Enhancing IFP students’ engagement through pronunciation peer practice

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Overview

- Background
- Research questions
- Research design
- Results pilot study
- Implications
Pronunciation in EAP

• Knowledge of phonological features of English (Reed and Michaud, 2011):
  • heightens non-native speaker intelligibility
  • enhances confidence when speaking
  • improves listening skills
Pronunciation practice

• In EAP, often little targeted pronunciation instruction and practice (Baker & Burri, 2016)
  • Time constraints /full curriculum
  • Speaking usually geared towards fluency
Learning how to learn: Enhancing engagement

IFP might be last English course

- Should promote autonomy, self assessment & study competence

- Ss need to learn how to continue acquiring the language and content of their disciplines independently (Alexander et al, 2008: 211-213)
A collaborative approach

• Vygotsky (1978): learning in an L2 context should be collaborative and interactive.

➤ Learners can scaffold each other/practise together.
➤ Teacher acts as facilitator
Facilitating peer practice

• Set a meaningful task (motivating students; integrating pronunciation).

Turuk (2008): collaborative learning most effective in pairs of mixed ability or different L1.
Scaffolding each other

- Autonomy
- Peer collaboration
- Teacher-led
Pilot study:
Central research questions

1. Is peer practice useful?
   Better results than practising alone?

2. How do students perceive peer practice?
   Engaging? Motivating?
Research design
(based on Pattanpichet, 2011)

• **Pre-test**
  Recording of 50 target words

• **Input session on Word Stress Patterns**
  Teacher led + materials/exercises

• **Task**
  Ss practised alone (‘singles’) or with a peer (‘pairs’) using materials provided

• **Post-test**
  Recording of 50 new target words
Part A. Start the recording and read out the words and sentences on the two pages below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>record (noun)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spontaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutralise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bureaucratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incredible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>perfect (verb)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criminalise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part B Read out the sentences below.

Some students at the Academy have unconditional offers.

He was fully proficient and had great ability.

The economic results will be detrimental.

Photography is a dynamic field.

We need to strive after flexibility and full collaboration.
• Often, however, the suffix influences the stress of a word. Fortunately, such stress shifts are fairly predictable. This can help you to pronounce academic words correctly.

Example: *demonstrate* > *demonstration* (making a noun from a verb; the stress shifts).

a. Look at these words. Underline the bit that has the strongest stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>presentations</th>
<th>collaboration</th>
<th>negotiation</th>
<th>recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>decision</td>
<td>expansion</td>
<td>supervision</td>
<td>technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>politician</td>
<td>optional</td>
<td>provisional</td>
<td>unconditional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where does the stress come in words ending in –ion(al) and –ian?

Can you think of any similar words?

Rule: .................................................................

Other examples: ..............................................................

h. Go through these word families. Where does the stress go? Underline the syllable that gets the most stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>equal</th>
<th>equality</th>
<th>equalise</th>
<th>equalisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>final</td>
<td>finality</td>
<td>finalise</td>
<td>finalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>neutrality</td>
<td>neutralise</td>
<td>neutralisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response & attrition

- 46 voluntary participants: 25 ‘singles’; 21 ‘pairs’
- Overall IELTS level 5.0-6.0
- 96% Chinese speakers

- 4 ‘singles’ did not complete the tasks
- 3 ‘pairs’ had invalid tests (2 missing test sections; 1 student was seen to use a dictionary)

➤ 21 ‘singles’; 18 ‘pairs’
# Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Score (out of 50 items)</th>
<th>Singles (N = 21)</th>
<th>Pairs (N=18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singles (N = 21)</th>
<th>Pairs (N=18)</th>
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<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reasons for lack of progress

• Practice time: not enough recycling / no consolidation?

• Other underlying problems:
  • Interference other pronunciation features
  • Word substitution
  • Lack of reading skills / lexical knowledge

• No mixed-ability pairs
Survey

• How do students perceive peer practice? Engaging? Motivating?

Brown (2008): academic benefits, social benefits, generic skills, negative aspects.
Survey: design

- Google forms: ‘singles’ and ‘pairs’
  - Some questions were the same
  - Some parallel questions
  - Pairs – some extra questions (experience)
# Parallel questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Pairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practising with a partner <strong>would be</strong> more fun/enjoyable</td>
<td>Practising with a partner <strong>was</strong> fun/enjoyable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Same questions Pairs/Singles

- Frequency of practice

- Academic benefits:
  - Useful workshop?
  - Improved understanding of word stress?
  - Improved pronunciation of academic words?
How often did you practise?

- **Pairs (N=21)**
- **Singles (N=20)**

- **Once**
  - Pairs: 30%
  - Singles: 50%

- **2-4 times**
  - Pairs: 70%
  - Singles: 40%

- **5 times +**
  - Pairs: 0%
  - Singles: 10%
Perceived academic benefits

- Workshop was useful
- Understanding word stress improved
- Pronunciation of academic words improved

Pairs (N=21)  Singles (N=20)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singles</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was able to make enough improvement on my own.</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practising with a partner would help me improve more.</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pairs</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working with a partner was not really necessary for me to improve.</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with a partner improved my pronunciation.</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other potential benefits:
Working with a partner....
Pairs: Collaboration

Working with a partner encouraged me to cooperate.

- Agree: 76.2%
- Strongly Agree: 14.3%
- Disagree: 9.5%
## Pairs: Peer assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was able to give my partner useful feedback.</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My partner was able to give me useful feedback.</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Working with a partner made me feel more responsible – for myself and my partner.

Agree 90.5%

Strongly Agree

Disagree
## Pairs: Practical issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was difficult to make my partner participate in the task</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with a partner took too much time</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was difficult to organise meetings with my partner</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Pronunciation input and practice builds confidence and raises awareness.

• Peer practice…
  • motivates and engages.
  • promotes autonomy and study competence.
  • encourages cooperation and responsibility.
  • stimulates criticality (self/peer assessment).
Teachers should ask us more often to work with a partner (Pairs).

- **Agree**: 66.7%
- **Strongly Agree**: 19%
- **Disagree**: 14.3%
Suggestion:
Buddy system for peer practice

- Long term
- Lower frequency
- Other forms of practice
- Other skills

Diagram:
- Autonomy
- Peer collaboration
- Teacher-led
References


