



New Ways in Teaching Connected Speech

May 2013 - Volume 17, Number 1

New Ways in Teaching Connected Speech

Author: James Dean Brown, Editor (2012)
Publisher: Alexandria, Virginia: TESOL International Association

Pages	ISBN	Price
362 pages	978-1-9311-8576-9	\$49.95 USD



The field of second language (L2) pronunciation instruction has benefited greatly from an increasing amount of research and attention in the last ten years. Before this, the field suffered from a narrow approach to pronunciation featuring a dominant emphasis on students sounding native-like. However, in the last ten years, a paradigm shift has occurred bringing focus to aspects of intelligibility and comprehensibility (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Levis, 2005). With the focus of L2 pronunciation research and instruction shifting, areas of word stress, intonation, connected speech, and suprasegmentals have seen much more exposure in scholarly articles and pronunciation instruction texts. These changes have resulted in the publication of *New Ways in Teaching Connected Speech* (2012). This book offers an extensive amount of pronunciation lessons created by teachers for teachers of a range of proficiency levels (i.e., beginner to advanced). The editor suggests that connected speech is not simply a marker for casual, less formal speech, but is instead present in all situations of language use to some degree. By enabling students to utilize rules for connected speech in English, teachers can provide their students with a means for being perceived as more intelligible and comprehensible.

The organization of this text allows a teacher to more succinctly target aspects of connected speech in need of instruction for students and to address those needs appropriately with provided lessons. The book features three major sections: *Getting Ready for Connected Speech*, *Connected Speech*, *Mechanisms*, and *Putting Connected Speech All Together*. These sections raise students' awareness of unique traits for spoken English, providing guided practice with principles for connected speech, and joining these principles from connected speech in meaningful lessons. Within each major section of the text, there exist smaller sections devoted to more particular aspects within connected speech. These smaller sections consist of lessons, or modules, ranging in length from 15 to 90 minutes of class time. These lessons are meant to provide teachers resources for teaching important aspects of connected speech in the classroom. This review attempts to give readers a glimpse into what the book provides by highlighting a few lessons that represent the underlying approach to teaching connected speech within the book.

The first section of the book prepares learners to distinguish between written and spoken English. In the module *Listening for Connected Speech*, learners are given a checklist featuring twelve forms of connected speech preceded by their written forms. Before the listening activity, the teacher reviews each of the items on the list to prime students before engaging in listening. Along with this list, a script for recording is provided so that teachers can target the specific connected speech forms in a more contextualized manner. As the prerecorded passage is played, learners check yes or no as to whether they heard each connected speech example on the checklist. Finally, a paused-play review of the passage provides teachers the opportunity to help students heighten their awareness of connected speech as it exists in natural spoken language. This module serves as an exemplary for the targeted nature and ease of use for the rest of the modules within the first section of the book. The first section of the book provides meaningful context and guided practice for students who are unfamiliar with connected speech as a language phenomenon.

The *Connected Speech Mechanisms* section utilizes different aspects of connected speech as areas of focus (e.g., stress and changing sounds). The *Same Consonant Twice in a Row* module focuses on transitions. Before engaging in a targeted listening activity, the teacher reviews lengthening consonants. A list of examples is provided to draw students' awareness to how this transitioning occurs in connected speech with different consonant types (i.e., stops, fricatives, and affricates). Students are then given a worksheet where two words in each numbered sentence have been removed. The object of the worksheet task is to engage students in targeted listening for instances where speakers transition from one word to another, blending the last phoneme from the initial word with the first phoneme of the following word (i.e., Bob Brown to /bab:raun/). A script is provided for the teacher to record and provide students context. This type of activity encourages a heightened awareness of the differing aspects of connected speech. It provides teachers with a short activity where students are presented with a description of and rules for connected speech forms, provided time for practicing

listening for the forms, and given guidance in working with the contextualized use of connected speech.

The purpose of the modules and activities in the final section, *Putting Connected Speech All Together*, is to apply learned knowledge from the sound discrimination activities in earlier lessons of the book to producing and self-assessing those features in students' own connected speech. One module repeated throughout the book is a *Connected Speech Diary* module. The activity engages students in meaningful reflection on the aspects and forms of connected speech learned in each section. By having students keep a diary, they can develop a metacognitive awareness of the ways in which connected speech is used in English and how they do or do not use connected speech in their own language use. The diary prompt for this section asks students to make note of modal and auxiliary verb phrases in their connected speech diary. Students are also asked to practice the phrases they have identified and reflect on whether the phrases pronounced are either similar to or different than the context where they were heard. This activity type is extremely valuable in solidifying the connections between connected speech forms and contexts of use.

One caveat for the book is its attention to listening activities over speaking activities. However, perception training is empirically supported as it contributes to a learner's ability in pronunciation (Bradlow, et al., 1997). Additionally, the level of proficiency prescribed by lesson writers may need to be reconsidered by teachers using the book. Lessons rely on pre-existing knowledge of metalanguage (e.g., syllable, and schwa) and teachers must consider this when deciding how to utilize lessons in their classrooms. Because some teachers might lack training with teaching this terminology and the terminology itself, providing a working glossary for these terms might improve the practicality of the book. Overall, the book is quite accessible for beginning and experienced teachers.

By describing connected speech, providing listening and speaking practice with guidance, and giving teachers materials for classroom use, this book contributes greatly to the field of pronunciation instruction. These tenets of instruction are known to be integral in improving students' pronunciation for higher intelligibility and comprehensibility (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010). The book is an extremely beneficial addition to any pronunciation, speaking, listening, or integrated skills course and features information and activities that will certainly address a commonly forgotten aspect of spoken English. Language instructors in ESL and EFL contexts can begin to develop a broader sense of spoken American English among their students by using the lessons in this book as a guide to connected speech. The authors' students have responded positively to the implementation of lessons from the book and most students have commented on their increased desire to learn more about this part of English that is so often overlooked.

References

- Bradlow, A., Pisoni, D. B., Akahane-Yamada, R., & Tohkura, Y. (1997) Training Japanese listeners to identify English /r/ and /l/: IV. Some effects of perceptual learning on speech production. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 101, pp. 2299–2310.
- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D., Goodwin, J., & Griner, B. (2010). Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide. (2nd edition?). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2005). Second language accent and pronunciation teaching: A research-based approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3), 379-397.
- Levis, J. M. (2005). Changing contexts and shifting paradigms in pronunciation teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3), 369-377.

Reviewed by

Nicholas Velde

Northern Arizona University

nv38@nau.edu

Randall Rebman

Northern Arizona University

rsr63@nau.edu

Copyright © 1994 - 2013 TESL-EJ, ISSN 1072-4303

Copyright rests with the authors.