

Beyond Repeat After Me: Teaching Pronunciation to English Learners. Marla Tritch Yoshida. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Press, 2016. vi +188 pp.

Reviewed by
Branden Kirchmeyer
Sojo University

Teaching pronunciation to EFL/ESL students can seem daunting, even for instructors who are native speakers of English. Teacher education programs the world over often prioritize literacy and grammar despite the common goal of developing practical communicative abilities shared by many language education institutions. Of course, texts for teaching pronunciation

abound, yet books aimed at providing teachers with specific strategies often gloss over the foundational concepts. Although larger handbooks for teachers may provide exhaustive and research-based reviews of the technical aspects of pronunciation, they take a backseat role in directing teachers *how* to teach pronunciation. *Beyond Repeat After Me* bridges this gap by successfully blending metalinguistic analysis of American English pronunciation with practical pedagogical strategies. In this text, written specifically for “the needs and interests of nonnative speakers of English” (p. v), Yoshida presents the essential concepts of American English pronunciation—from the articulation of individual sounds to the assignment of prominence in a thought group—in a manner that is both highly informative and easy to read. Divided into 15 chapters, Yoshida’s approachable exposition plays out into two unspecified yet discernable acts: the production and teaching of (a) segmental features of pronunciation (individual phonemes), and (b) suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm, prominence, and intonation).

Following an introductory chapter that orients the reader via briefings on trends in pronunciation education, factors affecting pronunciation learning, and key problems faced by students, Chapters 2 through 6 deal with the pronunciation of American English at the segmental level, culminating with a chapter on teaching suggestions and activities. Chapter 2 introduces some basic concepts of phonology, including phonemes and allophones, consonants and vowels, and the phonemic alphabet, before ending with an encouraging recognition of the descriptive nature of rules that “govern” pronunciation. Chapter 3 very briefly describes the human articulatory system and equips readers with the terminology necessary for subsequent chapters. Yoshida’s advocacy for the use of various media to teach pronunciation begins to emerge in this chapter. Some of her teaching suggestions include the use of mirrors, dental models, and multimedia apps (p. 21). In Chapters 4 through 6 Yoshida presents and illustrates consonants, vowels, and certain word endings of American English before expanding on the actual teaching of these features in Chapter 7.

Throughout each of these chapters the reader finds an abundance of figures, tables, and illustrations that serve to make the content more tangible: for instance, a tip box illustrating how toy pop guns, air pumps, and balloons can help demonstrate articulation (p. 26) and tables showing tongue position (p. 39) and lip positions (p. 41) for American English vowels. In her preface, Yoshida emphasizes the importance of sound as a necessary tool and aspect of pronunciation teaching and learning. Although visuals are helpful in representing various aspects of spoken language, nothing can

truly compare to using actual audio, and Yoshida does not disappoint. Her companion website (<http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/bookstore/beyond-repeat-after-me>), publicly accessible via the TESOL Press website, contains videos and audio files useful for both teachers and students. Icons denoting supplementary audio files, hosted on the aforementioned publisher's website, average about two per page in these chapters.

Busy teachers looking to dive straight into activities and approaches to teaching pronunciation might start in Chapter 7, in which Yoshida adopts a communicative framework proposed by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010) to present a compendium of techniques that require little background knowledge to understand and implement in any class. None of the techniques listed here are original, but they often include bits of advice amassed during Yoshida's nearly three decades of experience and together they offer an essential resource for EFL and ESL teachers in any context.

Suprasegmental features of pronunciation—stress, rhythm, thought groups, prominence and intonation, and connected speech—are brought up respectively in Chapters 8 through 12, which lead into a second set of useful pedagogical techniques (Chapter 13). Yoshida continues to employ visuals when explaining auditory artifacts: various sized balls indicate stress, contour overlays illustrate intonation, and bars of magnets convey connected speech patterns. Because Yoshida has earlier cited several scholars (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Gilbert, 2008; Lane, 2010) who prioritized the teaching of suprasegmentals over individual sounds (p. 3), it is not surprising that these chapters make up the larger portion of the book and include more than two-thirds of the supplementary audio files. Despite the increasing complexity of pronunciation-related concepts, Yoshida covers a wide variety of technical language both distinctly and clearly.

Chapter 13 is both entertaining and informative. Adapting the same five-part framework she used to organize phoneme-focused instructional strategies in Chapter 7, Yoshida delves into "Teaching the Musical Aspects of Pronunciation" with activities like syllable scavenger hunts, ball throwing, feet stomping, rubber band stretching, and orchestra conducting. Puppets, songs, model clay, and jokes are also discussed, as is software that analyzes and visualizes sound waves. These strategies—especially those that might seem childish at first glance—should not be overlooked as appropriate for learners who are above elementary age. This reviewer can personally attest to their capacity for engaging less-than-enthusiastic university students and their ability to convert features of English pronunciation that typically evade students' perception into comprehensible and replicable input.

The book closes out with a chapter aimed at drawing teachers' attention to student variability (Chapter 14) and a very helpful chapter addressing the notorious spelling system of English (Chapter 15). A concise collection of additional resources and a glossary of over 200 clearly defined terms, replete with examples, more than satisfactorily complete the book. On the whole, this text has much to offer any educator, regardless of experience, who is tasked with teaching pronunciation to English language learners.

References

- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (2010). *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and a reference guide* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilbert, J. (2008). *Teaching pronunciation using the prosody pyramid*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Lane, L. (2010). *Tips for teaching pronunciation: A practical approach*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman.