

THE PRACTICE OF PRONUNCIATION

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We were so grateful to welcome the PSLLT community to our little corner of the world at Purdue University, in West Lafayette, Indiana. Our theme was “The Practice of Pronunciation,” highlighted by an engaging keynote presented by Ron Thomson of Brock University, host of the 2022 PSLLT. “Practice” is a multifaceted word, and as Purdue is known primarily for STEM and for being the cradle of astronauts, we are called upon to reflect time and again on the practices we use, as well as the practicality of what we teach for students who quite literally want to reach the stars. As pronunciation teachers and researchers (and learners ourselves), we understand the need for practice, in class and out in the world where our target languages are used. PSLLT is devoted to finding and refining best practices in pronunciation learning and teaching, and our Teaching Tips roundtables at each year’s conference is a practical demonstration of that devotion. Of course, our teaching practices in second language learning must be informed by sound research and are inspired by the experiences we have in our classrooms. Language teaching is, in this way, a continuous cycle of question and discovery. Each of these pieces of the practice of pronunciation teaching and learning was on full display at the 14th PSLLT and documented in these proceedings.

INTRODUCTION

The 2023 Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching conference was organized under the theme of “the practice of pronunciation.” As we have seen in this year’s conference, the practice of pronunciation is deeply influenced by the ongoing pedagogical and technological developments in the field. In parallel, our research methodologies have continued to evolve, and the knowledge base that underpins our theoretical understanding of second language pronunciation has continued to grow. The PSLLT 2023 conference and proceedings show that PSLLT remains the premier venue for discussion of the practice of pronunciation from pedagogical, methodological, and theoretical perspectives. In this introduction we cover some of the most exciting developments in pedagogical, methodological, and theoretical perspectives that were presented in West Lafayette during PSLLT 2023.

Pedagogical and Technological Development

One major technological change that is positioned to significantly impact the practice of pronunciation, as well as our pedagogical approaches to pronunciation instruction, is the development of publicly accessible Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, like ChatGPT. At Purdue University, we are constantly reminded to think of how AI programs can or should fit into our courses, and we suspect this is true across the globe in all of your institutions as well. Such programs will undoubtedly influence how we teach and learn pronunciation in our various languages. Multiple presentations at this year’s conference reflected on how teachers may meaningfully incorporate AI as a pedagogical practice for second language pronunciation. But as Edna Lima and Lara Wallace remind us in their paper, “Considering What Pronunciation

Teachers Can Do That ChatGPT Cannot,” machines and machine learning can never completely replace human teachers and interlocutors. As AI tools are still in their relative infancy, we are confident that pedagogical innovation and research on using AI as a tool to enhance our teaching will remain a key area for development in the field.

Methodological Development

From a methodological perspective, this year’s PSLLT showed a continued focus on creating open, publicly accessible, and transparent research practices. Open science practices and the free distribution of research findings represent a key development in second language research. Those who attended Charlie Nagle and Amanda Huensch’s excellent pre-conference workshop on “Demystifying Open Science for Speech Research: Individual and Team-Based Approaches” got a wonderful introduction to on-going developments in the field, including the IRIS database and OASIS summaries often required by journals. Open Science is exciting yet, as they put it, daunting and its position in scholarly work will continue to grow throughout the coming decades. Fortunately, PSLLT has been ahead of this trend by always offering the PSLLT Conference Proceedings publicly without a paywall.

Similarly, Joseph Casillas’s workshop on data visualizations fits neatly into the Open Science question: part of the challenge, as Nagle and Huensch explained, is making all of the publicly available instruments, tools, and data sets clear and usable. Casillas provided the principles of data visualization, focusing on linguistic data. Following his guidelines and strategies will strengthen our contributions to Open Science and the community at large. Finally, Atsushi Fukada’s workshop on online pronunciation practice and data collection illustrated ways to collect data that can translate into methods and data sets to be shared via the open science framework.

Theoretical Development

Of course, beyond all of new tools, resources, and platforms, we continue to work on the quintessential questions of pronunciation in language learning and teaching, from theoretical development to innovations in pedagogy. One of these was highlighted by Ron Thomson in his riveting keynote address, “Perceptual Pathways to L2 Pronunciation Development.” Thomson made a case for similarity between the pathways in L1 and naturalistic L2, as well as for the necessity of explicit instruction for adult L2 learners. Explicit instruction, he explained, provides an opportunity to re-orient learners’ perceptual systems to facilitate the development of more accurate perception of L2 sounds, and, consequently, improvements in L2 production accuracy.

The methodological workshops, keynote address, presentations, and teaching tips featured PSLLT 2023 demonstrate the multi-faceted nature of L2 pronunciation research. Pedagogically, as a field we strive to provide students and teachers innovative, research-based pedagogical materials proven to enhance the learning process. Methodologically, we continue to pursue rigorous methodological approaches to our craft, supported by the core principles of an open science framework. Finally, from a theoretical perspective, we continue to explore the key notions that guide second language pronunciation, including the components of speech production and perception. We hope that the Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and

Teaching Conference and Proceedings continue to serve as central link between pedagogy, methodology, and theory, as we acknowledge that our classroom experiences drive the questions we choose to pursue for our research, and our research informs current pedagogical practices.