教学点津：
语音教学实用方法

H. Douglas Brown　主编

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Tips for Teaching Pronunciation:
A Practical Approach

配光盘

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丛书总序

改革开放 30 多年来，随着我国与世界各国交流和来往的广度和深度的不断发展，国民英语水平得到了普遍与大幅的提升。在我国发展的各个不同历史时期，国家也会对各个层次的英语教学适时做出新的调整，提出新的要求。进入 21 世纪以来最近的一次大学英语教学改革，作为我国高等教育教学质量工程的一项重要内容，在教育部的领导下，整体规划，分步实施，措施得当，取得显著效果。经过近十年的改革，我国大学英语教学的状况发生了巨大改变，基于计算机和课堂的新型教学模式在全国各高校基本全面建立，"以学生为主体，以教师为主导"的教学理念基本被广泛认同，各高校都已基本建立与本校办学特色相适应的大学英语课程体系，且注重加强课程内涵建设，学生的英语综合运用能力和自主学习能力普遍得到提高。

改革走到今天，经历了阵痛，也看到了成效，但依然方兴未艾。广大的高校英语教师面临学生英语水平的提高，面临高校师资队伍建设的新形势，面临职称晋升不断抬高的门槛，在亲历了大学英语教学改革浪潮的洗礼之后，尤其感觉到了从事高校英语教师这份职业的不易、挑战与压力。从教育部到高校各级教学单位的管理层，也越来越意识到，高等学校大学英语教学质量是关系到提高我国高等教育质量、办人民满意的教育的大事，而要提高英语教学质量，除了要改革教学大纲、教材系统、考试体系、教学模式和教学手段，更重要、也是更内核的是要转变广大英语教师的教学理念，不断提升他们的专业水平和教学能力。

我国的大学英语教师，普遍来说都是从高校取得英语语言文学及相关专业学位之后，即直接开始从事教学工作，不少年轻教师并没有接受过有关教育学和教学法的系统培训。而一个显而易见的道理是：一个好的英语教师仅仅具备扎实的英语语言技能是远远不够的，并不是自身英语水平高的教师就一定能教出英语好的学生。要搞好英语教学，咱们的英语教师还须不断学习现代教育理论、外语教学理论和外语学科理论，优化和完善自身的知识结构，掌握现代教育技术，提升文化素养，拓展国际视野，并具备将理论知识真正融会贯通到具体教学当中去的能力，如制定教学大纲、设计教学方案、驾驭课堂、充分利用教学资源、有效管理学生、科学测评学生能力等各方面的能力。更为重要的是，英语教师还应具备在本领域中可持续发展的能力。这就需要广大英语教师具备自主的终身学习意识和动力，具备自我发展的动力和能力，教师职业的专业化发展能力成为新时期对教师提出的新的和更高的发展目标。

20 世纪 80 年代以来至今，我国陆续出现了一些旨在帮助广大英语教师夯实理论基础、完善知识结构、更新教学理念、掌握新兴教学方法的著作。其中，既有从国外引进的，也有国内学者执笔的；既有偏综合性和理论性的，也有重实践和应用的。这些著作的出版，对于英语教师自我提升教学水平和科研能力，起到了非常重要的推动作用。此类著作目前在我国不是太多，而是太少。清华大学出版社外语分社历来就有重视教学研究的优良传统，此次经过精心策划和遴选，全新推出的"英语教师职业发展前沿论丛"是一套开放性丛书，今年先行推出第一批，今后还将根据我国广大英语教学工作者的需要不断进行补充和丰富。我有幸被邀请参与该套丛书的编委工作，看到这样一批优秀的国外前沿理论著作即将能在国内被引进出版，感到十分高兴。该套丛书特色鲜明，优势突出，其最大的特色与优势主要体现在以下几个方面：

一、出版社与作者并重，内容权威。该系列丛书中的每一本都是从美国 Pearson 出版集团和 McGraw Hill 出版集团等世界知名出版公司引进版权。作者均为当代国际著名语言教学专家，如 David Nunan 现任加州 Anaheim 大学副校长，并于 2008 年创建了 David Nunan 语言教育学院，曾荣膺 2002 年美国国会颁发的在英语教育领域中做出杰出贡献奖；H. Douglas Brown 是美国旧金山州立大学教授，曾任该校美国英语研究所所长和《语言学习》杂志主编。他们都曾任国际 TESOL 组织主席，在全球语言教学与研究领域的影响力广泛而深远，也为我国广大语言学习者和教学研究工作者所熟知。这套"英语教师职业发展前沿论丛"选择的第一原则就是：出自名出版社的名家代表性力作。

二、经典与前沿并行，更关注前沿。该套丛书中有一些属于教学法方面的经典著作，如子系列"实用英语语言教学法"所包含的 6 本，分综述篇、听力篇、口语篇、阅读篇、语法篇、少儿英语篇，另外还有两部语言测试与评估领域的经典之作，都是从事英语教学与研究的工作者奠定基本知识框架和掌握基本教学技能所需要的得力助手。同时，清华大学出版社此次在遴选入选书目时，更为关注的是国际上语言教学领域的发展动态与前沿方向。如《根据原理教学：交互式语言教学》与《语言测评：原理与课堂实践》，引进的都是近两年新改版的最新版次，在权威、经典、全面的基础上又增加了新热点问题的论述，包括后教学法条件、多元智力、自主性与交流意愿二原则、评价的再组织原则、教师发展与反思性教学、社会责任、批评教育学、标准化考试领域的最新研究成果等。另外，计算机辅助语言教学（CALL）、语音教学和跨文化交际教学等这些近年来的热门领域，在该系列中也都能找到国际上目前最前沿的论著。

三、理论与实践结合，更重实践。这套丛书最突出的一个特点就是理论与实践的统一，每一本书都是以一套完备的理论体系作为支撑，最终服务于实践指导，具有很

强的实用性和操作性。子系列"教学点津"（Tips for Teaching）的每一本都着眼于非常具体的教学技巧，理论研究与教师教学实践相辅相成、有效融合，同时还在书中提供了丰富而具体的课堂活动设计及可复制的课堂活动材料，展现活动设计范例和具体操作指导，让教师能快速学以致用。如《教学点津：计算机辅助语言教学（CALL）实用方法》一书就展示了100多个与教学内容配套的CALL相关软件和网页的彩色截图，随书附带的光盘还针对各章内容提供了"演示"和"模拟"功能，既形象生动，又易于上手进行实际体验和操练；《教学点津：语音教学实用方法》也是图文并茂，讲解清晰具体，配套的音频CD光盘还提供了所有可供选择的课堂活动的听力材料。其他的所有著作无一例外也都是一部部真正能为教师提升教学效果指点迷津的实用指南，其实用性价值在同类学术著作中无可比拟。

《国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要（2010－2020年）》中提到：教育大计，教师为本。教育部也从今年开始，在全国高校范围选派骨干英语教师定期举办"高等学校大学英语骨干教师高级研修班"，大学英语教师专业水平和教学能力的提升和培训进入常态化。"英语教师职业发展前沿论丛"的出版对于我国广大英语教师及英语教学法研究者来说，犹如一场及时雨，必将为他们的职业发展助一臂之力，为打造一支业务精湛、结构合理、具有较强英语运用能力、熟悉外语教学理论、掌握现代教育技术的高素质专业化英语教师队伍起到积极的推动作用。

王守仁
2012年11月于南京大学

中文导读

一、英语语音教学理论与实践

在跨语言交际的过程中，制约其有效性的因素源自不同的层面，包括二语语言体系本身的，如语音、语义和语法体系，也包括非语言体系本身的，如价值观念、心理因素、语言环境和文化差异。语言障碍与文化障碍是外语学习者必须面临的挑战，而语音作为语言的物质形式，是语法和词汇赖以生存的基础。故此语音障碍无疑是跨语言交际的首要障碍，且研究表明，语音对听力、口语、阅读、写作等各项技能的发展都有影响，语音教学在英语教学中的基础地位就不言而喻了。正如作者 Linda Lane 在书中所言：语音是进行有效交际的关键因素，在交际英语教学中占有重要的地位。正因为如此，一代又一代的专家学者和一线教师都在不断地进行探索，而《教学点津：语音教学实用方法》就是一本代表英语语音教学研究新成果和新理念的英语语音教学指导书。

在英语教学中，人们对语音的教学目标有着不同的理解与认识，这是因为英语学习的目标本身就是多元的。在英语教学界，得到大多数教学和研究者认同的、可行的教学目标通常指"接近母语标准的、可理解并能进行有效交际"的语音语调，最起码是帮助学习者"能清晰并自信地进行口语表达"。试想一下，如果学生讲的英语别人听不懂，英美人士讲的英语学生也听不懂，交际就无从谈起，更谈不上"有效的交际"。从本书我们可以看出，Linda Lane 将英语语音教学的目标定位为：帮助学生掌握英语语音体系的基本要素，使学生说出来的话语清晰易懂。

在英语语音体系中，对语言交际形成最大障碍的因素是什么？许多研究者与一线教师发现，超音段音位（重音、节奏和语调）的掌握比元音与辅音的正确发音更为重要，因为它直接影响着话语的可理解性，即人们是否能听懂说话的人想表达的意思。这一研究成果的直接体现是：Linda Lane 将英语语音学习的内容划分为五大部分，并将超音段音位的内容放在前面。为此，我们看到本书的内容与排列是：第一章单词的重音、第二章话语的节奏、第三章英语的语调、第四章英语的辅音、第五章英语的元音。这是作者从事英语语音教学30年的经验总结，也特别适合目前我国英语语音教学的实际需要。我国的"教育部普通高等教育'九五'国家级重点教材"、"普通高等教育'十五'国家级规划教材"《英语语音教程》（王桂珍，2000，2005）以及"普通高等教育'十一五'国家级规划教材"《英语语音语调教程》（王桂珍，2011）就是编著者在深入研究我国学生英语语音学习特点，根

据学生的学习需要编写的：在重视英语音段音位学习的基础上，加大对语句重音、话语节奏和语调使用的关注，形成在英语语音教学中音段、节奏、语调三足鼎立之势，使学生通过语音学习达到提高英语听说交际有效性的目的。

英语语音学习的过程可以说是从源语言语音到目标语语音的学习过程，二语习得研究者将其称之为中介语或语际语（interlanguage），而语间干扰所产生的错误被称之为语际错误（interlingual error），指学习者的母语对正在学习的语言所造成的影响。从上个世纪 70 年代初中介语理论产生后的近 20 年里，中介语语音系统研究主要是采用对比分析和错误分析的方法解释语言迁移现象（Selinker，1972）：对比和比较学习者母语和目标语语音系统的不同，找到迁移的原因，进而避免这些错误的产生。Eckman（1977）的标记性差异假说（Markedness Differential Hypothesis）则强调造成语音习得困难的不在语音系统本身，而是在其标记性差异：标记性程度越高，语音的习得就越困难。这些研究方法的直接依据是源于结构主义语言学的音位分布（distribution）、最小对比对（minimal pair）、区别性特征（distinctive feature）和行为主义心理学（behavourism）等理论。80 年代中后期和 90 年代初，变体（variationist）分析方法与优选论（optimality）方法相继问世：前者从社会功能的角度解释中介语语音的变化，后者则通过限制条件规则（constraint order）的理论解释中介语习得的过程。以我国英语学习者的英语话语节奏特点为例，用标记性差异假说解释是因为学习者的母语和目的语分属两种不同的话语节奏，因此标记性强习得亦困难；用优选论的限制条件规则方法解释则是因为在习得目的语话语节奏过程中，学习者使用的条件规则更倾向于他 / 她所习惯的规则，因此生成的语音输出不同于目标语的话语节奏。目前，中介语语音系统研究的理论基础和研究方法体现出趋于多样化和综合性的特点，更注重深层机制和发展过程的挖掘，可谓是一个多元发展的时代。

Linda Lane 根据自己的教学经验，列举了不同语言背景的学习者在语音学习方面碰到的主要问题，包括中国学生英语语音学习的难点与重点，同时理论联系实际地对学生在英语语音学习过程中出现的问题加以分析，并对教学提出指导性的建议。

从英语教学的发展史来看，20 世纪初期直接教学法的出现使得人们开始重视英语语音教学。学习者多通过直觉、模仿和重复等方式接触和学习目的语的语音，以直觉—模仿—重复组织语音教学的模式应运而生。结构主义语言学的崛起与听说教学法的兴起进一步促进了英语语音教学的发展，主要表现在：更加重视语音的基本操练以及学习者发音习惯的养成；根据句型操练的原理，设计出相应的语音对比操练模式；借助音标符号、发音图解、图表等教学用具，开展更加有效的语音教学活动。20 世纪 60 年代以转换生成语法为理论依据的认知教学法将语言教学的重点转向语法和词汇教学，英语语音教学在一定程度上被人们所忽视。20 世纪 70 年代交际教学法的出现使人们开始重新重视语音教学，语音训练

方式呈现向多样化方向发展的趋势。Linda Lane 对语音训练方式的"多元化"进行了诠释，对教学的建议不仅周到全面而且细致实用。

二、英语语音教学的内容与方法

Linda Lane 对英语语音教学理论与实践的诠释全面地体现在其对英语语音教学的内容与方法上。以下为本书的章节概要，每一章都包含教学的重点与教学方法的阐述。

第一章　单词的重音

将单词重音作为第一章的内容是因为它在语言交际中举足轻重——对于本族人而言，一个词语最重要的音节当属重读音节——因为这是词语解意的关键所在。其重要性还体现在重音是形成英语语流所固有之节奏的基石，在音段与超音段音位之间起着重要的桥梁作用。与此同时，单词重音也是相对比较容易切入的语音教学内容。

Linda Lane 强调单词重音的教学重点是掌握重音、次重音和非重读音节的读法，了解单词重音的一般规则及标识等。本章的教学内容包括：注意重读与非重读音节中元音及其所在音节本身的时长，非重读音节中元音的弱化，次重读音节的特点，双音节词的重读规律，复合词的重读规律，词的前缀与后缀的重音模式，重音的转换等。作者所设计的练习形式既有侧重语言形式的操练，也有侧重实际交际的练习，值得一线教师参考。

第二章　话语的节奏

Linda Lane 认为，学习者掌握英语话语节奏规律最重要的是运用音长和响度使语句中的重要词语有别于其他词语，同时将词语按意群顺畅地连接起来。鉴于学习者的英语话语节律往往与其英语水平相关，即英语水平高者通常其话语节律亦较好而初学者则英语话语节律亦较差，作者建议在练习材料的选择上应以适合学生的水平为依据。

本章的教学内容包括：以重音计时语言节奏的特点，句子中的实义词与功能词，意群，词的连读，常用短语的重音模式，功能词的弱读式，自然快速语流中的弱读现象，等等。以上学习内容对于中国学生极具针对性，也因此凸显其重要性。本章对我国从事英语教育的人员尤其适用，因为这一部分的教学内容往往是容易被忽视的，而学生英语听力在技术上的障碍与口头表达的流畅度存在的问题症结多在此处。作者所设计的练习值得我们借鉴。

第三章　英语的语调

Linda Lane 从话语意义、语法意义和情感意义三个方面来阐述英语语调的重要性。本章的教学内容包括：表示强调时使用的语调，进行对比时使用的语调，询问信息与请求确

认时使用的语调，句子未结束所使用的语调，同位语所使用的语调，语调与情感和态度等。本章的特点是作者对语调的归纳与分析清晰易懂，有利教和学。同时练习的设计较好地体现了创设信息沟并进行"交际"的理念。

第四章　英语的辅音

Linda Lane 在简要介绍英语辅音概貌的基础上着重对学生学习中常见的辅音发音问题进行分析，因为作者认为对于大多数学习者来说，英语中使用的辅音大多能在他们的母语中找到同类，需要特别关注的只是少数。对英语辅音的分析不外乎包括发音的部位、发音的方法以及清浊辅音三个方面。作者特别关注的辅音含：舌侧音、齿音、出现在元音中间的齿音爆破音、鼻音等。书中作者列出了许多实用、有效的练习形式供教学一线的老师们参考使用。

第五章　英语的元音

英语元音的分析自然离不开元音舌位图的辅助。Linda Lane 在本书特别强调学习者对英语元音的感知，认为没有正确的感知就不可能有正确的发音，而且，通过大量的辨音及听音练习帮助学生掌握英语元音的发音会有很好的效果。同时，作者认为元音的学习难度大于辅音，因为元音描述起来要比辅音复杂与抽象，为此，掌握元音发音所面临的挑战更多。作者特别关注下列单词对子中元音的区别，认为这些是元音学习中应该重点解决的问题，如：leave-live，wait-wet，bid-bead，bad-bead，not-nut，boot-book，以及个别双元音，等等。掌握正确元音发音的重要性是显而易见的：音错了，词义就改变了，交际就出现障碍了。书中作者列出了许多学生学习中常见的元音发音问题并进行分析，其中许多实用有效的练习形式对我国英语语音一线教师颇有启发。

三、英语语音教学的传承与创新

英语教学的目的在于培养学生用英语进行交际的能力，而在言语交际的过程中，"听"是第一位的。由于听力理解是个双向的过程，即听懂别人说的话也让别人听懂自己说的话，否则交际就不可能成功，因此帮助学生学会使用正确的英语语音语调有效地进行情感和信息的交流是语音教学的目标。本书作者在运用英语语音教学研究成果的基础上，结合自己的教学经验，阐述了教师在进行英语语音教学过程中应该注意的问题，提出了许多值得教师借鉴的建议，设计了大量实用的课堂练习，给一线教师提供了可贵的参考。

我国的英语语音教学经过多年的摸索取得了长足的进步。《教学点津：语音教学实用

方法》一书带给我们一个不同的视角：一个以英语为母语的英语教学同行对英语语音教学以及汉语背景学生英语语音学习问题进行审视的视角。这对推动我国英语语音教学的传承与创新，不断探索适合我国国情的英语语音教学方法与模式提供了可贵的借鉴。

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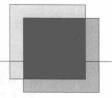
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Contents

TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

Recent years have seen a renewed recognition that pronunciation is a crucial element of effective communication and that pronunciation teaching belongs in mainstream, communicative ESL classrooms. ESL students place a high priority on instruction in pronunciation. At the same time, ESL teachers may feel uneasy about teaching pronunciation because they lack training in phonetics or linguistics or experience in teaching pronunciation. As a result, in spite of its recognized importance to communication, pronunciation is still a marginalized skill in many ESL programs.

It should not be. Pronunciation is intimately linked to other oral/aural skills, both influencing and influenced by listening comprehension and fluency. Gilbert describes the relationship between pronunciation and listening comprehension as a "speech loop between speaker and listener" (1987, 33); instruction in one improves performance in the other. For example, the reductions that native speakers use in both formal and informal speaking are in sharp contrast to their word list pronunciations: compare the pronunciation of *can* pronounced alone and its pronunciation in *Bea can light the beacon light* (/biykən layt ðə biykən layt/). The word list pronunciation, however, is the one that most students learn first and the one they expect to hear in speaking. "Micro-level" listening tasks can make students aware of how grammar words like *can* sound in connected speech and thus improve comprehension (Choi 1988, Murphy 1991). In addition, Michaud and Reed maintain that pronunciation instruction can lead to improvement in writing by making students more aware of errors that occur in both speaking and writing, like missing word endings (2008).

In this Introduction, we discuss the goals of pronunciation teaching, factors that affect learning a new pronunciation, pronunciation syllabi, general types of pronunciation exercises and activities, self-monitoring, and feedback.

GOALS OF PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

Students who learn English as adults or who are adults when significant exposure to English begins will probably never speak it with a native accent (but see Bongaerts et al. 1997). A nativelike accent is not a realistic goal for students, nor

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is it a necessary one for effective communication in English. More realistic pronunciation goals are intelligibility, confidence in speaking, and a reduction of accent features that distract the listener's attention from intelligible messages (Morley 1994, Gilbert 1980, Celce-Murcia et al. 1996). A gentle accent, together with accuracy in other areas of English (grammar, word choice), can even be an advantage, conferring on the speaker positive qualities like sophistication and intelligence. While these are not modest goals and not all students achieve them, most students can (and do) learn to speak more clearly and confidently.

Intelligibility, Comprehensibility, Accent, and Voice Quality

Intelligibility refers to the degree to which a listener can recognize words, phrases, and utterances (Smith and Nelson 1985, Smith 1992, Derwing and Munro 1997). In research, it is usually measured by asking listeners to transcribe nonnative speech and comparing the words listeners recognize with the words speakers intend. Another term, *comprehensibility*, describes the ease with which listeners can understand a nonnative speaker (Derwing and Munro 2005). "Comfortable intelligibility" is also used in this sense (Abercrombie 1949, Kenworthy 1987, 16). *Accent* refers to noticeable differences between native and nonnative pronunciations. While intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accent are interwoven, they are also, to a certain extent, independent. It is possible, for example, for even heavily accented speech to be intelligible. *Voice quality* refers to pronunciation features that are generally present in native speech, like average level of pitch.

The goal of intelligibility is uncontroversial: Without intelligibility, communication is impossible. Considering all areas of language, errors with pronunciation and word choice (the choice of an inappropriate word to express a speaker's meaning) are the two types of errors most likely to make a student incomprehensible (Gass and Selinker 2001, 266). Grammatical errors, such as omitting the past tense in a sentence (e.g., *Last night I go to a movie*) rarely lead to unintelligibility, although a large number of grammatical errors, together with pronunciation errors, can reduce comprehensibility (Varonis and Gass 1982), as can nonpronunciation discourse errors (Tyler 1992).

Research on the contribution of pronunciation to intelligibility has asked which features of pronunciation have the greatest impact. Accurate use of suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm, and intonation) appears to have a greater impact on intelligibility assessments by native listeners than accurate pronunciation of consonants and vowels (see, for example, Anderson-Hsieh et al. 1992, Derwing, Munro and Wiebe 1998, Hahn 2004). These studies have investigated the pronunciation of primarily intermediate and advanced ESL learners, and it is not clear whether the same findings would hold for students at lower levels of proficiency. In addition, experimental conditions can be far removed from real situations in which two people try to understand each other.

Assessments of intelligibility also depend on who the listeners are. Most research on intelligibility has used native English listeners. When nonnative listeners judge the

intelligibility of nonnative speakers, their assessments are sometimes based on aspects of pronunciation that are not important to native listeners (Jenkins 2000, 2002; Field 2005). The familiarity of the listener with nonnative speech in general, with a particular foreign accent, and with a particular nonnative speaker also affects assessments of intelligibility: The greater the familiarity, the more intelligible the speech (Gass and Varonis 1984). Because of this, ESL teachers may not be the best judges of their students' intelligibility. Kenworthy suggests that teachers set higher standards for intelligibility than what they themselves actually require in the classroom (1987). Much as our students like us, they are probably not taking English so that they can talk to us.

Studies of *comprehensibility* (ease of understanding) show that listeners' judgments depend on both segmental (consonants and vowels) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, and intonation) errors (Derwing and Munro 1997). In addition to errors in pronunciation, many other factors have an effect on comprehensibility: Speaking rate, errors in grammar, word choice, discourse markers, the age at which English is learned, the amount of exposure the learner has had to natively spoken English, the extent to which learners use English, and the listener's familiarity with the topic of conversation have all been shown to affect comprehensibility (Hinfotis and Bailey 1981, Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler 1988, Varonis and Gass 1982, Gass and Selinker 2001, Gass and Varonis 1984, Flege et al. 1995).

Accent refers to differences between native and nonnative pronunciations that are noticed by native listeners (Derwing, Munro, and Wiebe 1998, 396). The degree of accent is associated with segmental, suprasegmental, and voice quality features.[1]

Although accented pronunciations do not necessarily interfere with intelligibility, distracting, stigmatized, or stereotyped pronunciations should be addressed by pronunciation teachers. Even fully intelligible pronunciations can be evaluated negatively by native speakers because of accent (Pennington 1998, Levis 2005, Riney et al. 2000). For example, the substitution of /d/ for /ð/ in the word *them* (e.g., *Bring dem here*), while understandable, is stigmatized (for native English listeners) because it is a dialect feature of nonstandard English. The substitution of /z/ for /ð/ in *them* (e.g., *Bring zem here*), on the other hand, simply marks the speaker as nonnative.

Distracting or stereotyped pronunciations can affect intelligibility by drawing the listener's attention away from the message to the mispronunciation itself. Examples of distracting or stereotyped pronunciations include the confusion of /n/ and /l/ by speakers of some Cantonese dialects (e.g., *He nooked at the woman* instead of *He looked at the woman*); confusion of /r/ and /l/ (the stereotyped *flied lice* for *fried rice*) for Japanese ESL students; and the confusion of /y/ and /dʒ/ (*jess* for *yes, jesterday* for *yesterday*) for Spanish ESL students. These are pronunciation problems that can and should be addressed. The pronunciation of the vowels in *beach, sheet,* and *focus,* words which have caused countless ESL students embarrassment, should also be addressed.

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[1] As with intelligibility assessments, when evaluating accent, nonnative listeners may react to features of pronunciation that native listeners do not (Riney et al. 2005).

Voice quality settings are pronunciation features that are present most of the time in the speech of native speakers. Some languages, for example, are typically spoken at lower levels of pitch (e.g., Dutch) and others at higher levels of pitch (e.g., Japanese) relative to a particular language (e.g., English). In one language, words may be spoken with greater overall muscular tension and with less in another language; the lips may be more often spread (or rounded), or speech may have a generally "creaky," "breathy," or modal (neutral) sound (see, for example, Laver 1980, Esling and Wong 1983, Esling 1994, Keating and Esposito 2007). Esling and Wong suggest that ESL students become familiar with a broad model of voice quality settings for North American English (NAE), but note that not all dialects share these characteristics: spread lips, open jaw, palatalized (fronted) tongue body position, retroflex articulation (the tongue tip turns up and back), nasal voice, lowered larynx (lower overall pitch), and creaky voice (1983, 91). They offer several ways in which students can become aware of voice quality settings; for example, students speaking different native languages can say a short phrase in their native language and differences can be compared (1983, 94).

Although there is little doubt that voice quality plays a role in accent, more study is needed. Not only are there differences in the voice quality settings of speakers of the same language, there is also not always agreement about which particular settings are present or absent (Keating and Esposito 2007). More research using larger numbers of speakers is needed before teachers can confidently apply these findings in the classroom.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT PRONUNCIATION LEARNING

The degree of success that learners achieve in adopting a new pronunciation is influenced by many elements, including age and social-psychological factors, amount of exposure to the second language (L2), amount of use of the L2, the native language together with universals, and personality. Many of these factors (such as age and native language) are beyond the control of the classroom teacher and the learner.

Age and Social-Psychological Factors

Lenneberg (1967) proposed that there is a "critical period" for learning a language natively, which extends up to puberty: Neurobiological changes in the brain that culminate at puberty block the native-language learning ability thereafter.[2] In the area of grammatical learning, Johnson and Newport found evidence for a gradual decline in language learning abilities during the critical period rather than an abrupt fall off at the end (1989).

Social-psychological differences between adults and children have also been offered to explain the effect of age. Adults are assumed to have a deeper and stronger attachment to their native culture than children, which may consciously or

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[2] This claim is questioned by Krashen, 1973.

unconsciously prevent the adults from fully adopting the norms of a new language and culture (Gatbontin, Trofimovich, and Majid 2005, Jenkins 2005, Levis 2005). One of my students was very conscious of the conflict between English and his native language (culture) and stated that he did not want to sound like a "fake American." Another explanation of the age effect may be that adults' greater cognitive abilities (especially analytic abilities) are less effective in learning a new pronunciation than the more natural abilities found in young children.

Exposure and Use

Pronunciation learning is also affected by the amount of exposure learners have to the new language and the extent to which they use it (see Trofimovich and Baker 2006 for a review of research on these factors). It is not surprising that students who have spent three years in the United States typically pronounce English better than those who have spent three months. Similarly, students who use English a great deal in their daily activities are likely to pronounce the language better than those who rarely use it.

Native-Language Background and Linguistic Universals

The ability of native speakers to recognize specific foreign accents once they have experience with them attests to the influence of the native language on pronunciation of a new language. The native-language sound system (consonants, vowels, stress, rhythm, intonation, and voice quality) affects not only how learners pronounce English but how they hear it. For example, the two vowels in the English words *scene* and *sin* correspond to a single vowel in Spanish. Beginning and low-intermediate Spanish-speaking students are likely to have difficulty hearing the difference between *scene* and *sin* and may transfer their native-language vowel into the pronunciation of these words. As proficiency increases, students become better able to hear differences and notice pronunciations that are not present in their native languages.

Similarities between a native language and English can either facilitate or hinder learning. Lee, Guion, and Harada (2006) found that Japanese ESL learners were better able to lengthen stressed English vowels and shorten unstressed vowels than Korean ESL learners. They attributed this result to the fact that, while neither language is similar to English in terms of word stress, Japanese uses long and short vowels to contrast some words (e.g., *su*—"vinegar" and *suu*—"number") while Korean does not.[3] Because vowel length is important in Japanese, the Japanese learners may have been primed to notice differences in vowel length in English. On the other hand, if learners interpret a similarity as an equivalence, they may be unable to notice the differences between similar, but not identical, pronunciations

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[3] Some dialects of Korean contrast long and short vowels, but the learners in the Lee et al. study were not speakers of those dialects (2006, 493).