CALICO

INFOBYTES

August 2021

5 Things to Know About Teaching Pronunciation with Technology

By Diana Velázquez-López and Gillian Lord, University of Florida

Have you thought about incorporating pronunciation instruction in your language classes? Technology may be a great asset to do so. Here are 5 things to consider before you get started.

1. Research tells us that explicit instruction of second language sound systems can lead not only to improved pronunciation but also to better attitudes towards pronunciation, and more learner confidence (e.g., Boomershine & Ronquest, 2019; Elliot, 1995; Lord, 2008). Instructors and students repeatedly indicate that they want and appreciate the inclusion of pronunciation in their language classes (e.g., Cortés Moreno, 2002; Foote et al., 2011; Morin, 2007; Scarcella & Oxford, 1994).

2. A focus on comprehensibility and intelligibility (e.g., Munro & Derwing, 1999) has resulted in less discussion of segmental and suprasegmental aspects of language pronunciation. In fact, most teaching and learning guidelines don't mention pronunciation except for cases in which *problems* with pronunciation interfere with effective communication. However, pronunciation is often the first thing interlocutors notice, and there are sociopragmatic, not just communicative, consequences to nonnative like utterances (e.g., Oyama, 1982; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007).

3. As with any technology, it is crucial to have a clear goal in mind before implementing any tool. Instructors should assess learners' pronunciation needs carefully: what are the sources of difficulty (e.g., L1 vs. L2 segments? L1 vs. L2 processes? suprasegmental differences?) and determine which challenges need to be addressed explicitly. With that in mind, it is important that the instructor establish specific goals for the instruction, understanding that it is unlikely that

learners will achieve native-like perfection (Delicado Cantero et al, 2019; Kirkova-Naskova, 2019). Furthermore, while we may see immediate improvement after instruction (e.g., Bailey & Brandl, 2013), it is unrealistic to expect phonological restructuring over the course of just one semester or even year (e.g., Flege, 1995). The most appropriate tool will depend on other factors as well, such as the learner level and the native and target languages, as some tools are available in multiple languages, while others are only available for specific languages.

4. Three primary classes of tools are available to educators and learners. Each has advantages and disadvantages, so the best use will depend, again, on the desired goals.
    a. Tools created specifically to help language learners work on their own to improve their pronunciation. *Examples include: [Iowa Sounds of Speech Project](), [Tal Como Suena](), [Say It](), [ELSA Speak]()*
    b. Tools designed for other purposes, such as communication or general language learning, that can be adopted to focus on pronunciation. *Examples include: [Forvo]() or [YouGlish](), [LyricsGaps](), social media (e.g., Twitter, podcasts)*
    c. Tools designed for the analysis of speech sounds, which can be used to help learners self-assess. *Examples include: [Praat](), [iSpraak](), ultrasound*

5. Finding reliable information on tools may be tricky and can seem intimidating. Joining communities of educators may help to find the right tool for your class and students, and to share resources and ideas. This is especially important since tools and apps change constantly. Organizations specializing in technology-enhanced teaching and learning, such as [CALICO]() and [IALLT]() are a great place to start. Many social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn may also have groups specializing in aspects of teaching. In addition, a number of conferences either focus specifically on phonology and pronunciation (e.g., [LabPhon](), [CASPSLaP]()), or on effective technology use (e.g., [CALICO](), [IALLT](), [ISTE](), [Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference](), etc.) and can provide ideas and inspiration.

References

Bailey, A. A. & Brandl, A. (2013). Incorporating pronunciation in the first-year Spanish classroom: An early intervention. In J. Levis & K. LeVelle (Eds.). *Proceedings of the 4th Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference*. Aug. 2012. (pp. 207-223). Ames, IA: Iowa State University.

Boomershine, A., & Ronquest, R. (2019). Teaching pronunciation to Spanish heritage speakers. *Key Issues in the Teaching of Spanish Pronunciation: From Description to Pedagogy*.

Cortés Moreno, M. (2002). Didáctica de la entonación: una asignatura pendiente. *Didáctica. Lengua y Literatura*, *14*, 65-75.

Delicado Cantero, M., Steed, W., & Herrero de Haro, A. (2019). Spanish Pronunciation and Teacher Training: Challenges and suggestions. In *Key Issues in the Teaching of Spanish Pronunciation: From Description to Pedagogy*. Routledge.

Elliott, A. R. (1995). Foreign language phonology: Field independence, attitude, and the success of formal instruction in Spanish pronunciation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(4), 530-542.

Flege, J. E. (1995). Second-language Speech Learning: Theory, Findings, and Problems. In *Speech Perception and Linguistic Experience: Issues in Cross-language Research*, ed. W. Strange, 229-273. Timonium, MD: York Press.

Foote, J. A., Holtby, A. K., & Derwing, T. M. (2011). Survey of the teaching of pronunciation in adult ESL programs in Canada, 2010. *TESL Canada journal*, 1-22.

Kirkova-Naskova, A. (2019). Second language pronunciation: a summary of teaching techniques. *Vestnik Za Tuje Jezike*, 11(1), 119-136. https://doi.org/10.4312/vestnik.11.119-136

Lord, G. (2008). Podcasting communities and second language pronunciation. *Foreign Language Annals*, 41(2), 364-379.

Morin, R. (2007). A neglected aspect of the standards: Preparing foreign language Spanish teachers to teach pronunciation. *Foreign Language Annals*, *40*(2), 342-360.

Munro, M. J., & Derwing, T. M. (1999). Foreign accent, comprehensibility, and intelligibility in the speech of second language learners. *Language learning*, *49*, 285-310.

Oyama, S. (1982). A sensitive period for the acquisition of a nonnative phonological system. In *Child-Adult Differences in Second Language Acquisition,* eds. S. Krashen, R. Scarcella, and M. Long, 20–38. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Polinsky, M. and O. Kagan (2007). Heritage Languages: In the 'Wild' and in the Classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 1 (5): 368–395.

Scarcella, R. C., & Oxford, R. L. (1994). Second language pronunciation: State of the art in instruction. *System*, *22*(2), 221-230.

Recent *CALICO Journal* articles about teaching pronunciation

Barcomb, Michael & Cardoso, Walcir. (2020). Rock or lock? Gamifying an online course management system for pronunciation instruction: Focus on English /r/ and /l/. *CALICO Journal* 37(2).

Bueno Alastuey, María C. (2011). Synchronous-voice computer-mediated communication: Effects on pronunciation. *CALICO Journal* 28(1).

García, Cristina, Nickolai, Dan & Jones, Lillian. (2020). Traditional versus ASR-based pronunciation instruction : An empirical study. *CALICO Journal* 37(3).

Hanna, Barbara E. & Gao, Yang. (2016). Exploring optimal pronunciation teaching: Integrating instructional software into intermediate-level EFL classes in China. *CALICO Journal* 33(2).

Liakin, Dennis, Cardoso, Walcir & Liakina, Natalia. (2015). Learning l2 pronunciation with a mobile speech recognizer: French /y/. *CALICO Journal* 32(1).

McCrocklin, Shannon. (2019). Learners' feedback regarding ASR-based dictation practice for pronunciation learning. *CALICO Journal* 36(2).

Thomson, Ron I. (2011). Computer Assisted pronunciation training: Targeting second language vowel perception improves pronunciation. *CALICO Journal* 28(3).

Walker, Nicholas R., Trofimovich, Pavel, Cedergren, Henrietta & Gatbonton, Elizabeth. (2011). Using ASR technology in language training for specific purposes: A perspective from Quebec, Canada. *CALICO Journal* 29(3).

Zhu, Yu, Fung, Andy S. L., Wang, Hongwan. (2012). Revisiting the effects of pronunciation and stroke order animation in digital flashcards on memorization of Chinese new words: Towards an adapted dual coding theory. *CALICO Journal* 29(3).