



BOOK REVIEW

Guskaroska, A., Zawadzki, Z., Levis, J. M., Challis, K., & Prikazchikov, M. (2024). *Teaching pronunciation with confidence: A resource for ESL/EFL teachers and learners*. Iowa State University Digital Press.

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Teaching Pronunciation with Confidence is a comprehensive, open educational resource (OER, 2024) aimed at ESL/EFL teachers and learners, with a focus on effective pronunciation teaching. The book was conceptualized by lead author, Guskaroska, who had worked on a course created by Levis with fellow PhD students at that time, Zawadzki and Challis. The purpose of the book was to create an online resource for future students in Levis' pronunciation teaching course that could transform the course's paper-based activities into interactive online activities, providing immediate feedback for students completing the activities. At the same time, an OER publication offered teachers seeking to integrate pronunciation teaching into their classroom practice an accessible resource that drew on up-to-date technological resources and pedagogical approaches. ESL/EFL teachers and students will appreciate its clear, accessible format and descriptions of research-informed classroom activities that are appropriate for most levels of instruction. Teacher educators of TESOL trainees will find that the book (particularly in Chapters 1 and 2) provides succinct but thorough summaries of the theoretical background and research to ESL/EFL pronunciation teaching. Teacher trainers could find it a useful resource to draw on when preparing professional learning sessions. This review briefly outlines and evaluates each of the book's sections, including the foundational aspects of pronunciation instruction, segmentals (vowels, consonants), suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm, intonation), and assessment strategies.

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Levis' introductory chapter on the *Basics of teaching pronunciation* explains why teaching pronunciation is crucial, emphasizing intelligibility over native-like accents. The section *What is Pronunciation Teaching?* introduces the purpose of teaching pronunciation in ESL/EFL settings. Here, Levis stresses that the focus of pronunciation teaching has shifted from achieving native-like pronunciation to prioritizing intelligibility and mutual understanding of spoken English inclusive of all accents and dialects. This section highlights research on the impact of pronunciation on intelligibility to support the view taken in the book that there is a relationship between the explicit teaching of pronunciation and improved communication in English. Levis emphasizes the need for teachers to understand how to identify appropriate goals for pronunciation teaching, outlining the book's aims to provide teachers with a systematic "what, why, and how" of pronunciation teaching.

In Chapter 2, *Pronunciation in language teaching*, Levis builds on the introduction with a discussion of pronunciation teaching terms and concepts. Teachers will find an overview of the historical roots to constructs such as intelligibility and nativeness as well as key pedagogical concepts that underpin pronunciation teaching. The nature and role of functional load, suprasegmentals, orthography, and variations in English speech are discussed. This chapter underscores the need for teachers to adopt an "intelligibility-based approach" to teaching pronunciation, highlighting that "not all pronunciation errors are equally important in promoting oral communication". Levis acknowledges the limited time afforded to teaching pronunciation as a standalone skill in most classroom contexts, pointing to a need for teachers to understand how to accurately identify and prioritize areas of pronunciation to best support their students' oral communication. Subsequent chapters detail these areas and suggest relevant activities for each pronunciation teaching priority area.

Part II, *Segmentals*, deals with English vowel and consonant sounds. First, Guskaroska describes the complexities inherent in teaching English vowels, due to the discrepancy between spelling and sound and the fact that an individual vowel grapheme (letter, or combination of letters) can often represent multiple sounds (e.g., *ea* in *speak* vs. *heart*). An innovative section entitled *Technology Corner* includes links to online vowel instructional resources and practical ideas for utilizing resources such as *Google Pronunciation* and *Google Translate*. Activities in this section include listening discrimination activities with hyperlinks to the recorded sounds. These recordings use a North American accent model, which may limit their applicability to some classrooms. Other activities are described in relation to the nature of the production of the sound (e.g., how the mouth and tongue are positioned to produce the vowel sound described). Activities progress from listening discrimination tasks through to scaffolded, practice activities and then suggest how a teacher can guide students towards more independent production of the target sound taught in communicative activities (e.g., short, partner discussion activities that integrate vocabulary with the target sounds). The section on consonants outlines the concept of functional load in relation to

teaching consonant sounds. Drawing on research by Levis (2019), this section includes a helpful table of consonant contrasts to focus on, based on their highest functional load. Examples include the /p/ and /b/ distinction, which can cause confusion when mispronounced. Teaching activities are described following a similar format to the vowel activities, moving through listening discrimination activities and articulatory descriptions to controlled, guided and communicative activities. Such a structure provides teachers with a systematic approach for introducing and practicing specific English sounds when teaching oral communication skills.

In Part III, Zawadski notes how important *Suprasegmentals* (stress, rhythm, intonation) are for natural-sounding speech in Chapter 6. In the *Word Stress* section, the author emphasizes the importance of teaching stress patterns and rhythm to improve both intelligibility and the natural flow of speech. Misplaced stress can lead to misunderstanding. As English rhythm relies on stressed and unstressed syllables, the author explains how stress and rhythm patterns help speakers convey meaning in English. Rising and falling pitch patterns in speech (intonation) also affect meaning and speaker-listener interaction. Teaching suggestions in this section include identifying same/different words according to word stress heard, marking the main stressed vowel in a word and a hyperlinked interactive activity for students to record themselves reading a passage. Chapter 7, *Rhythm*, introduces readers to the nature of timing patterns in English and how these are built around stressed and unstressed syllables. Such patterns are important for teachers to understand, as they can affect how a speaker is understood and how easy/difficult speech may be for a listener to pick out important information a speaker is conveying. Zawadski notes that, for students accustomed to listening to syllable-timed languages such as French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and many African languages, understanding how English utilizes rhythm can be key to facilitating oral communication. In Chapter 8, Levis introduces teachers to *Prominence*. A helpful clarification for readers who are familiar with this field in linguistics or applied linguistics is Levis' note that the term prominence (a "special blend of intonation and stress") has different names in pronunciation literature, such as sentence stress, nuclear stress or focus. This section includes activities that help students identify changes in meaning between questions based on where word stress is placed and dialogue activities in which students can practice where to place prominence to adjust meaning. Chapter 9 on *Intonation* deals with the melody or rising and falling patterns of pitch utilized in English speech and how these are used to convey meaning. Listening activities in this section introduce teachers and students to challenges of accurately perceiving how rising and falling intonation impacts on meaning in English. In Chapter 10, co-authors Levis and Challis unpack *Connected Speech*, describing "normal form vs. dictionary form" of English in the context of natural speech. This section introduces readers to how sounds are commonly deleted, added, reduced, or changed in informal speech. Teachers will appreciate the authors' suggestions for visually representing these processes in a sentence (e.g., linking C-V, or the consonant at the end of a word to the vowel at the beginning of a new word).

Part IV, *Assessment*, includes suggestions for diagnostic tasks that help teachers identify pronunciation issues and track student progress. Here, Levis also discusses the importance of providing corrective feedback and offering controlled practice opportunities, such as listen-and-repeat exercises, to help learners improve over time. Tasks begin with initial questions to ask and ways to generally assess a student's overall speaking and pronunciation needs and strengths. There are also suggested tasks to gauge specific areas such as vowel production, word stress and intonation. These include simple ways for a teacher to make notes quickly and unobtrusively on a student's progress and areas in need of support.

Teaching Pronunciation with Confidence is a welcome addition to current pedagogical literature in the field of English language pronunciation teaching. It provides academics, teachers and teacher educators with open access to research and teaching activities grounded in robust, empirical literature. One area I would like to see developed in the book is that of activities relevant to adult students with emergent levels of literacy in English. A suggestion could be to include references to resources currently available in literacy research (e.g., LESLLA). Perhaps activities that draw on plurilingual pedagogies and global Englishes could also be included in future developments of this excellent, teacher-friendly resource. I highly recommend this resource to teachers, trainers, and academics who are interested in learning more about the teaching of pronunciation in practice and thank the authors for making research accessible to classroom teachers through the OER platform.

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