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BOOK REVIEW

John Murphy (Ed.). (2017). *Teaching the pronunciation of English: Focus on whole courses*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. viii + 352 pp.

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Teaching the pronunciation of English: Focus on whole courses edited by John Murphy is intended as a core text for teacher development courses for prospective teachers of English pronunciation. A majority of the book is comprised of rich descriptions of pronunciation-centered courses authored by the specialists who designed them. With the aim of developing effective pronunciation teachers, Murphy's collection combines these descriptions of whole pronunciation courses with accessible introductions to English phonology and the field of second language L2 pronunciation. By compiling these chapters, Murphy demonstrates how we can "grow as teachers and professionals by learning about, participating in, and contributing to the collective knowledge of what teaching the pronunciation of English entails" (p. iv).

The collection contains 12 chapters organized in two parts. In *Part 1: What Teachers Need to Know about Phonology*, Chapters 1-2 (written by the editor) present foundational suprasegmental and segmental concepts necessary "to prepare readers to better appreciate the substance and quality of" the remainder of the book (p. 3). Chapters 3-12 comprise *Part 2: Descriptions of Whole Courses* and include detailed descriptions of pronunciation courses written by contemporary pronunciation teachers who represent a variety of English as a Second/Foreign/International Language teaching contexts in North America, Europe, and New Zealand.

The book begins with an introduction that helps raise awareness of fundamental topics in L2 pronunciation teaching by answering questions such as, *What is L2 pronunciation?* and *What aspects of pronunciation are most important to teach?* The responses introduce the reader to two overarching themes emphasized throughout the collection: a focus on intelligibility and comprehensibility (rather than accent reduction) as a means to help learners improve communication and the importance of connecting research findings to classroom practices.

Chapters 1-2 provide an overview of aspects of English phonology connected to intelligible and comprehensible speech. Chapter 1 introduces readers to English suprasegmental features such as thought groups and prominence by providing clear explanations and illustrative examples. Chapter 2 focuses on segmental features of North American English, including consonants, vowels and *squeeze zones* (i.e., variations in pronunciation between isolated words and words in larger discourse contexts which result in processes of deletion, linking, blending, etc.). As a preview to *Part 2*, Chapters 1-2 conclude with a narrative account of a pronunciation lesson. A common theme throughout these two chapters is the "mutually interdependent" nature of the phonological features of English, and their connection to producing intelligible speech (p. 105). Using a balanced mixture of memorable anecdotes, easily accessible vocabulary, and references to empirical research, *Part 1* prepares the reader to engage with the whole courses presented in *Part 2*. Chapters 3-12 follow

a similar (and helpful) organizational structure by including subsections such as *setting*, *needs assessment*, *course design*, etc. Each chapter emphasizes how to meet the individual needs of learners and concludes with *tips for pronunciation teaching* and discussion questions related to the content of the chapter.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 describe courses designed for graduate students at North American universities. In Chapter 3, Carolyn Samuel presents the course “Pronunciation and Communication for Graduate Student Researchers and Conference Presenters.” The course focuses on the importance of suprasegmentals for improving intelligibility and the development of metacognitive awareness to promote autonomy and self-regulation. The course “Oral Communication for International Graduate Students and Teaching Assistants,” presented by Veronica G. Sardegna and Alison McGregor in Chapter 4 depicts a course which highlights the necessity and benefits of developing strategies to promote learner agency and ownership of their development/improvement. In Chapter 5, Edna F. Lima and John Levis present the Supra Tutor, an online program “intended to serve as a model for a stand-alone, self-paced pronunciation course” (p. 156). This chapter demonstrates how fundamental principles in L2 pronunciation can be combined with contemporary technology to result in an online experience that goes beyond typical ‘listen and repeat’ exercises.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 describe courses developed primarily (although not exclusively) for undergraduate students. Graeme Couper’s “Phonology Applied” course in Chapter 6 includes the unusual component having a student population of both first language (L1) and L2 speakers of English. Thus, course goals not only focus on pronunciation improvement, but also applying knowledge about diverse phonological systems to improving cross-cultural communication. In Chapter 7, Lynn Henrichsen describes an advanced pronunciation elective course. The importance of making learning enjoyable to foster continued practice is evident in the wide variety of engaging activities described in the *Activity Types* section of this chapter. Chapter 8, written by Christina Michaud and Marnie Reed, describes a pronunciation tutoring course created to meet the needs of a growing population of international undergraduate students. A unique feature of this course is its small group tutoring design: Three to four students and a tutor meet six times for 50 minutes during a 15-week semester. The benefits of providing direct corrective feedback are emphasized.

Chapter 9 presents two courses representing English as a Lingua Franca contexts, or those in which English is not the L1 of interlocutors but rather a shared communication tool. Authors Laura Patsko and Robin Walker describe teaching pronunciation in both mixed-L1 and shared-L1 environments, allowing them to highlight the similarities and differences as well as the advantages and limitations of each teaching environment. Chapter 10 by Nathan Kielstra (with Bill Acton) presents “A Haptic Pronunciation Course for First-Year ESL College Students”. Fundamental in this course is the notion of including “the whole body physical use of Haptic anchoring [...] designed to enhance modelling, feedback, correction, and integration into spontaneous speech” (p. 280). To illustrate the course’s emphasis on movement and intrapersonal touch, links to video illustrations are provided.

Karen Taylor de Caballero and Clair Schneider present “The Color Vowel Chart: Teaching Pronunciation to Beginning-Level Adults” in Chapter 11. The authors describe how the Color Vowel Chart provided the necessary curricular thread to reinvigorate a government-funded program housed in a community college. Links and demonstrations of how to use the tool to promote phonological awareness (for both students and teachers) are provided to readers. In the final chapter, Tamara Jones describes how she integrated prosody instruction into course content for students in grades 7-9 in an English as an Additional Language immersion program housed in

a private British school in Belgium. Particularly important in this context is the integration of pronunciation instruction into content-based lessons. The epilogue concludes the collection with a summary and reflection on its contents presented as maxims responding to the forward-looking question, “Where do we go from here?”

This book provides a thoughtful and purposeful collection of texts that are a valuable resource for both prospective and current pronunciation teachers. It directly responds to research which has identified the need for better training for prospective pronunciation teachers (for a summary, see Murphy, 2014). What sets this book apart is the breadth and depth of knowledge provided for readers as a result of focusing on whole courses. It is evident that particular attention was paid to include courses that represent a wide variety of contexts, learner populations, and contemporary perspectives on teaching English pronunciation. The goal of meeting the needs of prospective teachers is evident, for example, in the inclusion of learning outcomes for readers (Introduction), helpful tips and thoughtful discussion questions from each of the contributors (Chapters 3-12), and a framing of the epilogue as lessons learned by the editor that he wished he had known “as a novice pronunciation teacher” (p. 328).

The collection is also particularly well-informed by current empirical and theoretical research, which is evident not only in the course description chapters, but also in the very foundation of its approach to developing future teachers. The editor draws on literature from the field of L2 teacher education (e.g., Johnson, 2015) to emphasize the necessity of not only establishing “knowledge about phonology” but also developing “procedural and pedagogical knowledge about how to teach pronunciation” (p. 23). In addition, the ubiquitous focus on promoting intelligible and comprehensible speech (see e.g., Munro & Derwing, 2015) in both *Parts 1 & 2* highlights contemporary perspectives from the field of L2 pronunciation.

Prospective teachers of pronunciation will also benefit from the book’s engaging use of narrative techniques. From the editor’s introduction to prominence in Chapter 1, which begins with stories of being mistaken for his older brothers growing up, to being introduced to numerous ‘individual stories’ at the start of many of the course description chapters, the reader encounters narratives that make content both memorable and accessible (not to mention enjoyable to read). Another excellent feature of this collection is the impressive number of practical resources that are provided throughout. Both *Parts 1 & 2* are packed with samples of materials including needs assessment tools, lesson plans, performance objectives, assignment descriptions, etc. and provide numerous links to audio and visual resources, including commonly used software programs for recording and analyzing speech.

A final strength of this collection is its approach of reaching out to its readers as potential new members of a vibrant community of L2 pronunciation “classroom teachers, materials developers, and researchers” (p. v) and emphasizing that there is much still to be learned and explored in the field. It is easy to agree with the editor that “those new to L2 pronunciation teaching are entering an exciting era [in which] empirical research to support pronunciation teaching is growing in influence” and that “as members of a new generation of pronunciation teachers, readers of [the] book are well positioned to both benefit from and contribute to” future advances in the field (p. 337). In short, *Teaching the pronunciation of English: Focus on whole courses* is a valuable contribution to the field of L2 pronunciation that represents an engaging and well-supported text that will be beneficial for prospective/current pronunciation teachers and teacher trainers alike. I look forward to adopting it as a core text in the coming year.

References

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