

# Bringing pronunciation back to the pre-sessional programme

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# Overheard on the pre-sessional



- *‘His presentation is, on the whole, quite good, but I’m really struggling to understand him. But there’s nothing I can do about it at this late stage. I’ll just sent him to the in-sess. Pron. class’*
- *‘I’d love to do more pronunciation, but there just isn’t time’*
- *‘You don’t really need to do much pronunciation work in EAP, it’s all about the essay at the end of the day’*
- *‘I teach writing, it’s not my job to teach pronunciation!’*



# Overview



**1. Importance of pronunciation** for EAP students

**2. The issues:** why we're not doing more of it

**3. The studies:**

- 2 year qualitative data collection (Archer, 2018)
- 5-week classroom based study and strategies which evolved from it (Archer, 2017)

**4. Strategies** taken from the studies

**Goal:** to highlight the issue of pron. in EAP and share ideas about how it could be better integrated into EAP lessons/program.



# Why bother?



- Lacking in confidence to communicate can be ‘socially inhibiting’ and can even be ‘damaging to a learner’s ability to cope effectively’ in their new linguistic environment (Gilbert, 2016).
- Developing a reliable L2 phonological repertoire contributes significantly to the ability to comprehend L2 written texts (Walter, 2009)
- Pronunciation training is linked to an improvement in overall listening capabilities, with a growing number of studies highlighting students’ ability to identify phonological features more clearly after receiving pronunciation instruction (Gilbert, 1995; Brown, 2011)



## Why bother? (Cont.)

- To help learners decode the features of fast natural speech they hear in their new linguistic environment. E.g. connected speech, reduced vowel sounds, glottal stops.
- To provide personalised, student centred feedback
- Because we assess students' speaking ability, of which pronunciation is a criteria. Would we mark their essays without explicit writing instruction in preparation for submission?



# Why are we not doing it?

- Pronunciation: once the 'pinnacle of importance' (Levis, 2005)
- Introduction of communicative methodology led to decades of neglect, belief that students would learn 'naturally' through communicating.



# Why are we not doing it?



Despite the current pronunciation resurgence, many teachers are still not including it due to:

1. Lack of training in phonology and teaching pronunciation (MacDonald, 2002; Fraser, 2000; Yates, 2001; Bradford and Kenworthy, 1991; Murphy, 1997; Walker, 1999; Breikrutz, Derwing & Rossiter, 2001; Henderson, 2012)



# Lack of training Archer (2018)



Did you receive explicit pronunciation training?  
327 teachers (nationally/international)  
surveyed:

- Yes 49%
- Yes, but not in detail 35%
- No 16%



# Why are we not doing it? (cont.)



2. For many years, a lack of appropriate contextualised pronunciation materials (Derwing, Diepenbroek, & Foote, 2012) and a lot of ‘drill and kill’! (Fraser, 2000).



# Why are we not doing it (cont.)

## Office inventory of EAP resources x8 student books

Text type	No. of pronunciation exercises (in whole book)
A graded mini series of 3 books on listening and speaking in EAP, approx. 60 pp each.	2; 16; 1
2 sets of graduated EAP pre-sessional course books at int. and upper int. level 200 -300 pp each	7; 1 1; 0
An EAP presentation textbook, 128 pp	5

# Range of exercises:

- Listen and notice
- Listen and repeat
- Predict the stress
- Read the transcript aloud
- Mark the word stress

## **Lacking in:**

contextualisation,  
relevance,  
personalisation,  
often vague





# Why are we not doing it (cont.)



3. Pronunciation mismatch between existing materials and teachers' own voices (Archer, 2018).

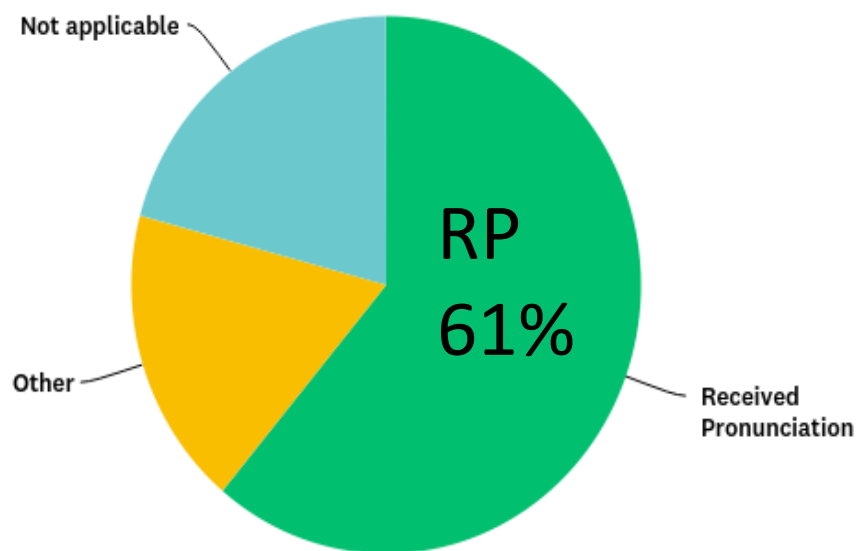


# Regional L1 speaking teachers

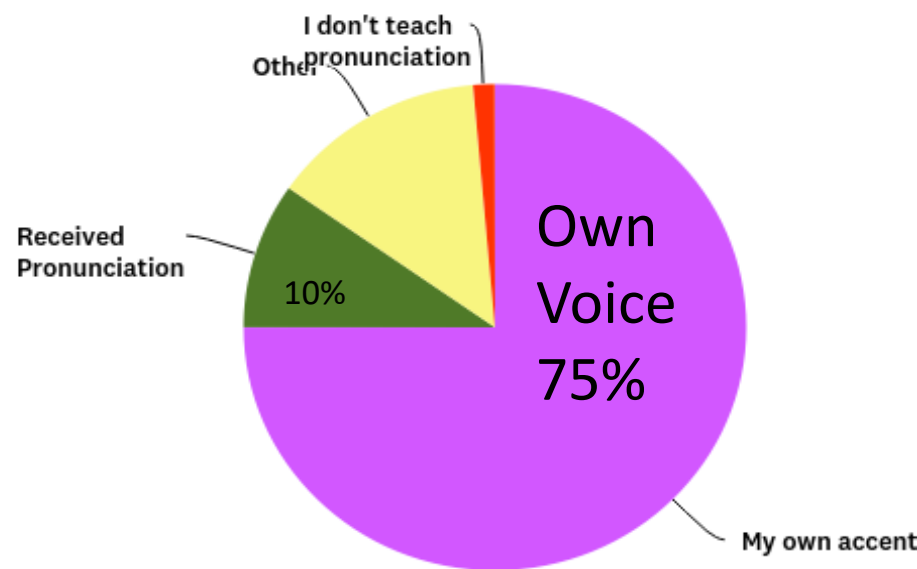
(100 Scottish teachers) Archer(2018)



I was trained with ....



I teach with ....



**Consequences:** When faced with pronunciation content 56% of respondents said they normally adapt or re-write materials, change the lesson, teach pron. but only the features that work, and 6% won't teach it at all.



# Why are we not doing it? (cont.)



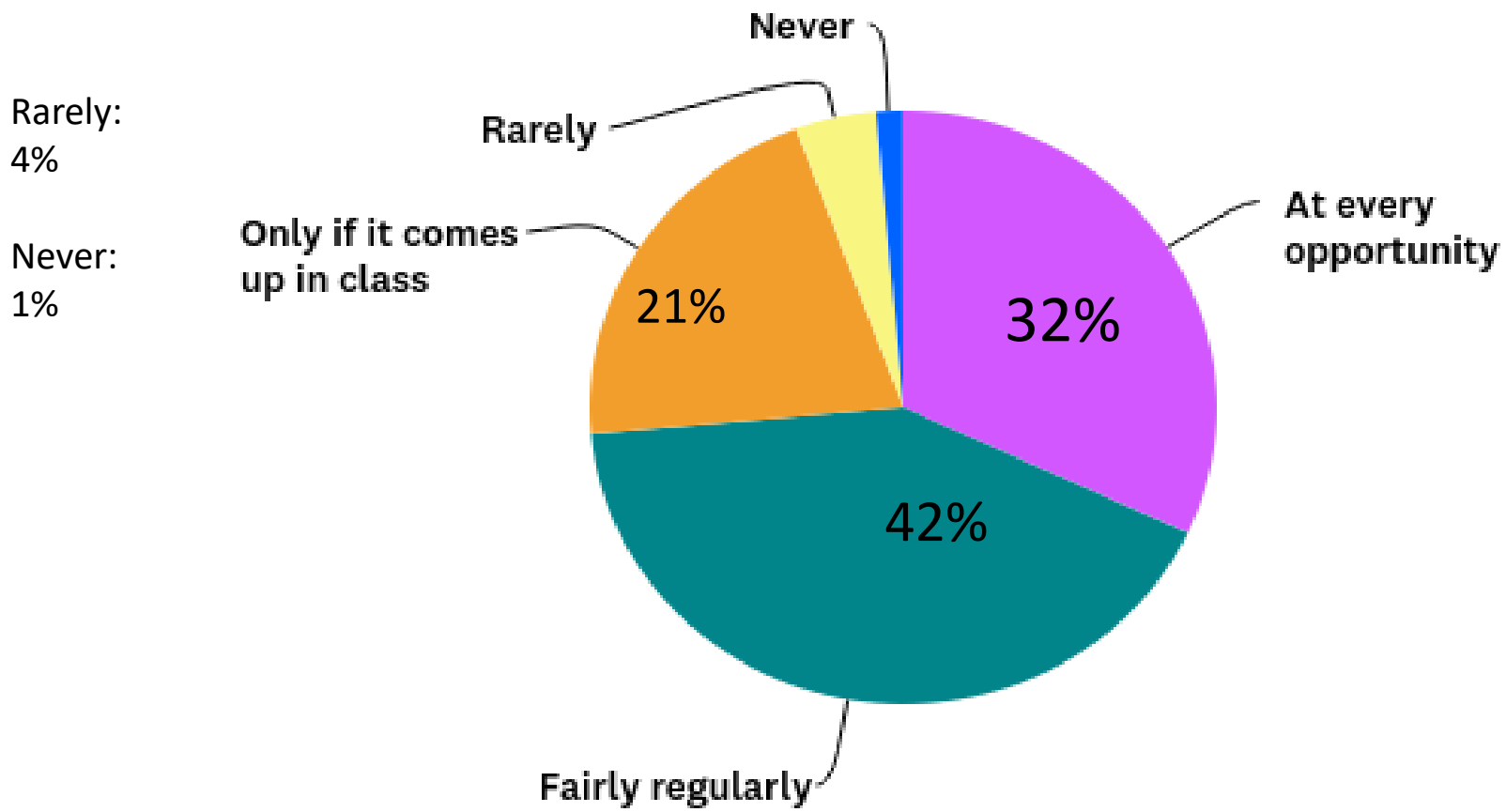
4. Teachers think they *are* doing pronunciation, but often this is simply responding to pronunciation issues as they arise, rather than planning and integrating explicit practice

(Baker & Murphy, 2011; Foote, Trofimovich, Collins, & Urzúa, 2013).

Canadian data suggest as little as 6% of class time is spent on pronunciation activities (Foote, Holtby & Derwing, 2011).

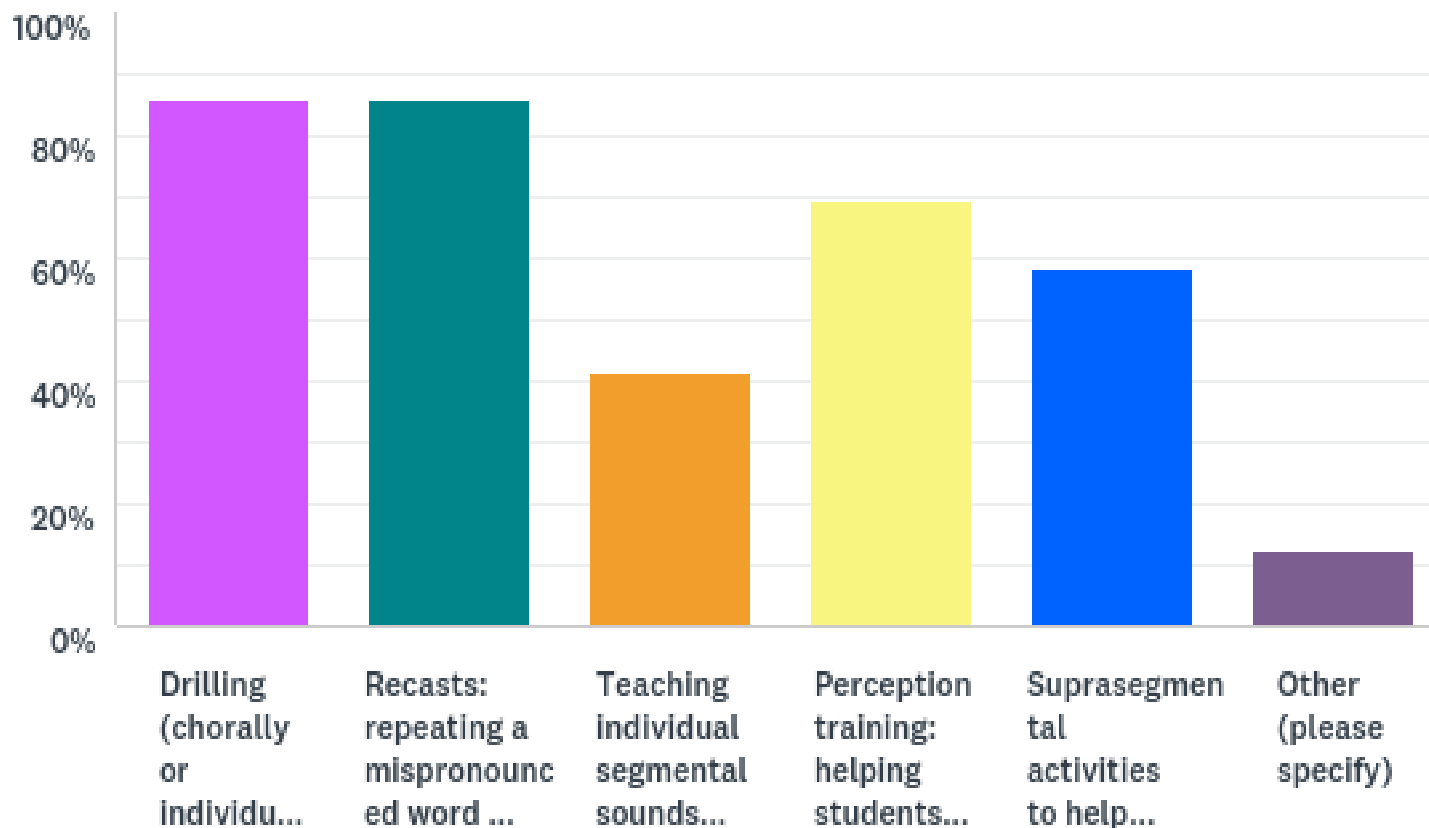


# How often do you include pronunciation activities in your lessons?



Archer(2018)

# What are the most frequent activities that appear in your lessons?



Archer(2018)





# Summary so far



Issues affecting teachers' likelihood to teach pronunciation:

1. Lack of training and subsequent knowledge
2. Lack of materials
3. Mismatch between model accent in materials and teachers' own
4. Teachers' mistakenly believing they are doing more pronunciation than they really are

## How I felt ...



Image: <http://www.masterofartsinteaching.net>

### I wanted to know ...

- Why are we teaching **(only)** RP to students living and studying in locations like Glasgow, where its presence is negligible, even said to be 'phantom' (Daniels, 1995) and often met with hostility?
- Does RP **truly** support students' perception and production better than other accents?
- Why is my accent not a suitable pronunciation model?



# The 2017 Study



5-week pronunciation course:

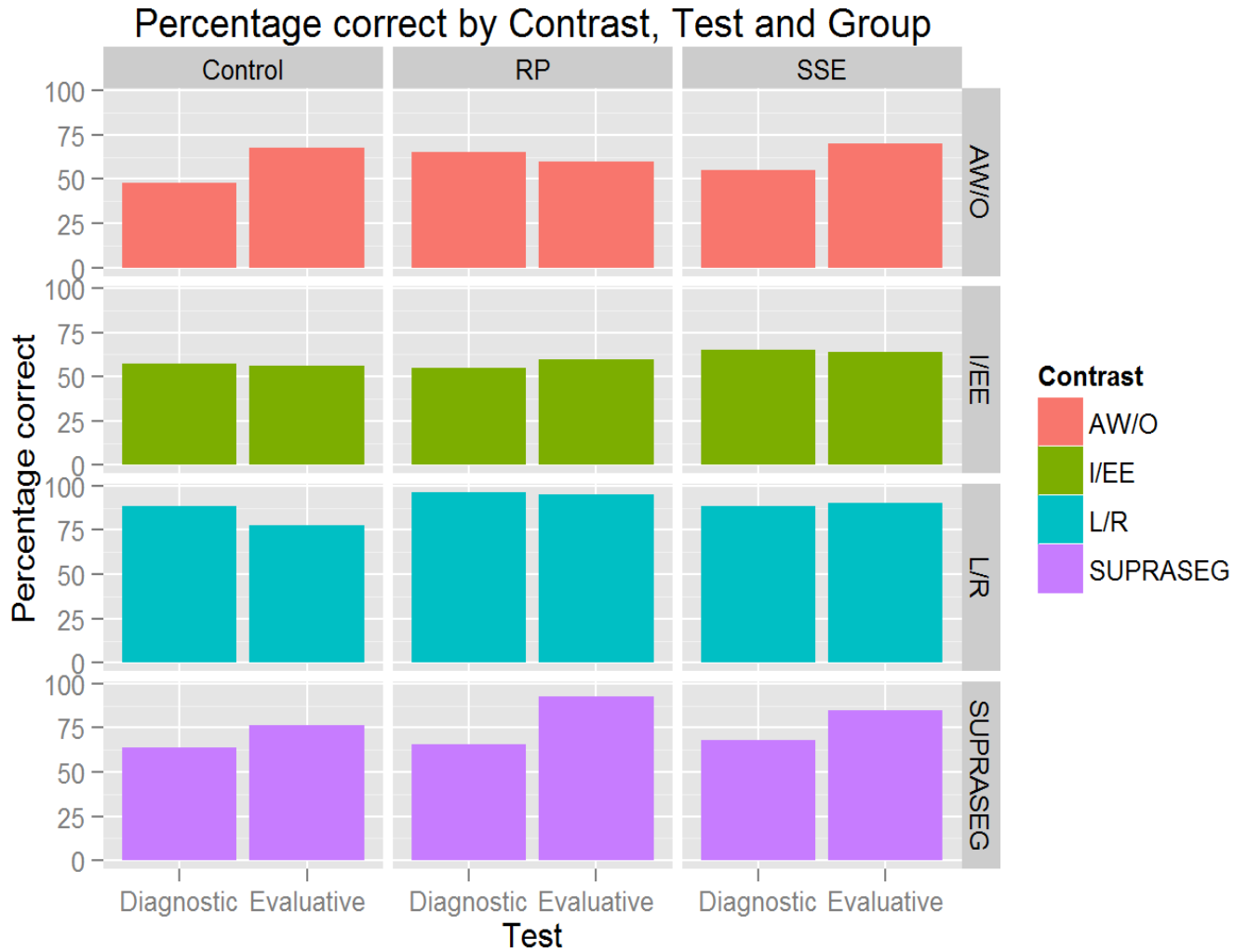
- 2 groups: randomly assigned a class using a Received Pronunciation (RP) model or a Scottish Standard English model (SSE). Both courses taught by me, but using audio recordings.
- 16 volunteers in each group, plus a control group. Students were East/south-east Asian, between the ages of 21 and 37, 90% female.
- All groups participated in diagnostic and evaluative testing of their perception and production.
- Course and test features: influenced by the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000) and Functional Load Theory (Catford, 1987):

**Segmentals:** /r/ /l/ /p/ /b/ /t/ /d/ /s/ /ʃ/ /i/ + vowel length

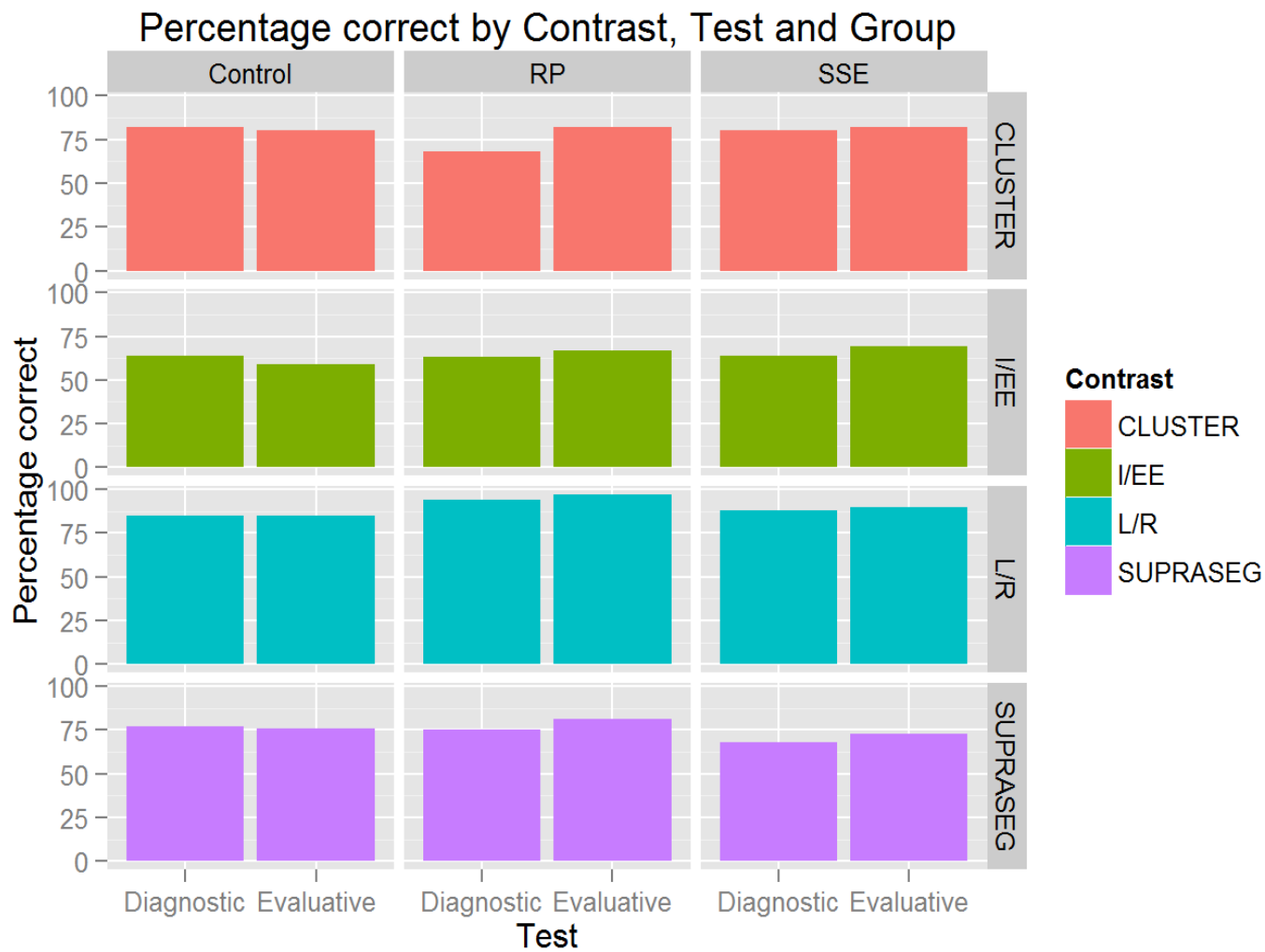
**Suprasegmentals:** nuclear (tonic stress)



# Results: perception



# Results: production

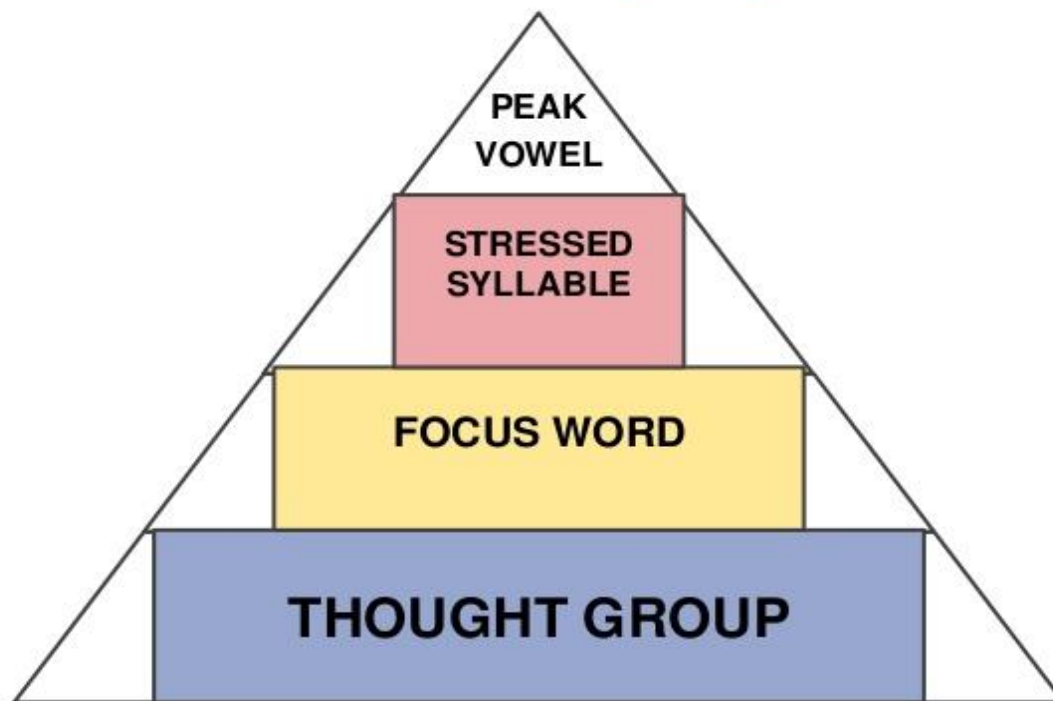


# Strategies

1. Introducing Prosody
2. The Lingua Franca Core
3. Structured lessons

# Introduce suprasegmentals with the Prosody Pyramid

## The Prosody Pyramid



Gilbert, (2008)  
Clear Speech 4<sup>th</sup> edition

<https://pronsig.iatefl.org/Info/Gilbert-Teaching-Pronunciation.pdf>

# Pronunciation for Listening

## Prosodic Annotations

- End of tone unit (TU) | or pause ||
- Primary stressed syllable (*beat*): blue larger text
- Reduced syllable (vowel only or syllabic /l/ or /n/): orange smaller text
- Nuclear (sentence) stress (whole word) : underlined
- Intonation (low fall, rise-fall, low rise) indicated by contour lines
- Phonotactic phenomena (linking, deletion, assimilation, etc.): highlighted in yellow

- The first **question** which you will **ask**, | and **which** I must **try** to **an**swer, | is **this**: ||'



# Pronunciation for Speaking Annotated presentations



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

In this grave hour, perhaps the most fateful in our history, I send to every household of my peoples, both at home and overseas, this message, spoken with the same depth of feeling for each one of you as if I were able to cross your threshold and speak to you myself.

For the second time in the lives of most of us we are at war. Over and over again we have tried to find a peaceful way out of the differences between ourselves.



# Consider the Lingua Franca Core



The Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000) advocates teaching certain core pronunciation features for maximum intelligibility rather than native likeness:

## Some of the LFC core features:

- All consonant sounds (except /θ/ and /ð/)
- Consonant clusters
- Rhotic /r/
- /t/ not tapped i.e. butter not '*budder*'
- More clear /l/ than dark [ɫ]
- Nuclear/ tonic stress



# Pre-planned: Lesson structure

‘The communicative Framework for Pronunciation’  
Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin & Griner (2010)

Step 1	<b>Description and Analysis:</b> oral and written illustrations of how the feature is produced and when it occurs within spoken discourse.
Step 2	<b>Listening discrimination:</b> focused listening practice with feedback on learners' ability to correctly discriminate feature.
Step 3	<b>Controlled practice:</b> oral readings of minimal pair sentences, short dialogues, etc. with special attention paid to the highlighted feature in order to raise learner consciousness.
Step 4	<b>Guided practice:</b> structured communication exercises, such as information-gap activities or cued dialogues that enable the learner to monitor for the specified feature.
Step 5	<b>Communicative practice:</b> less structured, fluency building activities (e.g. role play, problem solving) that require the learner to attend to both form and content of utterances



# Step 1

## Step 1

**Description and Analysis:** oral and written illustrations of how the feature is produced and when it occurs within spoken discourse.

## Pronunciation and Clear Speaking

/p/

/b/

/l/

/r/

To make the correct sounds in English, we have to make the right shape with our lips, teeth and tongue.

Look at the pictures below and **match** the correct mouth shape to the correct sound.

	phoneme	Mouth shape	Voiced/ unvoiced?
1	/l/		
2	/b/		
3	/r/		
4	/p/		

Listen to your teacher making these sounds. Do they use the voice box?  
Write your answers above.



## Step 2

### Step 2

**Listening discrimination: focused listening practice with feedback on learners' ability to correctly discriminate feature.**



**Exercise 1: Listen** to the words below then say them silently to yourself.

/p/	/b/	/l/	/r/
pat	bar	law	right
punish	ball	light	wrong
part	back	listen	remember
pill	bird	laugh	risk

**Exercise 2: Listen** to the ten words and write the sound they begin with.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_

## Exercise 3: Minimal pair distinction

Listen to the sentences and underline the word you hear.

- |             |                    |             |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 1. It's the | <i>right/light</i> | one.        |
| 2. Which    | <i>lab/lap</i>     | is it?      |
| 3. Did you  | <i>lead/read</i>   | it?         |
| 4. She said | <i>park/ bark</i>  | didn't she? |

**Exercise 4: Listen** for the missing words and write them in the spaces provided.

1. She forgot to say \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I don't need a \_\_\_\_\_ give me a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Don't eat this, it's \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Do you \_\_\_\_\_ it or do you \_\_\_\_\_ it?





## Step 3

### Step 3

**Controlled practice: oral readings of minimal pair sentences, short dialogues, etc. with special attention paid to the highlighted feature in order to raise learner consciousness.**

## Exercise 5: Minimal Pairs

Read the words in the table aloud, be careful to make the distinction between the sounds.

/p/	/b/	/l/	/r/
pine	brine	line	rhyme
pea	be	lee	-
puff	buff	-	rough
depend	bend	lend	-
pig	big	-	rig
-	bed	lead	red

# Exercise 6: Minimal Pair Dictation

Working with a partner, decide who is A and who is B. A students should look at this page only; B students should look at page six only. Take turns to read your list of words, having your partner listen. Decide which word sounds different.

- |         |       |       |
|---------|-------|-------|
| 1. fill | feel  | fill  |
| 2. ship | ship  | sheep |
| 3. shin | sheen | sheen |
| 4. bit  | beet  | bit   |
| 5. nil  | kneel | nil   |
| 6. seal | sill  | seal  |
| 7. teal | teal  | till  |

Your listening answers	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

## Exercise 7: Tongue Twisters

**Say the following sentences out loud, concentrating on the sounds /l/ and /r/ or /b/ and /p/**

1. Bart developed back pain after bending down to pick up his papers.
2. Barbara had to pay twenty pounds for her lab books.
3. Lilli's written approach was approved.
4. Paula studied painting and sculpting in Paris.

## Step 4

### Step 4

**Guided practice: structured communication exercises, such as information-gap activities or cued dialogues that enable the learner to monitor for the specified feature.**



# Exercise 8: Information gap

Ask your partner for the missing words. Listen and write the correct word into the boxes. Then swap and let your partner ask you.



A1 Rare books	B1	C1 Reduced business	D1 Limited lectures
A2	B2	C2 Rushed results	D2
A3 Poorly planned	B3	C3 Real crime	D3
A4	B4 Brief permit	C4	D4 Partly plagiarised

## Exercise 9: Dictation

Read the sentences below to your partner - they should listen and write exactly what you say. When you are finished, check the dictation together, looking for any problem sounds which have been written incorrectly and practice saying them together.

*'Recently a range of brand new rules were introduced in Livingstone Tower. On bank holidays, the lifts and the lights will be on standby so as to use less electricity. Also the computer lab will be locked. Only Postgraduate Business students and Professors will be allowed in. If you break the rules and enter the lab, you will be punished!'*

Recently a range of brand new rules were introduced in Livingstone Tower. On bank holidays, the lifts and the lights will be on standby so as to use less electricity. Also the computer lab will be locked. Only Postgraduate Business students and Professors will be allowed in. If you break the rules and enter the lab, you will be punished!



## Step 5

### Step 5

Communicative practice: less structured, fluency building activities (e.g. role play, problem solving) that require the learner to attend to both form and content of utterances



## Exercise 10:

**Recyclable/realistic tasks:** Give some advice, make an excuse, give directions, compare feedback, ask for help, prepare a list, prepare a dialogue

**1. Prepare a list** of things new students should and should not do on campus/ in Glasgow base on you/ your partner's experiences. Use at least 10 of the words from the vocabulary bank at the bottom of the page. At the end of the class you will negotiate with your classmates to make one final list for new students.

**2. Prepare a dialogue** with your partner based on the following scenario: one of you has been caught in the computer lab when they shouldn't be. The security guard is very angry. Use at least ten of the words form the vocabulary bank at the bottom of the page to write the conversation they have.



# Pre-planned: Lesson structure

Celce-Murcia et al communicative framework for pronunciation (2010): **Suprasegmentals**

Step 1	<b>Description and Analysis:</b> oral and written illustrations of how the feature is produced and when it occurs within spoken discourse. <b>E.g. stress = louder, higher, longer</b>
Step 2	<b>Listening discrimination:</b> focused listening practice with <b>feedback on learners' ability to correctly discriminate feature.</b> <b>E.g. listen/ identify stressed word/ syllable, use elastic bands</b>
Step 3	<b>Controlled practice:</b> oral readings of <b>sentences/ short dialogues</b> , etc. with special attention paid to the <b>stress</b> in order to raise learner consciousness.
Step 4	<b>Guided practice:</b> structured communication exercises, such as <b>information-gap activities</b> or cued <b>dialogues</b> that enable the learner to monitor for the specified feature.
Step 5	<b>Communicative practice:</b> less structured, fluency building activities (e.g. role play, problem solving) that require the learner to attend to both form and content of utterances



# But ...?



- I don't have time to make all these materials!

<http://international.okanagan.bc.ca/pronunciation/> (free)

- I don't have time to go through all 5 stages!

*The stages could be divided up over several lessons/  
days.*

# **Alternative strategies and exercises**



- A/B statements for ‘stress deafness’

Simple statements

She can swim.

A	B + / -	Normal
Jim	was	here.
I	don't	drive.
Anne	won't	mind.
They	were	tired.
Alice	is	late.
Chris	has	gone.

Hancock  
McDonald,  
(2017, p59).

Extract simple statements from texts or audio you have been using, inserting them into the table like this on the board.  
Read the statements aloud, asking students to identify where you used stress: A, B or normal. These can also be drilled, or used student –student.

- Lift challenging segmentals from texts/ transcripts, write them on the board, say words in random order, ask ss to point to words they hear. E.g. live/leave.
- Give ss elastic bands and demonstrate the effect of stress (louder, higher, longer), by lengthening the band over stressed syllables.
- Student - student dictation (e.g. students dictate instructions, then concept check each other).



# Conclusion



- Increasing evidence shows that explicit pronunciation instruction can have a positive effect on all four skills.
- Pronunciation **does** have a place in the EAP classroom and it should be considered a priority given that we formally assess speaking.
- There are many pre-planned and spontaneous methods in which you can increase the pronunciation undertaken in your EAP class.
- If you lack confidence in your pronunciation knowledge, you are not alone! Consider using elements of the *Lingua Franca Core* (Jenkins, 2000) and *The Prosody Pyramid* (Gilbert, 2008) in class to slowly increase your familiarity and knowledge.





# Thank you!



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