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Table of contents

REVIEWS

Martha C. Pennington & Pamela Rogerson-Revell. *English Pronunciation Teaching and Research: Contemporary Perspectives*, 2019. London: Palgrave Macmillan. xv + 500 pp.

Reviewed by Anastazija Kirkova-Naskova (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje)

Much to the delight of many professionals who have highlighted the need for a more transparent link between L2 pronunciation research and pedagogy, the publication of *English Pronunciation Teaching and Research: Contemporary Perspectives* marks the emergence of a common ground by offering a fresh perspective from an applied and sociolinguistic point of view. The authors, Martha C. Pennington and Pamela Rogerson-Revell, are well-established experts whose vast knowledge and experience breathes new life into old concepts. Their goal is to write a book that presents "a novel, state-of-the art and issues-centered view of the teaching of English pronunciation that also connects teaching to research" (p. v). To fulfill this ambitious goal, the authors provide a comprehensive overview of pronunciation as a language skill within the wider context of its use and relevance.

The book is organized into 8 chapters, each presenting an in-depth analysis of a particular issue related to English pronunciation (with detailed references). Although each is sufficient in its own right, the chapters are inter-connected and progressively build an overall picture of the way L2 pronunciation is approached: from understanding the nature of pronunciation in the learning process (Chapters 1–2), to exploring various methods in teaching and assessing pronunciation (Chapter 3–6) and finally providing new insights into real-life applications as well as pointers for future research (Chapters 7–8). The book ends with author and subject indexes.

Chapter 1 explains the broad meaning of pronunciation and its communicative value along with key concepts in pronunciation and applied phonology. Specifically, the authors regard pronunciation as a multi-level and multi-dimensional phenomenon which is a crucial aspect of communicative competence (a particularly interesting overview is given in Figure 1.1. on p. 7). Various examples, both segmental and prosodic, are given in support of the view that poor knowledge of L2 pronunciation is detrimental to communication. It is further pointed out that accent affects linguistic stereotyping which is directly related to a person's social profiling. These points are relevant for raising teachers' awareness, as learners may or may not be willing to easily change their core identity and

may approach L2 pronunciation learning either as an exciting challenge or as a threat.

Chapter 2 focuses on L1 and L2 phonological acquisition and learning. Insights into the process of learning reveal more differences than similarities – L1 learning is mainly implicit, incidental, automatic, bottom-up, and naturalistic, whereas L2 learning is explicit, intentional, controlled, top-down and usually happens in a classroom setting (p.59). L1 and L2 acquisition is explained in light of current theoretical models. The authors broaden the discussion by including observations related to identity, variation, factors affecting the learning process, constraints influencing L2 phonological acquisition, and cognitive processing through brain imaging.

In Chapter 3 the emphasis is shifted from the learner to the teacher. First, the authors provide a historical summary of approaches to pronunciation teaching and show how various ideas have influenced decisions about pronunciation models, goals and priorities in curricula design. Aware of the acute need for a fresh viewpoint, the authors propose a set of pedagogical considerations that could serve as fundamental knowledge for teachers. They highlight the importance of understanding the nativeness vs. intelligibility principle when determining pronunciation models and goals. The authors suggest that teaching priorities should be based on learners' needs and be given precedence over blindly following a national curriculum. What I like most about this chapter is the way the authors provide a practical list of factors involved in determining pronunciation teaching priorities, neatly presented in Table 3.1 (p.154–155). The chapter ends with two case studies that illustrate successful teaching experiences.

The scope of teaching pronunciation is further elaborated in Chapter 4. With many teachers feeling inadequately trained to teach pronunciation, special attention is paid to ways of incorporating pronunciation into other areas of language learning. The chapter includes a section on innovative teaching techniques such as critical listening, corrective feedback, proprioceptive drills, etc. An additional feature is a brief section on pronunciation learning strategies which I find most beneficial. The chapter concludes with a mention of more recent orientations to language learning, namely multilingualism, cognitive phonology and technologically-aided pronunciation instruction.

The main focus of Chapter 5 is how new technologies can enhance pronunciation learning, teaching and assessment. The authors stress the advantages of a computer-assisted pronunciation training (CAPT): enhanced learner motivation for self-paced learning, study on-the-go, and multimodal input/output. The remainder of the chapter reviews the available speech technologies and technologically-based products and resources. The authors address the effective-

ness of CAPT but also warn of the shortcomings that stem from machine-like interactions.

In Chapter 6 pronunciation assessment practices are critically reviewed. Drawing on extensive research, the authors observe that pronunciation is still viewed solely as a productive skill, and as such, it is mainly assessed through performance-based tasks. Such attitudes result in challenges regarding the reliability and validity of test results. In light of these considerations, the authors revisit some key notions in pronunciation assessment only to conclude that some centre around the speaker while others centre around the listener, causing problems with test scales and descriptors. A great strength of the chapter is the objective critique given to a variety of standardized tests and scales used for assessing oral proficiency. On a more practical note, the assessment of pronunciation in a classroom setting is addressed.

In Chapter 7 the relevance of pronunciation within a range of disciplines is analyzed. The authors recognize the importance of person's pronunciation for successful communication in linguistically and culturally diverse settings. Accent, for instance, is not a barrier to communication in business contexts such as sales or advertising; however, it may cause bias and discrimination. On the other hand, intelligibility is a major source of miscommunication between participants in international business meetings, among call center operators, and among health care-givers. Other areas where pronunciation has considerable impact on people's everyday and/or professional lives include vocal styling, forensic linguistics, speech technology, speech disorders and L1 literacy development.

In the final chapter, Pennington and Rogerson-Revell establish the connection between pronunciation research and practice. The discrepancy seems to exists in the way the two parties assume their roles: researchers provide scientific data not necessarily focusing on pedagogical priorities, whereas teachers follow prescribed methodologies without questioning whether these are grounded on solid research findings. The authors advocate for a constructive dialogue. Teachers should "systematically evaluate their own methodologies and practices" (p. 401) and consider research findings which can help them make informed decisions. Likewise, researchers should broaden their knowledge of "the realities of pronunciation in classroom or other real-world settings" (p. 450) and undertake investigations that will yield more applicable results. The chapter pinpoints areas where this dialogue can take place such as in establishing research priorities or creating opportunities for teacher training.

In line with its title, the book provides a concise summary of the contemporary issues in English pronunciation. What makes it unique compared to similar volumes (Derwing & Munro 2015; Reed & Levis 2015; Kang, Thomson & Murphy 2018) is its integrative approach: most relevant L2 pronunciation concepts are

investigated from the perspective of applied phonology and sociolinguistics. In an objective tone, the authors put forward principled and research-informed explanations and guidelines. Given the massive body of data analysed, the reader is left with an all-you-ever-wanted-to-know feeling. Despite being detailed in its scope and goals, it leaves room for more questions and gives inspiration for further work. Reading the book was a most enjoyable experience as it sparked my curiosity to reconsider my own beliefs and attitudes towards teaching pronunciation while inspiring an array of potential research ideas.

From a stylistic point of view, the book is written in a clear academic style. Throughout the text, the authors pay meticulous attention to highlighting key points in tables and figures thus providing readers with a helpful framework for quick access and self-reflection. They use situational examples from personal experience or from the literature to illustrate important arguments. The authors involve and guide readers through the material, rather than simply stipulating what is right or wrong. On a small critical note, the book could benefit from a detailed contents list, since some subheadings repeat across chapters in places where the same concepts are elaborated on from a different perspective.

Any novice or practicing teacher, teacher trainer, course developer, young researcher or experienced researcher who desires information about recent L2 pronunciation research and its application will benefit from this book. For teachers, it is a treasure trove of information and should be used as a tool for developing one's critical eye when reviewing pedagogical resources and/or when making improvements to one's own teaching practices. There are many takeaway messages for teachers, but one that stands out is *what to teach, why to teach and how to teach L2 pronunciation effectively*. For graduate students embarking on a research career, it provides helpful introductions to different issues, memorable citations and an up-to-date bibliography. Undoubtedly, this is the ultimate reference book to have for professional development, as a title for supplementary reading on phonology or English language teaching courses, or as a manual for textbook writers and curricula developers.

In conclusion, *English Pronunciation Teaching and Research: Contemporary Perspectives* successfully narrows the divide between research and practice by prompting collaboration between researchers and practitioners. It acknowledges the individual and social dimension of L2 pronunciation and recognizes intelligibility as the basis for effective communication. Given the holistic approach adopted, the book presents a valuable contribution to the field of L2 pronunciation.

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