principles, highlighting the importance of prosody and fluency over strict adherence to native norms.

In Chapter 4, Jeniffer Imaregna Alcantara de Albuquerque and Ubiratã Kickhöfel Alves present findings from a longitudinal study on the intelligibility and

comprehensibility of Haitian learners of Brazilian Portuguese. This chapter presents a study on intelligibility and comprehensibility involving three Haitian speakers of Portuguese and two Brazilian listeners with varying second language experience. Using oral repetition and a nine-point Likert scale for comprehensibility, the study found that listener-speaker relationships vary individually, promoting learning. Factors such as listeners' contact with foreigners and speakers' immersion time influenced results. Improvements in speakers' lexical complexity and pronunciation, and listeners' adaptability, were noted. The study emphasizes the benefits of examining these constructs through the dynamic interaction between listener and speaker.

Next, the second theme is labelled "L2 Pronunciation Teaching" comprising Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 5, by Ronaldo Lima Jr., explores the production of English vowels [i, ɪ, ε, æ, u, ʊ] by ten Brazilian undergraduates over four semesters. Initially, they had communicative lessons, followed by a phonetics and phonology course in the third semester, then returned to communicative lessons. Recordings from each semester were acoustically analyzed. Results showed dynamic, variable vowel development. Vowel contrasts appeared consistently, especially after the phonetics course, with most students improving their contrasts. However, development pace varied, and not all students formed new vowel categories. This chapter's emphasis on vowel development can inform ELF pronunciation training, helping learners achieve vowel clarity that enhances mutual intelligibility in diverse ELF encounters.

Chapter 6 is authored by Tim Kochem, Idée Edalatishams, Lily Compton, and Elena Cotos, discussing the development of an English-speaking consultation (ESC) program designed to provide additional support to L2 learners. This study reports on the impact of ESCs on participants' pronunciation improvement and explores their perceptions of the consultation experience. Data were collected through pre- and post-consultation assessments, including recordings of participants' oral presentations and feedback surveys. Analysis of the data focuses on changes in pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and confidence levels. Findings suggest that ESCs significantly contribute to the enhancement of pronunciation skills among participants. Moreover, participants reported positive perceptions of the consultation experience, highlighting the value of personalized, focused practice. ESC programs can be adapted to ELF contexts, providing individualized support that addresses specific pronunciation challenges, fostering clearer and more effective communication.

In Chapter 7, Ilvi Blessenaar and Lizet van Ewijk discuss the application of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) model in assessing and instructing L2 pronunciation. The paper advocates for integrating diverse daily experiences into L2 pronunciation training, citing the importance of

individual backgrounds and contexts. It proposes using the ICF model to tailor interventions, considering personal and environmental factors. By applying this model, practitioners can address learners' specific needs and prioritize goals effectively. This approach facilitates understanding of pronunciation challenges and identifies barriers to improvement.

Then, the third theme is "L2 Pronunciation Training: Implications for the Classroom", which encompasses the three subsequent chapters. Chapter 8, authored by Susan Jackson and Walcir Cardoso, presents a study on the impact of orthographic interference on the acquisition of the English /h/ sound by Francophone learners. The study examines how orthographic input affects L2 perception and production, particularly focusing on Francophone L2 learners of English struggling with the /h/ phoneme. Participants learned English pseudo-words under three conditions: auditory + congruent spelling, auditory + congruent/incongruent spelling, and auditory only. Results suggest that inconsistent grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence hinders phoneme acquisition, offering insights for teaching challenging sounds in L2 acquisition. Understanding how orthographic input affects pronunciation can help ELF teachers develop strategies to mitigate these challenges, enhancing learners' ability to produce sounds accurately in ELF interactions.

In Chapter 9, Yuri Nishio and Akiyo Joto explore an innovative approach to teaching pronunciation using alphabet letter names to enhance accuracy as it covers half of all English phonemes. However, Japanese learners often substitute similar Japanese sounds, potentially leading to persistent mispronunciations. This study investigates whether an information and communication technology (ICT) self-learning system can rectify fossilized pronunciation errors in English alphabet letter names. The system allows learners to view real-time videos of themselves. Results indicate significant improvement, particularly with consonants. The use of ICT in pronunciation training supports the ELF principle of adaptability, allowing learners to practice and improve their pronunciation independently and at their own pace.

Marking the end of Theme 3, Chapter 10, by Natallia Liakina and Denis Liakin, describes various forms of implicit and explicit corrective feedback (CF) offered by automatic speech recognition (ASR)-based applications, considering their impact on L2 pronunciation acquisition based on second language acquisition (SLA) research. It then presents findings from action research conducted in university-level French pronunciation courses, focusing on learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of different types of automatic CF provided by ASR-based tools. Finally, the paper discusses potential implications and offers practical recommendations for the integration of ASR-based applications in L2 pronunciation teaching and learning settings, both within and outside the classroom.

Lastly, Theme 4 is called “Pronunciation in the Laboratory: High Variability Phonetic Training”, which consists of the last three chapters, namely Chapters 11, 12, and 13. Chapter 11, composed by Ellen Simon, Bastien De Clercq, Pauline Degraeve, and Quentin Decourcelle, reports the effectiveness of high variability phonetic training (HVPT) on non-native contrast perception in 48 adult L1 French learners of Dutch in Belgium. Participants are assigned to experimental or control groups and undergo pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test lexical identification tasks with and without noise. The experimental group receives five multimodal HVPT sessions. Results suggest HVPT’s effectiveness in generalizing training effects to new tokens and talkers, but variability exists across robustness variables, influenced by learner type and sound contrast.

In Chapter 12, Pollianna Milan and Denise Cristina Kluge report their longitudinal study investigating the impact of perceptual training on the perception and production of heterotronics in Brazilian learners of Spanish. Participants were divided into basic and intermediate groups based on their academic exposure to Spanish, with each group further divided into those who received training and those who did not. Results showed significant improvements in perception and production among participants with less academic experience who underwent training. Individual analysis highlighted that learners with lower academic experience and initial difficulties benefited the most from training.

Chapter 13, by Anabela Rato and Diana Oliveira, discusses the long-term effects of perceptual training in second language acquisition, specifically focusing on the generalization and retention of learned skills. This paper addresses the persistent challenge of second language (L2) speech acquisition among adult learners, who often struggle to perceive and produce certain non-native speech sounds accurately. Despite decades of research applying training programs to improve L2 speech abilities and reduce accentedness, findings remain complex due to various factors. This systematic review examines 27 perceptual training studies conducted over the past 40 years, assessing their effectiveness in promoting robust L2 speech learning. The review highlights the benefits and challenges of using these measures and discusses future research directions.

The volume ends with insights from Tracey Derwing, who summarizes current research questions in pronunciation teaching and training studies and predicts future scenarios for both researchers and practitioners. Derwing’s chapter bridges the gap between pronunciation researchers and practitioners, underscoring one of the book’s primary goals. This chapter aligns with ELF research by emphasizing the ongoing need to adapt and refine pronunciation teaching methods to meet the evolving demands of global communication.

One significant strength of this comprehensive volume is its thorough examination of various aspects of pronunciation development and intelligibility in

L2 learning. It presents empirical research and pedagogical implications across multiple languages and theoretical frameworks. Another strength of this volume is the thorough comparisons made between the participants' L1 and L2, as discussed in most chapters. These comparisons provide an effective modality for scaffolding perception, thereby better accommodating the production stage. By highlighting specific phonetic and phonological differences and similarities between the learners' native and target languages, the book offers valuable insights into how learners can bridge the gap between perception and production; thus, emphasizing the idea that pronunciation does not only focus on making the speakers understood but also understanding the speech of others (Levis 2018). This detailed analysis helps educators develop targeted teaching strategies that facilitate more effective and nuanced pronunciation training, ultimately enhancing the learners' overall communicative competence.

Furthermore, the book successfully interprets newest theories in the field, including the Native Language Magnet Model (NLM), the Perceptual Assimilation Model-L2 (PAM-L2), the Second Language Linguistic Perception model (L2LP) and the recent Revised Speech Learning Model (SLM-r) among others. By exploring these and other contemporary theories, the book offers a comprehensive picture of the evolving field of second language acquisition, highlighting the significant progress made in understanding this fascinating process. Understanding the reasons behind pronunciation rules empowers L2 teachers to teach with confidence. By connecting theory to practical exercises, they can foster deeper student understanding. For instance, teachers can use models like the SLM-r to explain how repetition and feedback are crucial for solidifying new pronunciation patterns.

Nonetheless, the scope of the studies is limited to popular languages, potentially excluding a broader range of L2 learners. The second languages discussed are English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Brazilian Portuguese. It is, of course, inappropriate to have a one-size-fits-all approach to pronunciation training, considering the different learners' L1 and target language. Nevertheless, the range of linguistic distances is relatively narrow (e.g., Spanish-Portuguese, English-French), which may not adequately represent the challenges faced by learners whose L1s are significantly different from these languages. This limitation underscores the need for more inclusive research that encompasses a wider variety of L1-L2 pairings to better address the diverse needs of all L2 learners that are less Eurocentric, for example (Kirkpatrick 2010).

Additionally, another weakness lies in the editorial choices in the naming of the themes, which do not signify any apparent differences between one another, causing confusion for the reader, particularly the first three themes: (i) Pronunciation Development and Intelligibility: Implications for Teaching and Training Studies, (ii) L2 Pronunciation Teaching, and (iii) L2 Pronunciation Training: Implications for

the Classroom. These themes are somewhat redundant and arguably overlap in their focus, making it difficult for readers to discern the distinct scope and content of each section. Clearer and more differentiated theme names would enhance the reader's understanding and navigation of the book's content, ensuring that each section's unique contributions and perspectives are more readily apparent. This would also help to better organize the wealth of information presented, making it more accessible and useful for educators and researchers alike.

In regard to the relevance with ELF, each of the chapters collectively supports a multilingual perspective, emphasizing the value of diverse accents and the goal of mutual understanding over native-like pronunciation (Jenkins 2000). This perspective aligns with the principles of the LFC, reinforcing the idea that effective communication in ELF settings relies on intelligibility and comprehensibility rather than strict adherence to native norms. The insights provided in the chapters can significantly benefit ELF users, teachers, and researchers. For ELF users, the detailed comparisons between L1 and L2 phonetic and phonological aspects improve pronunciation and intelligibility, enhancing overall communication skills and confidence. ELF teachers can develop targeted teaching strategies and utilize theoretical models like NLM, PAM-L2, L2LP, and SLM-r to create effective pronunciation exercises and bridge the gap between perception and production. ELF researchers gain a comprehensive literature review, new theoretical insights, and practical applications for instructional strategies, paving the way for further studies in second language acquisition. Overall, the book offers valuable resources for enhancing ELF learners' communicative competence.

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