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### Book Review

**Pronunciation in EFL Instruction: A Research-based Approach**, by Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska, Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2015, 249 pp., \$114.88 (US), ISBN 978-1-78309-260-4

The book *Pronunciation in EFL instruction: A research-based approach* by Szpyra-Kozłowska is a rare book in pronunciation pedagogy that is written by an EFL teacher and especially for EFL teachers. The book, as suggested in the title, provides a reliable source of guidance for EFL pronunciation teachers with its solid foundation of empirical evidence from author's own research studies in EFL contexts and on EFL participants rather than mere reliance on teacher intuition and experience as in the cases of several books in the field. The book revolves around the three pertinent questions of contemporary EFL pronunciation pedagogy: what pronunciation models to adopt? Which pronunciation features to prioritise? and How to teach English pronunciation?

The book includes three main chapters which bring each of the questions to light. In pursuing a theory-practice balance, each chapter is designed with two parts: Part A discussing the theoretical background of issues in pronunciation pedagogy, Part B providing empirical evidence to support the theoretical claim(s) in Part A.

Chapter 1 mainly discusses two approaches in contemporary pronunciation pedagogy: the traditional EFL (English as a foreign language) and the newly emerging ELF (English as a lingual franca). While the former advocates native-English-speaker (NES) norms and prepares learners to be intelligible to NESs, the latter tends to give up native norms and prepares learners to be intelligible to non-native English-speakers (NNEs). The author, however, critically points out that both approaches have not satisfactorily addressed a crucial issue of EFL pronunciation pedagogy: learners' aspiration to succeed in communication with both NESs and NNEs. In response to that unfulfilled enquiry, NELF (native English as Lingual Franca), a "compromise" of EFL and ELF, is proposed. NELF acknowledges not only learners' preference for but also the usefulness of native Englishes including Received Pronunciation (PR) and General American (GA) as models for EFL pronunciation instruction. In part B, empirical evidence from the author's own studies is presented and strongly supports the adoption of NELF in EFL classes.

Chapter 2 focuses on English pronunciation priorities. Part A provides an evaluative discussion of proposals of pronunciation priorities to date. Complementing existing proposals and taking the specific needs of EFL phonodidactics (a synonym of "pronunciation pedagogy", which the author prefers for "its brevity, semantic transparency" and succinct combination of both "phonetics" and "phonology" within a single word (p. xi)), the author recommends focusing on word pronunciation, especially the "local errors", which are argued to be more detrimental to learners' intelligibility than both segmentals and supra-segmentals. In addition, the author places L1-L2 distance at the centre of the decision-making process regarding whether to focus more on segmentals or supra-segmentals and also what specific pronunciation features to be prioritised in each EFL context. Part B presents research findings that support the emphasis on the pronunciation of words and the impact of "local errors" on speaker intelligibility.

Chapter 3 presents a holistic approach to pronunciation instruction with a balanced emphasis on both motor and cognitive training with four main components: articulatory, phonetic and phonological training,

and multisensory reinforcement. The chapter also examines the role of feedback and provides teachers with guidelines in assessing teaching materials so as to, if necessary, supplement pronunciation-related activities to make them both fun and effective. This section of the book is rich in description and discussion of teaching techniques, which could be of great practical value to educators if organization of this section could be improved to enhance clarity. Part B presents empirical studies that examined the effectiveness and attractiveness of several pronunciation teaching techniques.

The contribution of the book to EFL pronunciation pedagogy is significant. Challenges and demands of EFL teachers and learners in pronunciation pedagogy are examined closely and responded to more than ever before. Most notably, the proposal of a NELF approach gives due attention to the desire of the majority of EFL learners for native pronunciation models, which is not only evident in the author's own research but also reported in other EFL contexts such as Vietnam (Phuong, 2018) and Cambodia (Lim, 2016). For the first time in the history of pronunciation pedagogy, NELF makes a clear distinction between pronunciation models and pronunciation targets, which have so far been mixed. The NELF approach advocates native English models as instruction models but also allows a wide range of pronunciation goals that learners can freely pursue in accordance to their aspirations and aptitudes. In addition, throughout the book, the author draws significant attention to L1-L2 distance in establishing pronunciation priorities and teaching methods; this approach is appropriate for EFL pronunciation pedagogy but often neglected or marginalized. Moreover, a range of pronunciation teaching techniques are examined in Chapter 3. Though some readers may argue that the techniques are of little originality, the examination of those known techniques is valuable as it assists EFL teachers to make informed decisions about which techniques may work effectively in their classes and how to apply those to best stimulate their EFL learners and maximize their pronunciation learning.

Beside its undeniable contribution to EFL pronunciation pedagogy, the book has some shortcomings. NELF, as discussed earlier, is really the pinnacle of the book. However, given the pervasion of the notion of native Englishes being the standard of "linguistic correctness" in the book, readers may reasonably argue that the advocacy of native Englishes as instructional models in NELF is, indeed, driven by an implicit but powerful favour of native norms beside other motives. In the same vein, the wide range of pronunciation goals which NELF opens to learners' choices can be interpreted as *compromises* rather than *truly desirable pronunciation goals* for EFL learners. Additionally, though the goal-model distinction, on which NELF is grounded, is valuable, it may not be well aware of by non-professional stakeholders of English education; NELF, thus, may be further perceived as promoting native speakerism. To this extent, the goal-model distinction is both a strength of the book and a potential trap for practitioners. Furthermore, NELF is partially based on the claim that learners with a good command of native English pronunciation have better adaptability in ELF communication. First, the evidence gained from research on a limited number of Polish students may not be considered representative enough to support the claim. Second, a potential counter-argument is that learners with good English aptitude can adapt well and succeed in ELF communication regardless of the model they are trained with; as such, the claim that training learners with native English pronunciation better facilitates their success in ELF communication could be perceived as of little persuasiveness.

To sum up, the strengths of the book outweigh the weaknesses. Though the association of native Englishes with the standard of "correctness" pervades the book, the central issue of ELF pronunciation pedagogy is rightly perceived and clearly pronounced in the book. That is, as in the author's words, "what matters in international contexts is mutual intelligibility of interlocutors, then certainly achieving native-like pronunciation is not necessary to attain this goal" (p. 9). Additionally, core principles of ELF have been well addressed in the book with a clear focus on learners' awareness of L1-L2 phonological distance and also on the development of learners' accommodation skills. Notably, the most significant strengths of the book can be attributed to the valuable goal vs. model distinction, which legitimizes the use of native Englishes as instructional models without conflicting with the newly emerging role of English as a *lingua franca*. Firmly grounded on the basis of that important knowledge, NELF, in my view, is a realistic and useful framework for EFL pronunciation pedagogy by successfully accommodating the new status of

English in EFL world and acknowledging EFL teachers and learners' preference to native English pronunciation models at the same time. As an EFL teacher, who has experienced difficulties in teaching English pronunciation and has witnessed colleagues' struggles in the same task, I feel it so heartening that EFL teachers and learners' concerns, needs, and challenges in pronunciation pedagogy are considered. The book has shed light on several important issues of EFL pronunciation pedagogy and is a valuable guideline for EFL teachers in teaching this challenging aspect of English.

### **References**

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