Promoting Learner Independence in Pronunciation

Arizio Sweeting
Pronunciation is an essential element of oral communication. There are questions, however, regarding how pronunciation should be taught.

(Linebaugh & Roche, 2013)
...very many of the exercises teachers use for pronunciation come down, in one form or another, to ‘listen and repeat’.

(Young & Messum, Speak Out, 2011)
Gattegno (2010) believed that...

the audio-lingual approaches deliberately fall into the trap of using drill and repetition as a way of bringing the new language to their students.
Gattegno realised that **awarenesses** are the stuff of human learning. Clearly, ...teachers must attend to awarenesses....[and] ..... appreciate that they have to continuously **adjust** their teaching in response to their students’ learning. This **transforms** the classroom.

(Messum and Young, 2013)
Pronunciation is a motor skill - do you agree?

- Physically demanding
- Whole body strength
- Agility
- Physical balance
There is no doubt that learning new sounds and sound combinations requires from students the formation of new motor skills, i.e. the formation of new articulatory habits.

(Szpyra-Kozłowzka, 2014)
Articulatory Setting is...

...the overall arrangement and manoeuvring of the speech organs necessary for the facile accomplishment of natural utterance.

(Honikman, 1964)
All languages do not have identical *articulatory settings*: whereas one language may resemble another in this respect, others may differ considerably. Where two languages are disparate in articulatory setting, it is not possible completely to master the pronunciation of one whilst maintaining the articulatory setting of the other.

(Honikman, 1964)
...[d]ifferent and apparently contradictory instructions may sometimes have to be suggested to learners with different language backgrounds.

(Collins et al. 1995)
...the teacher needs to act in the way that any sports coach normally acts...

Messum (2012)
Classroom ‘Coaching’ Strategies
Strategy:

1. Sensitise students about how their **speech breathing** functions
2. Encourage students to use their **abdominal musculature** to support stress, creating transient changes in loudness
3. Give them texts for **practice** in this way of speaking

(Messum, 2009)
a. Pe-ter-Pot-ter-was-a-po-et

b. Pe-Pot-po-
ter-ter-was-a-et
The difference is that the second sentence is more pulsatile than the first one.

In English, the pulses take more breath energy while the remnants take less.

The syllables in the pulse remnants are usually pronounced as a schwa and represented phonetically by the symbol /æ/.
Strategy:
Establish classroom ‘anchors’ or routines.
Strategy: ‘Big idiot!’

‘Very tired!’

‘Totally Relaxed!’
### Pronunciation Gestures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 and 9</th>
<th>/ə/ and /ɑ/</th>
<th>tongue</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pull lips into kissing lips with one hand and pull tongue out of your neck with the other hand.</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>/ə/</th>
<th>tongue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make BIG IDIOT and cut it for /ə/ the SMALL IDIOT</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>/æ/</th>
<th>tongue</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tongue to centre</td>
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[https://goo.gl/sQtQC6](https://goo.gl/sQtQC6)
Getting to Know Each Other
Name Chain

My name is...

Arizio - say it in four parts (syllables), more energy in the second part, roll the /r/ but very softly and the ‘o’ letter sounds like ‘book’

Juan - say it in two parts, more energy in the second part, the ‘j’ letter sounds like /h/ in ‘house’ and the syllable ‘an’ sounds like ‘sun’

Maurice - say it in two parts, more energy in the second part, ‘mau’ sounds like ‘more’ and ‘rice’ is pronounced in one sound with /s/

Liz - say it in one syllable, the ‘i’ letter is a short sound as in ‘fish’ and ‘z’ is said with voice so place your hand on your throat and feel a vibration when you make this sound
Latin learners (e.g. Brazilian, Spanish, Italian...) For them, spelling really matters! And so do vowels!

worked
/k [voiceless] → /t [voiceless]/

arrived
/v [voiced] → /d [voiced]/

wanted
/t [voiceless] → /d [voiced]/

I - schwi:
Counting the Syllables

**Strategy**: One syllable! Two syllables! etc.

1. Students work out the number of syllables
2. Teacher coaches to raise awareness - **no** listen and repeat
3. Students work out word stress using a finger hook
4. Teacher coaches self-correction of vowel/consonant sounds using the chart
5. Students practise stress using speech breathing and/or hand fists (haptic) - **no** listen and repeat
Japanese and Korean learners - /r/ is less frequent in their language! Reset the articulation kinaesthetically (Copeman, 2012)

**Strategy:**

1. Make them to produce /f/ as in ‘fit’ - the upper front teeth will get close to the lower lip

2. Anchor that position by getting them exaggerate it into a buck-toothed **Bugs Bunny grimace**

3. This will automatically force the tongue to pull back and down, avoiding the alveolar ridge

4. Get them use a **mirror** (or their **mobile phone**) and practise the sound until the new habit is reset

5. Use the chorus of a **catchy** song e.g. Fighter by Keith Urban as a practice piece
Chinese learners - unreleased sounds are often alien to them! **Strategy:** collect the problems and recycle them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>TRUE OR FALSE?</th>
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<tr>
<td>king</td>
<td>/g/ is pronounced</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zoo</td>
<td>pronounced with /z/</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring</td>
<td>pronounced like /bɪŋ/</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tall</td>
<td>pronounced with /r/ not /l/ at the end</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take</td>
<td>pronounced with /eɪ/</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take</td>
<td>pronounced in one syllable</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chill</td>
<td>pronounced with /dʒ/</td>
<td>F</td>
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For e-learning enthusiasts: Socrative, Quizlet, Kahoot etc.

Strategy:
1. Use your T/F questions.
2. Students discuss the answers together - notice they are probably trying to make the sounds! But they’re also having fun.
3. Get students to create their own quizzes about English pronunciation. This will give you an awareness of their perceptions of English sounds.
4. Get students to create quizzes about their own language. Here you might mix students from similar nationalities. This will give YOU an awareness of they sort of differences between English and their language
5. Recycling is important. You don’t have to be coming up with something new every day. Just add one or two here and then. You will also be able to use the statements in the next course!
Vietnamese and Thai learners –
For them, it’s all about sound representation!

It is actually quite understandable that learners think they are putting a consonant on the ends of words – because they are! The problem is that it is a consonant English speakers tend to ignore: the glottal stop.

Do you notice that every time you say a word that ‘begins with a vowel’ (eg. Apple), it really begins with a glottal stop? The reason you don’t notice it is that it is not functionally relevant to the phonology of English. However, in many languages the glottal stop is a stop consonant just like ‘t’ or ‘k’.

What learners are usually doing is not ‘leaving off the alveolar stop’ but ‘using a glottal stop instead of an alveolar stop’. It is more useful to them to be told ‘If you say it that way English speakers won’t hear the final consonant properly’ than to tell them to ‘put a consonant on the end’.

(Fraser, 2001)
You said X (write it on the board) but I heard Y (write it on the board)

or

You said X (write it on the board) but I want to hear Y (write it on the board)

e.g. CHURCH
‘...record the students’ pronunciation and your own and replay them as often as needed, allowing the students to hear both of them ‘externally’... [rather than asking them to take the recording home all the time] ...it is much more valuable to work on the recordings then and there [in the classroom] with the students.’

(Fraser, 2000)
Arab learners: consonant clusters are a challenge!
The Surgery Technique by Peggy Tharpe:

Objective:

1. Focus the students on the number of syllables
2. Remove the ‘extra vowels’ that Arabic speakers tend to add to the beginning of words unconsciously
3. Aid the awareness of consonant clusters

How does it work?

1. Choose a word which has a different vowel but ends in the same consonant sound as the ‘problem’ word e.g. *bus school*
2. Put words together and make lots of $SSS$ in between
3. Put extra energy in one of the S’s before school
4. Say the word *busss* without vocalising it (only mentally and through articulatory gestures)
5. Practise until you are left with ‘school’ only
## Arabic learners - building autonomy with word stress!

Syllable Stress & Word Rhythms, © Peggy Tharpe, AmericanPronunciationCoach.com, 2013

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<td>misunderstood</td>
<td>constitutional</td>
<td>administration</td>
<td>implementation</td>
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</table>
Thank you
References


Young, R., & Messum, P. (2011). How we learn and how we should be taught: An introduction to the work of Caleb Gattegno: Duo Flumina.