

Seeing, Hearing and Feeling L2 Sounds Through Metaphoric Gestures

The idea of using body movement in pronunciation teaching is over forty years old (Acton, 1984; Odisho, 2007) and gesture research clearly points to the inherent connection between speech production and gesture (Bolinger, 1983; Kendon, 1980; McNeill, 2005). However, the potential of gestures as a key component of learning to perceive and produce L2 pronunciation has remained largely unrecognized. This paper demonstrates how teachers can make unfamiliar sounds more perceptible and guide their students to clearer and more intelligible speech while adding fun to the learning process by incorporating into their instruction the use of metaphoric gestures, i.e., “voluntary movements of the body which use a cross-domain mapping to express certain thoughts or feelings” (Cienki & Müller, 2008, p.487). The examples described in this paper originated from the author’s attempts to employ body movement and metaphors in explicit instruction of target segmental and suprasegmental features for Japanese EFL learners, which include consonants, vowels, syllables, stress, rhythm, liaison, phrasing, and intonation.