

Embodied Pronunciation Teaching: A Teacher Cognition Approach

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Research has shown that gestures can have beneficial effects on second language pronunciation learning. However, previous studies have been conducted mainly in labs and not in classrooms. While teaching tips (e.g. from language learning materials) often include using visual resources such as body language and text annotations in pronunciation instruction, little is known about teachers' ideas about such resources and their conscious efforts to incorporate body language and gestures in their classroom practice.

The primary aim of this study is to explore teachers' ideas and strategies for pronunciation teaching, in particular the use of body language and gestures. To delve into this matter, we conducted semi-structured interviews with nine teachers, all teaching beginner-level Swedish to teenagers or adults. A particular focus towards the end of the interviews was given to the use of gestures in teaching two known difficulties in second language Swedish: /i/≠/y/ and the quantity contrast (*vila*≠*villa*). The interviews were filmed and subsequently transcribed and analyzed thematically.

Analysis is ongoing but preliminary results show that teachers claim that body language plays an important role in their pronunciation teaching. Indeed, all of them mention using exaggerated articulation, gestures or objects when teaching Swedish vowels and in particular the contrast /i/≠/y/, for example placing a pen above the top lip to elicit the specific protruding lip rounding for /y/. Additionally, when asked about gestures to illustrate the quantity contrast most teachers indicate using very similar gestures. Results are discussed in light of previous studies on the effects of gestures.

This study is part of a five-year research project, named “Swedish Embodied Pronunciation Training,” which focuses on the impact of embodied pronunciation training on learners' Swedish pronunciation in lab and classroom experiments, more specifically the effects of such training on the two phonological features mentioned above. In addition to the primary aim of understanding how teachers reason about the use of gestures and body language in their teaching practice, the study presented here also serves as an inspiration for the choice of gestures to be used in the upcoming experiments.