

# *Language Teaching*

*Techniques, Developments and Effectiveness*

**Carmine A. Hernandez**  
Editor

*Languages and Linguistics*

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LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS

**LANGUAGE TEACHING:  
TECHNIQUES, DEVELOPMENTS  
AND EFFECTIVENESS**



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LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS

# **LANGUAGE TEACHING: TECHNIQUES, DEVELOPMENTS AND EFFECTIVENESS**

**CARMINE A. HERNANDEZ**  
**EDITOR**



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## **PREFACE**

In learning languages, a distinction is usually made between mother tongues, second languages, and foreign languages. A mother tongue is the first language or languages one learns (or acquires) as a child. This new book presents findings on language learning including the methodologies commonly used by behavior analysts to teach verbal behavior; the use of multimodal tools for pronunciation training in second language learning in preadolescents; and teaching health professionals about language barriers to improve health care disparities and outcomes.

Chapter 1 aims to discuss the possibilities that arise for enhanced pronunciation training in Second Language (L2) teaching with the use of multimodal tools which incorporate the novel advances of speech technologies in fields like Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) or speech assessment. The improvement in the pronunciation skills of young learners of a new language has been traditionally neglected in the interest of the teaching of vocabulary, grammar or syntax; assuming that pronunciation would be improved by the own student along time. However, to acquire an intelligible pronunciation has a capital role in the communication abilities of the students when they have to face native speakers of the target language in a real situation.

Furthermore, the recent years have witnessed the apparition of a large number of Computer Assisted Pronunciation Training (CAPT) applications, which aim for the semi-automation of the process of pronunciation learning. These tools make an extensive use of speech technologies to detect mistakes in the pronunciation of the student and provide a valuable feedback, while using an effective multimodal interaction environment to make this feedback reach successfully the learner.

As a real experience of these novel possibilities, the outcome of the work carried out during a set of sessions in the Vienna International School (VIS) with “Vocaliza” is presented. “Vocaliza” is a CAPT tool developed under the “Comunica” framework for providing a better teaching experience to speech therapists and L2 teachers of Spanish all through the world. It uses audiovisual prompting for presenting a set of words and sentences to the student, capturing the answer with the pronunciation of the student and presenting feedback at the phonetic level on the mispronunciations made by the user.

The results of this study open the discussion for the possibilities of these novel techniques and provide sufficient elements and arguments for teachers and educators in their decision of incorporating the new technological elements into their classes.

Language barriers are increasingly present in health care in the US. Having limited English proficiency (LEP) is a risk factor for health disparities – it is associated with poorer health care processes and outcomes—but this risk can be reduced and/or eliminated when clinicians use professional interpreters or communicate proficiently with patients in their preferred language. In order to reduce the risk of health disparities that LEP patients face, it is essential that clinicians be educated as to how language barriers contribute to disparities and how to best overcome those barriers.

In Chapter 2, the authors first present evidence for teaching about language barriers in health care. Courses focused on teaching clinicians about language barriers in health care, and how and when to use an interpreter have been shown to be beneficial. Some examples of curricula described in the recent literature are discussed in detail.

Next, the authors present recommendations for curricula. Because education intended to reduce language barriers can also potentially contribute to disparities among LEP patients, institutions and/or individuals who develop and teach these courses need to take care so to avoid contributing to the problem they are intending to address. This can be done by making sure that teaching interventions are of high quality and that their impact on use of interpreters and on physician’s own limited non-English language skills be monitored. This section will cover specific recommendations for curricula on language barriers based on evidence based literature and an example of one such successful curriculum.

Finally, the authors discuss teaching non-English language skills to healthcare providers. The intention of these types of interventions is noble—to enhance communication with LEP patients—but it can also have the unintended effect of impairing communication and potentially contributing to

health disparities among LEP patients. In addition, the impact of this teaching on appropriate use of interpreters and inappropriate use of limited non-English language skills must be carefully tracked and evaluated to make sure they are not having the unintended effect of impeding appropriate linguistic access services. This section will highlight published examples of successful and unsuccessful efforts to teach non-English skills to clinicians.

Teaching clinicians and trainees about how to avoid contributing to healthcare disparities in the context of language barriers should be an essential component of clinical education.

The acquisition of effective communicative skills is critical in child development, and has been linked to better outcomes for children with disabilities. The presence of communicative skills has also been associated with lower levels of problem behavior, which can be a significant barrier during development, particularly for children with disabilities. Given the importance of communication skills and their role in the development of other adaptive skills and appropriate behavior, the acquisition and development of communication has been an important target of clinical intervention in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis. Behavior Analysts have attempted to overcome delays in communicative behavior using empirically-based procedures based on the principles of behavioral science. Using Skinner's conceptualization of verbal behavior, Behavior Analysts have been successful in designing training programs intended to teach verbal behavior to non-verbal individuals. Methods used to teach verbal responses go beyond vocalizations to include symbolic and gestural forms of communication, as well as the use of other augmentative devices. In Chapter 3, methodologies commonly used by behavior analysts to teach verbal behavior will be reviewed as well as the forms of verbal behavior that are often targeted for intervention.

One of the major problems for many second/foreign language learners is conducting pragmatic communication in the target language. Chapter 4 examined the relationship between the fourth year trainee teachers' communication orientations in English—willingness to communicate (L2 WTC), communication apprehension (L2 CA), and self-perceived communication competence (L2 SPCC)—and their academic success in their undergraduate study (Grade Point Average (GPA) scores of the first three years in their program). 152 trainee teachers studying at the English Language Teacher Training degree programs of two universities in Turkey and Cyprus participated in this chapter. Three measures were employed in the process of data collection: Willingness to Communicate (WTC), Personal Report of



Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), and Self-Perceived Communication Competence (SPCC).

Pearson Correlation was used in the data analyses to examine any correlation and relationship between various communication orientations and academic success. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant correlation between academic success and any of the communication orientations in either of the groups.

It was also observed that L2 WTC, L2 CA and L2 SPCC were significantly correlated with each other in both groups at .05 level. The strongest relationship was found between L2 SPCC and L2 CA ( $r = -.649$ ). L2 SPCC and L2 WTC were positively and significantly correlated ( $r = .556$ ). These findings were parallel to some other studies in similar contexts (Çetinkaya, 2005; Yüksel and Yu, 2008). Moreover, correlations of communication orientations between two groups from two different universities were parallel.

Findings of the study also revealed that L2 CA was negatively and significantly correlated with L2 WTC and L2 SPCC ( $r = -.44$ ) at .05 level, in other words, students with high level of communication anxiety tended to perceive themselves less competent in L2 communication, and hence had low willingness to communicate.

The lack of correlation between academic success and communication orientations was quite surprising. This might be due the nature of the variable (i.e., academic success) the authors chose. Students might be academically successful without communicating often because of the educational system. Academic success in Turkish university system usually depends on the written exams (midterms and finals) that mostly require students write essays or answer multiple-choice test questions. This leaves little or no room for any motivation towards communication in the target language.

As discussed in Chapter 5, it is very considerable that the students make the applied studies related with the phonetics-semantics in the poems in order to express the feelings correctly. If the students can perceive the relationship between the phonetics and semantics, they can get the real sense of the atmosphere of the poems and recite them truly. In the Traditional Poetry Teaching, the students used to be asked to find out the literary arts in the poem and to make the comments and explanations of the poems. Yet, the students should have some studies on phonetic-semantic relationship suitable for the constructive approach so that the students can perceive the poems joyfully. The students realize the contributions of the phonetics and the value of the sound to the rhythm, music and the meaning of the poem in the poetry

teaching related to phonetics and semantics. So they can perceive the feelings of the poet and appropriate and enjoy the poems. If the poems are not appropriated, they have no meanings in the students' minds and can easily be forgotten. Therefore, teaching the relationship between phonetics and semantics is very crucial in Language and Literature Classes.

As explained in Chapter 6, activity areas of the mother tongue are based on the skills of explaining and understanding. Effective and aesthetic use the mother tongue is possible through the effective realization of comprehension skills, reading and listening skills, explanation skills, and speaking and writing education. While teaching the activity areas, that is, the above-mentioned four skills, grammar rules should be given through smooth integration with these four skills. In a teaching-learning approach where activity areas of the mother tongue were operationalized, it was observed that the vocabulary reservoir of the students was enhanced and their thinking and criticizing abilities were developed. Language teaching aims to improve various and integrated skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Hence, mother tongue teaching courses should be courses aiming to instill skills and habits in students rather than courses aiming to transfer information. It is of great importance to capitalize on multimedia, visual materials, technology, and various other tools and devices while improving language skills. In this way, language teaching was made more functional to help students use their comprehension and explanation skills rather than only internalize the information.

The study described in Chapter 7 investigated the effects of bilingual teaching (Content and Language Integrated Learning, CLIL) on the development of children's literacy skills during their first six school years. In the CLIL classes 20–25 per cent of the instruction was given in a foreign language. The results of the study showed that the children in the CLIL classes learned to read and write their first language equally well than their peers in monolingual classes. In addition, bilingual teaching did not have a negative effect on the development of those children who started school with poor learning readiness either. After the two first study years the children in the CLIL classes were more fluent readers and had better reading comprehension and spelling skills than their peers in the other classes.

After four school years it was obvious that the children's creative writing skills had also benefited from bilingual teaching. The students in the CLIL classes had learned to pay attention to languages, as well to their mother tongue as to other languages. Moreover, they had more positive attitudes towards reading, writing and foreign language learning. Especially the boys'

attitudes proved to be more positive in the CLIL classes than in the other classes.

After six study years the students in the CLIL classes had achieved significantly better first language spelling skills than the students in the other classes. They made significantly less spelling errors and understood significantly better different texts. Furthermore, they showed more proficiency in deriving the meaning of new words from the written context than the other students. Likewise, they succeeded significantly better in finding the most important facts of the non-fiction text and summarising the text than their peers in the other classes. It is worth mentioning that in the other classes the girls' skills were significantly better than the boys' skills but in CLIL classes the difference was not significant. The students in the CLIL classes enjoyed studying the foreign language and also studying through it. Consequently, their foreign language skills developed very well.

Studies have extended the understanding of English phonological awareness and other oral language and metalinguistic skills in learning English as a second language (ESL) in the context of English speaking cultures to learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in the context of non-English speaking cultures, including Chinese societies. Chinese societies share a language that differs strongly in various features, both oral and written, from those of English. One issue that is sometimes neglected in the literature is the difference between the teaching of ESL and EFL in different social and cultural contexts. Indeed, in the teaching of very young children who are developing their first language proficiency at the same time they are learning a foreign language, oral language ability and literacy skills in English are often assumed to develop concurrently and even to facilitate one another. At the same time, however, developmentally, young children's oral language provides the strongest base for literacy development, with print being introduced only years later, in the native language. Few studies have considered possible differences in approaches to language and literacy in teaching very young Chinese children English as a foreign language in the EFL context. Thus, in Chapter 8, the authors suggest ways to teach young Chinese EFL children, beginning first with a focus on oral language skills and only later moving onto literacy skills that build on the oral language base.

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*Chapter 1*

# **THE USE OF MULTIMODAL TOOLS FOR PRONUNCIATION TRAINING IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING OF PREADOLESCENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This Chapter aims to discuss the possibilities that arise for enhanced pronunciation training in Second Language (L2) teaching with the use of multimodal tools which incorporate the novel advances of speech technologies in fields like Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) or speech assessment. The improvement in the pronunciation skills of young learners of a new language has been traditionally neglected in the interest of the teaching of vocabulary, grammar or syntax; assuming that pronunciation would be improved by the own student along time. However, to acquire an intelligible pronunciation has a capital role in the communication abilities of the students

when they have to face native speakers of the target language in a real situation.

Furthermore, the recent years have witnessed the apparition of a large number of Computer Assisted Pronunciation Training (CAPT) applications, which aim for the semi-automation of the process of pronunciation learning. These tools make an extensive use of speech technologies to detect mistakes in the pronunciation of the student and provide a valuable feedback, while using an effective multimodal interaction environment to make this feedback reach successfully the learner.

As a real experience of these novel possibilities, the outcome of the work carried out during a set of sessions in the Vienna International School (VIS) with “Vocaliza” is presented. “Vocaliza” is a CAPT tool developed under the “Comunica” framework for providing a better teaching experience to speech therapists and L2 teachers of Spanish all through the world. It uses audiovisual prompting for presenting a set of words and sentences to the student, capturing the answer with the pronunciation of the student and presenting feedback at the phonetic level on the mispronunciations made by the user.

The results of this study open the discussion for the possibilities of these novel techniques and provide sufficient elements and arguments for teachers and educators in their decision of incorporating the new technological elements into their classes.

## INTRODUCTION

The final objective in Second Language (L2) learning classes is to provide the students with the required abilities to communicate efficiently in the newly acquired language. One of the main abilities which are involved in this communication process is the phonetic competence, regarding the pronunciation skills of the student. However, in many cases there is not a specific time dedicated during classes to pronunciation training as it is understood that the teachers will correct the students in possible pronunciation difficulties which appear during class. This can limit deeply the phonetic competence of young students immerse in a multicultural and multilingual environment where the transferences from previous languages to the new language can alter the correct pronunciation of the L2.

Another main subject of interest recently is the use of multimodal computer tools for Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in L2. Although these tools have been being used for many years in text-based activities for vocabulary acquisition or syntax and grammar correction, there is a gap in pronunciation training. This may be caused either by the difficulties in speech processing, which is becoming more robust by the years, and by the

reticence of teachers to get deeper in the area of Information and Communication Technologies applied to their classes.

This Chapter aims to show how a merge of both approaches, i.e. an exclusive use of pronunciation training via automated tools in L2, can be useful for these classes. Students and teachers can be shown to obtain an improved experience in learning and, hence, be encouraged for the use of novel tools in their everyday activities.

The Chapter is organized as follows: First, a review of the historical trends of pronunciation training in L2 will be provided; followed by a bibliographical review of the development of CALL tools within several academic research groups. Afterwards, the methodology of the work carried out will be presented, focusing on the description of the group of study and the CALL application used for the experimental setup. Finally, the results will be analyzed and conclusions from the experience will be extracted.

## **PRONUNCIATION TRAINING IN L2 LEARNING**

Pronunciation is the basic support in oral transmission and, hence, the ultimate element conditioning the understanding of a message. This justifies the importance that pronunciation teaching should have in L2 classes, and all the discussion around it in different theories and learning approaches.

However, the weight of pronunciation training in L2 learning has been varying through different teaching trends and theories during the years. Once the traditional grammar-translation method was abandoned at the end of the 19th century, novel approaches like the direct method [Berlitz,1891], the audio-lingual method [Fries,1945] or the situational method [Palmer and Harper,1968] proposed to immerse the student completely in the new language during the classes. These approaches gave a large importance to the oral language, and propose that the student-teacher interaction had to be fully in the new language. However, they were totally based on behaviorist theories and did not really propose corrective activities with the student, which may lead to a fossilization of pronunciation mistakes in the students' pronunciations.

The development of psycholinguistics during the 1960's, boosted by Noam Chomsky's numerous works on generative approaches [Chomsky,1986], re-oriented L2 techniques towards cognitive theories. Methods like the Total Physical Response (TPR) [Asher,2003], natural approach [Krashen,1983], suggestopedia [Lozanov,1978] or communicative



approach [Hymes,1971] focused on language understanding as the major force which would make the student acquire the new language.

These communicative approaches did not show a special interest on pronunciation skills, producing that most of the students achieved great abilities in reading and writing but limiting their phonetic possibilities, unless the teacher decided to include pronunciation activities as part of their work. Finally, pronunciation training was included in the communicative approaches thanks to several authors [Leather,1983] [Kenworthy,1987] [Morley,1994] [Murphy,1991] [Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994] [Brown and Gonzo,1995] [Celce-Murcia et al.,1996] [Ellis1990] and, in the end, several theories indicated that pronunciation did not have to be tied to communicative skills, but it could be studied alone from a formal point of view, which opened the gates to specific pronunciation activities during the classes.

Anyways, it is still not clear nowadays how much weight pronunciation skills may have in the teaching of a new language. In the case of the European Union, where multilingualism is a matter of fact and the teaching and learning of foreign languages have become a major political issue, pronunciation is proposed as one of the major competencies in the acquisition of a new language [CEFR,2001] and teachers are appointed to provide effective pronunciation training to their students.

### **Issues on Pronunciation Training**

To finally understand how pronunciation training can vary through different techniques, it is important to know the several facts which affect the way in which a L2 teacher can provide this pronunciation teaching to a class: The knowledge in phonetics of the teacher, the interlanguage [Selinker,1972] of the students and the error correction methods applied by the educator.

A major challenge that L2 teachers face in the training of pronunciation abilities is the fact that most of them are not experts in phonetics, which may limit their approximation to pronunciation training; either because of their lack of formal phonetic knowledge, or due to their fear of approach an unknown field. Although it is understood that a minimum phonetic knowledge is necessary to teach a L2 (as well as it is necessary to have linguistic knowledge in grammar or syntax), it is not necessary to be an expert to provide an effective teaching and feedback in a pronunciation L2 class, so teachers should not be fearful of including pronunciation in their activities.

The transference of phonetic properties of the mother tongue to the L2 is a major effect in the pronunciation skills of L2 students. This effect, known as