

**Szpyra-Kozłowska, Jolanta. 2015. *Pronunciation in EFL Instruction. A Research-Based Approach. Multilingual Matters. 264 pages.***

Reviewed by Yolanda Joy Calvo Benzies  
Department of English Studies, University of the Balearic Islands

It is not a coincidence that the 2015 issue of *MonTI (Monographs in Translation and Interpreting)* issue is devoted to legal interpreting. This field has attracted a growing interest within the Translation and Interpreting Studies community in recent years and has allowed the discipline to widen the scope of interpreting research, which had traditionally revolved essentially around conference interpreting.

Although pronunciation has long been considered the Cinderella in EFL classrooms (Underhill, 2013), the last years have witnessed an increase in the number of volumes and studies conducted on the teaching and learning of this important language area (Walker, 2010; Lane, 2010; Celce, Brinton and Goodwin, 2010; Estebas, 2010; Rogerson, 2011 and Marks and Bowen, 2012, to mention a few). Most of these studies can be classified into the following two groups: a) studies which focus on theoretical issues regarding the teaching and learning of pronunciation, including explanations of English pronunciation at both a segmental and suprasegmental level; and, b) volumes which represent a collection of exercises and/or tips so as to help EFL learners improve their pronunciation. The present book, however, is slightly different since it “does not provide a description of English phonetics (...) nor is it a pronunciation manual which contains sets of exercises to practise particular aspects of English phonetics although it does contain numerous practical hints and suggestions how to deal with specific problems” (Szpyra, 2015: ix).

This volume is organised into four main sections: 1) *English Pronunciation Teaching: Global Versus Local Contexts*; 2) *Global and Local Pronunciation Priorities*; 3) *Pronunciation Inside and Outside the Classroom: A Holistic Multimodal Approach*; and, 4) *Concluding Remarks*. The first three of them are further subdivided into two main parts, Part A and Part B, respectively. Generally speaking, in the former subsections (Part A), the author provides readers with a general background to the topic(s) under discussion whereas the latter sections (Part B) present several experiments carried out by the author related to the theoretical issues outlined in the previous parts. Hence, in broad terms, this volume is full of both theoretical and practical sections which perfectly complement each other, making it a book that will not only interest EFL researchers interested in language teaching in general and in the teaching of spoken English in particular but it could also be considered an essential resource book on the teaching of pronunciation for EFL teachers at all levels of education.

The first section of this book, as its title indicates, could be considered a general introduction to the teaching of English pronunciation with special emphasis on the distinction between local and global contexts, i.e., differentiating ESL from EFL

teaching backgrounds. Moreover, readers can find useful information regarding many issues to bear in mind when teaching pronunciation such as: a) the reasons why pronunciation is important; b) why it has been traditionally neglected in these language-learning environments, c) pronunciation goals and models; and, d) factors which need to be taken into account when teaching and/or learning English pronunciation. Perhaps the two most important points in this section due to their innovating character are A.1.5 and A.1.8. In the former, the author describes and compares EFL backgrounds to ELF ones and then suggests the concept of NELF which, in her words “can be viewed as a kind of compromise” between EFL and ELF in the sense that “it is intended for foreign learners who wish to learn English in order to communicate in it with other speakers of this language, both native and non-native, without excluding any of these two groups of potential interlocutors” (Szpyra, 2015: 23, 24). The aforementioned approach is up to the best of my knowledge completely innovative; more specifically, I believe it is the first method that actually contemplates teaching EFL with an emphasis on intelligible communication following the ELF approach. Hence, these sections are a must-read for both teachers and researchers interested in the field of teaching pronunciation and I can truly imagine this method becoming the main one used in pronunciation classes throughout the world very soon. Section A.1.8 addresses the issue of factors that need to be taken into account when teaching and/or learning pronunciation. Such factors are divided into three main groups: 1) *EFL educational context*; 2) *EFL learner-related factors*; and 3) *EFL teacher-related factors*. It is true that this topic has already been discussed quite extensively in previous studies such as Berkil (2009), Lane (2010) or Rogerson (2011) but emphasis is normally placed on student versus teacher-related factors. On the other hand, there has been scarce research on the influence of the educational context on the way students learn pronunciation.

While reading through part B in section 1 (as well as the corresponding part B's in sections 2 and 3), it seems clear that the author of this volume has long research experience, something illustrated in the empirical experiments she thoroughly describes. In this particular section, three experiments on pronunciation goals and models are wonderfully summarised, making it very easy for the reader to establish comparisons with the theoretical issues outlined in the previous part. More specifically, in the first experiment, university students are asked to judge non-native speakers' accents according to aspects like reliability and pleasantness; in the other two experiments secondary-schools students' opinions are taken into account, first regarding accent preference and afterwards on the importance given to the teaching of pronunciation in Poland. Whilst reading these subsections, I personally strongly appreciated that the author had included long lists of explanations given by the participants when answering different questions.

Section number 2 revolves almost entirely around pronunciation priorities, i.e., on which parts of English pronunciation should teachers focus. In this part of the book, readers can find useful information on intelligibility, methods to classify pronunciation errors and to prioritise pronunciation needs (namely, Jenkins' *Lingua Franca Core*, *Amalgam English* and *International English* (both suggested by Cruttenden) and

Collins' and Mees' model), a long description of the segmental/suprasegmental debate in the last few years, a section on pronunciation and spelling in which both examples of irregular patterns and "positive effects of L2 orthographic output" (Szpyra, 2015: 105) are included, together with a few techniques to help students overcome pronunciation problems due to spelling, many instances which illustrate examples and comparisons between local and global pronunciation errors, as well as other types of complex words including false friends, mis-stressed and polysyllabic words.

Particularly interesting as well as innovative is the list of factors that can affect intelligibility, summarised in Table 2.2., factors which, as far as I am aware, have not been discussed in previous studies. Similarly, I appreciated the information displayed in Table 2.3. where readers can find the four pronunciation-priority approaches aforementioned compared at three levels: 1) *consonantal*; 2) *vocalic*; and, 3) *prosodic*. Furthermore, as in Part A in the previous main section of this book, the author does not only review previous research conducted but she also suggests her own personal approaches/opinion; in this case, she a) describes a new method called *Focus on the Pronunciation of Phonetically Difficult Words*, which, as its name indicates, entails focusing first on learning how to pronounce words considered phonetically difficult; and, b) gives her own point of view concerning the segmental/suprasegmental debate, an opinion I completely agree with since "it is impossible to generalize as to which of the two phonetic aspects of English, segmental and suprasegmental, is more important since this largely depends on the degree of similarity/difference between the learners' mother tongue and English" (Szpyra, 2015: 113).

Once again, most of the issues discussed in Part A within this second main section have been complimented by a practical study(ies) which adds some empirical data to the discussions. On this occasion, the emphasis in experiment 1 is placed on global and local pronunciation errors made by EFL learners which were graded by native English speakers according to a 1-4 scale on comprehensibility, foreign accent and annoyance as well as on intelligibility. The main focus of experiment 2 was on difficult words to pronounce in which secondary-school students were asked to write a list of words they think are difficult to pronounce and explain what aspects make them complex words. Finally, in the last experiment, native English speakers were given examples of typical Polish English learners' pronunciation mistakes which they then had to classify as important or non-important for intelligibility.

The third main section of this book, *Pronunciation Inside and Outside the Classroom: A Holistic Multimodal Approach* is the most practical of them all. In broad terms, it describes ways of putting into practice the pronunciation goals established in the previous section. Therefore, some of the most important topics dealt with here include ways of helping teachers to get students to realise how important English pronunciation is, some ideas to help their students improve by using both articulatory and auditory pronunciation training as well as cognitive phonetic and phonological training and giving feedback and correcting pronunciation mistakes. Of extreme interest for EFL teachers is the author's detailed description of a multi-sensory approach which includes techniques to combine visual, auditory and kinaesthetic/tactile learning styles

at the same time in order to benefit all our students. In the writer's words "L2 sounds must not only be heard and imitated (...) but, metaphorically speaking, they should also be seen, touched, tasted, smelled, felt, understood and appropriated, emotionally as well as intellectually, by EFL learners" (Szpyra, 2015: 145). Furthermore, readers may wish to pay special attention to subsection A.3.6 where they can find more than 10 pages on faults that still exist in current EFL textbooks regarding the teaching of pronunciation, thus making an important contribution to previous research on teaching materials and pronunciation (Tergujeff, 2010; Derwing, Diepenbroek and Foote, 2012; Tergujeff, 2013; and Henderson and Jarosz, 2014).

As mentioned in the introduction to this review, this book does not intend to be a resource full of activities for students to improve their pronunciation; however, the author does devote some pages to describing specific techniques available to teach pronunciation such as traditional transcriptions, songs, poems or games. Her contribution to this topic, although short, is well explained and full of examples; moreover, extremely practical is the fact that a whole separate sub-section is devoted to the use of new technologies for teaching pronunciation, crucial resources nowadays in the language teaching field.

Finally, the short chapter with conclusions is a must-read for both teachers and researchers. The outline, style and format is very clear. The main points developed throughout the whole book are described and the most important ideas appear in bold type so as to help the reader easily extract the most relevant information. I personally enjoyed this final chapter very much.

For future editions of this book, a few changes may be made. Firstly, although I have expressed my gratitude for the information displayed in some of the tables, I found the total number of tables quite low and perhaps more could be added in the future. Related to this suggestion, I would have appreciated a table index or list of tables in an appendix as is accustomed in books with these characteristics. Thirdly, although the list of student and teacher-related factors is quite extensive, it may have helped to divide each of these groups into different subgroups as previous studies like Berkil (2009), Lane (2010) or Rogerson (2011) have done. A longer description of the factors dependent on the educational context would also be appreciated. Another small modification could be to divide the list of techniques described into two main groups, namely, traditional versus modern techniques. In addition, perhaps more detailed descriptions of pronunciation software could be given in the section on new technologies since programmes such as Richard Caudwell's is only very briefly mentioned. Finally, it may be useful to place a list of references at the end of each main section of the book since many authors are quoted in the practical-experiment sections (Part B) and it may make it easier for the reader to find the references at the end of the corresponding main part instead of at the end of the volume since each of the main parts are quite long.

The previous shortcomings by no means undermine the great value of this book; as explained several times throughout this review, this volume wonderfully contributes to the field of teaching pronunciation in many ways, both at a theoretical and practical

level. All in all, it is full of new ideas and approaches that I am sure will be very beneficial for the language teaching field, for teachers and researchers. I would personally like to congratulate the author for her work and look forward to reading more research conducted by her.

### Acknowledgement

1. This review was funded by the Autonomous Government of Galicia (Grants number GPC2015/004) and by the Spanish Ministry of Innovation and Industry (Grants number FFI2014-51873-REDT, FFI2015-64057-P). These grants are hereby gratefully acknowledged.

### References

- Berkil, Gülçin (2009): *A Closer Look at Pronunciation Learning Strategies. Pronunciation Learning Strategies, L2 Pronunciation Proficiency and Secondary Variables Influencing Pronunciation Ability*. Mannheim: Verlag Dr. Müller.
- Celce, Marianne, Donna Brinton and Janet Goodwin (2010): *Teaching Pronunciation. A Course Book and Reference Guide*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Derwing, Tracey, Lori Diepenbroek and Jennifer Foote (2012): "How Well do General-Skills ESL Textbooks Address Pronunciation?" *TESL Canada Journal*, 30(1): 22-44.
- Estebas, Eva (2012): *Teach Yourself English Pronunciation: An Interactive Course for Spanish Speakers*. Oleiros: Netbiblo.
- Henderson, Alice and Anna Jarosz (2014): "Desperately Seeking a Communicative Approach: English Pronunciation in a Sample of French and Polish Secondary School Textbooks". *Research in Language* 12(3): 261-278.
- Lane, Linda (2010): *Tips for Teaching Pronunciation. A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.
- Marks, Jonathan and Tim Bowen (2012): *The Book of Pronunciation. Proposals for a Practical Pedagogy*. Peaslake: Delta Publishing.
- Rogerson, Pamela (2011): *English Phonology and Pronunciation Teaching*. Great Britain: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Tergujeff, Elina (2010): "Pronunciation Teaching Materials in Finnish EFL Textbooks". In Alice Henderson, ed., *English Pronunciation: Issues and Practices (EPIP). Proceedings of the First International Conference*. Université de Savoie: Région Rhône Alpes, 189-205.
- Tergujeff, Elina (2013): "Learner Perspective on English Pronunciation Teaching in an EFL Context". *Research in Language*, 11(1): 81-95.
- Underhill, Adrian (2013): "Cinderella, Integration and the Pronunciation Turn". *Speak Out!*, 49: 4-8.
- Walker, Robin (2010): *Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.