THE INSPIRATION FOR CREATING THE BEST OF TEACHING TIPS

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With the growing number of publications written about teaching pronunciation, practical pedagogy, and tools for pronunciation instruction (e.g., technology and instructional materials) it is clear that teachers need no convincing about the importance of teaching pronunciation (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Derwing & Munro, 2015; Lee et al., 2015; Levis, 2016, 2018, 2019; Levis & Echelberger, 2022; O'Brien et al., 2018; Thomson & Derwing, 2015). Yet on the practical side, in some EFL and ESL classrooms, pronunciation teaching still does not receive the attention it deserves, being overshadowed by grammar or vocabulary-oriented activities, as teachers themselves do not feel fully confident about their own pronunciation skills or pronunciation teaching abilities.

Whether presented implicitly or explicitly, pronunciation pedagogy is a crucial component of a language learning classroom. Helping learners foster intelligibility over accentedness, stimulating their L2 speech perception and awareness of their speech production, as well as teaching them strategies to speak more effectively in a variety of contexts may seem daunting at first, but it brings about a number of benefits for the learner, such as decreased speech anxiety and less relutance to speak. Other aspects that empower learners and lead to higher learning gains include implementing learner-focused instruction, both in a face-to-face and online environment, and providing teacher and peer feedback that is contextually relevant. Finally, integrating technology in the classroom and directing learners to relevant web and mobile apps and resources provides more autonomy and exposure to authentic language input, thus making pedagogy more inclusive and ensuring successful communication for learners in a variety of settings.

In light of these factors that promote excellent pronunciation teaching, we are delighted to focus this collection on selected best practical pronunciation teaching tips from the past issues of the Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching (PSLLT) Proceedings. PSLLT is a North American conference established by Dr. John Levis in 2009 at Iowa State University. The original goal of the conference was to help shape the field of pronunciation research and teaching. The first PSLLT had a strong start, attracting 65 presenters from 12 different countries. Since then, 13 annual conferences have been hosted by various universities across the United States and Canada. The conference has sparked the interest of researchers, scholars, and teachers worldwide, which is notable by the increasing number of attendees (for example, 196 participants at the 10th PSLLT in 2018, and 360 attendees at the 12th Virtual PSLLT in 2021).

The program typically consists of invited talks, research workshops, oral presentations, poster presentations, and teaching tips integrating theory, methods, and practice.

Over the last decade, PSLLT has had an important impact on the advancement of the L2 pronunciation field, including teaching prounciation. As the title suggests, PSLLT has created a community of researchers and teachers who learn from each other to bridge the gap between research and practice. At the conference, the teaching tips are the most practice-oriented, hands-on aspect of the conference and have informed second language classrooms because a large number of presenters are both researchers and teachers. Teaching and research are inherently linked, making it vital for the field to actively maintain open channels of communication between these two areas. As one of the plenary speakers, Marnie Reed (2022) stated, the view from the trenches and the view from the ivory tower are not the same, but the PSLLT conference provides opportunities for shaping the connection among them, especially with the teaching tips.

This selected collection is taken from the previous freely accessible PSLLT proceedings where presenters have been able to further share their knowledge. The proceedings are a peer-reviewed collection of papers written by presenters at the conference. Anyone who had a presentation, poster, or teaching tip for the conference can submit to the proceedings. At approximately 4,000 words, which is more concise than typical journal articles in this field, these articles are easy to read and digest in a short period of time. At the conference, teaching tip presentations are around eight minutes long and serve as a platform for teachers to share effective pronunciation teaching methods from their own classrooms. These presentations also provide an opportunity for showcasing activities that are grounded in classroom-based research. In the conference proceedings, the write-ups for teaching tips generally include a brief background on the targeted feature, emphasize its importance in teaching, and then offer a comprehensive overview of the activity, complete with relevant instructions and examples.

While planning this project, several considerations were taken into account. Studies have shown that though teachers recognize the importance of pronunciation in English instruction, they express concerns about their ability to teach pronunciation and their access to instructional resources (Macdonald, 2002; Sonsaat, 2018). Furthermore, even teachers who have access to teaching resources can find it difficult to stay up-to-date with current best practices. Time is precious, as any teacher will confirm, and most teachers do not have time outside their regular duties to search the latest journals in the hopes of finding something relevant to their practice. Even if they had time to devote to extensive reading to stay abreast of the field, the fact is that academic writing is generally intended to be read by scholars and theorists, not teachers. Thus, a goal of this project has been to make materials easily accessible and minimize the time teachers spend searching for resources.

We decided that the best method to meet our desired goals was to leverage the domain knowledge and individual experiences of our research group; while we are all graduate students in Applied Linguistics interested in pronunciation research, we come from diverse L1 backgrounds and have a wide variety of teaching experiences. Our group applied a collaborative consensus-building approach as the means of selecting teaching tips for this collection. This methodology involved a structured process of individual evaluation, deliberation, and negotiation to arrive at a collective decision. This approach provided a rigorous and transparent framework for group decision-making that was able to account for the perspectives and expertise of each participant.

In our regular meetings, each research group member was assigned to read the teaching tips within a specific volume of PSLLT proceedings. Notes about the teaching tips that were considered to be useful, relevant, and evidence-based were recorded in a shared spreadsheet, after which the group reconvened to discuss each individual selection. Discussions were centered around both theoretical and practical justifications for the usefulness, relevance, and salience of each teaching tip, and involved shifting opinions and reaching consensus through friendly debate. Most of our justifications included statements such as, "This provides awareness raising in a unique way that could be helpful for lower-level learners," and "This activity includes ready-made scripts and activities for teachers to implement scaffolded perception and production practice."

The teaching tips are organized into two main sections according to their primary focus. The first section focuses on the teaching of segmentals, with activities that address single phonemes or short phoneme clusters that are smaller than the word level, including both vowels and consonants. The second section focuses on the teaching of suprasegmentals, including word stress, prominence, and intonation. This section also includes a few activities that did not fit squarely within either category; we considered that function word pronunciation fundamentally deals with sentence-level stress, and shadowing imitation is also similarly focused on sentence and discourse-level pronunciation issues, rather than those that are below the word.

It is our hope that this collection will enable teachers and teacher trainees to be more effective at locating activities related to pronunciation to suit their needs. The field of pronunciation is becoming increasingly popular, as evidenced by the growing number of publications and many conferences organized around the themes of pronunciation theory and instruction, speech development or accents (e.g. PSLLT, International Conference on Accents of English, English Pronunciation: Issues and Practices, New Sounds) and interest groups suhc as PronSIG (IATEFL), SPLIS (TESOL) or TOP-IG (CATESOL) that this is a growing field with more and more interest, and we hope that this collection of teaching tips is an invaluable contribution to this ever growing field.

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