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Review of ***Pronunciation Instruction in English for Academic Purposes: An Investigation of Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices***



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Pronunciation Instruction in English for Academic Purposes: An Investigation of Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices by John Hodgetts, 2020, 267pp., \$169.99 (Paperback). ISBN 9783030561185.

Second language learning and teaching encompasses a wide range of skills and subskills that must be incorporated into the learning process in order to achieve satisfactory outcomes. Pronunciation instruction research is one of the subskills which has been partially neglected or less focused on in many contexts across the globe. From a review of studies on pronunciation instruction, it is clearly evident that lack of training in pronunciation skills received by teachers and the dearth of effective pronunciation materials in course books have resulted in teachers being unaware of the available techniques and tools and their effectiveness in teaching. On this note, teachers and educators will fully appreciate the comprehensive account of pronunciation instruction conducted by John Hodgetts entitled, *Pronunciation Instruction in English for Academic Purposes: An Investigation of Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices*, published by Springer Nature. Conducted for his PhD dissertation, Hodgetts study focuses on pronunciation instruction in an EAP context, through a summative assessment of pronunciation in a secondary school in Poland, providing valuable insights in the form of action research to help teachers better grasp the concepts surrounding pronunciation instruction.

The book is comprised of six chapters, beginning with a background of the research and study objectives in the first chapter. Before reading on and reaching a sound understanding of the research methodology and study design, the reader must first go through a tedious history and background of pronunciation instruction, being engulfed in details of the preliminary focus on speaking early back in the nineteenth century through to the emergence of audiolingualism and its theoretical foundation in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, the author provides clear examples of subject specific terminology required for a better grasp of the subject matter. The main changes in pronunciation instruction came about in the late 1990s, with a smorgasbord of techniques and games under the principles of

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Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In this approach, students were required to attend to form in addition to meaning, focusing on the accurate pronunciation of target items while simultaneously using them in communicative interchanges. Hodgetts provides very in depth insight into three approaches to analyzing errors, i.e. contrastive analysis, error analysis and markedness theory, which have had a considerable influence on pronunciation instruction in ELT.

This chapter is followed by a review of suprasegmental instruction and its significance for L1 speakers, with a focus on intelligibility, comprehensibility and accentedness (Chapter 3). Hodgetts argues that intelligibility is the understanding of an utterance, comprehensibility is the perceived level of difficulty or strain the listener experiences in trying to interpret the utterance, and accentedness is the listener's perception of the difference between the native variety and the speaker, which is in line with Frost and Henderson's (2021) study of pronunciation instruction done on IP-CAFES (Interphonology—Czech, Arabic, French, English and Spanish) [Cited from Kirkova-Naskova *et al.* (2021)]. Their aim was to improve pronunciation training of teachers and students as both speakers and listeners, in order to be better equipped to successfully participate in English instruction contexts in higher education. Both Hodgetts' and the latter volume on pronunciation instruction go hand in hand as guides for teachers to enhance their pronunciation instruction in the classroom.

The fourth chapter includes a description of the research context, the research questions, a rationale for implementing the mixed methods approach, the tools used for this action research, the research participants, and the stakeholder analysis. In this chapter Hodgetts provides a rationale for implementing action research, despite the criticism made that many applied linguists who advocate action research do not really make use of it in their own research. He endeavored to use action research in this context in order to uncover potential difficulties, discover strategies and most important of all, improve teacher practice, with an emphasis on teacher development. The research design is in line with Murphey and Baker's (2015) research agenda, who also focus on teachers' knowledge and beliefs and learners' perception about pronunciation instruction. Hodgetts pinpoints the various obstacles of providing meaningful pronunciation instruction in EAP contexts, such as lack of sufficient materials, limited time, and teachers lack of confidence in providing instruction and feedback, and presents some strategies and activities to overcome these obstacles, proving beneficial to both students and teachers in the long run.

Chapter 5 provides the results, analyses and discussion, encompassing course documents, notes on observations, interviews and questionnaires, analysis of the four research questions, and discussion of the course goals and guidance on how the materials can be used. Chapter 6 concludes with recommendations for pronunciation on future pre-sessional EAP courses, especially in different contexts. One of the distinctive features of this book is that Hodgetts provides the reader with fully added appendices on notes taken from induction and staff meetings throughout the course, examples of notes taken throughout the action research, self-completion teacher checklist, an interview guide for course leader and teachers, the learner questionnaire on student attitudes and experiences, teacher questionnaire on attitudes and experiences of teaching pronunciation, consent forms, mark sheet for learners, presentation criteria key features, and teacher feedback sheet for student presentations. This is one of the most inclusive appendices of any study, which guides the path for future studies in different contexts and can be used as a beneficial guide for researchers and practitioners in the field.

It is beyond a shadow of doubt that this volume be recommended to teachers and educators, not only in EAP courses, but all those who are attempting to develop their knowledge of pronunciation instruction to enhance learning outcomes in any language learning class. A detailed account of pronunciation practice in the classroom and its integration in the lesson plan is very explicitly

depicted through examples and relevant case studies in the literature. By this means the teacher is given inspiration on how to implement the activities and how to overcome certain obstacles throughout the path of enhancing pronunciation practice. The book's most distinguished feature is the easy readability and the numerous references to the literature on pronunciation instruction. As a result it can be a handy reference for pronunciation instruction studies conducted in the past decade.

One of the merits of this study is its innovative nature, in which the author has investigated upper secondary school learners' beliefs, needs and expectations of pronunciation instruction in a practical way. Despite its innovative layout, the study is limited to one set of foreign language learners, namely Polish speakers. Therefore, it seems that such a study cannot be generalizable to other language contexts, and studies on more commonly spoken languages across the globe such as Spanish and Arabic are necessary to confirm the findings. In this sense, if the author were to consider continuing such longitudinal research, two aspects could be kept in mind; one change could be to incorporate the same action research with various L1 in order to emphasize the differences such practices yield in different settings, and also to conduct the study with a greater number of participants from different levels of proficiency, as only 10 secondary school participants may not yield generalizable results. Nevertheless, despite the lack of its all inclusiveness (regarding L1 and level of education), this review recommends that the book be worth adding to the library of anyone who is interested in gaining insight on new advances in pronunciation instruction.

Another volume on pronunciation instruction entitled *English Pronunciation Instruction: Research-based Insights* (Kirkova-Naskova *et al.*, 2021) has incorporated studies on pronunciation instruction in different contexts and L1, so in many ways these two volumes complement each other and can be a guide for teachers and teacher trainers seeking new innovative ways to enhance their knowledge on the topic.

Overall, this volume fills the gap in the literature on pronunciation instruction by shedding light on a more innovative approach to pronunciation instruction in the current century and challenges Kelley's (1969) metaphor of pronunciation as the Cinderella of language teaching. Similar to the claims put forth in this volume by Hodgetts, Brinton (2012) believes that while pronunciation should be at the forefront of language instruction, along with the other four skills, vocabulary and grammar, it has been neglected in the past. For this means, action research conducted by Hodgetts is a turning point in responding to major issues with pronunciation instruction following the many obstacles faced by ELT teachers. Even so, a number of issues still remain to be addressed in order to efficiently implement pronunciation instruction into the English language teaching curriculum.

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