Practical approaches to teaching suprasegmentals

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Where this talk came from
An outcome of the chapter

- Teaching suprasegmentals is often quite different from segmentals
- From experience, I had lots of activities and ideas
- But what was general in these activities, and how did they fit with teaching second language suprasegmentals?

5 approaches

- Visualize it
- Embody it
- Contextualize it
- Change it around
- Give it meaning
Visualize it - Background

Visualize it - Activities

- Change the font
  - Moving typeface
  - Marking prominent syllables
  - Images of suprasegmentals
- Respellings
- Computer software, e.g.,
  - Pitch tracings on Praat

Moving the typeface

I can’t be\textsuperscript{LIEVE} it!

Can \textsuperscript{YOU}?

Can I \textsuperscript{WHAT}?

Can you be\textsuperscript{LIEVE} it!
From Dickerson (2010)

```plaintext
It's a pre-sent for Ewy's wéd-ding.
The first verse is the wórst.
Steve can read with éase.
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Using respelling
Picturing differences in stress (Dickerson, 2010)


Are you going, or are you staying?
Embody it - Background


- In a TESL Master’s class, teachers were exposed to the use of kinesthetic/tactile techniques.

- In later practice on their own, teachers’ use of kinesthetic/tactile techniques increased.

Embody it - Activities

- Word stress
  - Rubberbands
  - Moving hands
- Rhythm
  - Walk about
- Prominence
  - Keying body movement to stresses
Stress and physical actions

- Rubber-bands

COLlar reMIND deNIED it FOLLOWed her

- Other movements
  - Hand movements
  - Stand up, sit down

Walkabout

I never believed any of the things he said, and I didn’t believe it even when he said something that was true.

I never beLIEVED / any of the things he SAID, / and I didn’t believe it even when he said SOMething / that was TRUE.
Contextualize it - Background


  - Intelligible pronunciation is not simply the ability to pronounce in isolation, but within interaction.

  - This includes pragmatics, body language, and how suprasegmentals fit into the larger context of communication. In fact, the larger context of communication is the only place they fit.

Contextualize it - Activities

- Dramatic scenes from sitcoms or movies
- Transcribe it, mark it, practice it, role play it
OK hon. / Alright then. / I'll see you around ten. / OK, bye. /
Listen / Carrie's not gonna make it home for dinner / so I'm gonna, / I'm gonna order us / some pizza. /
From where? /
From Sal's. /
Sal's? / Have you lost your mind?? /
Okay / not Sal's. / Then from where? /
A little neighborhood joint called / "Dominos". /
Domino's?? /
Yeah, / that's it. /
Alright / what's the number? /
It's 17 / 18 / 11 / -sixty / -oh-eleven. /
Look / I have way too many numbers, / okay? /
I gave you the area code! /
We're in the area code, / I don't need to dial it! /
Okay, / ready? /
I'm ready. /
One-one-sixty-eight… / 
OK you know what? / How about a little phone number rhythm, / huh, / you know? / A little "bum bum bah, / bum bah, / bum bah…" / Got it? /

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**it around Change - Background**


- Students can improve their intelligibility by:
  - reducing function words
  - linking
  - pronouncing certain consonants clearly, especially final consonant groups.
- One way to do this is through build-up exercises
it around Change - Activities

- Backward Build-up
- Picture narratives with fluency practice
- Incomplete sentences for intonation

Backward build-up activities

Example sentence

One of the main tasks of the listener is to figure out where words begin and end.

One of the main tasks / of the listener / is to / figure out / where words / begin and end.
Try it!

“speakers need to be able to decide which words are the most important, and how the words fit together in phrases”

“speakers need to / be able to decide / which words are / the most important, / and / how the words / fit together / in phrases”
Using incomplete sentences

Individuals/Pairs. Write an appropriate short response to each of the short sentences. Mark the intonation. Compare your response with a partner and practice the conversations.

Example

1. A: Ready? 🔄
   B: ____________________________

2. A: How much? 🔄
   B: ____________________________

3. A: Funny? 🔄
   B: ____________________________

4. A: Cool! 🔄
   B: ____________________________

5. A: Interesting? 🔄
   B: ____________________________

Extend the activity

Pairs. Choose one of the short conversations in Exercise 6. Expand the conversation to include 6-8 turns. Include rising and falling intonation. Practice and perform the dialogue.

Example Conversation based on the example in Exercise 6

A: Darn! 🔄
B: What? 🔄
A: Hurt myself! 🔄
B: How? 🔄
A: Stupid hammer! 🔄
B: Oh! 🔄 Need a band-aid? 🔄
A: No, it’s just bruised. 🔄
Give it meaning - Background


“The teacher didn’t grade the papers”

“John’s even been to Thailand.”

“The car was stolen yesterday.”

Give it meaning - Activities
Give it meaning - Activities

Pragmatics and suprasegmentals
Using contrastive prominence to correct someone

Pairs. Person 1 reads his/her sentence. Person 2 corrects the sentence with the information in parentheses. Corrections should use contrastive focus and a politeness expression.

Person 1                                      Person 2

1. Penguins live in the Arctic.               (Antarctic)  
   I don’t think that’s right. Penguins live in the Antarctic.

2. Tigers are native to Africa.               (Asia)
3. The capital of the U.S. is New York.       (Washington, D.C.)
4. Dolphins are a kind of fish.               (mammal)
5. Koreans eat a lot of bread.                (rice)

6. (Hurricanes)                               Tornadoes start in the ocean.
7. (Paris)                                    The Eiffel tower is in London.
8. (Atlantic Ocean)                          Morocco is on the Pacific Ocean.
9. (Caribbean Sea)                           Cuba is in the Mediterranean Sea.

Conclusions

• Teaching suprasegmentals is most successful if we think beyond listen and repeat.

• Suprasegmentals are harder to represent than vowels and consonants, so using different strategies can help learners connect to the kinds of meanings that they might not otherwise notice.
Questions?