

WHAT CHARACTERIZES COMPREHENSIBLE AND NATIVE-LIKE PRONUNCIATION AMONG ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND-LANGUAGE SPEAKERS? META-ANALYSES OF PHONOLOGICAL, RATER, AND INSTRUCTIONAL FACTORS

AUTHORS

Kazuya Saito

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KEY TERMS

Accentedness

Accentedness refers to how different the pronunciation is from native speaker norms

WHAT EVIDENCE IS SUMMARISED?

Findings from

54

studies

37 listener studies, and
17 training studies

were used in this meta-analysis

WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM THIS SECONDARY RESEARCH?

How can teachers improve language learners' pronunciation in terms of comprehensibility and accentedness?

HOW CAN I USE THE FINDINGS IN MY TEACHING?

- Teachers should aim to develop learners' comprehensibility rather than nativelikeness
- Teachers should design a range of practice activities (based on segmentals, prosody, or fluency) to help learners improve various dimensions in their second language proficiency and the comprehensibility of their speech
- Teachers should provide language immersion and interaction for their learners to improve the fluency of speech, and develop prosody

WHAT DOES IT FIND?

- Accentedness is hard to change even when quality instruction has been provided
- Pronunciation teaching makes a "small-to-medium" difference when the assessment is based on comprehensibility and training is set for fluency
- The training will have slight or subtle effects if the purpose is to evaluate nativelikeness
- Expert listeners tend to target nativelikeness
- In second language pronunciation proficiency, if the focus is on comprehensibility, all the three elements of pronunciation (segmentals, prosody and fluency) are equal, while if the focus is on accentedness, each element is prioritized over the next in reversed order (segmentals < prosody < fluency)
- Teaching pronunciation has more effects on comprehensibility than nativelikeness
- Few adult learners can be nativelike in their pronunciation
- Accentedness may remain unchanged even after instruction
- The second language segmental repair is a long, slow and gradual process, even beyond the initial learning stages
- Motivation, orientation and commitment, perceptual acuity, and cognitive functioning can be very important in accelerating the process of the second language segmental refinement