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# A Review of Pronunciation in the classroom: The overlooked essential

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## Book Review

# A Review of *Pronunciation in the classroom: The overlooked essential*

*Reviewed by Sally Hood, University of Portland*

Jones, T. (2016). *Pronunciation in the classroom: The overlooked essential*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Press. ISBN: 9781942799269

*Editors' Note: ORTESOL would like to thank TESOL Press for providing this book free of charge.*

The message conveyed by authors of the various chapters in *Pronunciation in the classroom: The overlooked essential*, is that accurate pronunciation is a critical component of English language proficiency and that pronunciation practice can be systematically integrated into lessons with some planning by the instructor. The authors weave in brief citations to second language acquisition research and theories, as well as current brain research, to support claims about the important role of pronunciation in the language learning process. Each chapter provides thorough instructions for a multitude of pronunciation activities that can be implemented immediately, as well as references to Web sites where learners can practice pronunciation alone or with others. The authors incorporate their activities into grammar, vocabulary, reading, speaking, listening, and content area instruction while addressing the multiple intelligences (e.g., kinesthetic, visual, musical, etc.), a theory espoused by Gardner (1983). Each chapter is easy to read with

reference to necessary linguistic terms and explanations that are straightforward. Teachers of ESL and instructors preparing ESL teachers would profit from reading this book.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, along with an introduction and a conclusion. The foreword is written by Judy B. Gilbert, a well-known author of other pronunciation books. She provides a rationale for the significance of pronunciation along with a brief history of pronunciation teaching, punctuated by fun quotes from famous musicians, such as Bob Dylan. The author argues that prosody is the central component of pronunciation. The introduction offers to the reader concise linguistic descriptions, along with personal examples of how mispronunciation can lead to misunderstanding.

Chapter 1 focuses on how teachers can integrate pronunciation with vocabulary instruction, with convincing justifications of how learning to pronounce a word helps with learning its meaning. The author makes suggestions as to how to use The Color Vowel Chart (Taylor & Thompson, 2015) with different levels of learners.

Chapter 2 continues the emphasis on vocabulary, concentrating on a “haptic pronunciation teaching technique” that utilizes a multidimensional approach incorporating movement and touch.

Chapter 3 details how to integrate pronunciation into listening and speaking classes. The authors compare controlled, bridging, and communicative types of speaking activities and then describe a variety of pronunciation activities for each; many involve cooperative learning.

Chapter 4 discusses combining pronunciation practice with oral presentation skills, and offers pedagogical guidelines and examples.

Chapter 5 centers on how pronunciation improves listening skills. The author includes several pertinent citations to the second language acquisition literature to make his case, along with useful activities, some of which are connected to different content areas (science and math). Chapter 6 also highlights the integration of pronunciation with listening skills, but with more attention to pragmatics.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 focus on integrating pronunciation practice with teaching grammar structures, each with a focus on a different level (beginning, intermediate, and advanced, respectively). The authors emphasize teaching “real” pronunciation—for example, that students need to learn how to link and reduce words, as is common in native English-speaker speech.

Chapters 10 and 11 make connections between pronunciation and

reading, citing new brain research revealing the significance of pronunciation to reading comprehension.

Chapter 12 concentrates on integrating pronunciation with spelling and punctuation. The author provides a brief history of the English spelling system along with compelling activities that would make spelling fun.

The main strength of this book is its abundance of hands-on pronunciation activities. The activities are student-centered and engaging, with accompanying suggestions for adapting them to different English language proficiency levels, as well as to the age of the learner (children to adults).

Another asset of this book is

that several pronunciation activities are integrated into the teaching of oral communication. For example, one activity asks students to introduce themselves to each other using their personal names in order to practice prominent syllables. Lacking in the book are illustrations (there are a few, but none in color) which would engage the reader a bit more. Providing more illustrations for the example activities would also aid the English instructor in understanding what the activity might look like when enacted. In addition, the book does not include biographies of the 20 authors, which would have lent more richness to each of their submissions, although a couple of authors do mention that their chapters are written from the perspective of an ESL teacher. Another helpful change might have been to draw on current theories in the bilingual education field highlighting the benefits of capitalizing on learners’ first languages during instruction, allowing

***“The main strength of this book is its abundance of hands-on pronunciation activities.”***

for cross-linguistic comparisons, and building on learners' existing knowledge of their home languages (Cummins, 2007). Some practice activities could draw on these "metalinguistic awareness" principles (2007) by including opportunities for learners to

discover cross-linguistic similarities and differences in speech production (tongue height and position, cognates, intonation, etc.). To conclude, the goal of the book is to make pronunciation an integral part of teaching English, and the authors accomplish this aim to a high degree.

## References

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