

吉備国際大学研究紀要
 (人文・社会科学系)
 第29号, 125-140, 2019

大学における上級者向け英語発音授業

イアン・ウィリアム・ウォーナー

Advanced Under-Graduate Level English Language Pronunciation Lessons

Ian William WARNER

Abstract

This mediation on advanced under-graduate level pronunciation practice lessons firstly draws attention to the fact that word comprehension, while wholly desirable, is in no way a prerequisite for effective and thus beneficial pronunciation tuition. It then argues against all self-defeating use of phonetic symbols, before appraising the merits of utilizing Japanese and foreign English language news report articles as primary pronunciation practice texts. After reflecting on the pros and cons of paper-based and paperless (electronic) practice text usage, it considers the utility of annotation, dictation, spelling focus and homework-setting and so on, prior to offering a basic 90-minute duration model pronunciation lesson plan which the author contends is likely to be optimally rigorous and effective under generally prevailing 'real world' conditions.

Key words : English Language Pronunciation

キーワード : 英語発音

The irrelevance of student word comprehension:

Dedicated pronunciation lessons must - naturally - never be allowed to evolve into Reading and / or Listening comprehension lessons. Efforts to ensure correct Reading and / or Listening comprehension have no validity in dedicated Pronunciation lessons. The distinction between the goal of assuring correct pronunciation and correct Reading and / or Listening comprehension is clear and must not be forgotten. Strictly speaking,

comprehension is irrelevant and unnecessary for students who must have and retain, as their necessary central task and preoccupation, the goal of evolving a reliable ability to generally pronounce 'acceptably', words which they themselves choose to use and encounter. That a large minority or even majority of words contained in more advanced assigned pronunciation practice texts may well be unknown to students is immaterial. Pronunciation lesson students must be

left in no doubt that their sole task and objective is to improve (and, in the process, honestly reveal at frequent intervals) the extent and accuracy of their phonetic-phonemic knowledge and resultant capacity to output ‘standard’, ‘received’ Anglo and / or American style pronunciation - or something deemed ‘sufficiently ‘close’ and akin to them, so as to be ‘acceptable’ to any properly objective yet reasonably discerning arbiter (Warner, 2017).

Rejection of phonetic symbols:

As noted in Warner (2017), the development and present day ubiquity of reliable, easy and quick-to-operate mobile digital hardware and software technologies has surely greatly reduced or minimised the everyday salience of phonetic symbols for non-phoneticians. The official International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) sound description symbol chart for the English language (and its accompanying set of ‘extensions’ and diacritics) is intended for employment by expert phoneticians et al, not non-native language learners. It is difficult for most people - and certainly relatively casual users - even to partially comprehend, let alone master and use reliably. It is thus a ‘wholly unrealistic, non-viable proposition’, for most undergraduate non-native language learners, (above all, perhaps, those who wish to receive all instruction in English). Any successful undergraduate student mastering of the official IPA chart for the English language constitutes an exceptional feat, and would necessitate a long period of intense study. There is nowadays no good reason for pronunciation instructors to utilise phonetic symbols at any stage of non-specialist

undergraduate level pronouncing courses. Doing so is liable to be immediately confusing and debilitating for all students so exposed and wholly irrational. Only tiny minorities (at best) of even very capable undergraduate students are likely even nominally aware of any such symbols (which vary) at the outset of advanced pronouncing courses, let alone be functionally conversant. And they will not be able to become so in any short enough time-frame. Courses and component lessons dedicated to ensuring the ‘accurate’ - or at least ‘better’ - pronouncing of English (or any other language’s) words cannot sensibly be given over, in full or part, to phonetic symbol acquisition. Any such initiative launched at the expense of conventional visual-aural pronunciation practice will be time ill- or misspent and probably wasted. It is simply unrealistic to imagine otherwise. That different phonetic symbols are required to accurately represent different national and regional accents is a further reason to ignore them entirely. Phonetic symbols will invariably not be understood. It is far more effective to rely entirely on alphabet-based visual and aural conveyance of that information: while “fon-net-tix” will definitely be immediately replicable by all undergraduate students, the writing of “fənetiks” will not.

The core activity for undergraduate students of English language pronunciation is to constantly look at - and listen to - ‘real’ alphabet-spelt (printed and spoken) English words and to attempt to accurately appraise and determine how they should be ‘correctly’ uttered, and then to attempt to do precisely that. In real-life, everyday reading and speaking situations, we see and hear only words, not phonetic symbols. When

students encounter words that they believe likely ought not be pronounced 'as they are written', they must make educated guesses as to what the 'acceptable' pronunciation actually should be, based on the knowledge that they have so far managed to acquire, learn and retain in memory from prior instruction.

The importance of practicing pronunciation in context:

Familiar and unfamiliar words that students find hard to pronounce 'acceptably' should be pronounced as much as possible, in isolation, in list form, and within sentences. Advancement in pronunciation and - thus reading speed and fluidity - will conceivably be greater if such words are pronounced as component elements of sentences, not solely 'unanchored' specimens. While pronunciation of problematic or worse words in isolation and list form is advisable, students should likely ensure that they prioritise sentence-based pronunciation, since that is the authentic context in which all words are seen and heard.

Advantages of news report utilisation:

It is contended that it is highly beneficial - at undergraduate level - to employ standard mainstream English language news agency, newspaper and / or current affairs journals and magazine reports (in original or abridged and perhaps simplified form) and have students ultimately recite them aloud for pronunciation assessment and improvement purposes, since it is exactly these products that contain the suitably rich advanced-level vocabulary that approximate

ideal material for under-graduate level pronunciation practice (Warner 2017). Advanced, yet 'every day use', vocabulary is exactly what Japanese students of English ought to be able pronounce 'acceptably', immediately after they encounter or opt to use it.

Moreover, topical English language news agency and newspaper reports are, at present, also immediately accessible - electronically - in inexhaustible abundance and variety, whenever instructors and students enjoy internet access. Furthermore, a large proportion of daily Japanese and foreign English language news reports are still offered to the public free-of-charge. Unlike conventional, commercially-published books and textbooks, news agency and newspaper reports (and some current affairs journals) can therefore be extremely time and cost efficient to locate, examine, evaluate, assess, select, distribute, copy, print and store (to the extents that the last four activities are legal).

Finally, English language news agency and newspaper reports should also be attractive to all those eager to assist Japanese undergraduate students in intensive practical, trial-and-error efforts to improve their general English language pronouncing skills, because they are normally quite short and thus less likely to be thought daunting, intimidating, dull, monotonous and off-putting by students. Careful selection and employment of fiction and / or non-fiction book extracts (or any form of vocabulary-rich typed correspondence or memoranda) for advanced and extended pronunciation practice is not automatically

inferior to an exclusive reliance on news reports. There is little doubt that even very poorly crafted works will provide students with ample content to attempt to pronounce 'correctly' and 'acceptably'. However, instructor-designated or approved portions of novels and the like are better utilised alongside a still very large number of comparatively short news reports, that focus on - and potentially educate about - a myriad range of oft important and highly relevant topics, in and outside Japan, and globally, because doing so will increase variety, reduce possible monotony and so constitute a less risky proposition.

Pronunciation instructors with large or exclusively Japanese student contingents do not have to source news reports from foreign (i.e. non-Japanese) companies. It is quite feasible (though undesirable) to rely exclusively on the English language news reports produced by Japan's own leading internal / domestic news agencies and newspapers, since they more than suffice in terms of target-suitable vocabulary, despite some minor and trivial deficiencies.

News report sources:

Most leading English language news agency and newspapers currently permit free internet access to at least some reports. Moreover, though Japan-based and focussed, a large portion of 'Japan Today's' content is currently imported (assuring excellent vocabulary range and error minimisation).

Advantages of English Language Japanese news report utilisation:

The use of leading English language Japanese news agency and newspaper reports for advanced pronunciation practice lessons is attractive primarily because it enables the instructor to easily and quickly find and select - on-line - numerous suitably vocabulary-rich texts about Japan-centred and Japan-related topics, issues and problems, etc that students in Japan (be they natives or foreigners undertaking exchange studies) will be more - and sometimes very - familiar with and interested in, compared to otherwise similar texts, sourced from less familiar and completely unknown foreign entities. Students may well be apt to find the former more pertinent, alluring, accessible and motivating (to the extent that they are able to understand them in the limited time available or later on). Student realisation that chosen pronunciation practice material is actually of Japanese origin, generally authored and translated by Japanese persons, and supplied by well-known, seemingly influential, nationally important Japanese news agencies and / or national or regional newspapers (which, in Japan, may be considered somewhat prestigious and authoritative) may help induce some percentage of students to proceed with greater interest, seriousness, energy, diligence etc, in comparison to when they are told to use unknown foreign materials that primarily focus on and reflect the internal and external affairs of other nations and foreign readerships.

English language Japanese news agency and newspaper reports are, on the whole, also

substantially shorter than their Anglo-American equivalents which is often a good thing, since large minorities or majorities of pronunciation students may well tend to prefer to study two or more lucid and concise reports about entirely different topics rather than one single report of perhaps excessive size, if only for interest's sake or psychological reasons.

Disadvantages of English language Japanese news report utilisation:

Leading, larger circulation English language Japanese news agency and newspaper reports are all comparatively high - or excellent - quality, non-tabloid products. From the pronunciation instructor and student's perspective, they are well-enough drafted, contain sufficiently high percentages of appropriately challenging vocabulary, and - as just mentioned - generally comprise of an easily digestible number of words. That said, they do, appear likely, statistically, to normally be written in somewhat less advanced and less sophisticated manners vis-à-vis sentence construction and phrasing, etc, when compared with their foreign counterparts and - as one would predict - probably feature less varied, less exotic vocabulary and lower percentages of appropriately challenging vocabulary, than the latter. Also as one would anticipate, it does appear that the likelihood of encountering odd and patently incorrect grammar and sentence constructions (if not typing errors) in leading English language Japanese news agency and newspaper reports is higher than for Anglo-American and other non-Japanese (e.g. Continental European) English language news agency and newspaper reports.

Finally, there seems to be a perceptible tendency to over-use certain words and phrases, at the expense of easy-to-recall alternatives. Yet these faults hardly pose serious problems, and it may well be that the frequency at which such errors and missteps are committed has, for various reasons, been declining of late.

Advantages of non-Japanese newspaper report utilisation:

Non-Japanese English language news agency and newspaper reports constitute excellent pronunciation practice text materials because they are likely to be well written and structured etc and contain optimally rich arrays of evenly distributed target-suitable words throughout. Currently more advanced and competent Japanese students might well relish non-Japanese news reports for various reasons related and / or unrelated to pronunciation, especially if their English Reading and or Listening comprehension is of a standard that allows them to broadly understand the paragraphs that comprise them. In general, students should assume that non-Japanese reports will tend to be at least slightly more difficult - pronunciation-wise - and longer, than Japanese ones and, self-evidently, far less likely to focus on, or mention, Japan-related topics unless one narrows one's search perimeters.

Disadvantages of non-Japanese news report utilisation:

There appear to be no good reasons why Japan-based English language pronunciation instructors should refrain from giving their advanced students pronunciation practice 'raw' and /

or edited extracts sourced from non-Japanese English language news agencies and newspapers, even though some tend to publish protracted and intricate reports.

The desirability of using Japanese and non-Japanese English language news reports in unison:

Instructors should not hesitate to give their advanced students pronunciation practice texts sourced from both Japanese and non-Japanese English language news report providers. The former are certainly good enough to employ with confidence and ought not be shunned any more than the latter. Instructors can choose which percentage of reports they select from Japanese and non-Japanese sources. They can also decide whether to adhere rigidly to just one single ratio for an entire course, or opt for an ever changing mix from week to week (which would facilitate and reflect the need to assure report quality and appropriateness). The only practice that common sense suggests should be avoided is the deliberate complete exclusion of Japanese or non-Japanese sources. While the most advanced Japanese students of English pronunciation might prefer fewer Japanese and more non-Japanese reports, less advanced and confident students might plump for the opposite course, once familiar with and trusting of English language Japanese news agency and newspaper content.

News report selection:

The 'ideal' news agency or newspaper report for advanced pronation will be that which meets the following criteria:

a) neither excessively short or long; **b)** contains a high percentage (relative to its total word count) of target-suitable words difficult for students to pronounce; **c)** features a relatively constant and even distribution of difficult to pronounce words throughout its body; **d)** contains numerous instances of difficult to pronounce words, placed in close proximity to one another; **e)** contains numerous instances of difficult to pronounce words strung together, one after the other; **f)** contains at least some instances of less common and relatively rare words that may or may not be difficult for students to pronounce; **g)** does not contain any single difficult to pronounce word an excessive number of times; **h)** is well written and organised; **i)** is not overly repetitious; **j)** comprises of well-chosen vocabulary that, at least to some minimal extent, will be spontaneously 'passively' comprehensible to many students, or quickly 'decipherable' if they attempt (voluntarily) to 'decode' it (outside of lesson time); **k)** comprises of easily digestible paragraphs which are not too small or large and which thus don't need to be merged with others or sub-divided by the instructor prior to use; **l)** has, as its main focus, subject matter which the instructor believes will - or should - be of at least some passing interest to his or her students and thereby likely to win and hold their attention, and stimulate for a sufficiently long period of time; **m)** has, as its main focus, a topic and subject matter which the instructor regards as being in some way profound, important and / or educational or, at least, amusing; **n)** does not contain many non-English words or an inordinate number of hard to pronounce given names, surnames or place

names; **o**) contains at least single mentions of large numbers (i.e. hundreds, thousands and / or millions), years, decimal points, important common abbreviations such as “Ltd.” and important symbols such as currency signs; **p**) does not contain highly ‘offensive’ words, descriptions or statements, etc.

If all or most of the above criteria are met, one can be confident that students will be presented with a first-class and potentially informative and thought-provoking pronunciation practice text that will require them to produce the full gamut of English phoneme sounds.

Further reflections on news report selection:

It is wise to experiment but important to remain cognizant of the fact that while news reports and texts of all kinds will almost certainly be at worst minimally fit for purpose, the quality of report writing does vary markedly. Some reports are greatly more vocabulary-rich, finely-crafted and polished than others, so instructors should always appraise and vet earmarked reports discerningly.

Instructors concerned only with pronunciation skill enhancement always have a choice between disregarding subject-matter as irrelevant, or placing some emphasis on it precisely because of the nature of their task. As emphasised above, the determining measure for assessing how suitable a given news report is regarding pronunciation practice, should be the suitability and variedness of the vocabulary comprising it. Yet instructors who suspect that subject-matter may, to varying extents, sometimes or

always have an observable positive or negative influence on how students respond to and engage with assigned pronunciation texts, should avoid selecting news reports etc that they believe might, for whatever reasons, discourage and deflate, rather than encourage and animate, some or all students. It appears wisest for the instructor to always or usually attempt to provide an eclectic mix of Japanese and foreign-sourced news reports of varying lengths - both related and unrelated to things Japanese - which he or she believes they will, may or should find topical, relevant, important, and otherwise interesting and stimulating (if only on the strength of their headlines). Certainly the enlightened humanist charged ‘only’ with enhancing pronouncing skills will always prefer to assign students high-quality, potentially enlightening report texts about profound topics, even if he / she knows or suspects that few if any will have the ability, inclination and time to focus on comprehending them *after* firstly focussing on pronouncing them accurately. Attractive, enticing content must not distract, but is nevertheless desirable as ‘bait’.

Editing of news reports:

Caution should be exercised regarding texts that take longer than 20-25 minutes for the native speaker to read through slowly - and record carefully - once. U.S. news agency and high-end newspaper reports (along with those found in prestige journals) can be long by British standards. Judicious editing on the part of the instructor of those reports that he or she deems to be of excessive length is wise, if the instructor believes the inherent quality of the text justifies

such.

Advantages of Graded Readers and / or books:

Graded Readers and / or novels and short stories are the obvious alternative complimentary product to news reports. By definition they will respectively contain controlled, level-specific and un-controlled high or highest level (eg. CEFR C2) vocabulary of superior quality and range, ideal for pronunciation practice utilisation. Essentially, graded readers and / or novels should be committed to only when one is very confident that they will be received favourably and not considered over-priced.

Disadvantages of Graded Readers and / or books:

Reading just one or a few book extracts can be wonderful from the point of view pronunciation, above all when the participating students understand a lion's share of the content. But books, however prestigious, might be more likely than (comparatively brief and fleeting) wire service and press reports, sooner or later, to cause or contribute to student dissatisfaction and boredom, or worse. It may well be less monotonous and tedious to pronounce the words of a number of carefully selected news reports (from different countries or cities and / or companies) about entirely different topics, than an equivalent number of words contained in a single chapter (chosen or authorised by the instructor) that all relate to one single narrative. Studying whatever number of news and / or current affairs reports may well be more likely than any single book extract to give students a sense of dynamism,

drive, progress and accomplishment and forestall losses of momentum and flagging engagement.

Use of the Oxford 3,000 most commonly used word list:

Available on-line, free of charge, and featuring extremely useful British and American audio playback examples for each entry, the Oxford 3,000 list of most commonly used words can serve as an important supplementary resource for advanced pronunciation students, as it is these words above all that they will need to 'identify' and replicate. Pronunciation instructors should regularly use this handy resource or similar during lessons and / or as a focus for assigned homework activities.

Advantages of printed pronunciation practice materials:

Self-printed pronunciation practice materials (including the printing of on-line accessed news reports) of course have the great advantage of permitting full physical in-classroom portability. Students so provisioned do not need to remain tied to PC or internet-connected device screens which can be uncomfortable to use for protracted periods. Furthermore, students are able to freely circle, underline, highlight and annotate paper-based texts with ease, as instructed and / or as they see fit. While feasible, doing the equivalent with digital files tends to be more awkward even when using the most user-friendly software (such as the Apple OS Preview application) and students are enthusiastic and pretty much computer literate (which is not always the case).

Disadvantages of printed pronunciation practice materials:

Self-printed pronunciation practice materials obviously have various major disadvantages. Apart from necessitating 'heavy' and costly use of paper, ink and electricity (especially when class sizes are large), they take time for instructors and / or students to print etc and likely tend to be less convenient to keep, store, protect, preserve, transport and find, and much easier to mislay and damage.

Advantages of digital pronunciation practice materials:

The creation of digital pronunciation practice materials - be they URL links, Adobe pdf. or editable Microsoft Word or Apple Pages formatted files, is, needless to say, quicker, easier, cheaper, greener and generally more convenient than printing. Such files are instantly displayable and enlargeable on monitor and TV screens, can be sent to any known recipient e-mail and social media address at any time, be duplicated, saved and stored easily, in seconds, as desired, locally and remotely (including on free internet cloud service websites, if one chooses) and then searched for, found, opened and - if necessary - printed with like ease and speed. Importantly, digital files can be audio read / narrated automatically by computer applications and even computer operating systems, notably the Apple OS's user-friendly, fairly realistic-sounding and quite extensively customisable 'Text to Speech' feature. In addition, digital file use permits comprehensive utilization of college Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) hardware. For example, file

texts can be projected and 'mirrored' as well as distributed and collected via file transfer.

Disadvantages of digital pronunciation practice materials:

As stated above, digitally recorded pronunciation practice files obviously tie instructors and students alike very closely to whatever form of device platform they have at their disposal: machines that firstly may not be optimal in terms of size, general specification or ease-of-use, and secondly, can and often do eventually cause - or contribute to - student discomfort, fatigue and related mind-wandering, etc, if not frustration. PCs and even portable devices are not necessarily more, or even as comfortable, amenable and ergonomically conducive as pieces of paper. Digital device dependency may for these reasons, if only to some limited extent, physically inhibit optimally beneficial and enjoyable student pair and group work activities. Perhaps the gravest drawback regarding reliance on digitally recorded pronunciation practice material files stems from the fact that they are a far more awkward and inefficient to circle, underline, highlight and annotate, even for more competent PC users (and, as touched on above, not all undergraduate students today deserve that epithet). Finally, digitally recorded and stored files are, of course, useless whenever one is unable to operate the hardware needed to access them.

A balance between printed and digital distribution of practice materials:

It is seemingly best practice to adhere to a pragmatic, 'middle of the road' approach wherein

printing, given its various cons, is minimised and reserved for those occasions when it is thought likely to facilitate optimally efficient learning. Instructors should distribute ALL pronunciation materials in electronic, digital form but also print SOME of them, namely those that they want and / or expect students to scrutinise, annotate, complete and / or read comprehensively for longer stints and / or more important reasons.

The utility of annotation:

Whenever students are confronted with a word that they are unsure how to pronounce, they should, assuming that they have not been forbidden and time allows, needless to say endeavour to ascertain exactly how that word should be pronounced 'acceptably' and consequently locate the word in a digital dictionary or via online website that features British and American English audio playback pronunciation functionality. Having established - aurally - exactly how the word should be pronounced, they ought then make appropriately brief annotation on their practice text page and / or elsewhere, for near and long-term future reference. Annotation is surely a vitally beneficial activity for all pronunciation students: one that should be constantly encouraged to make and keep it habitual. On the other hand, students should be urged to annotate as sparingly, clearly and concisely as possible, and instructors should always ensure that neither too little nor too much time is devoted to doing so. The exact amount of annotation that students carry out during any given lesson will depend not only on the difficulty, length and number of the assigned practice

text(s), but on the amount of time the instructor allocates to formal pronunciation investigation and checking, as well as student decisions about its utility.

Regularly requiring students to i) read through practice texts in search of words that they know or suspect they probably cannot pronounce correctly; ii) check their actual correct pronunciation and iii) then annotate accordingly (prior or subsequent to any actual voiced reading) is doubtless an excellent use of pronunciation lesson time, providing that the time allocated is neither too fleeting nor too lengthy, and this type of exercise is not demanded to an excessively frequent extent. That said, instructors need to balance or subordinate annotation exercises with straight, preparation-free, immediate reading aloud and subsequent real-time instructor correction, for it is far more the *latter* exercise that enables advanced students to expose themselves to appropriately large numbers of practice-worthy words during each lesson.

The danger of excessive annotation:

In practice, it is unrealistic to expect even advanced level pronunciation students to constantly annotate even printed, large-font pronunciation practice documents. Instructors and students must do more than annotate and necessarily heavy, extensive, rigorous annotating of more difficult and demanding texts is a time consuming and laborious, if normally worthwhile endeavour. Instructors should be careful not to require students to do excessive amounts of note-making, and to allocate realistic time frames:

heavy annotating sessions conceivably ought not take-up more than 45 minutes of each lesson.

How should students annotate?

Given that they cannot competently use phonetic symbols, students must annotate as they think best in English / and or their native language, both when they are being directly instructed by their teacher and especially when researching correct pronunciations by and for themselves. What matters is that students write quickly, legibly and informatively and then properly heed their notes at key junctures.

Evaluating and assessing student annotation:

There is no compelling need for instructors to examine, evaluate and assess the extent and / or quality of student annotation. Doing so is largely pointless because it does not permit sound assessment of current pronunciation ability, expended effort and / or motivation level. Annotation is only a means to an end: namely the achievement of permanently 'acceptable' pronunciation. Estimated current pronouncing ability is what needs to be determined and monitored, not the annotations of pronouncers. Students can only legitimately be graded on what they are seen to do. But the amount and quality of annotation that each student outputs will probably vary and fluctuate considerably from lesson to lesson, and over time, for numerous reasons, including changes in current ability level, often related changes in how necessary and beneficial students think annotation will be, and often associated fluctuations in overall level of interest, enthusiasm and resultant motivation

towards pronunciation accuracy per se and / or the specific pronunciation texts assigned.

Students known to have currently less advanced or intermediate pronunciation skills who generally do not produce much in the way of extensive or high quality annotation should be urged to try to annotate more because it might engender performance improvements, whereas students known to possess currently already more advanced or excellent pronunciation skills should never be penalised for failing to heavily annotate, since they may rightly think it unnecessary. Instead, they should be permitted to decide for themselves when to annotate. Generally speaking, up to a certain point, the more aware, capable and confident a student becomes regarding 'correct' pronouncing, the more they will likely recognise the need for extensive annotation whenever told to study and subsequently read aloud difficult pronunciation practice texts as well as they can. Accurate, appropriately extensive and generally excellent 'research' annotation vis-à-vis challenging and perhaps lengthy pronunciation practice texts should be taken to indicate that the annotator may well currently have at least intermediate - and possibly advanced - pronunciation skills, and certainly possess a good or excellent motivation and / or 'endurance' level. In contrast, sheets that contain very little annotation reveal little or nothing about the pronunciation ability or motivation levels. No legitimate inferences can be drawn - in isolation - from them. Students who annotate hardly at all may be suffering from a chronic lack pronunciation skill and motivation, or overflowing

with both.

Dictation:

Long dictation is a useful secondary activity for advanced pronunciation students at least if the instructor prepares user-friendly paper dictation work-sheets. Students can either be limited in how many times they are permitted to listen to the recorded (or live-spoken) text content, or allowed to listen to it as much as they like on their own PC or device. Correct spelling can either be required, and left to each student to ensure, or - more realistically - made clear to class-members via separate, random-order digital or printed keyword list, distributed initially or later on.

Spelling:

Activities explicitly designed to enhance spelling accuracy can be incorporated into advanced pronunciation lessons but should be accorded low priority given the applicability of digital spell-checking technologies and inherent difficulty entailed.

The need for lesson plan variation:

While arguably not so important for advanced learners, it is nevertheless important to ensure that pronunciation lessons not take on a single, uniform, unchanging format, since - as with any subject - such 'rutting' may cause or contribute to the student dissatisfaction and boredom, or worse. Regular main elements of each pronunciation lesson should - to the extent possible - therefore be varied and passed through in different orders and perhaps speeds, from week to week, and interspersed with a variety of

one-off and occasionally deployed pronunciation-centric activities, including, ideally, animating and enlightening games judged adequately relevant and unlikely to overly stress or embarrass.

The advisability of assigning homework:

Pronunciation homework is better assigned than not, given the fundamental objective of maximising student pronunciation capacity. Sound regular practice moves one closer to perfection. If thought likely to be adequately beneficial and the recipients do not loathe it as a seriously onerous or intolerable burden, such additional work should be given, assessed and returned weekly.

A model pronunciation lesson outline:

Shown below is an 'ideal' rump outline plan for a typical 90-minute dedicated pronunciation lesson. Some component steps described can sometimes be skipped by the instructor or students, as is thought best or time dictates. While the proposed step ordering appears optimal, it too can be altered. The steps outlined form a core framework: other brief secondary activities can and should be undertaken before and / or after, whenever feasible.

Step 01 - Commencement and familiarisation:

Students are presented with size 11 font printed (or pdf. digital) copies of one carefully selected, possibly abridged news agency or newspaper sourced news report (or a book or essay extract). Each student is told to read all (or an optimally-sized first portion) of the chosen text silently, at least once, and to initially 'by-pass' (rather than dwell on or check) every familiar or unfamiliar

word that they come across which they know or suspect themselves unable to pronounce ‘acceptably’.

Step 02 - Close scrutinising:

Students are required to repeat Step 1 but underline, circle or otherwise highlight each and every aforementioned (familiar or unfamiliar) word that they know or suspect is problematic pronunciation-wise;

Step 03 - Consideration and reflection:

Students are required to ponder for a while how they ought to ‘correctly’ pronounce the challenging words that they have just self-identified.

Step 04 - Investigation, clarification and confirmation:

With head or earphones connected to whatever, each student is required to ascertain the ‘correct’ / ‘acceptable’ pronunciations of the words that they have previously isolated. They do this by way of recourse to i) electronic or online dictionaries offering automated model audio pronunciation and / or ii) one or more instructor-recorded (or sourced) model audio-only or audio-visual reference files (each covering no more than one paragraph of assigned practice text, to ensure easy file navigation ‘scrubbing’).

Step 05 - Repeating:

Students are required to listen to the aforementioned audio-only or audio-visual files (for the first or second time) and *echo* recite aloud and verbatim from start to finish exactly what they

have just heard (and can simultaneously see, read and follow in their - now annotated - corresponding practice text document), on a sentence-by-sentence and / or main and subordinate clause basis, immediately after they hear it.

Step 06 - Simultaneous shadow reading:

Students are required to listen to the audio-only or audio-visual files (for a second or third time) and simultaneously *shadow* recite aloud and verbatim from start to finish exactly what they can see, read and follow in their practice text document, as in step 5, but as they hear it.

Step 07 - Comparing and appraising:

Students are required to recite aloud and verbatim from start to finish exactly what they can see and read in their practice text document, and to immediately thereafter listen to the audio-only or audio-visual files (for a third or fourth time) for confirmation and enforcement.

Step 08 - Reading (full or partial):

Students are required to read aloud and verbatim from start to finish the assigned pronunciation practice text once again, either, by and for themselves, or with 1-3 partners. In the latter scenario, each student in turn proceeds to read one paragraph (max.) before giving way to the next, while the other group members (and, from-to-time, the instructor) listen and visually follow and assess progress and monitor for ‘serious’ errors (which they should draw the reader’s attention to, if detected).

Step 09 - Demonstrating:

Students are required to read aloud and verbatim at least one single whole paragraph of the assigned pronunciation practice text, one-by-one, while their instructor and fellow class-mates again - collectively - listen and visually follow and assess their progress and monitor for 'serious' errors (which the instructor should draw the reader's attention to, offer appropriate corrective advice, and then request him / her to make repeat attempts to pronounce 'correctly' and 'acceptably' or 'less incorrectly').

Step 10 - Final reading and audio recording for later instructor and student analysis:

Each student is required to audio-record their own personal voiced verbatim reading of the assigned practice text, as best they can, then electronically deliver the resulting audio file to themselves and their instructor for definite or possible analysis / feedback. Recording can be done in stages rather in one take. Students should repeat specific words and parts of sentences, whenever dissatisfied with the overall accuracy and thus quality of initial attempts. If sufficient time is lacking, audio-recording should be made homework.

Step 11 - Analysis and Reflection:

Finally, for homework, or at the start of the next scheduled lesson, students should listen carefully to, and compare their own audio recording with the instructor's already distributed reference audio file(s), ideally, in an instructor-sentence > student-sentence pattern or vice-versa. Freely available at: <https://www.videolan.org/vlc/index.html> VLC VideoLAN makes this easy.

The usefulness of the Apple OS:

The Apple OS boasts an easy-to-operate, realistic-sounding Text-To-Speech utility. Highly customisable, it offers multiple voices, including an impressive British 'RP' accent. Apple's 'QuickTime' utility is a similarly functional audio and video recording app., (unlike Apple's inferior iOS-only 'Voice Memos'). These and the semi-professional 'Audacity' program (<https://www.audacityteam.org/>) make things simpler for instructors and students vis-à-vis recording, editing and perhaps splicing of captured readings.

Principal Conclusions:

- 01)** Pronunciation students must refrain from attempting to comprehend texts which they find hard to understand in full or part, even when sorely tempted;
- 02)** Word and sentence comprehension efforts should be initiated only after all required pronunciation work is completed to the best of one's ability;
- 03)** Students must strive not to become demoralised due to frequent pronunciation error and / or word non-comprehension;
- 04)** Students able to immediately or quickly comprehend practice texts in full or large part may well tend to enjoy pronunciation practice lessons more than those who don't, but might also tend to be those with less acute need to enhance and thus practice pronunciation;
- 05)** Phonetic symbols are dysfunctional, so should be dispensed with entirely;
- 06)** In the interests of skill optimisation, a large proportion of pronunciation practice should be voiced and full-sentence based, where target-

suitable words are seen and / or heard in proper context, not only in isolated list form;

07) for advanced pronunciation lessons, it is optimal to employ standard English language news agency, newspaper and current affairs journal and magazine reports (in original or abridged and perhaps simplified form) for pronunciation assessment and improvement purposes, since they: i) contain suitably rich vocabulary; ii) are most likely to interest, stimulate and enliven students; iii) are least likely to bore, depress and deflate students; iv) potentially offer the greatest variety and most educationally-rich reading comprehension experiences (for those students able to immediately comprehend some or all of their content); v) best lend themselves to digital learning environments; iv) ensure high all-around cost-effectiveness and general administrative efficiency;

08) English language pronunciation practice texts should be carefully selected from both Japanese and foreign news agency and newspaper sources;

09) A preponderance of foreign news agency and newspaper reports should be used for more advanced students but a preponderance of Japanese reports should be used for less advanced students as they will be slightly easier to pronounce and / or their headlines and content may be considered somewhat more interesting to readers;

10) Selected news reports should contain very high percentages (relative to overall word count) of target-suitable words;

11) Target-suitable words should be densely clustered but evenly distributed throughout the

body of each selected report;

12) Selected news reports should not suffer from excessive repetition of single target-suitable words, excessive occurrences of numbers, or non-English language words or names;

13) Print and electronic file distribution should be embraced: the former when necessary, the latter by default;

14) instructors should, whenever possible, make and distribute self- audio-recorded model readings, that can be referred to multiple times by students;

15) students should be afforded ample time in which to ponder, research, practice and demonstrate correct pronunciations;

16) extensive annotation should be expected, encouraged and sometimes examined, but never graded as quantity of annotation, in the abstract, provides no sound, bona fide indication of a student's likely current pronouncing ability or motivation level;

17) audio - if not video - recording should be used extensively by students in every lesson, in order to capture their pronunciation efforts for comparative-analysis, etc;

18) pronunciation lesson plans should not be unchanging in structure or monotonous in practice;

19) the setting of weekly pronunciation homework assignments probably has favorable effects, so is advisable;

20) For five plus reasons, Apple's OS (Mojave) platform presently appears more useful to pronunciation instructors and students than Microsoft's Windows 10.

References

Warner, I. W. (2017) Under-Graduate Level English Language Pronunciation Lessons *Journal of Kibi International University (Humanities and social sciences), Extra Edition*, 115-122.

International Phonetic Association (2018) IPA Chart <http://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/content/ipa-chart> available under a Creative Commons Attribution - Sharealike 3.0. Unported License.

The Oxford 3000™ Word List

Accessible online at: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/wordlist/english/oxford3000/>