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BOOK REVIEWS

Tamara Jones (ed.). (2016) *Pronunciation in the classroom. The overlooked essential*. Alexandria: TESOL Press. xxi + 170 pp.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Keenan (Carringbush Adult Education, Melbourne, Australia)

Pronunciation in the classroom. The overlooked essential, edited by Tamara Jones, is a practical handbook that integrates pronunciation teaching into all areas of the English teaching curriculum. Jones addresses the issue for teachers “of figuring out how to incorporate pronunciation seamlessly into their lesson plans” (p. xii). It is a valuable guide for teachers, giving clear explanations of essential elements of pronunciation and providing activities to readily incorporate pronunciation teaching into a variety of lessons, with the desired outcome of improving learners’ communication skills.

The book is organized into 12 chapters, with contributions from well-known educators and researchers in the area of pronunciation teaching and learning. Although most of the contributors are from North America, the content is relevant for Australia and other contexts. Each chapter provides an explanation of one or more pronunciation features (e.g., sounds, stress, intonation, thought groups), and demonstrates how the teaching and learning of these features can be integrated into the curriculum in areas such as vocabulary, listening, oral presentation, grammar, reading, and spelling instruction. Relevant teaching activities are also included in each chapter, making this an excellent guide for teachers working with learners at all levels of English language learning.

The book begins with a forward by Judy Gilbert who provides a brief history of pronunciation teaching, a diagram of her prosody pyramid, and a list of the features of pronunciation that she believes should be prioritized in pronunciation instruction. The introduction by the editor, Tamara Jones, provides an explanation of the segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation. Here, the descriptions and explanations of the different features are clear and dotted with anecdotes and examples from Jones’s teaching experience. As many English language teachers do not have the luxury of teaching a dedicated pronunciation class, the dilemma presented is how to teach pronunciation in an already overfull curriculum. Jones proposes that pronunciation teaching be integrated into the existing curriculum. This volume suggests ways to use required course textbooks to provide the “how to do it” of incorporating pronunciation into the teaching and learning of other language skills.

Chapters 1 and 2 offers ways to integrate pronunciation into the teaching of vocabulary. In Chapter 1, Kay Ahmad advocates the teaching of pronunciation with the introduction of new vocabulary, with attention to the sounds of English. A useful resource, The Color Vowel Chart, is explained together with examples of activities to introduce vocabulary with pronunciation instruction. In Chapter 2, Michael Burri, Amanda Baker and William Acton discuss the importance of anchoring new vocabulary through the use of kinesthetic and tactile techniques, with a focus on teaching stress at the word and then sentence level.

In Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 the emphasis is on prosodic features including intonation, prominence, and thought groups. Greta Muller Levis and John Levis, in Chapter 3, give very clear explanations of prominence and final intonation with excellent activity examples sequenced from controlled to bridging to communicative activities. I have had the chance to trial some of these activities with my beginner-level students. They were particularly engaged in “Greetings and Small talk” and used gestures to indicate prominence, and arrows and gestures to indicate final intonation. Veronica G. Sardegna, Fu-Hao William Chiang and Mimi Ghosh, in Chapter 4, discuss the relationship between pronunciation and presentation skills, and highlight the value of oral presentations as a vehicle to teach prominence and stress at the word and phrase level. The authors provide clear guidelines for practice, preparation and self-evaluation of oral presentations, and argue that teachers can use strategy training to equip students to predict and pronounce prosodic features thus enabling autonomous practice. In Chapter 5, John Murphy stresses the importance of thought groups in integrating pronunciation instruction and listening skills as “foundational to everything we listen to and say in English” (p. 58). He maintains that once thought groups are introduced, other prosodic features are more easily understood. The chapter provides practical activities and clear instructions for how to identify thought groups, the features of thought groups, and non-prominent segments. The importance of developing listening skills is examined further by Marnie Reed in Chapter 6, who considers speaker intent, the illocutionary act, and the role of prominence. Reed puts forward a strong case for the importance of teaching intonation. She defines implicational intonation as “the marked or enhanced intonation contours that signal what the speaker intends to imply and the listener must infer” (p. 78). The focus of this chapter is to increase teacher and learner awareness of ‘the communicative role of intonation and the importance of listening for what is meant’ (p. 77). As Reed points out, the speaker’s intended meaning is not always clear from the linguistic form and must be inferred by the listeners from the intonation contours. She therefore recommends that educators teach intonation to “directly improve learners’ abilities to listen for what is meant” (p. 85). Activities and teacher tips are provided to help students notice and practice the fall-rise pitch contour of implicational intonation and contrastive stress.

Integrating grammar and pronunciation instruction is the focus of the next three chapters, each targeted at a different learner level. In Chapter 7, Sue Miller and Tamara Jones acknowledge the value of incorporating pronunciation instruction into grammar classes at the beginning of English language learning. They focus on suprasegmental features of pronunciation and support the use of physical movement to internalize prosodic patterns, clapping to imprint prosody, choral practice, and focused listening to listen beyond the meaning and notice the music of an utterance. I have used many of their excellent activities successfully with my beginner-level students. They are a valuable resource for me in my work to develop the students' awareness of prosodic features of spoken English and to enable them to practice these features more frequently. Monika Floyd, in Chapter 8, presents practical pronunciation activities to integrate pronunciation and intermediate grammar instruction. She explains how to integrate intonation practice when teaching question types and suggests using a visible system to indicate the direction of the voice, such as arrows or lines above or below the text. Floyd suggests a multimodal presentation of stress including clapping, using rubber bands and Cuisenaire rods when introducing new vocabulary, as "students need to know not only its part of speech and its meaning but also which syllable is stressed" (p. 106). In Chapter 9, Wayne Rimmer argues that with advanced learners, for whom the syllabus is organized around grammar, the "most proficient use of grammar would be completely wasted if the utterance was unintelligible" (p. 118). He suggests a range of activities to incorporate pronunciation teaching using prescribed textbooks targeted at advanced-level learners.

Chapters 10, 11 and 12 involve the inclusion of pronunciation instruction in reading and spelling lessons. The authors of Chapter 10, Minah Woo and Rebecca Price, emphasize the importance of training focused on segmentals, and argue that pronunciation training is the critical first step of phonemic awareness (the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds) and phonics (the ability to assign letters to sounds). I have tried their lower-level skills development activities with my beginner-level students with positive results; the activities are both effective and enjoyable for the students. Feifei Han, in Chapter 11 stresses the importance of pronunciation instruction in reading skills at a passage level and Adam Brown looks specifically at pronunciation, spelling, and punctuation in Chapter 12. He gives a brief history of English spelling, the relationship between English phonology and orthography and activities to help students predict the pronunciation of English words and to assign spelling to pronounced words.

Many English language teachers have been reluctant to teach pronunciation "due to inexperience, lack of specialized training, lack of resources and/or lack of institutional support" (Murphy, 2014, p. 204–5). With increased awareness of and interest in pronunciation instruction, teachers can benefit from a practical

resource such as this, as it not only explains what to teach and how to teach it but addresses the issue of integrating pronunciation teaching into existing schedules.

What I like about this book is the arrangement of an easy-to-read text into short chunks of information, with related activities. This allows for targeted reading on specific pronunciation features with explanations of how to incorporate them into many areas of the curriculum. Included in each chapter is an easily understood theoretical description of the targeted pronunciation features and explicit examples of how to teach those features to different learner levels. Several chapters include a list of useful resources to further explore a teaching point.

There are numerous books for English language teachers aimed at providing information about how to teach pronunciation, what is important and what to prioritize. This book offers something unique in that it addresses the issues of overloaded schedules and mandatory course materials by providing activities to integrate pronunciation instruction into many areas of the curriculum. It makes a valuable contribution to the area of pronunciation teaching and learning by specifically addressing the constraints teachers face, and provides theoretical support based on research findings throughout. When reading the book I felt I was being educated in “how” to teach pronunciation and learning “why” it is important to teach it. One particularly interesting feature of the book is that the authors acknowledge the value of other contributors to the book, which gives a sense of a united force in the quest for effective, integrated pronunciation instruction.

Our organization is currently undertaking a funded project looking at how to upskill teachers in the area of pronunciation teaching, and how to best integrate pronunciation teaching into current lessons. This text is a valuable resource not only for this purpose, but also for me personally as a teacher who wants to teach pronunciation across the day in all areas of the curriculum.

References

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Reviewer's address

Elizabeth Keenan
39 Chrystobel Crescent
Hawthorn 3122
Australia