Exploratory Study of Pedagogy in Foreign Accent Modification

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Abstract

Foreign accent is one of the variations of speech, which is influenced by individual’s native language. Foreign accented speech is valuable as it tells an individual’s culture and life story. The problem, however, arises when it results in reduced intelligibility and comprehensibility in communication. As one solution, foreign-accent reduction courses are offered in speech language pathology (SLP) and in English as a second language (ESL) programs in the US. Two primary instructional methods used in such programs are traditional and technological.

The purpose of this study was to gain information from individuals who are actively teaching accent modification regarding (1) their current pedagogical approaches and (2) their preferences regarding traditional versus computer-aided approaches. Directors/supervisors/instructors/clinicians from universities and colleges in the US who offer foreign accent modification courses were surveyed electronically.

Results from 56 responses indicated that the most widely used method in both SLP and ESL programs was a traditional approach. Although computer-assistance was applied in both programs (40% in SLP and 50% in ESL), it was mainly for the purpose of individual practice outside clinic and classroom. Results also demonstrated that the most preferred method was a combination of traditional and technological approach in SLP, and traditional approach in ESL. Moreover, the responses suggested a potential change to depend more on computer-assistance is occurring although it is a supplementary adoption of technology, not a replacement of traditional approach.

There is no doubt that technology has made revolutionary changes to learning foreign languages. Regardless of the advantages of technology, however, human pedagogy seemed more emphasized with its philosophical position of treatment/instruction as human-centered. Foreign-accent modification involves more than intelligible English production. The more collaborative work of SLPs and ESL instructors is expected to create a more effective approach to meet the future needs.

References


