

Prikaz

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Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska: *Pronunciation in EFL Instruction: A Research-Based Approach*. Second Language Acquisition Series: 82. Bristol – Buffalo – Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2014

English is nowadays indisputably a truly global language, and international communication in English for the most part takes place among non-native speakers, who outnumber native speakers. This has had an important impact on pronunciation theory, research and teaching practice, as native models of English pronunciation have ceased to be unchallenged ideals. Accordingly, some of the most hotly debated issues in English pronunciation teaching theory and practice include the appropriate pronunciation model(s) and the phonetic teaching agenda for learners of English who are assumed future users of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) – a newly emerging mode of communication among speakers of different first language backgrounds. It is precisely the discussion of these issues that Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska, a professor of English phonetics and phonology at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin and a prolific scholarly writer in the related fields, sets out to contribute to and does so very insightfully in the book under review.

Based on extensive empirical research on the pronunciation features of specific first-language groups of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), in this 249-page study the author offers her insights about the currently most controversial issues. The book is organized into three main chapters, which are introduced by a *Preface* and followed by *Concluding Remarks*, *References*, *Author Index*, and *Subject Index*. The three main chapters have the same structure: each of them consists of two parts, A and B, which are further subdivided into three to eight sections.

In Chapter 1, *English Pronunciation Teaching: Global Versus Local Contexts*, the author actually expresses the main point of the book. She stresses the importance of the institutionalized teaching and learning of English pronunciation based on expert knowledge and using some of the major native models of pronunciation, which have

already been well established as such in foreign language instruction. Szpyra-Kozłowska actually argues against some simplified, often lay interpretations of the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and, applied to pronunciation teaching priorities, of the related theoretical construct of the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), as established by Jenkins (2000). Although the original idea behind the LFC was to identify English pronunciation features which, based on the studies of large international corpora, turn out to be crucial for international intelligibility, it has given rise to all kinds of extreme, nonprofessional misinterpretations, particularly among learners and practical English teachers, to the effect that the quality of English pronunciation is good enough as long as it is internationally intelligible and thus in terms of foreign-accented speech, "anything goes" as long as it does not violate the LFC. Szpyra-Kozłowska argues that the LFC is "tentative in nature and subject to further empirical research". She draws the readers' attention to a number of factors, in addition to the LFC features, which teaching priorities in pronunciation instruction should depend on, but in any case, irrespective of what these are in a given situation, diligent work on the quality one's pronunciation is a must and it is not legitimate to treat pronunciation as the "Cinderella of ESL/EFL". The main implication of this attitude is that learners and teachers who do not want to bother with pronunciation learning/teaching are not justified in using the theoretical concepts of ELF and LFC as an excuse for what is generally perceived as bad pronunciation in learners as well as teaching models.

However, the author is also fully aware of the other extreme situation found in English teaching practice, an uncritical "cult" of the native speaker. As shown by a large body of empirical research, this kind of extreme attitude can also be detrimental to the quality of pronunciation learning and teaching. Ultimately it can be ineffective and discouraging for non-native users of English in international communication, as well as for expert non-native English teachers whose knowledge should and normally does go much beyond the practical skill of blindly imitating native models and requiring their students to do the same.

To strike a balance between these two opposed attitudes, Szpyra-Kozłowska offers what she calls "a middle ground" between the two extremes – her notion of NELF, *Native English as a Lingua Franca*, that is, expert pronunciation instruction based on native models, but also taking into consideration factors such as the specific L1 needs, the specific learners' needs and preferences, as well as the need for flexibility and adaptation strategies necessary for the real use of English in the

contemporary world of globalization. In the empirical part of Chapter 1 the author discusses attitudes to foreign-accented speech and to models of ELF pronunciation and concludes the chapter by a section devoted to the specific pronunciation teaching context in Poland.

In the next two chapters, Szpyra-Kozłowska elaborates upon the main points made in the initial chapter. In particular, in Chapter 2, *Global and Local Pronunciation Priorities*, she deals in more detail with the complex issues related to pronunciation priorities for EFL learners. She offers her evaluation of several recent proposals concerning these priorities, including the currently most hotly debated Jenkins' (2000) concept of the Lingua Franca Core; Cruttenden's (2008) Amalgam English and International English; and Collins and Mees' (2003) pronunciation Error Ranking. With reference to the results of some empirical research Szpyra-Kozłowska here suggests that among top priorities in EFL phonetic instruction one should include the typically mispronounced lexical items *per se*, rather than inaccurately pronounced segments or prosodies. Following the same basic structure as in the remaining chapters, in part B the author identifies some global as opposed to local pronunciation errors and discusses their impact on intelligibility. Besides, in separate sections, she identifies some other English words which are generally difficult to pronounce for all kinds of reasons and finally, concludes the chapter by applying all these insights to the Polish context by establishing the pronunciation priorities for Polish learners.

In Chapter 3, which logically follows from the points made in the preceding chapters, Szpyra-Kozłowska proposes a holistic multimodal approach to phonetic instruction, i.e., the one involving the learner's body and mind and developing a combination of the appropriate learner's motor habits and cognitive mechanisms. Part B of this chapter is devoted to the phonetic activities recommended by the author as particularly useful in pronunciation teaching. These include exercises involving motor and cognitive training, employing elements of drama, as well as phonetic error correction.

Chapter 4, *Concluding Remarks*, clearly and concisely sums up the main points made in the preceding parts of the book and singles out its most important claims. Thus it concludes this well written study based on the solid grounds of theoretical knowledge and practical experience, as well as reasonable attitudes to the major hotly debated issues concerning English pronunciation instruction in the global context. It will certainly be of great use to English teachers, phoneticians, as well as

students of English. Its theoretical insights will be just as interesting and thought-provoking to ELF theoreticians.

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