Pronunciation: Carry-Over Activity

Improving Acquisition Focusing on Negotiation for Meaning

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The Context

3 Pronunciation classes at an ESL school in Los Angeles.

- 12 week program
  - 1 hour class, 4 days a week
- Students ages 18-50
  - 1 Advanced Pronunciation class (18 students) - Brazilian and Japanese
  - 2 Intermediate Pronunciation classes (20 students) - Brazilian, Japanese, Chinese, and Saudi

Challenges with teaching the classes (between 3 teachers):

- 1 week spent on a topic of pronunciation
- Following weeks, students reverted back to “old” mistakes
- Casual conversations and group communicative activities → did not apply the pronunciation they learned

My Question: How can I help my students apply their learned pronunciation into spontaneous speech?
Inhibitors of Student Pronunciation Progress

Learner related:
- Lack of real or meaningful interactions
- Lack of instruction or practice
- Ineffective instruction
- Not motivated
- Fossilized
- L1-related problems
- Other

Instruction related

Darcy (2018)
Problem: Lack of application of learned pronunciation

Teachers *rarely* feel that they *see improvement in* their students’ *pronunciation* when spontaneous conversation occurs (Darcy, Ewert and Lidster 2012; Darcy, 2018; Levis & Levis, 2018)

“One obvious *reason for the lack of transfer* can be found in the traditional use of *decontextualized pronunciation practice* (e.g., rote drills and choral repetition of target words and phrases)” (Grant, 2014, as cited in Darcy, 2018).
Research Questions

How does the negotiation of meaning affect students’ pronunciation acquisition?

What pronunciation activities can be implemented that facilitate carry-over through negotiation for meaning?

Darcy et al. (2012) notes that, “one of the major challenges is to enhance carry-over” and suggests, “… focusing on meaningful and communicative activities are relevant to real life situations as a way to facilitate carry-over” (p.93).

- Carry-over → the transfer of learned pronunciation to spontaneous speech
Literature Support

Derwing, Munro and Thomson (2007) recommend that in order to build student’s fluency and comprehensibility in real life, students would benefit from the development of formulaic sequences.

→ Formulaic Sequence example: Ordering food.
   Person A: What would you like?
   Person B: I’d like a hamburger please.
   Person A: Do you want anything to drink?
   Person B: No thanks!
   Person A: Your total is $10.

Practicing this “formula” will improve students comprehensibility, or ability to make themselves understood.
It is important that teachers include *activities* in class that can *mirror authentic communication* outside of class. Darcy (2018) notes that, “activities that are inherently *repetitive* yet genuinely communicative ...have been suggested for *promoting the development of comprehensible spontaneous speech.*” (p.24)

→ **Authentic Communication** example: Getting information for a party
   a. Where is the party? What should I bring? What time is it, and when does it go until? How do I get there?

This activity is *repetitive* and also *mirrors authentic communication* students will need outside of class.
Murphy (2003) notes that, “activities that provide opportunities for learners to communicate meaningfully with each other are more interesting... memorable... and have more of an impact on enhancing speech intelligibility” (p.116)

→ Students communicate meaningfully when they:
   a. Negotiate with a partner to reach a goal.
   b. Are required to share, barter, check, and redefine their information to make themselves understood.

To reach their goal, students will need to make sure their information is accurate and clear. If it isn’t they will have to figure out where and how their information was misinterpreted, and then fix it until they are successful. Successful negotiations are memorable and can enhance students speech intelligibility
The Bullet Points?

To build fluency and comprehension in spontaneous speech, activities need to be:

→ Genuinely Communicative (unscripted, with possibility of failure to create understanding)
→ Authentic (mimics real life)
→ Formulaic and Repetitive
→ Memorable
→ Require Negotiation for Meaning
The Carry-Over Model

Learned pronunciation features: For example:
- Minimal pairs (main vs. man)
- Reducing -ed syllables (watched)
- Linking (It's a hard apple)
- Contrastive Stress (correcting info)

Application of Pronunciation in Activities that are:
- Authentic (mimics real life)
- Communicative (unscripted)
- Focused on Negotiating for Meaning
- Meaningful
- Formulaic and Repetitive

Improvement in:
- Student confidence
- Metacognitive awareness
- Speech intelligibility
- Spontaneous speech
Recommended Activity

Use a “Giving Directions” activity that can be adapted to fit the pronunciation goals of any given pronunciation class. (Brown, 1988; Lee, Jang and Plonsky 2015)
Giving Directions  Adapted from Judy Gilbert’s Clear Speech (2012)

Pronunciation Uses:

1. Contrastive stress (emphasizing important information: “turn LEFT”) (Levis & Levis, 2018)

2. Minimal pairs for consonants & vowels (pine street vs. pin street, thin street vs tin street) (Darcy et al. 2012)

3. Word stress (ex. 50th (fiftieth) street vs. 15th (fifteenth) street) (Lewis & Deterding, 2018)
Additional Map Examples
Giving Directions

Within my context

Advanced Pronunciation class:

- Map for: syllables with -ed endings

Intermediate Pronunciation class:

- Map for: vowel minimal pairs: relative vowel (e.g. bet) and alphabet vowel sounds (e.g. beat)
- Map for: syllables with -ed endings
Implementation:

1. Use this activity after having already taught and practiced an aspect of pronunciation.

2. Before class: write street names according to target pronunciation features.

3. Model with the class → give them directions to a location of your choosing. Then have students choose their own locations (don’t show!)

4. Pair students up to give them opportunities to practice giving directions.

Successfully guiding a partner to the destination would be a sign that students have acquired the pronunciation (or identify areas for further instruction).
Expansion Options:

➔ Further Authenticity: set the scene of an “Uber car ride”. Give a time limit to challenge students’ fluency, and imitate a “don't miss the exit!” feeling. → this could help match students’ personal and professional goals. (Mcgregor & Reed, 2018)

◆ Derwing et. al. (2007), “Generally, fluency improves with greater opportunities to interact in the L2 outside of the classroom.” (p.360) → bring the real world into the class

➔ Encourage students to repeat the given directions with the WRONG information → their partner will have to use contrastive stress to give the correct information.

➔ Students could create their own street names to target their perceived difficulties
Survey

Post Activity survey administered to:
- Evaluate student’s perceived changes in comfortability and confidence regarding target pronunciation

Survey needed:
- To be communicated verbally and through text
- Simple language → crucial for lower level students

**Possibility of subjectivity**
Survey Questions

1. I felt confident with the pronunciation before the activity.
   Strongly Disagree        Disagree         Neutral           Agree          Strongly Agree

2. I feel more confident with the pronunciation after the activity.
   Strongly Disagree        Disagree          Neutral          Agree           Strongly Agree

3. Before the activity, I felt confident that I could use the pronunciation correctly in real life.
   Strongly Disagree         Disagree          Neutral           Agree           Strongly Agree

4. After the activity, I feel more confident that I can use the pronunciation in real life.
   Strongly Disagree        Disagree        Neutral            Agree          Strongly Agree

Comments:
Findings: Intermediate Class Survey

Confidence with Targeted Pronunciation

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Before Activity
After Activity

17 Students Surveyed
Findings: Intermediate Class Survey (cont.)

Real Life Confidence with Targeted Pronunciation

- **Before Activity**
- **After Activity**

17 Students Surveyed
Responses

Angelina (Brazil, intermediate) - “Before the activity I felt confused about the listening, but the activity is too good and we can use in practice in real life. Can feel the difference”

Bernardo (Brazil, intermediate) - “Everybody thinking two things, directions and pronunciation. More difficult. You think it’s correct”

Gio (Brazil, intermediate) - “Good for you when you talk with another person in LA. Before the activity I was confused about if I can listen clean. After I do the activity it’s very clear for me.”
Research Questions

How does the negotiation of meaning affect students’ pronunciation acquisition?

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Findings

Student responses indicate:

- Increased confidence with pronunciation and ability to converse in real life
- Increased self-awareness and metacognitive awareness
- A “Giving Directions” Activity can help facilitate carry-over
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Limitations

- Infrequent use of giving directions due to Google Maps and Waze
- Creating tests that truly measure spontaneous speech
- Students may be biased
- Possibility of “loaded” Questions
Next Steps

- Conduct further activities and surveys with a wider range of students
- Interview students and have them journal their changes in pronunciation
- Determine whether the activity produced lasting effects upon student’s pronunciation

I’m hoping to find that from activities that focus on negotiating for meaning, students are able to:

- retain learned pronunciation
- apply the pronunciation into spontaneous conversation
Further Research

Teachers need a wider toolbox of carry-over activities that are easy to implement:

- More activities need to be created
- Activities must be capable of adapting to fit a variety of pronunciation targets
- Activities must be communicative in nature
Thank you for your time!

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References


