

Book Review

Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova, Alice Henderson & Jonás Fouz-González (eds.). 2021. *English pronunciation instruction: Research-based insights*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. xix+388 pp. ISBN: 978-90-272-0935-1(hbk).

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The edited volume entitled *English pronunciation instruction: Research-based insights* by Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova, Alice Henderson, and Jonás Fouz-González presents key findings of some of the latest research on second language (L2) English pronunciation, with a focus on pedagogical implications and applications. It fills an important gap in the L2 pronunciation instruction literature by bridging the gulf between L2 pronunciation research and L2 pronunciation teaching practices. Based on selected papers presented at the 2019 International Conference on English Pronunciation, the volume contains a wide range of interesting European-based studies looking for improvements in L2 pronunciation pedagogy, with a special focus on intelligibility.

This volume consists of 15 chapters. Excluding the introducing chapter (Chapter 1), the book is organized into five parts: “Linking research and practices” (Part I: Chapters 2–3), “Surveying beliefs, attitudes and classroom practices” (Part II: Chapters 4–7), “Using corpora to inform instruction” (Part III: Chapters 8–10), “Investigating learners’ output” (Part IV: Chapters 11–12), and “Exploring tools and techniques” (Part V: Chapters 13–15).

Chapter 1 by the editors, Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova, Alice Henderson, and Jonás Fouz-González, lays out the overall structure of the book, which consists of the following five parts: (1) linking research and practice, (2) surveying beliefs, attitudes and classroom practices, (3) using corpora to inform instruction, (4) investigating learners’ output, and (5) exploring tools and techniques. The chapter states that the main objectives of the book are (1) to stimulate thinking and discussion on pedagogical/practical implications of empirical research studies on L2 pronunciation and (2) to provide empirically-based findings to inform pronunciation pedagogy. The chapter also provides a clear overview of the current gap between theory and practice in L2 pronunciation instruction and addresses some of the practical difficulties teachers often face in L2 pronunciation teaching, including having different first-language (L1) students in the same classroom and having received no or little prior training in teaching pronunciation.

Written by John M. Levis, Chapter 2 deals with the disconnect between L2 pronunciation research and teaching. In the chapter, the author calls upon teachers to consider the pedagogical implications of L2 pronunciation research. An appeal is also made to researchers to make the practical value and pedagogical implications of their research more salient. Levis also suggests that pedagogical implications from the latest research should not just be published in academic journals, but also be made available on more commonly used resources, like YouTube and other internet resources.

Chapter 3 by Tanja Angelovska examines the differences between L2 and third language (L3) pronunciation acquisition by looking at language classes in Europe where students learn two or more additional languages. The chapter illustrates that multilingual students hold several advantages over bilingual ones and that heritage speakers often hold an advantage over adult learners, as the former acquired the language in a less explicit and more informal fashion. Based on the aforementioned findings, the author calls on teachers to recognise linguistic diversity in the classroom. The significant role of working memory on L2 phonological acquisition is also discussed. The chapter concludes by making innovative suggestions for future research. Particularly interesting is the use of spectrograms to give students a visual representation of their own pronunciation.

Chapter 4 by Alma Vančura and Draženka Molnar focuses on students' and teachers' attitudes towards English pronunciation in Croatian primary schools. Their study finds that most students and teachers agree that out-of-class activities have a great impact on pronunciation. It is found that most students prefer to improve their pronunciation by listening to native speakers of English, rather than doing formal in-class pronunciation exercises (see Sung 2014, 2016). The chapter concludes by suggesting that universities should include systematic pronunciation teaching in teacher training and that textbooks need to include more pronunciation exercises. It also makes the case that pronunciation classes should focus on intelligibility, rather than native-speaker pronunciation.

Chapter 5 by Kristýna Červinková Poesová and Klára Lancová presents the first study on Czech pre-service teachers' beliefs about and attitudes towards native and non-native accents of English. Their study finds that most pre-service teachers believe that teachers' pronunciation should approximate those of native speakers of English, with almost half of them indicating that accented speech may hamper students' in-class concentration. Towards the end of the chapter, the authors suggest the promotion of more pronunciation varieties (i.e. not just native English varieties) with a focus on intelligibility, although they also make the point that students should not be discouraged if their aspiration is to emulate native English accents.

Chapter 6 by Małgorzata Baran-Łucarz focuses on summative assessment (SA) and formative assessment (FA) in pronunciation in Polish secondary schools. EFL

pronunciation is highly valued in Poland, where students are formally assessed on it. The author suggests that SA (officially used for grading) can be problematic, as it may result in non-critical learning and short-term knowledge. The author suggests that SA can be more effective when supplemented by FA (especially informal assessment with provision of remedial advice), given that FA often reduces anxiety and increases motivation. The chapter finds that many Polish teachers receive inadequate pronunciation assessment training and often do not provide feedback on students' intonation and sentence stress.

Chapter 7 by Magdalena Szyszka focuses on L2 pronunciation learning strategies (PLS) of high- and low-achieving first-year university students in Poland and aims to inform strategy-based instruction associated with PLS. Her study finds that high achievers (HAs) generally employed more PLS than low achievers (LAs). Moreover, the study finds that LAs relied more on external sources, compared to HAs, who relied more on internal strategies. This could be indicative of HAs having greater confidence in their own abilities. Higher order strategies are also found to be exclusively used by HAs. The chapter suggests that students need a positive, affective approach, and that teachers should convince them that specific pronunciation tasks/activities given in class will improve students' pronunciation.

Chapter 8 by Sophie Herment and Anne Tortel focuses on intonation contours. This chapter's data is drawn from the ANGLISH corpus (consisting of recorded speech by 40 British native speakers and 20 French learners). Among 10 of the native speakers, falling tones are found to be most frequent in final and non-final tone units (contradicting general claims), while rising contours appear to be exceptional in read speech and indicate readers' attitude, rather than non-finality. This contrasts with the typical prosody of French EFL learners, who tend to overuse rising tones. Among the pedagogical implications provided in the chapter, a particularly innovative idea is the employment of visualisation techniques to assist students in correcting their speech contours. The chapter concludes by recommending prosody as a core component of L2 English teaching.

Chapter 9 by Dan Frost and Alice Henderson explores the intersection between English as a medium of instruction and foreign-accented speech in French higher education and provides an overview of the IP-CAFES project ("Interphonology – Czech, Arabic, French, English, and Spanish"), a research project which focuses on the English spoken by users from these mother tongues. The chapter suggests that native speech is not necessarily easier to comprehend and that teachers should no longer be aspiring to be models of linguistic perfection. It is also argued that teacher training should emphasise intelligibility, rather than native-like speech. However, the authors also point out that accentedness which increases the cognitive load of audiences to such an extent that intelligibility suffers can be detrimental. A number of recommendations in L2 pronunciation teaching are made, including: a focus on

prosodic features; the use of online resources in combination with face-to-face classes; speaker training (e.g. prosody annotation); and listener training (e.g. pair work on word stress).

Chapter 10 by Sylwia Scheuer and Céline Horgues looks at L2 English pronunciation errors leading to miscommunication/corrective feedback. Their study shows that misunderstandings or mistakes between pairs during recorded speech were often ignored to prevent interruption of speech flow. The study also finds that recasts featured much more between pairs during recorded speech, compared to interactions in an L2 classroom. Further, their study finds that most communication breakdown was due to mispronunciation, among which incorrect lexical stress was most common. The chapter concludes by claiming that learning context determines teaching goals, and that native-like speech can be a valid goal, depending on the context.

Chapter 11 by Yulia Lavitskaya and Antonina Zagorodniuk focuses on the acquisition of English onset consonant clusters by L1 Chinese speakers. Although it is traditionally held that a language with the greatest distance from one's L1 is the hardest to acquire, this may not necessarily apply to the acquisition of onset consonant clusters. This study sheds valuable light on Chinese speakers' choice of syllable repair strategy. The authors therefore suggest that intelligibility and fluency of EFL students can be improved by systematically focusing on their pronunciation of word-initial clusters.

Chapter 12 by Ivana Duckinoska focuses on Macedonian EFL learners' vowel reduction in English grammatical words. English vowels have strong and weak forms, and correct use of these is a distinguishing feature of native pronunciation. Previous studies have found mixed results on the effect that instruction has on vowel reduction acquisition. This study investigated L2 English vowel reduction of 25 grammatical words in 121 Macedonian EFL learners. Their findings show that only around 20 % of vowels were correctly pronounced in their weak forms. The study also finds that high proficiency learners produced more correct forms, compared to beginners, and that those who received training had a significantly higher accuracy rate. The authors contend that the inclusion of pronunciation instruction while discussing grammar can improve receptive and productive skills.

Chapter 13 by Veronika Vonzová and Radek Skarnitzl focuses on the integration of prosodic features into a Czech primary school children's English course. Although children's attention span is short, they often work out language rules via playful interaction, and their limited attention span can be accommodated via educational games involving physical movement. The chapter presents an innovative study examining 24 primary school Czech children's production of English rhythmical patterns and melodic properties. The experimental group ($n = 12$) received strong guidance on prosody, but this was not available to the control group. The

experimental group's performance on melodic suppression was found to improve significantly. An important pedagogical implication arising from the study is that interactive activities targeting rhythmical and melodic aspects of English could benefit students' pronunciation learning.

Chapter 14 by Mireia Ortega, Ingrid Mora-Plaza, and Joan C. Mora focuses on the effects of advanced L1 Catalan/Spanish undergraduate EFL students receiving phonetic training on the production of English vowels. Given that difficulties in receptive and productive skills are common when learning L2 pronunciation, sufficient exposure to L2 sounds (potentially in the classroom) may improve learners' L2 receptive and productive skills. The study presented in the chapter investigated the use of High Variability Phonetic Training (HVPT) via three groups (non-word training group; word training group; control group). The results show that non-word training is effective in improving learners' L2 receptive and productive skills, but word training is not. The chapter argues that L2 pronunciation training is most effective when focusing on form, as opposed to meaning, and when using non-words.

Chapter 15 by Beata Walesiak focuses on students' use and perceived effectiveness of mobile devices for pronunciation learning. Pronunciation training, with a focus on intelligibility, is becoming an increasingly important part of English language courses. As mobile phone usage is expected to soon overtake that of computers, this exploratory study examines 38 adult Polish EFL students' use of five popular pronunciation training mobile apps. Results show that students' use of Mobile-Assisted Pronunciation Training (MAPT) increased after training, but decreased by the time of the delayed post-training questionnaire. The chapter concludes that MAPT could be useful for the learning of pronunciation for independent adult learners who already have a good foundation in the target language, but it may not be suitable for younger learners or beginners.

Overall, the volume presents some insightful findings from the most recent research studies on L2 pronunciation instruction. It is a well-edited and well-structured volume, with a coherent focus on the importance of pronunciation training in the teaching of English. The range of topics covered is impressive, including the teaching of different segmental and suprasegmental features of English pronunciation to L2 learners, teachers' and learners' perceptions and practices pertaining to L2 pronunciation instruction, different types and sources of learners' pronunciation errors, tools and strategies for L2 pronunciation instruction, attitudes towards accented speech, as well as the relationship between pronunciation research and teaching. Also worth noting is that the volume succeeds in linking L2 pronunciation research and pronunciation teaching practices, filling in a noticeable gap in the L2 pronunciation instruction literature. In particular, it makes a significant contribution to the existing body of work on L2 pronunciation teaching and learning by providing a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of different

pronunciation teaching techniques, the role of learner strategies in L2 pronunciation learning, as well as teachers' and learners' attitudes and beliefs regarding L2 pronunciation teaching/learning. Compared to other recent book-length publications on L2 pronunciation instruction (Alves and de Albuquerque 2023; Levis et al. 2022), this edited volume stands out in its coverage of a broad wide of interrelated topics related to L2 pronunciation instruction and its strong linkage created between L2 pronunciation empirical research and L2 pronunciation pedagogical practices across different chapters.

One minor criticism is that as most of the empirical studies reported in the volume are European-based, it would have been better if empirical research studies from other parts of the world (e.g. Asia and Africa) were also included in the volume to reflect the diversity of research on L2 pronunciation instruction from around the world. It would also have been better if the volume included contributions that discuss the impact of English as a lingua franca (ELF) on L2 pronunciation instruction and on teachers' and learners' attitudes towards L2 pronunciation instruction.

As most chapters in the book include a dedicated section on pedagogical implications with useful suggestions for classroom instruction, the book will certainly be a valuable resource for L2 language instructors, especially pronunciation instructors. It will also be of great interest to L2 pronunciation researchers, as the volume provides useful directions for future research on L2 pronunciation, especially L2 pronunciation instruction.

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