Pronunciation Matters

Why pronunciation is important

and

Horses for Courses

What is important in pronunciation
Before we begin

1. What matters most when learning English – grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation? Why?

2. Which are the most important aspects of pronunciation, vowels, consonants, stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.? Why?

3. Which is the best accent of English for learners?

4. What would be a realistic pronunciation goal for your learners?

5. How do you feel about your own pronunciation?
Pronunciation Matters & Horses for Courses

1) Why does pronunciation matter?
2) What is a good goal for our students’ pronunciation?
3) What are our teaching priorities?
4) Who will make the best models?
5) Who will make the best instructors?
1) Why does pronunciation matter?

1) The impact on speaking
   a) poor intelligibility
   b) avoidance of vocabulary
   c) avoidance of structures

- Wrocław
- infrastructure
- If I’d known, I’d’ve learned Chinese
1) Why does pronunciation matter?

2) The impact on listening
   a) recognition
      i. sounds
      ii. words
      iii. sentences

Department of Employment, Trade and Industry
1) Why does pronunciation matter?

2) The impact on listening
   b) overload
1) Why does pronunciation matter?

3) The impact on writing
   a) invented spelling
   b) misspelling

   a) Łódź

   b) Hake with crap sauce
1) Why does pronunciation matter?

4) The impact on reading

Catherine Walter: This suggests strongly that teaching phonology will help L2 learners to read better.
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5) Who will make the best instructors?
2) What is a good goal for our students’ pronunciation?
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‘been-to-boys’

… it is the locals speaking English with a native-like accent who are mocked as sounding foreign and affected, and derided for putting on a false accent (Joanne Rajadurai 2007)

‘England-returned’
2) What is a good goal for our students’ pronunciation?

*English Next*, British Council

In organisations where English has become the corporate language, meetings sometimes go smoothly when no native speakers are present. This is not just because non-native speakers are intimidated by the presence of a native speaker.

Increasingly, the problem may be that few native speakers belong to the community of practice which is developing amongst lingua franca users.
2) What is a good goal for our students’ pronunciation?

Svartvik & Leech, 2006

In international trade, English is the most used language – notably between countries and regions whose languages are unrelated . . .

Some firms are adopting English as their working language: as one example, it is the lingua franca in a Toyota and Peugeot factory in the Czech Republic, between Czech, Japanese and French staff.
2) What is a good goal for our students’ pronunciation?
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*Smith et al. 1992*

… concluded that there was no evidence of a breakdown in the functioning of English as an international lingua franca but that, interestingly…

… native speakers (from Britain and the US) were *not* found to be the most easily understood …

… *nor* were they, as subjects, found to be the best able to understand the different varieties of English.
2) What is a good goal for our students’ pronunciation?

• Speakers of ‘BBC’ English • 1.4m
• Speakers of British English • 58m
• Speakers of N American English • 300m
• Native speakers of English • 380m
• Non-native speakers of English • 1,500m
2) What is a good goal for our students’ pronunciation?

Intelligibility

A good accent

... accent and intelligibility are NOT the same thing. A speaker can have a very strong accent, yet be perfectly understood.

Derwing & Munro 2008
2) What is a good goal for our students’ pronunciation?
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Intelligibility

Goal 1 – a NS accent

Goal 2 – international intelligibility
3) What are our teaching priorities?

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**Goal 1** = NS accent  
**Goal 2** = International intelligibility  
**VIP** = Very Important  
**IP** = Important  
**NP** = Not important
3) What are our teaching priorities?

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**VIP**
- **Length only**
- **Variation in /θ, ð/ & /r/**
- **Word initial & medial**
- **Not important**
- **Can reduce intelligibility!**
- **Listening work only**

*Assessing English language since 1938*
1) Why does pronunciation matter?
2) What is a good goal for our students’ pronunciation?
3) What are our teaching priorities?
4) Who will make the best models?
5) Who will make the best instructors?
4) Who will make the best models?

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International intelligibility

Assessing English language since 1938
4) Who will make the best models?


*This paper reviews purposes for pronunciation teaching, questions the hegemony of native English speaker (NES) models, and explores the possibility of incorporating at least some attention to nonnative English speaker (NNES) models....*
This paper tries to show the importance of exposure of learners of English, especially those in the military field, to non-native models of pronunciation.
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competence  pedagogy
5) Who will make the best instructors?

There has often been the danger of an automatic extrapolation from competent speaker to competent teacher based on linguistic grounds alone.
5) Who will make the best instructors?

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5) Who will make the best instructors?

Smith et al.

**NNS** English teachers have strengths that NS teachers do not possess.

They are more familiar with the difficulties of learning English than their NS counterparts because they have had direct experience in acquiring the target language.
5) Who will make the best instructors?

Graddol

Native speakers were regarded as the Gold Standard...

In the new rapidly emerging climate, native speakers may increasingly be identified as part of the problem rather than a source of solution.
5) Who will make the best instructors?

Graddol

The target model of English within an ELF framework is not a native speaker, but a fluent bilingual speaker...

...[who] has the special skills required to negotiate understanding with another non-native speaker
Summary

1) Pronunciation matters because it …

2) A good goal for our students’ pronunciation is …

3) The *lingua franca core* is …

4) The best models for pronunciation are …

5) The best instructors are …
Summary

1) Pronunciation matters because it affects every other aspect of learning English.

2) A good goal for our students’ pronunciation is international intelligibility.

3) The *lingua franca core* is a good guide to the teaching priorities for international intelligibility.

4) The best models for pronunciation are English teachers who know from experience that they are internationally intelligible speakers.

5) The best instructors are bilingual English speakers with a good understanding of the phonologies and phonetics of English and the learner’s mother tongue.
Further reading

Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca.

Oxford University Press 2010

https://englishglobalcom.wordpress.com/downloads/