

"Why is pronunciation so challenging to acquire and teach?"

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Pronunciation is singled out among other language components, e.g. grammar, vocabulary, in that nativelike proficiency is an extremely far reaching goal, which for most L2 learners it is apparently impossible to attain. This exceptional status of pronunciation has led to its frequent marginalisation in the classroom. It is generally true that both teaching and research on pronunciation have lagged behind almost all other aspects of language learning and instruction (Leather 1997, Pennington 1998, Derwing and Munro 2005, Couper 2006). Recently there appears to be a renewed interest in pronunciation (Goodwin, Brinton and Celce-Murcia 1994; Silveira 2002, García-Lecumberri and Gallardo 2003, Fraser 2006), which may in part be related (a) to current methodological approaches that emphasise the integration of language components in L2 teaching (Chela-Flores 2001), and (b) to the importance currently placed on the production of communicatively functional and socially acceptable language (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin 1996, Jenkins 2000).

This presentation draws from research on L1 and L2 phonological acquisition as well as empirical studies on pronunciation teaching in different contexts and for different age groups in an attempt to provide a synthesis of those features that make pronunciation acquisition and teaching so challenging. It discusses issues relating to (a) the developmental changes in perception and production, (b) the role of the native language, (c) the effect of accent on intelligibility and comprehensibility, (d) the methodological approaches used for the teaching of pronunciation (e) future directions in pronunciation teaching including the use of computer-based technology.

Finally, in line with the emphasis currently placed on the integration of language components it presents a new method for the combined teaching of pronunciation and vocabulary (Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis 2005, submitted) which draws from research on the structure of the L1 and L2 lexicon and the teaching of pronunciation and vocabulary. It discusses the major principles the method is founded upon (i.e., categorisation and selected learning strategies) and presents examples to illustrate its application. Finally, it elaborates on the potential advantages this method may have for the acquisition of pronunciation and vocabulary and presents the major procedural steps the teacher can follow when implementing this method.