Review of Pronunciation in EFL instruction: A Research-Based Approach, by Jolanta Szpyra-Kozlowska, Multilingual Matters, 2015,

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Pronunciation in EFL instruction: A Research-Based Approach. Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska, Multilingual Matters, 2015, 249pp. ISBN-13: 978-1-78309-260-4 (pbk).

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Jolanta Szpyra- Kozłowska's latest book contributes to the discussion of what English pronunciation instruction should entail for what she claims is the largest group of learners – learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) - in contrast with the majority of pronunciation teaching books which focus on English as a Second Language (ESL) or, more recently, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) learners. It successfully provides many of what the author describes as "the necessary ingredients for successful pronunciation instruction to EFL learners: phonetic theory, research, and practice", and she explores these from both local and global perspectives. Overall, it is a well-edited, very readable work, with each section leading logically into the next. Its greatest strengths are its insistence on evidence-based explorations of the issues, and the author's summaries of the main issues, which will be informative for teachers and students alike.

The main body of this book is organized into three chapters, each of which is split into two parts. Part A presents an overall theoretical discussion of a given issue, whereas Part B describes the author's own experimental studies related to the issue/s presented in Part A. The chapters include copious endnotes and the bibliography has almost 200 entries. Szpyra-Kozłowska has drawn on up-to-date work in order to support her analyses, as is shown by the fact that only 37 of the references are pre-2000, and only 19 are pre-1990. This bibliography and the endnotes combine to make a precious resource for those interested in further exploring the issues. A fourth chapter presents the conclusion, which is short but provides a good summary of the book.

The Preface sets the book's tone by emphasizing the author's conviction that decisions regarding theoretical and practical aspects of pronunciation teaching should be "informed and non-arbitrary" and based on "extensive empirical research" (p. viii). Szpyra- Kozłowska intends her book to bridge the gap between phonetic research and the practice of pronunciation teaching by presenting a "holistic motor-cognitive multimodal approach to English phonodidactics" (p. viii), primarily but not exclusively with respect to Polish learners of English. She coins the semantically transparent term *phonodidactics*, which is "synonymous with pronunciation pedagogy or pronunciation teaching […] and combines phonetics and phonology in one word" (p. xi). This type of pragmatic innovation is typical of the author's no-nonsense approach.

Chapter 1, "English Pronunciation Teaching: Global versus Local Contexts", initially describes why pronunciation should be taught and learned and why it is nonetheless often neglected. The core of the chapter deals with the tricky issue of selecting an appropriate pronunciation model. In the first of many informative tables, Szpyra- Kozłowska summarizes EFL, ELF and NELF (Native English as a Lingua Franca) approaches to pronunciation teaching. The NELF approach is her novel compromise solution, whereby to achieve a goal of

intelligibility between native and non-native speakers, native English is adopted as a model where the linguistic, but not the sociocultural, aspects of native English are accepted. She argues for the specificity of EFL contexts, supporting this claim in Part B of the chapter, where she presents the results of three studies on the Polish context.

This leads naturally into Chapter 2, "Global and Local Pronunciation Priorities". Here, Szpyra- Kozłowska discusses the usual criteria for determining priorities, in terms of "achieving the goal of comfortable intelligibility or listener-friendly pronunciation" (p. 69). It is worth noting that her table of "Major factors affecting intelligibility" (p. 76) usefully distinguishes between speaker-related, listener-related, and context-related factors to show that there is often overlap and that the oft-used approach of focusing only on minimal pairs is inappropriate. She argues that the same error might have different consequences in different situations, and therefore there is a need for experiments specifically designed to provide sound and clear evidence regarding the ways in which different aspects of English phonetics influence intelligibility. This is just one of many examples of the author's rallying cry: more research-based evidence is needed to support claims which have been accepted for too long at face value.

Szpyra- Kozłowska then neatly summarizes and evaluates four proposals for establishing pronunciation priorities: Jenkins' (2000) *Lingua Franca Core* (Jenkins, 2000), Cruttenden's (2008) *Amalgam English* and *International English*, and Collins and Mees' (2003) *Error Ranking*. Again, in the interest of clarity, she provides a summary table (p. 88) and concludes that as yet there is no empirical evidence to support that any one set of specific phonetic features would guarantee intelligibility for learners of EFL. This is where her innovative streak shines through yet again, as she draws on her vast experience of the Polish context, as both a teacher and researcher, to put forward the notion of phonetically difficult words, also described as "seriously deformed words" (p.92). She refers to these as local errors and argues that they should be a pronunciation priority for lower-level EFL learners, because of the impact of their mispronunciation on intelligibility. She argues that intelligibility research exploring which global errors to address (segmental contrasts, aspects of prosody) has ignored the crucial importance of such words, which differ depending on the learners' native language. The second half of the chapter provides evidence from several studies in the Polish context, in order to establish a set of pronunciation priorities for Polish learners of English. The chapter ends with a succinct and useful table that compares the phonetic features of Polish English that impact on intelligibility and accentedness.

Chapter 3, "Pronunciation Inside and Outside the Classroom", addresses the issue of how to achieve the goal of comfortable, intelligible pronunciation. In keeping with her overall argument, for Szpyra- Kozłowska "one size does not fit all" and EFL phonetic training should be both multimodal and holistic (p. 144). To this end, she discusses four types of phonetic training: articulatory and auditory training (described as indispensable basics), and cognitive and multisensory training (described as secondary). She suggests a few related tasks and techniques for each but this is clearly not the primary goal of this book. The chapter includes a clear analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of language labs, but it also contains perhaps the weakest section of the book, three pages on "Pronunciation learning outside the classroom". Szpyra- Kozłowska is right to highlight electronic dictionaries and audiobooks as excellent resources. A few computer-based pronunciation training materials are also criticized for their pedagogical failings, suffering "from many shortcomings in terms of interactivity and the feedback they provide" (p.

194). However, given that Pennington's 1996 book *Phonology in English Language Teaching* appears in the bibliography, here readers might have expected reference to her other works (see 1996 with Esling, or 2008, 2009), or to Chun's chapter *Technological Advances in Researching and Teaching Phonology* in Pennington (2006) or simply to Chun (2007). Moreover, Chapter 3 is about pronunciation inside and outside the classroom, and therefore social networks, virtual worlds, gaming and streaming of television series or films should at least be mentioned. While research into their impact on foreign language pronunciation learning is still limited, they are common features of everyday life for so many learners and should not be ignored.

The weaknesses of this book are few and far between. There are occasional typographical and formatting errors, and in terms of content, an informative footnote would help students of applied linguistics or teachers without the theoretical background to understand the importance of some of the more technical terms and concepts introduced. In addition, it can no longer be categorically stated that "the classroom frequently constitutes the only place in which the student is exposed to English" (p. 150). Szpyra- Kozłowska admits as much in mentioning an activity called "phonetic alert", where she encourages her learners to pay attention to mispronunciations in the media (p. 143). Finally, in terms of organization, sometimes the author gets ahead of herself; for example, on page 164 she describes a study that is only dealt with in detail 45 pages later. This begs the reader to skip ahead, especially as the example referred to is a study comparing the effectiveness in the classroom of an intuitive-imitative approach versus an analytic-linguistic or cognitive approach – a type of study that is still too rare in the literature.

To conclude, Szpyra- Kozłowska's book is an extremely valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion about how best to learn and teach English pronunciation. Her thorough research-based approach, combining quantitative and qualitative findings, has implications well beyond the Polish context and should be replicated with other EFL populations. Her determination to root the debate in "the empirical validation of theoretical claims" (p. 141) is laudable and undoubtedly will inspire high-quality work by others.

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