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## Teaching Word Stress: A Curricular Resource For Adult English Language Learners at the High Beginner/Low Intermediate Levels

Ellen M. Clore-Patron

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TEACHING WORD STRESS: A CURRICULAR RESOURCE  
FOR ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT THE  
HIGH BEGINNER/LOW INTERMEDIATE LEVELS

by

Ellen M. Clore-Patron

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language.

Hamline University

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To Alexander, my son, for listening to me explore pronunciation features aloud (and while muttering under my breath) and keeping me focused.

To Noel, for the best companionship, patience and loving encouragement that helped keep me going strong through the hills and valleys of writing this paper. He made it easier and understood how critically I needed time to write; this is true sharing.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Adults tend to have a common need for at least a backpack, briefcase or sometimes even several suitcases when they travel. They take sundry items and clothing, perhaps a guidebook and some local currency. It is all put into baggage. All international travelers also “take along” at least one language with them: their native language (L1). For the sake of illustration, I like to think of that language as being in the carry-on: the baggage that does not leave you. (You do not check it to be stored in the cargo hold of the airplane – if you travel by plane). It remains in your presence.

An L1 is like something in a lifelong carry-on that is filled with linguistic essentials. North American English (NAE) essentials include the sounds of the language, (the individual sounds of each consonant and vowel, i.e., segmentals), as well as the suprasegmentals, such as the rhythm of the language (some words get more emphasis than others in an utterance), intonation (the rise and fall in pitch on different words and with certain types of questions) and word stress, i.e., the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables within a multisyllabic word which highlights the one syllable that has more prominence than the others (Grant, 2014). People with other L1s take with them different linguistic essentials because languages have different sound segments and prosodic features. In the lifelong carry-on, the language learner will take highly useful linguistic cognitions and skills and apply them in new communicative contexts.

I chose the metaphor of a person's L1 being like baggage because while it is essential like a weighty suitcase, native sounds and ways of constructing meaning phonologically can interfere with second language (L2) production and pronunciation acquisition of a target language. In other words, as a speaker using an L2, the cognitions and skills from the native language which they usually use without conscious effort may become a detriment that inhibits their ability to communicate. As this challenge presents itself in second language settings, the non-native speaker can benefit from instruction to facilitate his acquisition of the second language's pronunciation (Couper, 2006; Grant, 2014).

Adults, in particular, have more persistent challenges in acquiring intelligible pronunciation of an L2 than do children (Grant, 2014; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010). Historically, researchers asserted that a critical period exists for nonnative speakers to learn another language with a native-like accent which precedes adulthood (Parrish, 2004). The myth that adults cannot *improve* their pronunciation of a second language in adulthood, however, has been debunked (Derwing & Munro, 2014). With students interested in improving their pronunciation, resources are needed to improve their pronunciation skills.

The research question of the present study is "what materials should be included in a curricular resource for teaching word stress of North American English to adult English language learners at the high beginner and low intermediate levels?" Since word stress is a highly significant contributor to the capacity of nonnative speakers to be understood (Hahn, 2004), adult students need instruction to apply word stress effectively in order to dispel L1 phonological interference. Such interference is referred by language

experts as *negative transfer*, *first-language interference* (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010), or *cross-linguistic transfer* (Odlin, 2012). Mispronunciation vis-à-vis word stress happens regularly with English language learners, particularly for adult students with first languages that are categorically different from English in terms of their lexical stress (Checklin, 2012).

### **What is Word Stress?**

Word stress is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables within a multisyllabic word. In English, one syllable always carries stronger stress than others in the same word. Yoshida (2016) discusses the importance of correct word stress because the misplacement of word stress can lead to misunderstandings between interlocutors. She recalls that native English listeners recognize words by both their individual sound segments as well as by the prosodic variable of word stress.

Stressed syllables have three typical characteristics; they have a longer duration, are louder, and are higher in pitch (Yoshida, 2016). Celce-Murcia, et al. (2010), note, however, that all three characteristics may not be present in a stressed syllable; and, vowel duration is probably the characteristic that listeners would identify as most obvious among stressed syllables. Unstressed syllables must be considerably shorter, quieter and lower in pitch. Yoshida (2016) emphasizes that the vowel sounds of unstressed syllables are usually less clear and often are represented by the schwa sound, an unstressed phoneme, e.g., as the ‘a’ sounds in ‘about’. The patterns and contrasts that distinguish one syllable from another are part of what make NAE words distinctive from one another.

### **Why is Word Stress Important?**

If we compare the structures of the world's languages, we can observe that words in some languages are multisyllabic while words in other languages have only one syllable. For example, English words can be represented in one syllable or multiple syllables, i.e., multisyllabic (typically between two and six to seven syllables) as compared to their Thai and Mandarin counterparts which exclusively have words with the English equivalent of one syllable but multiple tones (McWhorter, 2015). Furthermore, languages with multisyllabic words may have one or more syllables per word that are stressed. For example, the English word 'America' has the strongest stress on the second syllable while the first, third and fourth syllables are not stressed.

Benrabah (1997) notes that English word stress is almost unique among the world's language bank, as its word stress is not easily predictable. NAE has word stress rules but those rules are not perfectly consistent and do not always reflect word stress use accurately (Yoshida, 2016). Celce-Murcia, et al. (2010), mention that it is the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables that characterizes English pronunciation significantly and differentiates it from many other languages.

English (both North American and British varieties) has what is referred to as free word stress where conventions governing which syllable receives primary stress are not fixed by syllable pattern (Cutler, Dahan, & van Donselaar, 1997). Fixed stress languages have a regular pattern for the stressed syllable, e.g., Polish and Swahili (penultimate syllable), Czech (first syllable), Macedonian (antepenult) and French (last syllable) (Hayes, 2009; Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010; Cutler & Clifton, 1984). This effect results in large part from the very nature of English of which its lexicon is an amalgamation of

words from other languages in addition to its root language, Anglo-Saxon (Celce-Murcia, et al, 2010). What also complicates the rules of NAE word stress, according to Celce-Murcia, et al., is that borrowed words, over time, tend to shift their stress to a syllable closer to the onset of the word. So, as English pronunciation changes over time, shifts in word stress may result. These shifts suggest another reason why NAE pronunciation and its word stress seem so unpredictable.

The stressed nature of NAE is further characterized by varying vowel quality and vowel reduction (Benrabah, 1997). When considering word stress, the salience of the vowel in the stressed syllable is paramount. Celce-Murcia, et al., (2010) classify it as the syllable “peak” (p. 113) or “heart” (Yoshida, 2016, p. 72). In stressed syllables, the vowel is clear and long. In unstressed syllables, as previously mentioned, vowels tend to be reduced to the schwa /ə/ sound or one of four other unstressed vowels. (cf Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010, for more information about vowel quality and unstressed vowels).

While patterns of NAE word stress are not 100 percent predictable, regularities are evident for words with certain prefixes and suffixes, certain borrowed words, compounds, phrasal verbs and some classes of words by grammatical function (Yoshida, 2016). Explicit instruction of word stress is needed in part because English word stress is not in a fixed pattern and because, as Baptista (1989) notes, students may create their own rules to predict stress patterns or apply the patterns from their first language causing cross-linguistic interference. It is also needed for adults because Checklin (2012) confirms that ‘late learners’ also tend to apply the word stress from known words to new words. Overall, breakdowns in communication can be minimized if the nature of NAE

word stress is taught so that learners first understand that word stress exists and secondly observe and apply patterns of word stress that are in the English lexicon.

In sum, English word stress does not have a fixed character but is variable unlike in many other languages that feature word stress. Furthermore, “[native English speakers] understand words not only from their individual sounds, but also from their pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables” (Yoshida, 2016, p. 73). Native English speakers and listeners rely upon word stress for lexical recall. Many nonnative speakers are challenged to produce it for a variety of reasons which include negative transfer and a lack of awareness of existing word stress rules. It is for these reasons that explicit instruction of English word stress is exigent.

### **Do We Have Best Practices?**

The ESL teaching and research community have not yet come to empirically know what the best practices are for teaching particular pronunciation features like word stress. Indeed, pronunciation research is far behind research into grammar and vocabulary instruction (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010; Grant, 2014). However, we do have instructional frameworks, foundational approaches and best practices informed by classroom experience that are effective in the instruction of English word stress (Grant, 2014; Yoshida, 2016). The conclusions researchers have reached, however, are not yet well reflected in English language teaching materials nor is pronunciation very well addressed in ESL textbooks (Derwing, Diepenbroek & Foote, 2002). Derwing and Munro (2014) note that a richer base of empirical research, and particularly longitudinal studies, are needed. Such studies will fill a gap in the pedagogical profile of suprasegmental features in general and word stress in particular.

### **My Observations**

I am continuously reminded of how compelling and yet inhibiting all these factors can be for new English language learners' pronunciation as I teach a large, open-enrollment English as a second language (ESL) class with adult learners from age 18 to over 70 and whose ages of arrival in the United States are also varied. These immigrants are retired senior citizens, refugees, students, parents, grandparents, workers and homemakers. I assume that the years of exposure that they have had to English is considerably widespread, as is the amount of exposure they have on a daily basis to English. I once reviewed my class attendance of 30 students to be from 25 different countries and 20 different languages, including Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin, Japanese, Portuguese, Somali, Mongolian, Amharic and Farsi.

What is significant about that variety of native languages is that their pronunciation features are completely different and impact their NAE production in diverse ways (Swan & Smith, 2001). By observation, it is apparent that production errors are not entirely a result of cross-linguistic transfer, and other factors may certainly be at play. However, scant attention is given in the literature to confirm the extent to which cross-linguistic phonological transfer of some suprasegmental features affects L2 pronunciation. The extreme differences between the pronunciation patterns of adult students from different L1s have been studied and research demonstrates that their phonological baggage affects their production of English as second language (Odlin, 2012).

I am convinced by my own experiences as a teacher of adult English language learners, practitioner anecdotes, and by academic research that teachers of adult second

language learners should spend substantial time on pronunciation at all skill levels (in multi-skill classes and stand-alone pronunciation classes, as resources are available to provide them).

Since I started becoming fascinated with pronunciation, I have paid much more attention to the pronunciation of my intermediate and advanced-level students. I observe what particular features and phonemes they struggle to produce accurately. Because I teach a multi-skills class and there are four language domains to teach (reading, writing, speaking and listening), I can attend to pronunciation for only a fraction of the amount of time each student really needs. Because the differences between the sound segments that are reflected in one native language may not be used in English as the target language, aberrant segmental pronunciation is typical. Adult native speakers of different languages will have highly variable differences in producing the sounds of English correctly depending on many factors including how much they have been taught and when pronunciation instruction began.

However, there are prosodic differences, i.e., non-segmental pronunciation factors of which word stress is a primary determinant of comprehensible speech that are common to all students and can be taught at the beginner levels and beyond. Since the lists of contrasts between the phonology of hundreds of native languages and English are monumental, I cannot possibly attend to them in a multi-skills class. I can, however, instruct students in global aspects of English pronunciation that affect all learners, e.g., word stress.

Given the complicated process required in sorting out which pronunciation issues need priority among a large class full of adult students with different native languages



(versus English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes which are occupied by students of the same native language), I am certainly not the only teacher who struggles with teaching pronunciation in a general-skills ESL classroom. My purpose in developing this project is to better inform myself about pronunciation instruction of word stress and to develop curricular materials that will assist me and others in applying teaching strategies that facilitate English L2 pronunciation for beginner and low intermediate adult learners. From classroom experience I recognize that adult students need instruction in word stress prior to reaching the intermediate level. Research also shows that adults even want pronunciation instruction at the beginning levels (Zielinski & Yates, 2014).

It is for these reasons that the curricular resource presented in Chapter Four is ideally employed at the high beginner/low intermediate levels. It can also be modified to serve a lower instructional level. It is my hope these materials may contribute to the small bank of published materials that currently exist about teaching word stress in the literature of the English language teaching community and multi-skills ESL textbooks. It is my hope this resource will assist other teachers of nonnative adult speakers of English at the beginning and low intermediate levels.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have introduced the analogy of an English language learner's L1 being like baggage which can complicate the nonnative speaker's production of English as a second language. L1 interference is a factor in explaining why second language learners have difficulty with English pronunciation and word stress in particular. Another reason is the lack of instruction in English pronunciation and the lack of explicit and simple-to-convey rules that can be taught to learners governing NAE word stress. Also,

in this chapter I explained my motivations for creating a curriculum that addresses word stress for adult English learners at the high beginning/low intermediate level.

In Chapter Two I review what the research literature says about the need for pronunciation instruction and word stress in particular. The literature is conclusive about that need for more instruction and practice in the suprasegmental domain of pronunciation although not to the exclusion of instruction in the production of the sounds of English, i.e., NAE phonemes. In Chapter Three I explain the methodology I used to create a curriculum for teaching NAE word stress. Chapter Four includes the curricular resource itself. In Chapter Five I reflect on my learning, the curriculum and discuss its application.

My question remains: what materials should go into a curricular resource for teaching word stress of North American English to adult English language learners at the high beginning/low intermediate levels? I will answer this question by examining the research, identifying best practices, and applying these to the development of curricular material.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Each language has its own set of sounds and unique ways of combining those sounds to make up the phonology of the language, and English is no exception. As mentioned previously, we call the individual consonant and vowel sounds *segmentals*. Other features of pronunciation are categorized as *suprasegmentals* or *prosody* which include intonation, rhythm and word stress (Grant, 2014). My study looks at word stress as a prosodic element and a significant NAE feature.

As we teach English to adult non-native speakers, pedagogy requires curricula to convey the features of word stress that can be readily taught and dispel the negative impacts of cross-linguistic transfer on learner pronunciation. My research explores what materials should go into a curricular resource for teaching the pronunciation of NAE word stress to adults at the high beginning/low intermediate levels. In this chapter, I will review the literature about the importance of teaching pronunciation, discuss which elements of pronunciation may be priorities in instruction, make a case for teaching word stress and some of its particular features, and convey the implications for pedagogy. I will begin by reviewing some of the most recent history with respect to the teaching of English pronunciation to second language learners.

#### **Historical Perspectives: The 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Students, teachers and researchers alike have been concerned with developing L2 pronunciation for longer than we can possibly know and perhaps even for millennia.

Recent history of the past 70 years or so shows no exception to the struggle many adult students face as they seek to achieve a heightened level of intelligibility, i.e., the ability to be understood. Teachers too have had their struggles in determining to what extent they should teach pronunciation and what goals and objectives they should set forth for their adult students (Levis, 2005; Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010). As 2020 nears, those concerns remain salient for educators.

### **The Audiolingual Method**

As we look at the past 70 years, one can trace the movement of varying ideologies regarding language learning that have had a significant impact on the teaching and research of pronunciation instruction. The ideology of the audiolingual method, which became popular in the late 1940s and 1950s, held that pronunciation was of primary importance when teaching English to L2 learners (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010). Murphy and Baker (2015) report that teachers tended to follow what they call a “lesson sequence of information-transmission phases” (p. 19). It was a tendency to convey the pronunciation feature (e.g., intonation) and then utilize repetition (both choral and individual), mimicry and dialogue practice, with other aural/oral pronunciation practice activities initiated by the teacher (Grant, 2014).

By the 1980s, technological innovation allowed the use of language laboratories and hand-held audio-tape players to reinforce classroom practices which deliberately targeted the teaching of oral skills with the audiolingual method. As quoted in Murphy and Baker (2015), Howatt and Widdowson (2004) provided a critique that the use of the language “lab [as featured in teaching with the audiolingual method] appeared to be

perpetuating some of the worst features of [imitative-intuitive] pattern practice” (p. 319).

In effect, prevailing pronunciation pedagogy nurtured its own decline.

One particular research study also had a damaging impact on the teaching of pronunciation. Specifically, in the late 1970s a research team comprised of Purcell and Suter (1980) conducted a study of over 60 English language learners from multiple L1s. Their research results suggested that “pronunciation instruction did not correlate significantly with accent” which thereby reinforced the notion that pronunciation instruction was not effective (Derwing & Munro, 2014, p. 38). Accordingly, the impact of that conclusion had an undesirable effect on the cognitions of practitioners regarding the efficacy of pronunciation teaching. While these conclusions were widely accepted in the late 1970s and early 1980s, later research debunked Purcell and Suter’s research conclusions which had a profound impact on the waning ideology of the audiolingual method.

### **Communicative Language Teaching**

In the late 1980s and 1990s, we began a transition period with the decline of the audiolingual method and discourse about what role pronunciation would have in the English language learners’ classroom. The notion arose that effective communication, rather than accuracy, was key to classroom practice (Breitkreutz, Derwing & Rossiter, 2001; Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010). An input-based approach suggested that pronunciation did not need to be taught; pronunciation would be acquired as students were exposed to quality input (Thomson & Derwing, 2015). This approach came to be known as Communicative Language Teaching (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010).

By the 1980s many practitioners had become dissatisfied and questioned whether direct instruction was effective at all, and Communicative Language Teaching arose as an alternative to the Audiolingual Method. Significant changes were afoot, resulting in the reduction and even entire elimination of the pronunciation component of many ESL programs for adults (Morley, 1991; Grant, 2014). No longer was pronunciation at the pinnacle of the pedagogical hierarchy. Unfortunately, students were left without pronunciation instruction which resulted in many students developing *fossilized* errors in their English pronunciation, i.e., their pronunciation did not improve even with quality input (Derwing & Munro, 2014).

Beyond pedagogy in the late twentieth century, a general paucity of second language research that concerned itself with pronunciation was also evident (Saito, 2012). Derwing and Munro (1995) note that pronunciation research was marginalized to an extreme, recent research was very minimal, and the research results that were attained were not readily available to inform pedagogy. For that reason, and up until the mid-2000s, teacher-preparation materials had little substance dedicated to engaging students in pronunciation instruction that was research informed. Derwing and Munro (2005) recount how little teacher preparation material for pronunciation teaching was influenced at this time by key researchers; the links between second language teaching and pronunciation research just were not being made. Perhaps even more significant was that an entire generation of teachers was not being trained sufficiently to teach pronunciation.

In sum, the notion that it was not effective to teach pronunciation was widespread in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Derwing & Munro, 2014). Derwing and Munro's research led them to conclude that the Purcell and Suter study, the shift toward Communicative

Language Teaching, a lack of formal pronunciation instruction for students, and a lack of teacher training all led to the marginalization of pronunciation instruction. Today that means many of our contemporary instructors' beliefs and knowledge (cognitions) about pronunciation instruction were hampered by the lack of pedagogical guidance and, for some, a sense of futility in teaching pronunciation entirely.

### **Historical Perspectives: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

#### **Communicative Language Teaching Evolves**

Around the turn of the century new research in the domain of pronunciation pedagogy was significant. Breitzkreutz, et al. (2001) describe how an empirical psychological study by Schmidt (1995) brought to many researchers and practitioners' awareness his conclusions that "second-language (L2) learners need to have their attention drawn to specific characteristics of a language if they are to make changes in their own productions" (p. 52). Schmidt (1995) determined from his research that input alone was not sufficient to produce quality output. He went on further to establish that *noticing* applies to all language domains, including phonology.

A controlled study conducted by Derwing, Munro and Wiebe (1998) was among the first of its kind to suggest that direct instruction in pronunciation over an extended period of time can have a positive impact on learners. Derwing, et al., used three different foci of training (i.e., with segmentals, with suprasegmentals and a control group with no pronunciation-specific instruction). Two 12-week experiments led to improvement in "three aspects of oral production: comprehensibility, accent, and fluency" (p. 405). These results demonstrated that instruction in pronunciation is viable.

Saito (2012) synthesized the results of 15 quasi-experimental studies, each with pre- and post-tests, which investigated what effect pronunciation instruction has on L2 acquisition. The studies also assessed whether segmental or suprasegmental instruction positively influenced second language development. Thirteen of the fifteen studies demonstrated significant improvement, again reinforcing the salience of pronunciation instruction. (Note: of the 15 studies, 12 focused on English instruction. In the two studies where L2 learners did not demonstrate significant improvement, Saito accounts for those results as due to a very minimal amount of instruction being included in the experiments, i.e., 15-30 minutes). The control groups, which did not include *form-focused pronunciation* instruction, also demonstrated no improvement. (Form-focused instruction involves explicit instruction in pronunciation forms.) Spada's (1997) research suggested that "explicit teaching of form can have beneficial effects on L2 [second language] learning." Couper (2006) further explored how significant gains have been achieved by focusing learners on specific pronunciation features and language acquisition (e.g., the addition and deletion of particular segmental elements).

By the 2000s, the maxim that pronunciation should be taught and can engender positive results in targeted second language pronunciation acquisition had been quantified and qualified by empirical research (Couper, 2006; Derwing, Munro & Wiebe, 1998; Derwing & Munro, 2005). However, Derwing & Munro emphasize that applied linguistics specialists and pronunciation instructors in particular must be exposed to the research, i.e., empirical research must be made accessible to inform pedagogy and the development of teaching materials (2005).



By the 2010s, Murphy and Baker (2015) had noted that a defining characteristic of the prevailing trend in pronunciation teaching includes the notion that pronunciation should be taught, knowledge of phonology should be incorporated into teacher training, and the support of instruction through contemporary empirical research should continue. Levis (2016) wrote in his article “Researching into practice: How research appears in pronunciation teaching materials” that there are only two research areas that are “adequately represented in teaching materials” (p. 428) among the many features of the pronunciation domain. Lessening the reliance on anecdotal experience to inform instruction even further may surely result in more informed teaching practices (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

### **Nativeness or Intelligibility**

Celce-Murcia, et al., (2010) note that a “renewed urgency” to teach pronunciation was becoming evident in ESL classrooms with the maturation (or perhaps evolution) of Communicative Language Teaching in the late 1990s. Nevertheless, questions remained, and L2 pronunciation pedagogy did not return to its apogee as in the days of the Audiolingual period. Becoming of significance was the question as to what extent should teachers and students be concerned with pronunciation (Grant, 2014).

Adult students and teachers alike have long held to the desirability of nonnative speakers achieving a native-like accent (Levis, 2005). What would or should be the goal of instruction? In a TESOL Quarterly publication, Levis (2005) defined two principles that continue to be regarded as defining principles between the poles of pronunciation teaching ideology: the *nativeness principle* and the *intelligibility principle*.

“The nativeness principle holds that it is both possible and desirable [for adults] to achieve native-like pronunciation in a foreign language” (Levis, 2005, p. 370). Levis reports that principle was popular until the 1960s when researchers began assessing its validity and concluding that numerous factors inhibit the vast majority of learners from eliminating their native accents in their second language. While acquisition of a native-like accent in adults is rare, it is apparent that the possibility of achieving one exists. What a conundrum for the L2 learner who can hear native-like speech from a nonnative speaker but cannot achieve that pinnacle himself!

Levis (2005) notes that for a host of reasons (e.g., L2 use, age and motivation) few adults as second language learners are able to achieve a native-like accent. He concluded that it is unreasonable to expect students to reach that pinnacle or for teachers to aim instruction for students toward that level of achievement. Field (2005) further commented that it is “unrealistic, time-consuming, and potentially inhibitory to aim for a native-like accent” (p. 400). Extensive research in this domain has been conducted that supports the notion of students having a limited ability to acquire a native accent (Celce-Murcia, et al, 2010).

In response, Levis (2005) put forward a second principle, the *intelligibility principle*, which suggests students and teachers alike should aim for student pronunciation to simply be understandable. This principle “recognizes that communication can be remarkably successful when foreign accents are noticeable or even strong” (p. 370). An accent or accentedness is a feature of L2 pronunciation that can impact a nonnative speaker’s comprehensibility and intelligibility (Derwing & Munro, 2011). Crystal (2003) defines an accent as “the cumulative auditory effect of those

features of pronunciation that identify where a person is from, regionally or socially.”

Comprehensibility is a term used in linguistics that refers to how difficult it is for listeners to understand nonnative speech and that can be empirically tested by listeners’ perceptions (Derwing & Munro, 2011). Intelligibility, a third useful feature of the pronunciation construct, reflects how much a listener is able to actually understand a speaker, i.e., “the degree to which a listener actually understands the speaker’s intended message” (Derwing & Munro, 2011, p. 4).

Derwing and Munro’s research conclusions suggest that accentedness, intelligibility, and comprehensibility are “related but partially independent dimensions of speech” (p. 4), i.e., “speaking does not have to be native-like to be intelligible” (Grant, 2014). They noted that “the greatest benefits for learners occur when the instructor emphasizes those elements of speech that will positively affect intelligibility and comprehensibility” (Derwing & Munro, 2011, p. 4).

Although members of the commercial accent reduction industry might disagree, researchers mostly agree that intelligible and comprehensible pronunciation is the goal of instruction (Foote, Trofimovich, Collins & Soler Urzua, 2016; Derwing, 2009). Derwing notes, however, that some ESL teachers remain true to the nativist principle as a result of student interest in achieving native-like pronunciation. For a variety of reasons, teachers respond to those personal interests and continue to seek means to address student demand. However, Grant (2014) reinforces the notion that the majority of teachers are on board with the goals of intelligibility rather than the abandonment of the learners’ native accent in favor of native-like speech in the second language.

### **The Role of the Listener**

Researchers assert that one of the most important elements of nonnative speech and the pursuit of students to be understandable is accentedness, but it is the role of the listener that is essential in making the determination as to whether a nonnative speaker's pronunciation is intelligible and comprehensible (Field, 2005). Field looked at some of the contributory factors that native speakers assess as they judge nonnative speech and focused his study on the prosodic factors. He also reported that segmental features have a lesser impact on pronunciation in his citations of studies by Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson and Koehler (1992), Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler (1988) and Derwing, Munro and Wiebe (1998).

For various research studies, native speakers have been employed to listen the speech of non-native English speakers and make assessments of intelligibility, comprehensibility, fluency and other factors. As listeners, their assessments demonstrate they have attitudes and expectations that impact how they rate nonnative speakers (Hayes-Harb and Hacking, 2015). Bias exists among listeners toward strong accentedness (Grant, 2014), and other research gives us clues about where strains in communication occur.

From the onset, research conclusions suggest that nonnative accents are easily identifiable by native speakers of English and that those listeners are very sensitive to divergences from the norm (Munro, 2003). Munro reports on a study conducted by Flege (1984) wherein "phonetically untrained listeners were able to detect a foreign accent in tiny segments of speech as short as .03 seconds" (as cited in Munro, 2003, p. 38). Along with other variables, such as what and how speakers dress, L2 speaker accentedness is

highly noticeable. Munro further asserts that the higher profile of nonnative speakers in society has raised awareness of nonnative speakers with the result often being less than positive.

Strains in communication go beyond sensitivity to accentedness: listeners can also be particularly impatient with foreign accents and may discriminate against nonnative speakers (Munro, 2003). Munro further notes that “some people may disfavor speech if it is unintelligible or appears to require some special effort to comprehend” (p. 39).

Classroom observations of my own have revealed that even nonnative speakers can be particularly impatient with other nonnative speakers who have less comprehensible speech.

Studies such as Munro’s (2003) and one by Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) revealed that nonnative English speakers are aware of and experience negative consequences and perceive stigmatization that they attribute to their accentedness. Stereotyping and job discrimination were highlighted in the Munro (2003) study in which he used the phrase *linguistic profiling* to illustrate accent identification and stigmatization. Accent reduction companies have even been known to capitalize on these fears in their advertisements for classes (Thomson, 2014).

Zielinski’s (2012) research points to how much bearing listener variables may have on the L2 speakers’ communication. She studied 26 nonnative speakers’ perceptions of their pronunciation and discovered that 24 of the 26 learners had negative perceptions of how their pronunciation affected their communication interactions. In several cases, bad experiences with an interlocutor, such as being laughed at, affected their perceptions.

Specifically, Zielinski notes in regard to pronunciation difficulties, speaker confidence and even a willingness to speak may be impacted.

It is critical to recall research conclusions mentioned previously that there is no correlation between accentedness and intelligibility/comprehensibility, i.e., just because an L2 speaker has a “thick” accent does not suggest a lack of understandability. Heavily accented speakers may well be clearly understood. Nevertheless, strains in communication may result in part from the attitudes and preconceptions of the listener. While some interlocutors may contend it is incumbent upon the speaker to make themselves understood, the role of the listener can be one of compassion that sets aside stereotypes which impinge upon successful interactions between native and nonnative speakers.

### **Prioritizing Instruction**

It was previously noted that more research into the salience and viability of pronunciation instruction became evident in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thomson and Derwing (2005) conducted a review of 75 studies of second language pronunciation of which 74 percent were English-oriented. Researchers had concluded that pronunciation instruction was effective in 82 percent of these studies. They also concluded that the duration of instruction is key to the amount of pronunciation improvement. “Global improvement in comprehensibility / intelligibility requires weeks or even months of instruction” (Thomson & Derwing, 2015).

A workplace training study that tested the changes of pronunciation comprehensibility in workers who had lived on average 19 years in an English-speaking context led conclusively to significant improvements in pronunciation. (Derwing, Munro,

Foote, Waugh & Fleming, 2014). Their experimental training included both pre- and post-tests as well as 90 minutes of class time per week in 30-minute intervals and 10 minutes of out-of-class work following each class, for a total of 34 classes or 17 hours of instruction. Their research questioned whether improvement could be seen in both the participants' intelligibility and comprehensibility, and they approached the study with instruction in both segmental and suprasegmental features because the two domains are "not mutually exclusive" (p. 544). This methodology was unique for a workplace training study.

As we conclude that pronunciation instruction is necessary and in demand by students, teachers and researchers alike are also coming to some conclusions about what pronunciation instruction should be given priority in multi-skills and stand-alone pronunciation classes. Celce-Murcia, et al., (2010) quote McNerney and Mendelsohn (1992, p. 186), who captured the prevailing notions about the shift to focus on the prosodic features of intonation, word stress, and rhythm like this:

"a...course should focus first and foremost on suprasegmentals as they have the greatest impact on the comprehensibility of the learner's English. We have found that giving priority to the suprasegmental aspects of English not only improves learners' comprehensibility but is also less frustrating for students because great change can be effected in a short time."

Researchers Derwing, Munro and Wiebe (1998) came to a similar conclusion from their research that instruction in suprasegmentals has greater impact on intelligibility than does instruction in segmentals, although they advocated for the

inclusion of instruction in both aspects of phonology. (Readers can find a short description of their research on page 22.)

North American classrooms have adult English language learners from across the globe who collectively speak many languages, and students in one ESL class may speak one of any number of first languages. We cannot attend to each aberrant segmental produced by our learners and endeavor to correct those errors in class. Therefore, it is essential that teachers target the most salient prosodic features that impact the learner's capacity to be understood (Field, 2005). Again, identifying or developing curricula that targets increasing learner intelligibility is key.

### **Word Stress**

Among the prosodic aspects of English phonology (which include word stress, intonation and rhythm), word stress has been identified as essential for L2 pedagogy because aberrant word stress is known to cause misunderstandings and lower nonnative speaker intelligibility by native speakers (Grant, 2014; Cutler, 2005; Field, 2005; Benrabah, 1997; Derwing, et al., 1998). As cited by Checklin (2012), Clarke and Garrett (2004) concluded that another one of the impacts of misplaced word stress is delayed word identification processes for the listener. Misplaced word stress may impact intelligibility because some listeners may decode words based partly on word stress and then are hampered as they seek the word in their mental lexicon.

### **Word Stress Rules and Generalizations**

Baptista (1989) notes that the complexity of NAE word stress hampers teachers from teaching what rules and generalizations we can apply in some regularity. Several aspects of word stress are highly predictable and easily teachable whereas others are less



predictable and follow general rules with less consistency. Given that research has determined that word stress is so critical to the intelligibility of nonnative speakers, teaching word stress rules that can be applied most consistently makes sense. I have identified two categories of lexical functions with highly consistent word stress rules: two-syllable nouns and compound nouns (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010).

### **Two-Syllable Nouns and Verbs**

The first category of words that are highly predictable are nouns with two syllables. In 90 percent of all two syllable nouns, the primary stress is on the first syllable, according to Avery and Ehrlich (1992), as cited in Yoshida (2016). Yoshida further describes verbs with two syllables as being more likely to put primary stress on the second syllable. That said, noun-verb pairs that are spelled the same way follow the same pattern as described above: the noun of the pair is stressed on the first syllable, and the verb is stressed on the second syllable.

It should be noted that in noun-verb pairs with the same spelling, vowel qualities are often different (Odlin, 2012). Odlin provides the example of *combine*: as a noun, the first syllable receives the stress; as a verb, the second syllable is stressed. While not focusing on vowel qualities, I will note that pronunciation of the vowels is different between the verb and noun example. The vowel in the prefix is reduced as a verb; the vowel in the noun prefix is not reduced but rather has a full, clear vowel sound.

### **Compound Nouns**

Compounds are a highly productive lexical feature and account for the largest percentage of NAE vocabulary other than from borrowing from other languages (Celce-Murcia, et al, 2010). Another very consistent word stress rule is also present with

compound nouns. In these cases, the speaker can identify “the stressed syllable of the first element in the word” (Yoshida, 2016, p. 77). Yoshida provides four examples: haircut, basketball, policeman and swimming pool. In each of these words, the stressed syllable is in the first word of the compound. She also notes that with multisyllabic compounds that individually have a stressed syllable, as a compound all the syllables of that second part would be unstressed, e.g., newspaper, motorcycle, police officer. In other words, newspaper is stressed on the first word in the compound. Police officer also has its stress in the first word, but in this case on the second syllable. In both cases the second word in the compound is not stressed.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

As I have identified two aspects of word stress that can be readily taught and researchers agree that word stress should be taught to improve the intelligibility of nonnative English language learners (Field, 2005), I also recall pedagogical implications for teaching word stress rules (Checklin, 2015; Taylor, 1996). First and foremost, teachers need phonological training in pronunciation in general and some may need convincing that pronunciation needs to be taught at all. While Yoshida (2016) notes that today’s L2 teachers realize that nonnative English learners need instruction in the suprasegmentals, Burns (2006) ascertained that many teachers remain unconvinced of the salience of teaching pronunciation, and some have residual issues from the days when advocates of Communicative Language Teaching did not embrace pronunciation teaching. This disparity suggests to me that cognitions about pronunciation’s importance may still be questioned by teachers not schooled in modern research.

Whatever their cognitions might be, language teachers as a whole have had insufficient training in the domain of pronunciation teaching, including the suprasegmentals (Saito, 2012; Foote, Holtby & Derwing, 2011). In response, such training can be implemented on several levels: 1) at university levels when new instructors seek their pre-service teaching credentials, and 2) following credentialing during in-service professional development workshops and conferences. In her 2009 text, *Utopian Goals for Pronunciation Teaching*, Derwing notes that there is a definite need for more pronunciation courses for ESL teachers. In Canada, for instance, there are very few teaching programs in English as a second language that offer a full course in teaching pronunciation. Recent surveys of pronunciation classes in teaching programs in the United States have confirmed that in the American context as well (Murphy, 2014).

I noted earlier in this chapter that many educators had not previously been trained sufficiently (i.e., without adequate L2 acquisition theory and research); their comfort levels were low when it came to teaching second language pronunciation. While many of the most recent generation of L2 English teachers have been trained with instructional materials informed by empirical research plus practitioner anecdote, significant inconsistencies between what they have learned and what/how they teach are evident. Murphy (2014) analyzed the research conclusions on teacher cognitions about pronunciation instruction. Figure 1 summarizes twelve themes Murphy distilled from the research studies he analyzed.

Theme	Studies Reporting the Theme
1. Teachers feel underprepared to teach pronunciation.	Akram (2010); Baker (2011a); Bradford & Kenworthy (1991); Breitzkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter (2001); Burgess & Spencer (2000); Burns (2006); Deng et al. (2009); Foote, Holtby, & Derwing (2011); Macdonald (2002); Walker (1999)
2. Teachers believe more training in teaching pronunciation is needed.	Akram (2010); Baker (2011a); Bradford and Kenworthy (1991); Breitzkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter (2001); Burns (2006); Foote, Holtby, & Derwing (2011); Macdonald (2002); Murphy (1997)
3. Few teacher training programs offer a full course dedicated to how to teach pronunciation.	Baker (2011a); Breitzkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter (2001); Burgess & Spencer (2000); Deng et al. (2009); Foote, Holtby, & Derwing (2011); Murphy (1997)
4. Stronger ESL pronunciation curricula are needed.	Akram (2010); Breitzkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter (2001); Burns (2006); Foote, Holtby, & Derwing (2011); Macdonald (2002)
5. Teacher preparation programs are faulted for lacking a pedagogical focus in the phonology-related courses they offer.	Breitzkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter (2001); Bradford & Kenworthy (1991); Foote, Holtby, & Derwing (2011); Murphy (1997)
6. Professional training usually consists of a phonology component within a more general linguistics course.	Bradford & Kenworthy (1991); Burgess & Spencer (2000); Foote, Holtby, & Derwing (2011); Murphy (1997)
7. Teachers do not like (or are reluctant) to teach pronunciation.	Breitzkreutz et al. (2001); Macdonald (2002); Walker (1999)
8. Teachers lack confidence in teaching suprasegmentals.	Burgess & Spencer (2000); Burns (2006); Foote, Holtby, & Derwing (2011)
9. Teachers tend to teach in the ways they themselves were taught.	Baker (2011a); Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010)
10. High-quality teacher preparation can have a positive impact on how teachers teach.	Baker (2011a); Burgess & Spencer (2000)
11. Both declarative knowledge about phonology and experiential knowledge about how to teach pronunciation play important roles in the development of pronunciation teachers.	Baker (2011a)
12. Other potentially positive impacts are collaborations with colleagues, textbooks, and teaching experience.	Baker (2011a)

Figure 1 Research Study Themes (Murphy 2014)

Clearly, even teachers most recently in pre-service programs need additional training to teach pronunciation with confidence. Teacher confidence is low in applying prosodic features to their instruction, as Couper (2017) discovered in the New Zealand context. In a Canadian context, a research study by Foote, Trofimovich, Collins and Soler Urzua (2016) demonstrated that experienced teachers spent just one tenth of their teaching-related episodes on pronunciation and most episodes were in the form of corrective error feedback and not practices integrated into the lesson plan. Their research indicated that teachers believe they focus on pronunciation more than they actually do. Foote, Holtby & Derwing (2011) also observed extreme variation as to how much time teachers spend on teaching pronunciation in their classes.

Another factor that may impact pronunciation instructors today is that most of the pronunciation techniques that had been popularized up until the late 1970s were rejected and described as incompatible with Communicative Language Teaching (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010). Although many of those techniques focused on segmentals and not with prosodic features, teachers need more guidance in the specific area of word stress as they incorporate this pronunciation feature into their multi-skills classes. They also need comprehension regarding how to incorporate the form-focused nature of pronunciation into practicable communicative contexts.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored the literature which helps answer my question as to what needs to be included in a curriculum that teaches word stress to adult English language learners. This curriculum was developed specifically for a class of high beginner/low

intermediate learners upon the recognition that low-level learners need pronunciation instruction (Zielinski & Yates, 2014). I started with a discussion about the state of pronunciation pedagogy and research in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I followed that discussion with a presentation of two poles in pronunciation pedagogy ideology: the nativeness and intelligibility principles. Next, I conveyed my thoughts and research regarding students' interests in how accented their speech 'should' be and some societal impacts that native listeners of English tend to apply to non-native speakers. I also presented the literature on how we should prioritize instruction between segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation with an understanding that as a prosodic feature word stress needs to be prioritized in ESL classrooms because it is a globally challenging feature for English language learners. To make the case that word stress needs to be a priority in pronunciation instruction, I reviewed several ways rules can be applied in word stress with some regularity and thus be teachable and practicable. Finally, I provided some discussion on the pedagogical implications of teaching pronunciation and word stress in particular.

In Chapter 3 I will describe my methodology for creating a curricular resource for the instruction of word stress to adult English language learners at the high beginning and low intermediate levels.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The primary question I am answering for this capstone project is the following: What materials should go into a curricular resource for teaching word stress of North American English to adult English language learners at the high beginner/low intermediate levels? From my research as described in Chapter Two, we now know that pronunciation can be taught with successful results of improved intelligibility for English language learners. We also know word stress is an imperative element in the pronunciation construct. Third, we know word stress rules are available to convey vis-à-vis a form-focused approach. With this understanding, I can envision a curriculum to address word stress and derive activities to support acquisition of this essential pronunciation feature. In this chapter, I describe the curriculum's audience and setting, set forth the principles and approaches that will engender a viable series, and specifically describe how I develop the curriculum.

#### **Rationale**

Since word stress is a highly characteristic feature of NAE pronunciation, it makes sense to provide instruction to learners as to its nature and begin the process of revealing what makes word stress so important for the intelligibility of nonnative speakers of an American variety of English. Beyond the educational purpose of ensuring

students understand the complexities of word stress, students also need opportunities to experience proper word stress in communicative activities of different levels so that they develop better pronunciation skills. As syllables are a critical part of teaching word stress, the teaching of syllable division is critical in advance of teaching word stress features. A carefully constructed curriculum following well-conceived principles and approaches is also essential and intentional in its development so that the curriculum developed in Chapter Four demonstrates solid objectives and lays out activities to support learner acquisition of more intelligible NAE pronunciation.

### **Audience and Setting**

The audience for this curriculum is adult English language learners at the high beginning/low intermediate levels. Learners could be enrolled in 1) an English as a Second Language class at the high beginning or low intermediate level or 2) enrolled in a stand-alone pronunciation course. This resource is also accessible to teachers of multi-skills ESL classes who could utilize these resources effectively with their adult students above the low intermediate level with some adjustment to the vocabulary presented. Consistent student attendance is necessary to achieve program objectives since lesson objectives are cumulative.

### **Approach**

I have approached the development of this curriculum as a series of two lessons that total of four to five hours of instruction plus suggested extension activities. I envision the structure of the lessons to be sequential. The series should follow lessons on consonants and vowel sounds. It should precede lessons on sentence rhythm and intonation.



Both lessons in the curriculum have pronunciation objectives with a lesson plan and activities aimed at high beginner and low intermediate learners. It includes discussion of information to be presented, rules discovery, listening discrimination, and skills development with controlled, guided and free activities. (More about activity types can be found further in this chapter.) The lessons are designed with activity descriptions, activity directions, handouts, worksheets and language for the instructor to use in the classroom included.

### **Rules Discovery**

We know from the literature review that the rules governing word stress cannot be perfectly applied although there are generalizations that can help guide students toward accurate pronunciation. We also know that noticing is key to learning and repetition is a significant contributor toward second language pronunciation acquisition (Schmidt, 1995; Isaacs, 2009). Moreover, in the pronunciation research noted in Chapter Two, participants made significant progress toward improved intelligibility when focusing on form. Rather than the teacher simply conveying word stress rules and generalizations, I have designed the curriculum so that learners take a deductive approach; they assign patterns to word stress generalizations. Such rules discovery has been used with success in courses utilized with *Well Said: Advanced English Pronunciation* and developed by Linda Grant (1993) and for other form-focused domains of language. (cf Ellis (2008) for more on rules discovery in grammar study and second language acquisition.)

### **Pronunciation Teaching Framework**

Celce-Murcia, et al., (2010) describe a five-stage framework for teaching pronunciation that I will follow for two lessons combined. It should be noted that

students may well move from one stage to a second stage and back again to a previous stage if reinforcement and additional practice at a certain level is required. Also, syllable identification and word stress are fully integrated concepts that require reinforcement throughout the two lessons.

In the first lesson, students will be exposed to syllable division as it is an essential component of teaching word stress. Students will first analyze written and oral language themselves to understand syllable division and which will be reinforced by the instructor. In the second lesson, students will engage in word stress analysis. Celce-Murcia, et al. (2010), call this stage *Description and Analysis*.

Celce-Murcia, et al., (2010) refer to the second stage *Listening Discrimination* which involves “focused listening practice with feedback on learners’ ability to correctly discriminate the feature” (p. 44). Focused listening tasks involve teacher-led aural/oral activities. Written activities accompany listening discrimination tasks as well, such as dividing syllables, counting them and indicating which syllable receives primary stress through a written code (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010). Zielinski and Yates (2014) add the term *awareness* to this stage of development and comment that students may be identifying how the feature may be different in the learners’ native language. (I provide explicit description of this feature in the first stage of the curriculum. Reinforcement of this fact could well be provided further in the second stage.) Given that my approach is deductive, rules discovery takes place following this phase.

*Controlled Practice* is the third phase in the Celce-Murcia, et al., (2010) construct and involves aural/oral drills, among other aural/oral practice activities. These activities can be repetitive, and require learners to attend to form rather than fluency. Parrish

(2004) reminds us that controlled practice activities should still be meaningful. (I utilize a chain activity that has been suggested in several forms by Parrish (2004), Celce-Murcia, et al., (2010) and Yates and Zielinski (2009), et al.) Zielinski and Yates (2014) suggest that this phase is the one in which students will practice stress of particular words at the word level.

*Guided Practice* involves “structured communication exercises...that enable the learner to monitor for the specified feature” (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010, p. 45). In effect, students are focusing on both form and fluency in guided activities. Guided activities are sometimes also referred to as semi-controlled activities.

Celce-Murcia, et al., (2010) conclude the five stages with *Communicative Practice* which involves activities that also focus on fluency in a variety of contexts. Students are expected to focus on what they learned regarding the rules and generalizations governing the word stress feature as well as on content to be conveyed to their interlocutors. Zielinski and Yates (2014) name this stage *extension*. (I prefer to name related coursework outside of class as “extension activities”.)

### **Communicative Language Teaching**

As noted in Chapter Two, Communicative Language Teaching is the approach practitioners in the English language teaching community have ascribed to our current era. However, pedagogically, educators and researchers agree it has evolved to include the salience of teaching pronunciation again. Naiman (1992) noted some specific aspects of communicative language teaching that should be present in a pronunciation course. I will incorporate those areas into my curriculum for my lessons which focus on word stress in particular. They are listed verbatim below from page 165 of his text:

1. meaningful practice beyond the word level
2. task orientation of classroom activities
3. development of strategies for learning beyond the classroom
4. peer correction and group work
5. student-centered classroom

### **Activity Sources**

Texts that consist of collections of pronunciation activities that I have explored for the curriculum and that reinforce the teaching of word stress include M. Hancock's Pronunciation Games (1995) and M. Hewings' Pronunciation Practice Activities (2004). Other resources I have consulted include Celce-Murcia, et al., Teaching Pronunciation (2010), B. Parrish, Teaching Adult ESL: A Practical Introduction (2004) and P. Avery and S. Ehlich, Teaching American English Pronunciation (1992).

I have also developed my own game, Let's Talk, which I will use as a communicative activity. Let's Talk is a simple board game that uses question cards and dice to move pawns around a track and towards a finish line. I have written original question cards using the targeted lexical items and word stress patterns to facilitate communicative practice in a competitive game environment. A full presentation of the game is included in Chapter Four.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have revealed the methodology I used to create a curriculum for teaching NAE word stress to adult English language learners. For high beginner/low intermediate learners, the curriculum seeks to improve the intelligibility of my learners by using a rules discovery technique and communicative language approaches. The

stages I follow also include description and analysis of the syllable and word stress features, listening discrimination, controlled practice, guided practice and communicative practice. I have listed the primary sources which I explored to draw meaningful activities and enhance them to fit the context of the lessons. In addition, I utilize my own resources which are tailored for the purpose of teaching word stress.

In the next chapter I will reveal the fully designed curriculum with lesson objectives, fully annotated lesson activities with directions, worksheets, handouts, and other supporting documentation.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**CURRICULAR RESOURCE**

**CURRICULAR RESOURCE FOR TEACHING WORD STRESS  
TO HIGH BEGINNER AND LOW INTERMEDIATE  
ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

<p><b>TOPIC</b> Word stress</p>
<p><b>LANGUAGE DOMAINS TARGETED</b> Speaking /Listening</p>
<p><b>PRONUNCIATION OBJECTIVES</b> At the end of these lessons, students will be able to: count and identify syllables demonstrate understanding that multisyllabic words require word stress / word stress is not optional recognize common syllable stress patterns for two syllable nouns, two syllable verbs and compound nouns apply North American English stress patterns to two targeted vocabulary sets</p>
<p><b>NUMBER OF LESSONS</b> 2</p>
<p><b>ESTIMATED TIME</b> 4-5 hours over two days</p>
<p><b>TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION</b> cell phones, document camera</p>
<p><b>OVERVIEW</b> The primary goal of this curricular module is to bring to student attention that word stress is a fundamental feature of English pronunciation and that the application of this feature is essential to understandable speech. Students will begin using word stress consciously when using selected target vocabulary. They will also become aware of three generalizations vis-à-vis word stress which will be discussed below and that can be applied in other contexts. The overarching benefit of applying a lesson on word stress is the immediate impact it can have on intelligibility. It is for this reason that it is recommended to begin instruction in pronunciation from the beginning levels.</p> <p>The two lessons in this module are to be taught sequentially with both focusing on syllable identification and word stress. The first lesson begins with vocabulary that is likely familiar to many students (fruit). The second lesson utilizes a vocabulary set related to cleaning. Both lessons can easily be adapted to other vocabulary sets and can be expanded for larger class sizes.</p>

One of the highlights of this curricular resource is the rules discovery process. Students are not given the generalizations about word stress directly but rather discover them following analysis and listening discrimination activities. Other features of this resource include lesson plans that follow research-based instructional approaches and a Communicative Language Teaching framework that engages students beyond the word level in individual, whole class and small group configurations.

Language that can be used by the instructor to introduce concepts and activities to learners is printed in a **red font**.

**LEARNING LEVEL**

High beginner / Low intermediate



## LESSON PLAN ONE

<b>Lesson Length: 2-2 1/2 hours</b>	
<b>PRONUNCIATION OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• count and identify syllables</li> <li>• demonstrate understanding that multisyllabic words require word stress/word stress is not optional</li> <li>• recognize common syllable stress patterns for two syllable nouns and compound nouns</li> <li>• apply North American English stress patterns to vocabulary set</li> </ul>
<b>VOCABULARY SET</b>	<p>pear, peach, lime, grape, mango, apple, grapefruit, lemon, guava, orange, banana, coconut, blueberry, pineapple, strawberry, blackberry, papaya, watermelon, kiwi</p> <p>To expand the resource for more than 18 students, it is recommended to add another food vocabulary set, e.g., vegetables.</p>
<p><b>MATERIALS NEEDED</b></p> <p><b>Activity A:</b> Flashcards of fruit (attached)</p> <p><b>Activity B:</b> Completed fruit word sort (attached)</p> <p><b>Activity C:</b> Inverted triangle pyramid worksheet (attached)</p> <p>Individual white boards and a dry erase marker for each student</p> <p>Recording devices (ideally student cell phones with recorder application)</p>	
<p><b>ACTIVITY OUTLINE</b></p> <p>Warm Up Activity – 10-15 min</p> <p>Presentation on Identifying Syllables – 3-5 min</p> <p>Controlled Activity on Syllables – 30 min</p> <p>Presentation of Word Stress – 5 min</p> <p>Nonsense Listening Discrimination – 10-15 min</p> <p>Listening Discrimination of Target Vocabulary – 25 min</p> <p>Rules Discovery – 5-10 min</p> <p>Teacher-Led Activity Preparation – 15 min</p> <p>Individual Controlled Activity (Technology Integration) – 15 min</p> <p>Guided Activity – 15-20 min</p> <p>Suggested Extension Activities</p>	

**Warm-Up Activity (10-15 min):**

Have students brainstorm all the fruits the students can think of in English. You will need this list later so be sure to save it. Use flashcards (Activity A) to introduce any of the following fruits the students do not know in English: banana, lemon, apple, grapefruit, guava, pear, lime, orange, papaya, pineapple, mango, blackberry, strawberry, blueberry, watermelon, coconut, peach, grape, kiwi. You may add to the master list any other fruits the students brainstormed. Write the fruits added to the list on individual notecards or as word slips to use with flashcards later.

**Presentation of New Material on Syllables (3-5 min):**

**Preparation:** 1) Write “syllable” on board. 2) Hand out all flashcards and/or slips of paper with one fruit picture or name to each student. Some students may receive more than one fruit depending on the size of the class 3) Draw a 4-column organizer on the whiteboard with *fruit* as the heading. Label each column with *1 syllable*, *2 syllables*, *3 syllables* and *4 syllables*.

A syllable is a way to divide a word and help pronounce it correctly. Each syllable has only one vowel sound. Let's look at the word *fruit*. Fruit has one syllable because the u and i together make the sound /u/. One syllable has one vowel sound. Demonstrate by clapping one syllable. Which other fruits have just one syllable in English?

**Whole Class Controlled Activity (30 min):**

Look at your word slip/flashcard. Does it have one syllable or more than one syllable? You may talk to a partner to make your decision. Students with the following fruits should name the fruit on their word slip: pear, lime, peach, grape. Prompt students as necessary to all clap together and say the fruit name at the same time. Students with the one-syllable words write the name of their fruit in the first column (1 syllable) of the organizer on the board.

Here is the vocabulary list of two, three and four syllable words: mango, apple, grapefruit, lemon, guava, orange, banana, coconut, blueberry, pineapple, strawberry, blackberry, papaya, watermelon, kiwi

Many English words have two or more syllables. With a partner, discuss how many syllables you think are in your words. Clap out the syllables. Allow time for students to confer with a classmate. Let's sort the rest of the fruit into one of the four columns. In the first column we have words with one syllable.... Go around the room asking individual students to report how many syllables are in their word. Have students clap to find syllables. If students are not clapping or getting the correct answer, have students put a hand under their chin (touching it) and say the word. Each time the jaw moves the hand, the student is saying one syllable. Finish filling out the 4-column chart by inviting each student to write his/her fruit in the correct column. Add to the organizer any fruits added during the brainstorm. Be sure to save this completed organizer to use later in the lesson. Collect the flash cards and word slips that were made during the initial brainstorm.

**Presentation on Word Stress/Nonsense Discrimination (15-20 min):**

Write *word stress* on the board. All English words with two or more syllables have one syllable that is stronger than the others. That pattern is called word stress. In English, we *always* give one syllable more strength than the others. Word stress is very, very important. A stressed syllable is louder, and its vowel sound is longer and may be a little higher.

The following activity is a chance for students to recognize word stress for the first time in this lesson. The teacher will read the first pair of two syllable nonsense words and apply word stress to the syllable that is capitalized. Students should listen for the louder and longer vowels. As you continue with the list, allow students ample time to hear the differences or sameness between the two nonsense words. You may need to repeat the combination of two words multiple times. Listen. I'm going to say two things. Are they the same or are they different? Raise your hand when you decide.

In a second round, have students listen to each nonsense word and decide which syllable is stressed. Be sure to make the jaw move for each syllable. Listen to this word. Decide if the first syllable is stronger or weaker than the second syllable. If the first syllable is stronger, show one finger. If the second syllable is stronger, show two fingers. Wait for multiple students to raise their hand and show one or two fingers before giving the class the answer. Continue with the remaining nonsense words. (basic activity idea from *Teaching Pronunciation* by Celce-Murcia, et al., 2010)

- |             |          |
|-------------|----------|
| 1. la LA    | LA la    |
| 2. LA la    | la LA    |
| 3. la LA la | LA la la |
| 4. ME me    | me ME    |
| 5. ME me    | me ME    |
| 6. me ME    | ME me    |
| 7. CO co    | co CO    |

**Extension activity – Presentation of Language-Specific Word Stress**

Compare and contrast English word stress with your learners' languages. Some languages employ word stress and some do not. One way to do so is to listen to your learners pronounce their name and the name of their country. You could also ask them how to pronounce *America* for contrast.

**Listening Discrimination of Nouns/Compound Nouns (25 min):**

Now let's listen to the word *banana*. How many syllables are in *banana*? Let's clap. Which syllable sounds the strongest or longest? Repeat, saying *banana* multiple times. Listen especially to the vowel sounds. Now I'm going to give you the word stress incorrectly two times plus the correct stress. Only one pattern is correct. 'BA na na. ba 'NA na. ba na 'NA. Which word has the stress on the correct syllable? Raise your hand when you know which syllable is strongest. Allow students time to consider their

answers. Call on one student for their answer after several students have raised their hands. Have classmates agree or disagree. Repeat pronunciation sequence again if students get the incorrect answer.

Pass out an individual white board and dry erase marker to each student. **Now listen to the following word and spell it on your white board. Look on the board in front and see how the word is divided into syllables. Now, listen to my pronunciation of the word and decide which syllable gets the stress. Write a filled circle above the stressed syllable on your white board. Hold up your board and show me your answer after you have drawn the circle.**

Pronounce the target vocabulary in the order it is written on the class whiteboard starting with the two-syllable column and progressing to the third and fourth columns so that students can find the spelling of each fruit easily. The target vocabulary includes banana, lemon, apple, grapefruit, guava, kiwi, orange, papaya, pineapple, mango, blackberry, strawberry, blueberry, watermelon, and coconut and add the fruits that were brainstormed by the students from the beginning activity.

The teacher should pronounce a fruit name correctly 2-4 times first. Then, the teacher can alternately exaggerate the stress on both the correct or incorrect syllables, e.g., ‘O range or o ‘RANGE. The teacher will go to the saved organizer from the original syllable sort activity which is drawn on the board. She draws a filled circle above the syllable that is stressed. See Activity B below for the completed organizer (Fruit Word Sort).

### **Hand out Completed Fruit Word Sort**

#### **Rules Discovery- Nouns (5-10 min):**

It is true that most two syllable nouns have the stress on the first syllable 90% of the time. Also, stress is usually closer to the beginning of the word than the end. Notice in the following compounds, strawberry, blueberry, blackberry, pineapple, and watermelon, the primary stress is on the first noun AND the first syllable. Although this is not always true, e.g. *policeman*, the generalization is helpful to students.

As a beginning introduction to the two-syllable noun stress rule, have students explore the organizer. Ask them to notice which syllable gets stressed most often for nouns with two syllables.

**Break in learning (15 min):** Choose one of the following methods to record vocabulary onto student cell phones: 1) Teacher collects student cell phones and makes mass recordings of the fruit vocabulary in groups of five cell phones at a time. After pressing *record* on each of the five cell phones, the teacher pronounces the name of a fruit, waits for four seconds, and then repeats the fruit again. The teacher waits again for four seconds and speaks next vocabulary word, continuing until all vocabulary words are recorded. Teacher continues, saves recordings and repeats the process until all student phones have recordings of the target vocabulary. Return

phones to the students. 2) Alternate recording method: if the teacher has a phone list or What's App, she could simply record the message once and text it to the whole class at one time.

### **Pronouncing Word Stress (15 min):**

Students use their cell phones for this activity with the recording of the vocabulary words on each phone. **Take out your phone. Find the voice recorder and the recording I just made (or sent you) of the fruit vocabulary. Play the recording and listen to each word as I have pronounced it. Listen particularly for the stressed syllable. Repeat the word after you hear it. Then, listen to my recording again. Wait to hear the next vocabulary word. Listen and say that fruit.** Students can work in pairs and listen to each other's pronunciation. Teacher mingles. Have students put away their cell phones once this activity is complete. They may use the recordings as an extension activity after class.

### **Guided Practice (15-20 min):**

Play Chain Game. Teacher passes out flashcards of fruits, one to each student. Teacher models the activity by holding up her flashcard (banana) and saying: **Let's make a fruit salad. I'm going to the grocery store and buying bananas.** Model with some exaggerated stress and encourage students to make stressed syllables a little stronger. Encourage students to open their hand on the stressed syllable. The next student repeats the first line and adds the name of the fruit on his flashcard (grapes). The following student repeats and adds to the sentence: *I'm going to the grocery store and buying bananas, grapes and peaches.* Continue until all flashcards have been used in the chain. Optional: Do second round without displaying flashcards, relying on student memory. Accuracy is important: correct students' pronunciation as needed.

### **Suggested Extension Activities**

1. Students are challenged to brainstorm items (minimum 10 items) in their home or grocery store that have two or more syllables. Ask students to use the inverted pronunciation triangle (Activity C) to record the items and divide each word into syllables.
2. Students record the fruit vocabulary on their phones five times and email it to the instructor.

ACTIVITY A



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ACTIVITY A



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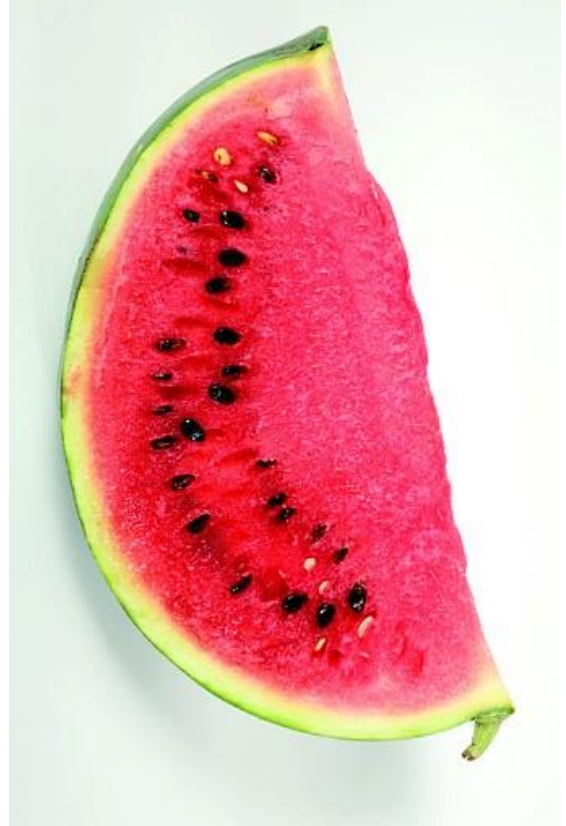
ACTIVITY A



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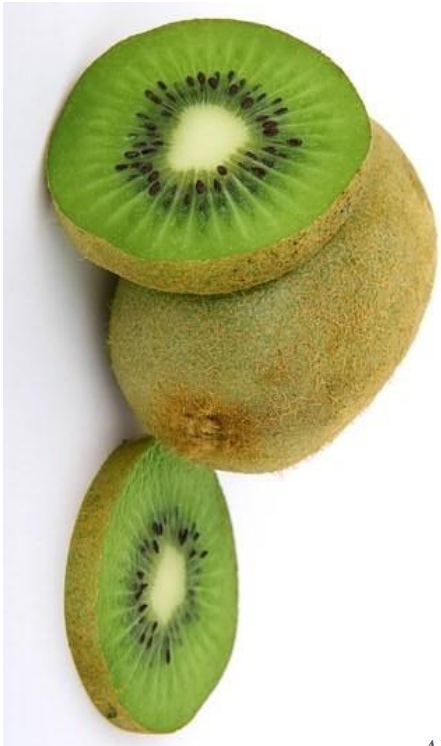
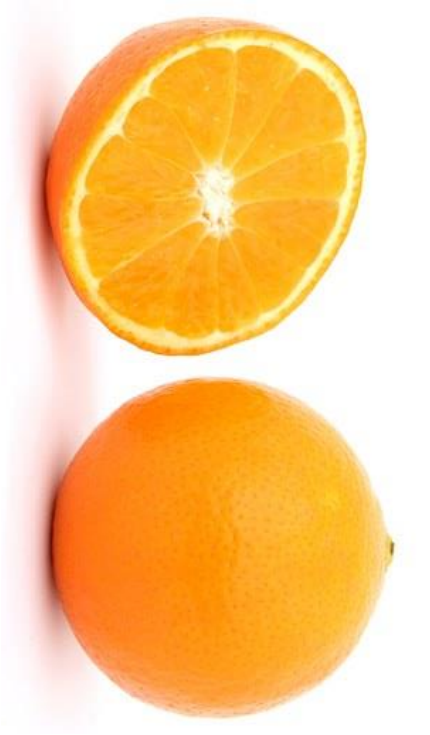


ACTIVITY A



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ACTIVITY A



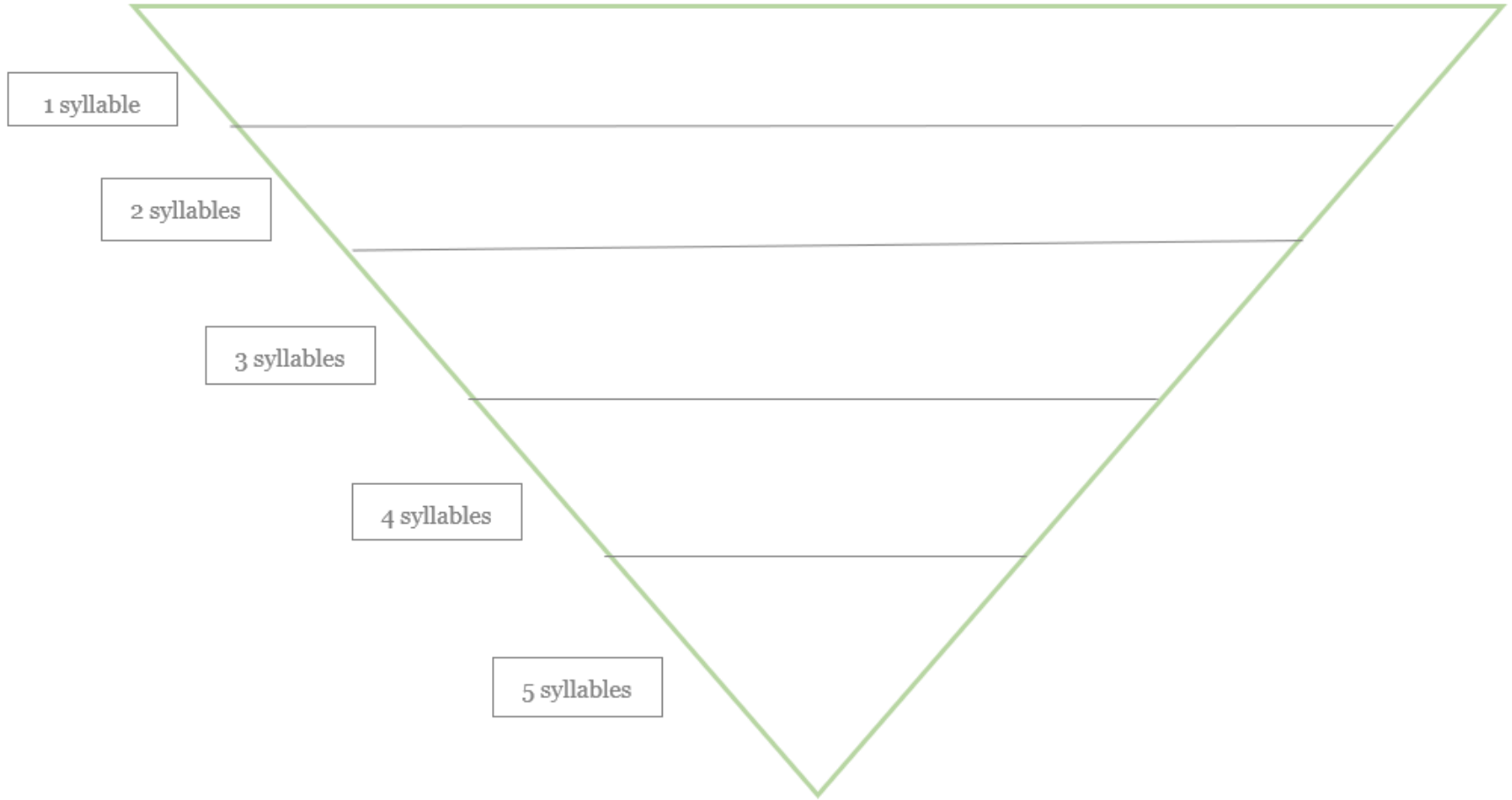
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## ACTIVITY B

Fruit Syllable Sort			
1 syllable	2 syllables	3 syllables	4 syllables
pear	● o/range	● pa/pa/ya	● wa/ter/mel/on
peach	● gua/va	● ba/na/na	
grape	● le /mon	● co/co/nut	
lime	● grape/fruit	● blue/ber/ry	
	● ap/ple	● pine/ap/ple	
	● man/go	● straw/ber/ry	
	● ki/wi	● black/ber/ry	

# ACTIVITY C

## PRONUNCIATION PYRAMID



Adapted by Ellen Clore-Patron  
Original by Gray 2001 ([www.soundsofenglish.org](http://www.soundsofenglish.org))

## Lesson Plan Two

<b>TOPIC</b> Word Stress	
<b>LANGUAGE DOMAINS</b> Listening / Speaking	<b>LESSON LENGTH</b> 2 – 2.5 hours
<b>PRONUNCIATION OBJECTIVES</b> Students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• count and identify syllables</li> <li>• demonstrate understanding that multisyllabic words require word stress/word stress is not optional</li> <li>• recognize common syllable stress patterns for two syllable nouns, two two syllable verbs, compound nouns</li> <li>• apply North American English stress patterns</li> </ul>	
<b>TARGET VOCABULARY</b> Verbs: begin, arrive, complete, forget, select, repeat, receive, sweep, mop, vacuum, empty, organize  Nouns: offices, kitchen, lobby, hallway, reception, doorway, closet, cubicles, mistake, cleaning, counter, mirror, manager, garbage can, window blinds, recycling, detergent, computer, umbrella, broom, mop, gloves, sponge, chair, desk, dust, dust pan, scrub brushes, bookcases  Adjectives: dirty, dusty	
<b>MATERIALS NEEDED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium rubber bands (one for each student plus extras in case of breakage)</li> <li>• Activity D: Cleaning Word Sort (attached)</li> <li>• Activity E: Office/cleaning vocabulary (attached)</li> <li>• Activity F: Playing cards with office /cleaning vocabulary (attached)</li> <li>• Activity G: Let’s Talk Game board (attached)</li> <li>• Activity H: Questions cards (24); one set for each team of 4-5 players each (questions attached)</li> <li>• To be gathered prior to class: unique items that can be used as pawns (multi-colored beads work well), 1 die for each team of 4-5 students</li> </ul>	

**ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW**

- Warm up – 15 min
- Listening Discrimination – 20 min
- Rules Discovery – 10 min
- Controlled Practice with Rubber Bands – 15 min
- Stress Moves – 20 min
- Sentence Chains – 15 min
- Stress Snap Game – 30 min
- Let's Talk – 30 min
- Suggested Extension Activities

**Warm Up Tongue Twister (15 min):**

Write the following tongue twister on the board: *Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers*. **Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers. In this tongue twister stress is on the first syllable in each word. Let's practice the tongue twister altogether three times. Practice. Now, stand up and find a partner to practice with. Allow 5 minutes for practice. Please be seated. Who thinks they can say the tongue twister correctly with word stress on the first syllable of each 'P' word? Are there any volunteers? Have all students who think they can recite the tongue twister stand. Individually volunteers recite it. Please be seated.**

**Listening Discrimination of Nouns and Verbs (20 min):**

Pass out the Cleaning Vocabulary Word Sort (Activity D). Each column has a different number of syllables or the stressed syllable is in a different position. The first column has two syllables and the first syllable will be stressed. In the second column, the stress will be on the second syllable. In the third column, words will be recorded with three syllables where the first syllable has the most stress. The fourth column is for words with three syllables and where the word stress is on the second syllable.

**I'm going to say a word that belongs in one of these four columns. Together we will decide how many syllables are in the word. You may call out the answer. Then I will pronounce the word with the correct word stress. Raise your hand when you know which syllable gets the stress.**

kitchen, select, reception, offices, recycling, repeat, vacuum, empty, closet, complete, arrive, cubicles, doorway, hallway, begin, lobby, forget, computer

Say each vocabulary word with correct word stress 2-4 times. Then, alternatively exaggerate the stress on both the correct or incorrect syllables, e.g., 'OF fice or of 'FICE to help the students recognize the appropriate word stress. Repeat with remaining vocabulary words in order listed above.

**Rules Discovery (10 min):**

Divide the class into groups of three and write the following questions on the board. How many of the two syllable words are nouns? How many two syllable words are verbs? Do you see any patterns? Which words are compound words? Where is the word stress for those two words? **In your group, I want you to read through the list of words in each column and answer these questions.**

They should notice that the verbs are often stressed on the second syllable. Be sure to highlight that this is not always true. For example, the action verbs empty and vacuum, are stressed on the first syllable. Vacuum can be a noun or a verb. Empty can be a verb or adjective. Students may notice that the three-syllable words are not stressed on the last syllable. Few words with more than two syllables are stressed on the last syllable.

**Controlled Kinesthetic Practice - nouns and verbs (15 min):**

Nouns: offices, kitchen, lobby, hallway, reception, doorway, closet, cubicles,

Verbs: begin, arrive, complete, forget, select, repeat, empty, vacuum.

This kinesthetic activity is used with medium-sized rubber bands. Distribute one rubber band to each student. The objective is to have students exaggerate word stress by stretching the rubber bands on the stressed syllable and listening to how the vowel sound is elongated. Students should release the tension of the rubber band on unstressed syllables. Go through the list of 2-3 syllable nouns separately from the verbs.

Watch me as I say the word *office* which has two syllables. The word stress is on the first syllable, so I'm stretching the rubber band on the first syllable. For the second syllable I relax the rubber band. Now you try it. *Office*. Stretch the rubber band on the first syllable and relax it on the second syllable. Good. Now the next word on our list is *kitchen*. Is it stressed on the first or second syllable? That's right. The first syllable. So, we stretch the rubber band on the first syllable and relax it in on the second syllable. Continue similarly through the list of 2-3 syllable nouns. Do you remember that most two syllable nouns have their stress on the first syllable? Watch as I go through the list of two syllable nouns. Teacher recites the list of two syllable nouns and stretches the rubber band on the first syllable for each. Now let's stretch out the word stress together.

Two of the nouns in this list are compound nouns (*hallway* and *doorway*). Compound words are made of two nouns together. Both of these compound nouns have their stress on the first word in the compound. The stress is never on the last word in the compound.

Now let's go through the list of verbs like we did with the nouns. *Begin* is the first verb in our list. How many syllables does it have? Which syllable gets the stress? That's right. The second syllable. So, we keep the rubber band relaxed as we say the first syllable and stretch it as we say the last syllable. *be GIN*. The teacher continues reciting the list of verbs, asking for the number of syllables and then stretching the rubber band on the stressed syllable and relaxing on the unstressed syllables.

Notice that most of the verbs are stressed on the second syllable but NOT ALL of them. *Vacuum* and *empty* can both be verbs but they are stressed on the first syllable. If you have to guess how to pronounce a verb, a good guess is that the word stress may be on the second syllable. Here's a suggestion: If you guess the stress and the person you are speaking with does not understand you, try putting the stress on the first syllable instead. Sometimes that helps make your pronunciation clearer.

### **Stress Moves (20 min):**

(adapted from Stress Moves in Pronunciation Games) -

Preparation: print the 24 words on index cards. (See Activity E for the list of words.)

- 1) Let's decide together on some "stress moves" and practice them. A stress move is a movement that you make on a stressed or unstressed syllable. For example, we once made a clenched fist on an unstressed syllable and opened the hand for a stressed syllable. We could also clap hands, bang the table or stomp a foot. Which would



- you like to do for the next activity? The class decides together on the stress moves for both stressed and unstressed syllables.
- 2) Let's divide into small groups. You three together, you three, etc....
  - 3) Circulate among the groups. Pass out vocabulary words on index cards. Here are three (or four) vocabulary words. I want you to count the syllables first and then decide which syllable is stressed. Write down the number of syllables for each word and their stress pattern.
  - 4) Allow groups to work independently for five minutes. Then, circulate and check group work. While teacher is mingling, have finished teams practice their stress moves as a group.
  - 5) First, Team One (arbitrarily assigned), I want one of you to pronounce one of your words and then together demonstrate its stress moves. Everyone else will copy you. Okay. Let's hear one of your words. How many syllables are in it? Great. Now, let's see your stress moves. Team one demonstrates their pattern together. Now, let's have everyone else say the word and copy Team One's stress moves.
  - 6) Repeat until each team has demonstrated their stress moves for each vocabulary word.
  - 7) I'll collect your vocabulary cards but first tell me whether the word is a noun, compound noun or verb. There is also one adjective in this group of words. I'll put the nouns, verbs, compound nouns and adjective in their own piles. Collect cards as students name the part of speech. Let's notice again that all of our nouns EXCEPT one have stress on the first syllable. The three compound nouns have stress in the first word. How about the verbs? Some of them are stressed on the first syllable and some on the second syllable. Are there more verbs with stress on the first syllable or second syllable? Let's read through them together. Choral repetition. Great. Please be seated.

#### **Guided Practice (15 min):**

Now we are going to practice with the words we used with Stress Moves again.

Teacher passes out index cards randomly, one to each student. Here's how we practice. Each student is going to make a sentence using one of their words. Take a minute now to think of a sentence. You may write it down. Pause for 2 -3 minutes. Let's stand up in a circle. Student A is the first student to say his sentence. Student B to his left will continue and say his sentence. This is called going in a clockwise direction. We'll continue until all flashcards have been used like in a chain. Let's try it. Activity begins and continues until each student has spoken at least one sentence. Now we are going to do this again but this time Student B has to repeat Student A's sentence and then say his own sentence. Play ensues with all students taking their turn and repeating the previous speaker's sentence. Great job. Please be seated. Accuracy is important but secondary: encourage initial sentence fluency without correction. Collect the index cards.

#### **Guided Practice (25 min):**

**Play Stress Snap (Playing cards are available in Activity H.)**

(adapted from *Pronunciation Games* by Mark Hancock).

Now we are going to play a card game called Stress Snap. We will all play at the same time in pairs. I'm going to give each pair a set of cards. Your goal is to win more cards

than your opponent. Your opponent is the person you are playing the game with. I'll pair you up after we talk about how to play the game.

Draw a five-column organizer on the board and label it with filled and empty circles according to the stress patterns described next. Filled circles should be larger than the small circle. ● ◦ All of the playing cards fit into one of five stress patterns – just like the ones we've been working with today. The patterns are one syllable words; two syllable words with stress on the first syllable; or two syllable words with stress on the second syllable; three syllable words with the stress on the first syllable; or three syllable words with stress on the second syllable. Let's look at those patterns. In the game, your job is to match words with the same stress pattern. There are five patterns.

First think about words with one syllable. Can you name a few? Students call out words. If they cannot think of any one syllable words, suggest *mop* and *broom*. Let's write those on the board. Can you think of any others? They do not have to be cleaning words.

Let's do the same with two syllable words. What are some two-syllable words that have stress on the first syllable? Think about some of the nouns we have used today. Students may call out two syllable words. Ensure that they fit into the correct pattern. Students may need to count syllables again. How about two-syllable words with stress on the second syllable. You might think of some verbs we have used today. List at least two words from each pattern on the board.

Now, let's think about three-syllable words with stress on the first syllable. I can think of a few: *beautiful* and *company*. Three syllable words with stress on the second syllable include *computer* and *umbrella*. Can you think of any others? Encourage students to call out three syllable words that fit these two patterns. Write them on the board under the correct stress pattern.

One player will be the dealer. The dealer is the player who divides the playing cards evenly between the two players. Game directions: each player makes a pile in front of him with the cards face down. At the same time, each player turns over one card from the top of their piles into the center. Do not show the card to the opponent before it is turned over.

When one player notices that the stress pattern is the same on both cards, he covers the cards with one hand and says *Snap*. If the stress pattern is different, no one should say *Snap*. The winning player collects all the cards, including the matched set, that are on the center pile.

Model game play with a volunteer student until a player calls out *Snap* and matches a stress pattern.

Game directions: When someone makes a match, put all cards collected in a separate discard pile but do not play again from that pile. Players begin again by turning over

one card at a time from their piles. Mix the cards up and deal the cards in the center pile evenly again when the players run out of cards. The player who wins the most cards when all matches have been made wins the game. The teacher is the referee when opponents cannot agree on matching stress patterns. Model game play.

The teacher divides the students into pairs using whatever method she prefers and hands out a set of playing cards to each pair. Playing card are Activity F. It may save time to simply assign the dealer role at this point.

**Guided/Free Activity (30 min):**

Let's Talk (Clare-Patron, 2016) is a board game with dice and question cards that contain target vocabulary from the lesson. The teacher gives instructions and models game play.

You are going to play a game with three or four other players. The game will give you a chance to practice word stress with the vocabulary we have used in this lesson.

Start by choosing a colored game piece (pawn) and setting it on the START space. Decide who will go first.

Game instructions: Player 1 rolls a die and moves forward the number of spaces shown on the die. Then Player 1 takes a question card and reads it out loud. Player 1 answers the question in a complete sentence. If she lands on a space that gives instructions, she must follow those instructions before ending her turn. (For example, go back two spaces.) Play continues clockwise until someone reaches the finish line, allowed time expires or all players reach the finish line.

Model game play.

**Suggested Extension Activities**

- Teacher records target vocabulary set onto student cell phones and encourages after-class practice with students mimicking the teacher's pronunciation.
- "Word Stress" (on <http://www.roadtogrammar.com/wordstress/>) is an appropriate online quiz for low intermediate learners if the two-syllable word option is chosen. High beginners may be more challenged by the vocabulary set.

**Close by reviewing lesson objectives.**

**ACTIVITY D**

<b>Cleaning Vocabulary Word Sort</b>			
●○	○●	○●○	●○○
2 syllables	2 syllables	3 syllables	3 syllables

Directions: Sort the following words into the Cleaning Vocabulary Word Sort.

**Word Bank**  
 kitchen, select, reception, offices, cubicles, recycling, computer, repeat,  
 vacuum, empty, closet, complete, arrive, doorway, hallway, begin, lobby,  
 forget, organize

## ACTIVITY E

Directions: Increase font size and print each word on an index card or card stock.

**cleaning**

**mirror**

**umbrella**

**recycling**

**complete**

**arrive**

**detergent**

**mistake**

**select**

**reception**

**forget**

**garbage can**

**computer**

**begin**

**window blinds**

**dirty**

**hallway**

**manager**

**counter**

**offices**

**organize**

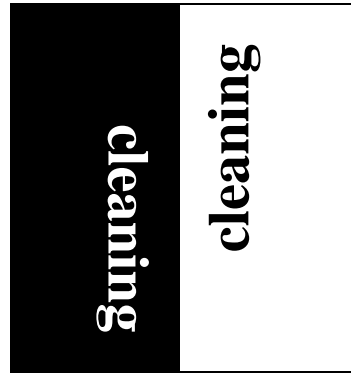
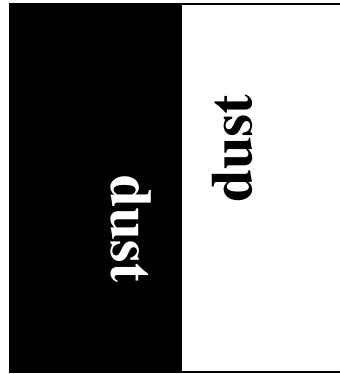
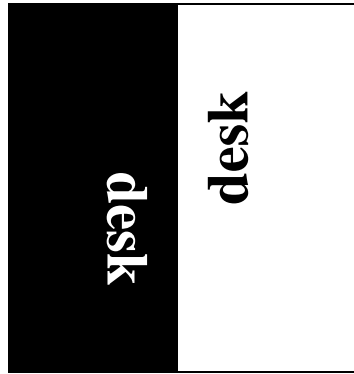
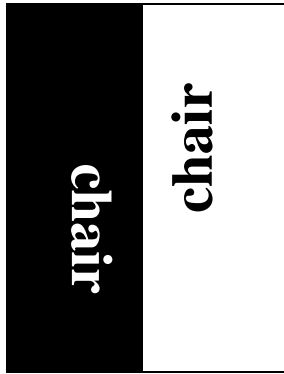
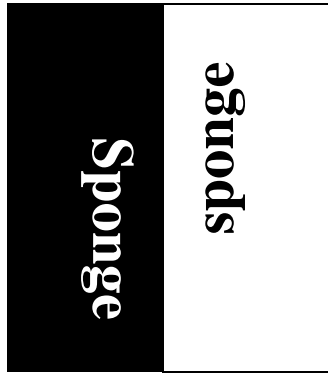
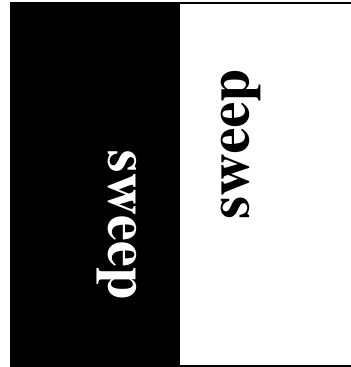
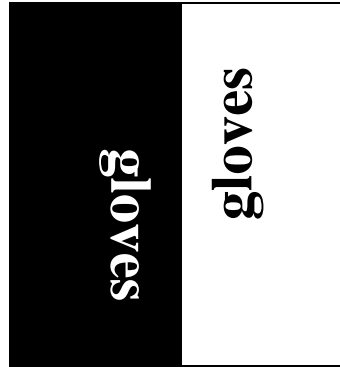
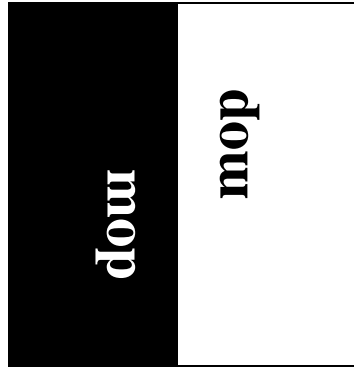
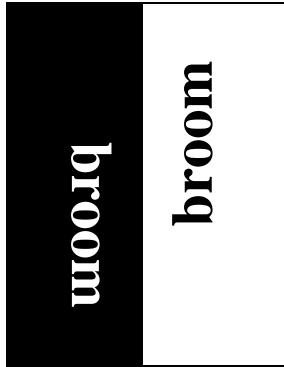
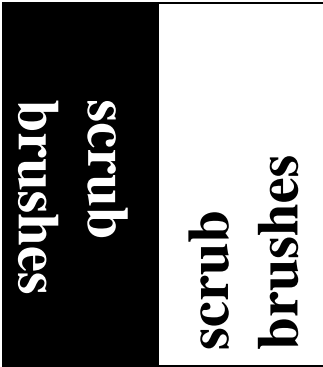
**closet**

**banana**

**cubicles**

## ACTIVITY F

Directions: Print out one set of cards for each pair of students on card stock. Cut into 38 cards.



ACTIVITY F

<b>dirty</b>	dirty
--------------	-------

<b>counter</b>	counter
----------------	---------

<b>closet</b>	closet
---------------	--------

<b>mirror</b>	mirror
---------------	--------

<b>pictures</b>	pictures
-----------------	----------

<b>manager</b>	manager
----------------	---------

<b>garbage can</b>	garbage can
--------------------	-------------

<b>organize</b>	organize
-----------------	----------

<b>blinds</b> <b>window</b>	blinds window
--------------------------------	------------------

<b>offices</b>	Offices
----------------	---------

ACTIVITY F

dust pan

dust pan

Begin

begin

pencil

pencil

arrive

arrive

complete

complete

select

select

mistake

mistake

receive

receive

forget

forget

repeat

repeat



ACTIVITY F

**banana**

**banana**

**bookcases**

**bookcases**

**umbrella**

**umbrella**

**recycling**

**recycling**

**cubicles**

**cubicles**

**detergent**

**detergent**

**reception**

**reception**

**computer**

**computer**

## ACTIVITY G

# Questions for Let's Talk

**Directions: Reformat questions to print on cardstock. Alternative: Two questions can be printed on each 3½ " x 5" index card and cut in half.**

1. The wastebaskets are often not full. Do you still empty them?
2. What happens to the garbage in the recycling bins?
3. What do you use to clean the mirrors in the bathroom?
4. The pictures on the wall are dusty. What do you use to clean them?
5. The recycling bin is full. Do you empty it?
6. Do you clean the window blinds every day?
7. The computer is dusty. What do you do?
8. The vacuum cleaner quits working. What do you do?
9. What do you use a mop for?
10. What do you use scrub brushes for?
11. Do you always clean with gloves on?
12. The garbage bags are almost gone. Who do you tell?
13. The desks in the cubicles are messy. Do you organize them?
14. Do you use a dust pan with the vacuum or the broom?
15. When is the cleaning finished?
16. How often do you polish the floors?
17. How many offices need to be cleaned each day?
18. What do you clean the counters with?
19. Do you clean the hallways with a broom or the vacuum?
20. How often do you clean out the closets?
21. When do you use detergents?
22. Do you use special cleaners for the computers?
23. What time do you begin cleaning each day?
24. What time do you arrive at work

## ACTIVITY H



How to play: 1) Roll the die (number cube) and move the number of spaces on the die. 2) Pick up a card and read the question out loud. Answer the question on the card with a complete sentence. 3) Continue to play until everyone reaches the finish.  
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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter serves to explore conclusions I have come to about the teaching of pronunciation to nonnative adult speakers of English specific to my study of word stress and resource planning. I also offer reflections on my learning and product, a curricular resource for teaching NAE word stress to adult learners at the high beginner/low intermediate levels. Among those topics, I introduce how I came to change my research question and advocate for more pronunciation instruction for adult English language educators in general and earlier in their language education. I suggest ways in which the curricular resource can be adapted for low beginners as well as some of its limitations. I also discuss my efforts to disseminate the resource within my current organization as well as the broader English language teaching community.

#### **Overarching Theme**

I began the present study with the analogy of one's native language being like baggage. My learned conviction is native language baggage can become less of a hindrance if educators have greater awareness of the role pronunciation instruction plays in learning and then take strides to plan and implement explicit pronunciation instruction early in adult students' learning. The research is conclusive that pronunciation instruction is effective in improving a speaker's intelligibility. This statement is not to suggest that beginners are ready for a full treatment of English pronunciation. They certainly are not

ready until they have a better grasp of higher level vocabulary and some abstract concepts. However, among the many features of pronunciation, word stress can be taught at the beginner level; it makes sense to teach pronunciation and is simply in high demand (Zielinski & Yates, 2014). The heavy suitcase that contains one's native language phonology does not have to be so weighty if pronunciation is addressed at the beginner level.

### **The Research Question**

I continue this fifth chapter by reflecting on the present research question: what materials should be included in a curricular resource for teaching word stress of North American English to adult English language learners at the high beginning/low intermediate levels? That question is not the one I started with but rather evolved out of lack of word stress curriculum at the high beginner/low intermediate level and an immediate need to create one for an instructor of a pronunciation class.

My original intention was to create a resource for my own purposes as a teacher of adult intermediate and advanced learners. However, between the start of the capstone and the beginning of writing the fourth chapter I shared with a colleague who works at the organization where I currently teach about this project. It turned out she needed to teach a four-hour lesson on word stress and did not have the resources identified or developed to deliver such a lesson. I was quite pleased to be able to apply my learning about word stress to her context since it is a high beginning/low intermediate class and the resource could be utilized immediately. With the implementation of the lesson plans, my colleague agreed to provide feedback to inform this fifth chapter. Later in this chapter

I will discuss how I found lesson planning for others to be quite different from lesson planning for oneself.

### **Key Learning from Lesson Planning**

Since beginning to teach as a volunteer five years ago, I have had a particular interest in lesson planning. Until I completed the process of creating my curricular resource for teaching word stress, however, I did not realize how planning within the pronunciation construct was different from planning other skills-based lessons. I had planned many lessons with pronunciation objectives and activities but not a pronunciation lesson that spanned more than two hours and followed a research-derived construct for lesson planning. Following the five steps advocated in the Celce-Murcia, et al. (2010) text described in Chapter Three which includes description/analysis, listening discrimination, controlled activities, guided activities and communicative activities, kept me focused on my overarching objectives and ensured that I was moving toward a point when students would be able practice and apply their learning of word stress in a communicative activity.

One of the benefits I expected when writing for another teacher was that I would have feedback to inform my writing and evaluation of the resource. But, there were also limitations. My colleague could not give me the vocabulary set which she was using for that class so I had to find vocabulary I would use, cleaning vocabulary, if teaching the same course. Unfortunately, my colleague did not give me constructive feedback in the planning process. There would have been great benefit to having that feedback on implementation to inform this project. In the end, the lesson is untested by a third party because plans to have it tested were unsuccessful.

Resource planning for others' use had additional limitations and certain challenges. The most prevalent challenge was the need to be explicit with designing a resource that includes both precise instructions to the teacher and also provides clear and concise language for the teacher to use with the students. Another challenge was that I did not know her students. What language have they acquired? I was not certain and so erred on the side of caution. I used a fruit vocabulary set which is beginning level vocabulary for the first half of the plan. For the second half, I utilized a cleaning vocabulary set which I knew the learners were familiar with. I might have used a different vocabulary set had I known the learners better and if they were all not of the same occupation (custodians). Otherwise, it makes no difference which vocabulary is used to implement word stress instruction. All words with two syllables or more are viable.

I had several motivations for expanding the applicability of the resource for different audiences. While my colleague's class was the impetus for the project and all students were Spanish speakers, I adapted the lesson further so that it could be used by a broader audience and heterogenous classes with students who have different L1s. There were several other reasons for making the language especially clear including that I do not know the level of any of the potential users. As research tells us, most teachers will not have a background in NAE phonology or pronunciation instruction (Murphy, 2014); therefore, everything needed to be explicit and justified.

### **Key Learning from the Literature Review**

Until I read through one of the texts for the literature review (Grant, 2014), I had not realized the extent to which the early form of Communicative Language Teaching

had on modern day pronunciation instruction and the rise of the commercial accent reduction industry. The entire text debunks seven myths that have become prevalent since the end of the Audiolingual Period and the rise of Communication Language Teaching. It became apparent to me from reviewing it as a compendium by key pronunciation researchers, authors, and educators that Communicative Language Teaching as an approach to learning in its earliest form has had a profound residual impact on the teaching of pronunciation today. In many respects, pedagogy depended on anecdote and teacher observation to inform instruction approaches and methods. Research in the pronunciation domain was scarce and pronunciation was described by one researcher as the ‘orphan’ of the language teaching family (Gilbert, 2010). The mere existence of the commercial accent reduction industry is almost proof that the English language teaching community was ‘asleep at the wheel’ as it was teaching a new generation of nonnative learners during the beginning of the Communicative Language Teaching era. We have a long way to go before the myths are no longer prevalent and pronunciation instruction returns to the days when it was a pedagogical norm in multi-skills classes.

One of the myths that Zielinski and Yates (2014) sought to debunk is that “(p)ronunciation instruction is not appropriate for beginning-level learners” (p. 56). The literature addressed that myth and is part of the reason I changed my research question. The dissemination of the research they cited is key; teachers need to get the message that beginners are ready to learn pronunciation and that resources are needed to introduce activities to support such instruction. I have become convinced since starting the present project that early instruction in pronunciation is critical. (I used to be part of the cohort of teachers that believed pronunciation instruction should begin at the intermediate level and



above and just did not think about what features could be taught earlier.) I have since had conversations with other teachers who are convinced that beginners are not ready for pronunciation instruction. Given the few resources in the field, it may be they simply are not aware of teaching methods and activities for instruction at the beginner level. A wide audience for Pronunciation Myths might help convey that reality. Further advocacy by researchers and educators that beginners are ready for pronunciation instruction is critical, as is further dissemination of the other few resources that do exist. After all, word stress can be taught as soon as the learner is exposed to two syllable words for any lesson.

I also researched a number of studies and watched YouTube videos on teaching pronunciation and word stress in particular. One of the studies I read about focused on pronunciation in ESL textbooks. The study, entitled “How well do general-skills ESL textbooks address pronunciation” by Derwing, Diepenbroek, and Foote (2012), explored the extent to which pronunciation activities are offered in popular textbook series. Unfortunately, the authors did not report on beginner/high beginner textbooks specifically but did relegate some relevant data to the appendices. At this point readers do not know which resources provide explicit instruction guidelines and what sorts of activities they address at the beginning levels for pronunciation instruction. Do they address suprasegmental features, such as word stress? I mention this fact because research does not yet tell us at which levels beginners can acquire which pronunciation features. How do we know where to begin pronunciation instruction and what activities are appropriate for beginning learners? The YouTube video, *Word Stress: Adult ESL Pronunciation Activities for Teaching Word Stress Fluency* (Echelberger & McCurdy, 2018) exemplifies how beginning learners can be taught word stress. Dissemination of

videos like this one is needed as is advocacy to teach pronunciation to beginning level learners.

One avenue I did not explore extensively in the literature review was the extent to which pronunciation is provided in teacher training in the United States. Researchers have learned the very limited extent to which educators of adults in the United States have been trained in teaching pronunciation (Foote, et al., 2011; Murphy, 1997). Even more so, I have to doubt that many educators of adult *basic* education have such training. How many have been exposed to activities that allow learners the practice they need to improve their pronunciation? Furthermore, how many adult educators teach pronunciation with planned lesson activities and do not simply resort to error correction? What benefits do learners reap from such planning? This project has raised for me many questions about the state of educator training and to what extent those educators follow through with pronunciation instruction in the beginner classroom.

It may resonate with readers as it did with me that pronunciation is emerging as a more important focus for language instruction as Communicative Language Teaching evolves. Empirical research has moved the profession far forward but perhaps not at the speed many English language teachers and even English language learners would hope (Levis, 2016). The English language research community has come to some compelling conclusions that word stress needs to be taught early since it has been found to interfere with intelligibility (Field, 2005). And, without pronunciation instruction, “improvement may be limited” (Zielinski & Yates, 2014, p. 61).

### **The Evolution of the Resource and its Application**

After gaining some fervor about the need to advocate for pronunciation instruction for beginning level learners, I further developed the curricular resource as described in Chapter Four. If I disseminated my resource, I wanted it to be as accessible as possible for a broader audience. For that reason, I transformed it from one four-hour lesson for Spanish L1 learners into two two-hour lessons that are more accessible for students with multiple L1s. In both ESL contexts, word stress can be a problem for nonnative learners. If the class had just a few different native languages spoken by students, teachers and students together could investigate if those languages employ word stress and give a comparison between those languages and English. In an EFL context or other classes where all students speak the same native language, learners would certainly benefit from a brief discussion of word stress in their native language. In the resource, I provided a couple of strategies to begin that discussion of word stress with a comparative approach.

The present resource also addresses syllables with a very basic vocabulary set and three lexical categories. I anticipated that some, if not all, learners in my colleagues' class may have had little experience with dividing words into syllables. Again, because I wrote the curriculum for another teacher to use, I questioned my colleague as to whether students had ever divided words into syllables. Because she did not know the answer to that question, I used vocabulary I thought would already be known and required little or no instruction. I also only planned for learners to experience word stress generalizations/rules for nouns, verbs and compound nouns. Without these limitations, it would have been necessary to add a third lesson. While a pronunciation class can devote more time to

word stress, three two-hour lessons might be too lengthy for a multi-skills class given the demands on time for teaching all language domains.

The resource certainly can be modified in other ways to suit different audiences and time constraints. The resource, in different ways, is well-suited for multi-skills, pronunciation, and speaking classes. The resource was originally designed for a high beginner/low intermediate pronunciation class specifically for custodians. It is for that reason that the vocabulary set in the second lesson relates to cleaning. Teachers of any multi-skills class could use any vocabulary set with this resource and integrate word stress instruction into any daily lesson.

To use the resource at the beginner level, it would be necessary to lower the amount and level of language used and perhaps integrate teaching the vocabulary with additional time devoted to controlled activities that would ensure learning of the vocabulary. I think one of the activities in the second lesson plan would be too advanced for low beginners: specifically, the communicative activity encourages full conversation in game play (Let's Talk).

Two learner limitations could be affected by the approach I took to the lesson plans. For low beginners, the instructor would want to ensure that their learners are all literate since the lesson plan does require reading and writing. In several instances, teachers could eliminate the need for writing (e.g., instead of the student spelling vocabulary on a dry erase board; the student could simply mark the word stress with a filled bubble on the board where the teacher has written the vocabulary).

The last limitation that I recognize could apply to this lesson for beginners is what I call 'grammar speak'. Have students been taught and learned the language for nouns,

verbs and compound nouns? If learners are not aware of this basic grammar terminology, it would need to be taught prior to using the lesson plans ‘as is’. Alternatively, the plans could be taught without using the terminology, with other minor adjustments, and still expect students could meet the language objectives.

### **Benefits to the Profession**

The curricular resource as I have presented it in Chapter Four is part of the evolution of Communicative Language Teaching as it relates to pronunciation. The lesson plans were designed with an eye toward improving nonnative speaker intelligibility early in a learner’s education in English as a second language. The resource meets the needs of multi-lingual classes which are so prevalent in 21<sup>st</sup> century ESL teaching environments. Making the instruction of suprasegmental features a priority is the aim, as researchers advocate.

Pedagogically, the resource addresses some of the themes that Murphy (2014) concluded were present in the cognitions of teachers who may or may not have encountered such a resource (see p. 36). For example, with application of the curricular resource, teachers can be more prepared to teach pronunciation and more prepared at lower learner levels. Teachers can have curricular materials for in-class activities, handouts, worksheets, and suggested extension activities that are clear and accessible.

### **Advocacy and Resource Dissemination Efforts**

From the start of my literature review I was cognizant that advocacy for teaching pronunciation to nonnative speakers of English is particularly salient. Again, we know from research that pronunciation instruction is effective. Since beginning research for this capstone, I began to advocate among the volunteer teachers in the outreach programs for

my learning center to add some pronunciation instruction into their lesson plans for beginners and intermediate classes. I have done so by providing concrete activities, describing what research has said is important and disseminating it among our community. I also conducted a pronunciation workshop for that group with the aim of increasing volunteer awareness of pronunciation features and introduced some ways we can incorporate pronunciation better into our lessons. The workshop was well received as I received affirmative feedback and I have noticed more teachers report working on pronunciation in their lessons.

My resource has been well received by the teachers who have reviewed it but I would like to see further dissemination of the plans. In that regard, I am making the plans available to the LINCS English Language Acquisition Community of Practice. LINCS is a dedicated community of adult educators and includes teachers, volunteers, and administrators from throughout the United States who work with nonnative English speakers. In addition, the LINCS resource collection is a repository for lesson plans where I will be disseminating the resource. I have also been asked to write a newsletter article which provides an overview of the plans and links to the full resource for the WATESOL newsletter. (WATESOL is the local TESOL affiliate for the Washington, D.C. area. TESOL is an international membership organization for teachers of English to speakers of other languages.) The challenge will be to re-package the plans appropriately. I am still considering the best ways to share my resource with the professional staff where I currently volunteer. Ideally, I would like to give a presentation or workshop with the lessons. I know that the resource is welcome on the internal organization website and

will be posted once I repackage it. As other dissemination opportunities arise, I will certainly pursue them.

### **Conclusion**

The most significant conclusions I have come to with regard to this study have been the extraordinary enrichment it has brought to my education of teaching pronunciation to nonnative speakers and the solidification it has engendered to my convictions about the need to teach pronunciation, suprasegmental features, and word stress to beginning level learners. The literature review advanced my knowledge greatly about the state of pronunciation research and opened my eyes to some of its deficiencies. It also raised many questions. The most important of those questions is what avenues can be taken to ensure that educators do not remain stuck in the notions prevalent in early Communicative Language Teaching. It is incumbent on us to facilitate the learning environments at the beginning levels that will go a long way toward assisting students in their quests to be intelligible. It is my hope this resource will be part of that process toward helping lessen the load of the linguistic baggage that burdens nonnative speakers of English.

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