

T. M. Derwing & M. J. Munro. (2015) *Pronunciation Fundamentals: Evidence-based Perspectives for L2 Teaching and Research*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. xv, 208 pp.

Reviewed by Sharif Alghazo (University of Jordan)

My interest in the area of second language (L2) pronunciation teaching and research began during a post-graduate course in phonology and pronunciation in Australia. This interest developed because of my deeply-held belief that pronunciation forms a fundamental anchor of genuine communication, and also because of the many assertions by scholars and researchers about the subsidiary position of L2 pronunciation in general foreign and L2 learning programs. Derwing, Munro, and Wiebe (1997) have argued in relation to pronunciation teaching that “there is still very little evidence available to guide teachers’ choices of activities in the ESL classroom” (p. 217); in 2005, Derwing and Munro noted that “the study of pronunciation has been marginalised within the field of applied linguistics” (379); in 2009, they argued that “Even quite recently, common views on pronunciation teaching have been pessimistic” (p. 481); and in 2011, they pointed out that “the number of empirical studies of pronunciation instruction is far too small” (p. 316).

A recent surprising assertion by Thomson and Derwing (2015) is that “Pronunciation instruction is no longer a neglected domain of second language teaching and research” (p. 339). What led them to announce such a huge change in focus in this area in a very short period of time? Now that I have read this invaluable resource on pronunciation teaching and research, I realise that such an extensive and comprehensible account of the wide range of issues related to pronunciation forms an encyclopaedic reference of answers for many questions and unsolved issues in this area. I congratulate Tracey Derwing and Murray Munro who have been contributing to the development of the field of L2 pronunciation teaching and research for the last two decades or more. They are recognised for their contribution both empirically and theoretically to researching L2 pronunciation. Their continuous efforts in studying different aspects of oral communication – of which pronunciation is an integral part – cannot be overlooked.

The book is about both teaching and research; it provides a new, “evidence-based” perspective of how L2 pronunciation can be approached. The 10 chapters that constitute this reference book cover a wide range of issues in the teaching of L2 pronunciation. The book ends in a simple but informative glossary of key terms used in-text.

Chapter 1 provides a concise and comprehensive overview of the key terminology that is widely used in the field. Some overlapping terms such as ‘comprehensibility’, ‘intelligibility’, and ‘accentedness’ are clearly distinguished which contributes to enriching our understanding of the different terminology and concepts used in various pronunciation-related areas.

Chapter 2 is a historical account of the development of pronunciation instruction. It presents the authors’ “selective survey” (p. 15) of key historical stages in the development of pronunciation instruction. The value of this historical account, which makes it distinct from other accounts, lies in the fact that it not only follows developments in pedagogical aspects (i.e., approaches and techniques used), but also emphasises developments in four other related areas: description of the sound system; “teaching materials” (an area often overlooked) including technological developments; perception and production; and empirically-oriented instruction in the classroom.

Chapter 3 highlights the wide range of factors that play a part in L2 speech acquisition. The opening story illustrates the intricacy and diversity of the acquisition process. Hundreds of factors have been, as reported in the literature, claimed to affect the mastery of L2 fluency, chief among which is the age of learners. This and other factors (cognitive, personal and cultural) are discussed in detail, attempting to examine the widely held view that “adult learners do not typically acquire native-like pronunciation” (p. 31). Supporting and contradictory evidence for the Critical Period Hypothesis is presented for a fuller understanding of the complexity involved to trying to uncover answers to the mysteries of L2 acquisition.

Chapter 4 examines L2 pronunciation errors examining what counts as an *error* in the L2 and presenting arguments and counter-arguments for labelling errors. It links the discussion of errors to communication and intelligibility as the ultimate goal of learning the L2. A fine scheme for classifying types of errors is presented with a focus not only on segmental and prosodic errors but also on other problematic aspects such as *fluency*, *speech rate*, *voice quality*, and *paralanguage*. In regard to causes of errors, the chapter discusses some theoretical propositions as to why errors occur, demonstrates the bases of those proposals, highlights their limitations, and warns teachers about the dangers of relying totally on results of contrastive analyses to predict aspects for instruction. The chapter ends with a discussion of criteria for identifying “error gravity” in L2, indicating the difficulty of reaching a consensus in this respect.

Chapter 5 offers practical ideas on how to develop pronunciation in L2 classrooms. It recognises many eclectic issues in pronunciation teaching, noting the lack of attention devoted to pronunciation along with the widely-reported reluctance of teachers to integrate pronunciation in L2 instruction. Instruction-related issues such as teaching materials and teacher training are also discussed

extensively. The chapter attempts to correct a “faulty assumption” (p. 81) in some EFL contexts that the foreign accent is a hindrance and that non-native speaking teachers are unable to teach pronunciation effectively. Apart from teachers and teaching, the chapter considers other instruction-related areas such as curriculum design and development, with a focus on how and when pronunciation can be integrated and introduced in language classrooms. An interesting point relates to the “cyclical” (p. 100) nature of development which means that teachers should provide colleagues with notes on individual students’ achievements and challenges in order to best deal with students at upper stages of learning.

Chapter 6, *Assessment of L2 Pronunciation*, examines the evaluation and testing of pronunciation in L2 instruction with reference to different types of tests that can be used in and beyond the classroom. It provides guidance on how to assess pronunciation before, during, and after instruction: a needs-based assessment explores students’ abilities and challenges before teaching begins; a formative assessment allows teachers to evaluate instruction during the course; and a summative assessment measures students’ achievements after the course. The authors discuss the invalidity of written tests of pronunciation and higher validity of oral production tasks. The chapter also considers pronunciation assessment beyond the classroom, that is, by global institutions and organisations that require proficiency scores to be attained as part of admission policies. The chapter concludes with a discussion of reliability and validity in testing pronunciation and calls for more technology involvement in measuring pronunciation to remove “the human variability factor” (p. 118) in such tests.

Chapter 7 addresses the use of technology in L2 pronunciation learning. At first, when reading the authors’ past experience dealing with technology in pronunciation research and the “sheer frustration” (p. 121) they had, it may seem that they feel negative about this aspect. This is not the case. Reading further, one realises they try to correct faulty stereotypes among both teachers and learners that technology is the answer to all our questions and posit that teachers need to consider both advantages and disadvantages of technology-oriented approaches to pronunciation teaching prior to implementation in the classroom. After presenting some benefits of using technology, the chapter discusses some innovations in the field of digital speech that characterise today’s trends in using tablets and smartphones. Narrowing the focus, the last two sections note that stockpiles of online resources for computer-assisted pronunciation are becoming available for language learners to develop pronunciation at their own pace.

Chapter 8 presents an ethno-linguistic discussion on language as a social means for interaction and communication. It raises some of the thorny issues in language teaching and learning, those of the relationships among language, context, and identity. It begins by a consideration of the significance of accent

in determining “life-and-death situations” (p. 132) and discusses variance of attitudes towards accented speech ranging from tolerance to deviance. The chapter sheds light on the discrimination against accented speech, noting the widely-documented negative attitudes of native speakers towards non-native speech samples which often lead to discrimination in employment. It shows – through a narration of experiences and also research findings – how language forms a fundamental part of identity. Recent discussions of World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca that regarded intelligibility as the goal of pronunciation instruction are followed by a consideration of interlocutors’ roles in successful communication. The chapter ends with some pedagogical suggestions for language teaching.

Chapter 9 concerns the ethics of L2 accent reduction and modification. It begins with the authors’ position that the achievement of mutual communication is critical for deciding whether to interfere and reduce one’s accent, which is, for many people, an aspect of personal identity. Three essential concepts are discussed: accent reduction used by entrepreneurs to boost native-like pronunciation; accent modification by speech pathologists in order to shift a foreign accent closer to native accents; and pronunciation teaching used by educationalists and instructors to help learners minimise the effects of their foreign accent in and outside the classroom.

Chapter 10 focuses attention on some future directions in pronunciation research, namely the need to explore intelligibility, comprehensibility and accent and the need for more research on effective strategies for pronunciation teaching. Future directions in pronunciation teaching – including development of more resources and courses for language teachers and the reconsideration of curricula – are discussed in detail. The chapter also calls for more research on L2 pronunciation assessment raising the need for “[i]ndividualized needs assessments” (p. 170), a discussion that leads to further calls for a better integration of technology in L2 pronunciation classes.

This book presents a reliable and informative academic resource in the area of L2 pronunciation. Most currently popular books in this field pertain to discussing phonetic and phonological aspects of the L2, ignoring the pedagogical concerns of phonetic instruction. This book, however, pays significant attention to that often-neglected area of instruction. An area of interest and value to researchers and teachers relates to the most neglected aspect of pronunciation teaching: classroom-based research on effective teaching strategies. This entails the observation of classes to gain fuller understanding of current teaching practices and then to devise more effective pronunciation instruction. This issue was raised in Chapters 5 and 10. In this vein, it should be noted that similar attention was called for in Baker’s (2011, 2014) research, which was among the first attempts to fill this gap [see also Alghazo (2013)]; however, this research was unfortunately

recognised in this book. Overall, *Pronunciation Fundamentals: Evidence-based Perspectives for L2 Teaching and Research* is an invaluable contribution for both teachers and researchers in the field of L2 pronunciation.

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Reviewer's address

Sharif Alghazo
University of Jordan
Department of Linguistics
Jordan

Tracey M. Derwing, Murray J. Munro. The emergence of empirical approaches to L2 pronunciation research and teaching is a powerful fourth wave in the history of the field. Authored by two leading proponents of evidence-based instruction, this volume surveys both foundational and cutting-edge empirical work and pinpoints its ramifications for pedagogy. The authors begin by tracing the history of pronunciation instruction and explicating L2 phonetic learning processes. Subsequent chapters explore the themes, strengths, and ethical problems of the field through the lens of the intelligibility principle. Find many great new & used options and get the best deals for *Pronunciation Fundamentals: Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research* by Tracey M. Derwing, Murray J. Munro (Paperback, 2015) at the best online prices at eBay! Free delivery for many products! {"modules": [{"unloadOptimization": true, "bandwidthDetection": true}], "unloadOptimization": {"browsers": {"Firefox": true, "Chrome": true}}, "bandwidthDetection": {"url": "https://ir.ebaystatic.com/cr/v/c1/thirtysevens.jpg", "maxViews": 4, "imgSize": 37, "expiry": 300000, "timeout": 250}}. eBay. MJ Munro, TM Derwing, SL Morton. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 111-131, 2006. 512. 2006. Putting accent in its place: Rethinking obstacles to communication. TM Derwing, MJ Munro. *Language teaching* 42 (4), 476, 2009. 451. 2009. *Pronunciation fundamentals*. TM Derwing, MJ Munro. Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research. Amsterdam, Benjamins, 2015. 431. 2015. Second language fluency: Judgments on different tasks. TM Derwing, MJ Rossiter, MJ Munro, RI Thomson. *Language learning* 54 (4), 655-679, 2004. 416. Title: *Pronunciation Fundamentals* Subtitle: *Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research* Series Title: *Language Learning & Language Teaching* 42 Published: 2015 Publisher: John Benjamins <http://www.benjamins.com/>. Book URL: <https://benjamins.com/catalog/llt.42>. Author: Tracey M. Derwing Author: Murray J. Munro Electronic: ISBN: 9789027268594 Pages: Price: U.S. \$ 49.95 Electronic: ISBN: 9789027268594 Pages: Price: U.K. £ 28.00 Electronic: ISBN: 9789027268594 Pages: Price: Europe EURO 33.00 Hardback: ISBN: 9789027213266 Pages: Price: U.S. \$ 143.00 Hardback: ISBN: 9789027213266 Pa