Teaching Perception of Suprasegmentals Using Popular Media

TESOL 2007

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Presentation Outline

- Presentation Goals
- Definition of Suprasegmentals
- Our Motivation
- Brief Explanation of the 3 Ps
- Criteria for Selecting Materials
- Demonstration of Activities
Presentation Goal

- Demonstrate effective methods for teaching perception and production of suprasegmentals
Linking

- Definition:
  Connection of sounds between words in fast speech.

- Example:
  My_aunt_is named Rachel.
Trimming

- Definition:
  Deletion of sounds in fast speech, including contractions.

- Example:
  Isn’t he going?
Blending

Definition:
Coarticulation of /t,d,s,z/ with /y/

Examples:
I know that you’re afraid.
Did you miss your bus?
Message Units (MU)
a.k.a. thought groups, etc.

- Definition:
  Smallest unit of spoken discourse, identified at each boundary by a pause.

- Example:
  What did you teach while you were there?

  I taught math / and physics for one year.

  I taught math and physics for one year.
Alternating Rhythm

- Definition:
  Alternation between stressed and unstressed words/ syllables inside MUs

- Example:
  we wENT to the stORE.
  we bOUGHT banANAs.
Primary Phrase Stress (PPS)
a.k.a. main stress, etc.

Definition:
Most prominent stress in a MU

Example:
we went to the stORE.
we bought banANAs (there).
Our Motivation

- Teach features that are important for comprehension and intelligibility
  (Derwing et al., 2003)

- Use materials that are authentic and motivate students (Hadley, 2001)

- Add variety to existing lesson plans

- Encourage students to become independent language learners
The 3 Ps

- Prediction
  - Application of rules and patterns

- Perception
  - Ability to hear English stress and rhythm

- Production
  - Accurate pronunciation of English suprasegmentals

(Hahn & Dickerson, 1999)
Criteria for Selecting Materials

- Appropriately authentic
- Contain salient examples of pronunciation features in focus
- Relate to classroom content
- Content is appropriate for age/proficiency of students
- Observe fair use and copyright rules

http://employees.csbsju.edu/esass/internetlessoncriteri.htm
Rhythm in *The Matrix*

- **Objectives / Rationale**
  - Students practice predicting and perceiving target pronunciation features.
  - Use of these features is critical for production of English rhythm.
  - Ability to perceive these features aids students’ comprehension.
The Matrix

- Prerequisites
  - Students have general understanding of the target features, based on materials presented in previous classes.
The Matrix

- Procedures
  - Ss mark their predictions on the transcript.
  - Play the audio file twice. Students mark in a different color pen what they hear the speaker do.
  - Discuss: Where are your predictions correct? Where did the speaker do something different? Can you explain why?
  - Play the file again, repeating certain phrases as needed, so students can hear the target.
Message Units in MLK’s “I Have a Dream”

Objectives / Rationale

- Students practice predicting, perceiving, and producing message units.
- Use of message units is critical for production of English rhythm.
- Ability to perceive message units aids students’ comprehension.
MLK’s “I Have a Dream”

- Prerequisites
  - Students have a general understanding of message units, based on materials presented in previous classes.
MLK’s “I Have a Dream”

Procedure

- Ss mark their predictions for message units on the transcript.
- Play the audio file twice. Students mark in a different color pen what they hear the speaker do.
- Discuss: Where are your predictions correct? Where did the speaker do something different? Can you explain why?
- Play the file again, repeating certain phrases as needed, so students can hear the target.
Student-Developed Materials

- Objectives / Rationale
  - Students practice self-directed learning by creating their own version of suprasegmental practice materials

- Prerequisites
  - Completion of in-class perception and production activities
Student Developed Materials

Step 1: Ss browse the Internet for a lecture which contains a topic of interest to them (i.e. physics, chemistry, computer science, etc).

Step 2: Ss transcribe, word-for-word, 1 or 2 minutes of speech from the lecture.

Step 3: Ss choose one aspect of the speaker’s pronunciation to concentrate on (i.e. message units, rhythm, primary phrase stress, linking, trimming, etc.).

Step 4: Ss mark transcriptions with predictions.

Step 5: Using a clean transcription, Ss mark the actual productions of the speaker.

Step 6: Ss post their transcriptions, along with a link to the audio/ video file on a class web site.
Student Feedback

- All students said the activity helped them understand more about message units
- All said they would like to do another, similar activity
“I think I need more ‘examples’ to learn not from textbook”

“I am wondering if this is a normal way to speak. I mean maybe people don’t speak like giving a speech usually”

“Message units is not fixed to rules, it depends on the purpose of the speaker”
Student Feedback

- “Increases my awareness in perception.”
- “Provided real life examples of what we learn in class.”
- “The stress is used obviously everywhere, and so is alternating rhythm.”
Student Suggestions

- Use video also.
- Have us listen and transcribe before seeing script.
- Have us read and repeat out loud what we heard.
Main Points

- Popular media can provide authentic and salient examples of important English suprasegmentals
- Students learn to apply prediction rules inside and outside the classroom
- Teachers can adapt lesson plan formats to focus on diverse targets and themes
References

Criteria for Selecting and/or Evaluating Lessons that Use the Internet.


Thank you!

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Slides and handouts are available on TESOL’s website