Review of *English Pronunciation Teaching Theory, Practice, and Research Findings*

RIZGAR QASIM MAHMOOD

The University of Wollongong, Australia

rqm841@uowmail.edu.au

In the realm of language instruction, scholars like Levis and McCrocklin (2018) have highlighted the inevitable role of pronunciation as a crucial component in verbal communication. Echoing this sentiment, O'Brien (2004) emphasized the paramount importance of pronunciation, stating that it holds a pivotal position in determining the success of students when engaging in communication with native speakers. Therefore, these insights collectively underscore the significant role pronunciation plays in effective language learning and communicative competence. In the last two decades, many publications have attempted to address the key aspects of researching and teaching pronunciation but ended up investigating pronunciation from very limited and controlled lenses. Very recently, an edited book entitled "English Pronunciation Teaching Theory, Practice and Research Findings" by Veronica G. Sardegna and Anna Jarosz (2023) was published by Multilingual Matters.

The foundation of "*English Pronunciation Teaching Theory, Practise, and Research Findings*" lies in extensive research, solid theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence. Reading the book, I concluded that it is one of its kind that can be easily read and understood even if the reader is a novice teacher in the field. The book consists of five major parts, and each part contains several aspects of pronunciation by various researchers and experts.

Part One of the book opens with an introduction and key aspects of pronunciation learning and teaching by the editors. The authors introduce the readers to critically think about why teachers should teach pronunciation, and they state that clear English pronunciation is crucial for successful communication, both among native speakers and non-native speakers using English as a lingua franca. They also asserted that the book's primary objective is to create evidence-based pronunciation teaching models,

set teaching and research priorities, and offer best practices for preparing teachers to effectively teach English pronunciation. Furthermore, in the second chapter of Part One, the author provides a comprehensive summary of the most pertinent terminology (such as phonetic features, intelligibility, accuracy, and fluency) in pronunciation learning and teaching, and how to assess pronunciation. This chapter can be used as a reference for those who need to gain more knowledge of the basics of pronunciation such as novice teachers and researchers to have a better understanding of pronunciation components before teaching and researching.

Part Two starts with a theoretical perspective of pronunciation, and it contains Chapters 3 to 6. Each chapter deals with an aspect of pronunciation meticulously. Chapter 3 explores the effects of learner and instructional variables on English pronunciation learning and what teachers need to know. For example, it is stated that learners must recognize the importance of pronunciation improvement, considering personal and professional goals, beliefs, attitudes, pronunciation awareness, and feelings about pronunciation learning. This chapter guides reaches to learn what learners need to understand regarding pronunciation improvement from learner and instruction perspectives, and informs readers what necessary steps to take when learning and teaching pronunciation. The author of Chapter 4 introduced a model aimed at enhancing the metalinguistic awareness of L2 English learners regarding the usage of intonation at the phrase, sentence, and discourse levels to convey distinctions associated with information structure. In addition to that, chapter five seeks to assess whether pronunciation instruction (PI) is influenced and to what degree it is mediated by individual difference (ID) factors. The author concluded that pronunciation instruction is certainly affected by ID factors. Chapter 6 in Part Two is dedicated to discussing English pronunciation in ESL and EFL contexts such as the Swedish case. The author provides detailed information on English and pronunciation teaching in Sweden. The author concluded that ESL learners worry about native speakers, but also interact with non-native speakers. EFL learners prioritize intelligibility in ELF situations, not native-like pronunciation. Therefore, Part Two informs readers about the pronunciation of key terminology, the factors affecting it, and what learners try to gain in two different contexts.

Part Three of the book contains seven chapters by various authors. This part particularly deals with pronunciation empirically providing research-based findings for a variety of aspects. Chapter 7 explores how to teach word stress and identifies word stress rules and approaches to teaching word stress. Through practical investigation, the author found that training students on previously mentioned aspects of pronunciation can lead them to significant improvement. In the same vein, in Chapter 8, the author discusses a study that explores the relationship between intelligibility in English speech and pronunciation learning strategies (PLSs). After reviewing the previous literature on intelligibility and PLSs and executing the study, the results showed different PLSs between the groups. Highly intelligible individuals used cognitive and metacognitive strategies, while less intelligible speakers focused on cognitive and memory strategies. These findings caution teachers to deal with strategies carefully in pronunciation classes. As accent is a vital component of pronunciation, Chapter 9 is dedicated to it, and the authors attempted to research accent imitation as a technique for the production and perception of accent. The study showed potential for the FL accent imitation technique. Production and perception data differed significantly. Production had limited effects, while perception showed relatively successful imitation. Similarly, Chapter 10 investigates learners' views on the usefulness of L2 perceptual training. The results indicated that participants had a positive response to the perceptual training approach they received. Chapters 11, 12, and 13 in Part Three explore learners' and teachers' beliefs and views on pronunciation, practice and feedback. Researchers of these chapters reached four main conclusions: 1) teachers acknowledged the importance of having proficient pronunciation skills for their careers and felt reasonably confident about their pronunciation abilities. 2) it is vital to recognize that teachers' perceptions and views influence the classroom environment and the learning process. 3) it is crucial to emphasise the need for developing the skill of providing corrective feedback

(CF) to L2 pronunciation during teacher education. Finally, 4) pre-service teachers should receive appropriate exercises and guidance on best practices for offering feedback effectively. These chapters confirm that teachers' and learners' views cannot be ignored when teaching pronunciation.

Understanding the components of pronunciation, factors that affect teaching and learning, pronunciation, and teachers' and learners' views are undeniably essential to the successful pronunciation teaching and learning process. However, another key touchstone in that area is teacher preparation. That is why Part Four of this book is dedicated to discussing it through four chapters (i.e., Chapters: 14, 15, 16, 17). In Chapter 14, Tracey M. Derwing stated that "there is now ample evidence that L2 pronunciation instruction can be effective in enhancing the communication skills of L2 learners" (p. 209). She concluded that teachers need to improve their teaching pronunciation skills through courses. Similarly, in Chapter 15, the authors explore a model of pronunciation training that involves individual L2 pronunciation tutoring, providing student teachers with a valuable practical teaching experience with L2 learners. The authors concluded that incorporating models into teaching pronunciation can build a stronger connection between coursework and classroom practice. In Chapter 16, the focus is on teaching pronunciation to international teaching assistants (ITAs) and graduate students. The author suggests that it is important to have specific models and goals to teach them pronunciation as they work in specific contexts. The author concludes that linking language work to students' professional goals helps motivate them to invest time and effort in developing their pronunciation skills. The final chapter in Part Four is on teaching pronunciation to older adult EFL learners. The author discusses various sources and practices to teach pronunciation. The results showed that nearly all participants strongly agreed that systematic pronunciation practice should be provided during an FL course designed for older adults. Part Four invites us to include teachers and learners as two inseparable parts of any teaching context, and before teaching pronunciation, teacher preparation is the key to an effective teaching pronunciation course. Therefore, stakeholders have to offer rigorous pronunciation courses to pronunciation teachers.

The final part (i.e., Part Five) is the conclusion of the book. The editors concluded with Chapter 18, and they focused on what has been learned so far and what future directions might be. They emphasized the importance of pronunciation and instruction. In addition to that, they address the main findings, and concerns regarding how, when, and why to teach English pronunciation skills.

This edited volume is uniquely different from previously published works in way that every aspect of pronunciation from theory to practice, from teachers to students and their views on the techniques and training courses have been comprehensibly discussed and supported by empirical findings and evidence. This book can be used as a reference for policymakers, educators, in-service and novice teachers, and even students. It should be mentioned that the book also has the potential to be used as a textbook for students in higher education such as MA and PhD students in L2 teaching and learning fields to have a better understanding of the importance of pronunciation and how to deal with this significant skill. As a PhD student focusing on pronunciation and feedback, I highly recommend reading this book.

References

Levis, J. M., & McCrocklin, S. (2018). Reflective and effective teaching of pronunciation. In M. Zeraatpishe, A. Faravani, H. R. Kargozari, & M. Azarnoosh (Eds.), *Issues in applying SLA theories toward reflective and effective teaching.* Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004380882_007

O'Brien, M. G. (2004). Pronunciation matters. *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German, 37*(1), 1–9.