From potential words to actual words:
A pronunciation-integrated teaching model to facilitate productive oral vocabulary development

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Facilitating the transformation of vocabulary from receptive to productive can be challenging for second language (L2) teachers. Although some studies have focused on understanding activities that promote productive vocabulary in written modes (e.g., Teng & Xu, 2022), little is known about the effect of activities on productive vocabulary in spoken modes. To fill this gap, this paper presents an innovative pronunciation-integrated teaching model to facilitate productive oral vocabulary development. Pronunciation training and vocabulary teaching are typically seen as distinct areas of teaching English as a Second Language; yet, in the context of developing productive vocabulary to be used in speaking, they are highly complementary. Therefore, the innovativeness of the model presented here is the integration of pronunciation training into vocabulary-focused. The teaching model is helpful because it provides teachers with a practical guide for the creation of activities that can be used for classroom teaching of productive oral vocabulary.

Key words: Pronunciation; productive vocabulary; speaking; vocabulary teaching

Introduction

Around 15 years ago, I travelled to Argentina for the first time to obtain a CELTA certificate. While I was there, I decided to learn Spanish to thoroughly understand the experiences of a second language (L2) learner. As the daughter of immigrants, I have been bilingual since birth, knowing both English and Serbo-Croatian. However, I had never formally studied a second language. So, I was excited to go through the process of learning another language as an adult in an academic setting. As I studied Spanish in Argentina, I kept a reflective journal on my experiences as a language learner. My reflections on learning Spanish revealed that I was consciously aware of the fact that I could not use words that I knew existed but were unknown to me. Although I was cognisant of having heard a word before or understood that a direct translation of an English word would exist, in the moment of speaking, I was unable

to access the specific vocabulary I needed to communicate my thoughts. In some way, I was acutely aware of my lack of productive vocabulary knowledge. In subsequent years, I, as an English as a second (ESL) and foreign language (EFL) teacher, observed similar frustrations in my students.

As a result, I determined that the objective of L2 vocabulary teaching was to facilitate the acquisition of new words and to develop a learner's ability to use learned words in real-life communication. However, as a teacher, I found that teachers can use limited classroom resources to support learners in developing their ability to use words productively in speech. A basis for using words in speech is accurately pronouncing a target item. Jones (2018) has highlighted that "while other linguistic inadequacies may make an exchange difficult, incomprehensible pronunciation will stop the conversation" (p. 370). However, teachers seem to dedicate most classroom time to grammar and vocabulary instruction and often neglect explicit pronunciation teaching (Foote et al., 2016). Word stress is critical in the context of productive vocabulary development (Cutler, 2015). The ability to produce accurate word stress has been shown to expand learners' productive vocabulary (Murphy & Kandil, 2004). Therefore, to ensure that pronunciation is not completely overlooked, Darcy et al., (2021) have recommended that explicit pronunciation instruction should be integrated into existing vocabulary-focused lessons. Moreover, experts recommend that learners need to be provided with repeated opportunities to practise using words if they are to develop proficiency in word use (Laufer, 2005; Schmitt, 2019). To support the development of productive oral vocabulary, teachers need to use classroom time to provide learners with opportunities to experiment with using target words in speech and provide sufficient pronunciation training for learners to accurately produce target words.

Overall, lexical knowledge comprises more than just the meaning of individual words and also includes an understanding of complex relationships between items. Schmitt (2000) emphasises that for a word to be effectively used in communication, its meaning must be first known receptively, and then its form and use must be mastered. This highlights the importance of having a degree of control over receptive knowledge to activate productive word knowledge. By using lexis in a controlled manner, learners can shift from a state of receptive knowledge to productive knowledge. In terms of productive oral word knowledge, Nation (2013) and Schmitt (2000) argue that productive knowledge encompasses receptive knowledge and requires further mastery of the target lexis to enable its oral retrieval and use in speech. Thus, the ability to control the use of target lexis in speech is central to the development of productive oral vocabulary.

Therefore, it is important to recognise that vocabulary development occurs on a continuum rather than within a dichotomy of receptive and productive knowledge. Such a dichotomous view of vocabulary development would fail to acknowledge the complexity of vocabulary and the relationship between the depth of knowledge and the ability to use words. Viewing vocabulary development as occurring on a continuum provides a more accurate understanding of how learners acquire and use words (Færch et al., 1984; Laufer & Paribakht, 1998). Consequently, effective vocabulary development involves not only recognising a word's meaning but also understanding how to use it appropriately. This requires both receptive and productive knowledge of words, with receptive knowledge serving as a foundation for productive knowledge. As such, developing productive oral vocabulary relies heavily on a learner's ability to control and use target words effectively in speech (Liu, 2020).

There are two primary methods for learning new words: deliberate and incidental learning. Incidental learning occurs through exposure to words in activities focused on meaning, while deliberate learning occurs through explicit instruction of lexical knowledge (Nation, 2021). Erlam and Ellis (2018) found that learners must be consciously aware of target linguistic forms for productive vocabulary knowledge to be enhanced through input alone. This is because learners may perceive linguistic features of input without conscious attention, but for that knowledge to be stored in long-term memory, it must be consciously attended to (Schmidt, 2001). Even though incidental learning can lead to progress, explicit instruction followed by speaking practice has been demonstrated to result in the ability to use newly learned vocabulary in communication (Shintani, 2013). While incidental learning can be helpful for vocabulary acquisition, combining it with deliberate vocabulary learning has been found to be more effective (Boers, 2015; de Keyser, 2002; Hulstijn, 2005; Sanz & Leow, 2011; Schmitt, 2000; Wong et al., 2021). Therefore, utilising both incidental and deliberate methods of word learning is an effective way to assist the development of productive oral vocabulary knowledge.

The teaching model presented in this paper can be used as a practical guide by teachers as they aim to develop productive oral vocabulary knowledge of adult ESL learners. It is expected that instructors in an Australian ESL context will be able to use the teaching methods presented in this paper to teach productive oral vocabulary to their adult learners. It is also expected that this model may empower teachers to develop effective classroom teaching material so that their students can enhance their oral communication skills.

A pronunciation-integrated teaching model to facilitate productive oral vocabulary development

The pronunciation-integrated teaching model to facilitate productive oral vocabulary development presented in this paper consists of four stages: Focus on Conceptualisation; Develop Internal Network; Proceduralise Output; and Focus on Productive Use. The overall objective of the teaching model is to transform vocabulary knowledge from receptive to productive as learners move through the stages of learning. Therefore, the activities within each stage need to become progressively more focused on productive learning. Particular types of activities are recommended at each of the stages, and other underlying conditions must be considered. It is essential to note that since vocabulary development is viewed as developing on a continuum, the stages of the teaching model need to each be viewed as a continuum as well. Therefore, the individual stages of the teaching model will only be completed after the later stages begin. Instead, learning within each stage will continue, in a cumulative fashion, as each new stage commences. However, the stages must be introduced sequentially. Later stages should not begin without earlier stages having started. Figure 1 below outlines the teaching model's four stages and also includes suggested activities, which are described in detail in Appendix A. Subsequent paragraphs describe the stages of the teaching model in detail.
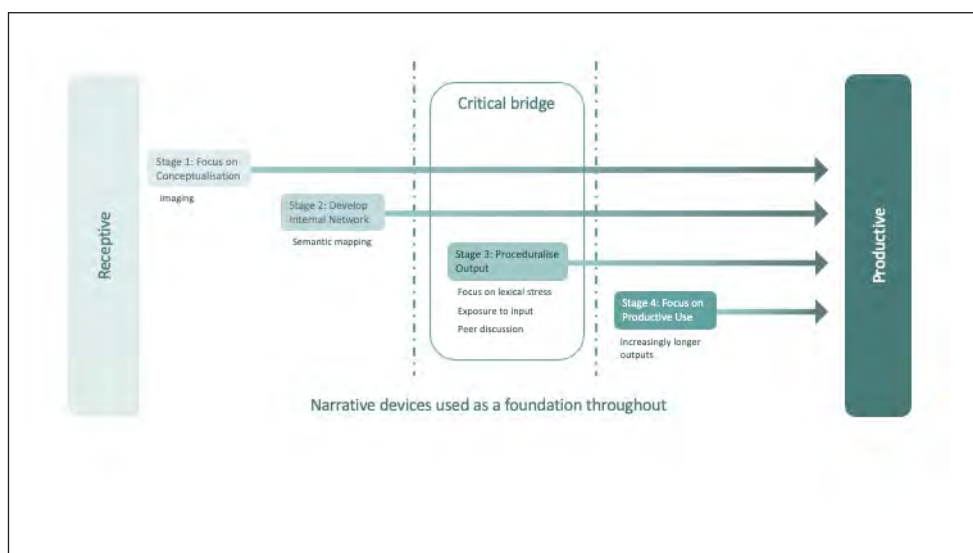

Figure 1. A Pronunciation-integrated teaching model to facilitate productive oral vocabulary development

Stage 1: Focus on Conceptualisation

The first stage of the teaching model is *Focus on Conceptualisation*, which utilises receptive learning techniques to facilitate the development of the phonological form-meaning links of target words. Narrative devices need to be used in this stage to create rich opportunities to anchor form-meaning links. For example, listening to a story containing the target words can provide rich context clues to the target word's meaning. This might include providing synonyms or detailed descriptions in the surrounding sentences. It has been reported that a focus on lexical form (i.e., spelling of a word) better enhances the development of more complete form-meaning links when accompanied by contextual word learning (Elgort et al., 2018). To exemplify this, learners might listen to a pre-recorded narrative that reconstructs a scene from the animated film *Peter Rabbit*. The following narrative segment is an example created by the researcher and illustrates the context that surrounds the target word *persuade:*

> "A little bit later in the day, Peter tried to *persuade* his friend Benjamin to steal some vegetables from the farmer's garden. 'Come on Benjamin, let's do it together. It'll be great! We can eat all the vegetables we want, and the farmer will never know.' – Peter said convincingly. Benjamin didn't want to do it at first, but eventually he agreed and together they went into the garden."

The rich context within the narrative provides numerous clues from which learners can determine the meaning of the word *persuade.* First, Peter provides a list of reasons why Benjamin should join him in the garden, which is central to the definition of *persuade.* Then, the derivative form of the target word's synonym, *convince*, is included. Finally, the concept of *persuasion* is highlighted at the end with Benjamin initially not wanting to do something but eventually agreeing to do it.

In this first stage of the teaching model, teachers must aim to create a visual anchor for target words. To do this, teachers need to draw on narrative devices to enrich the learning process. They can do this by selecting images representing target words and depicting aspects of the narrative. For instance, for the previous example, an image showing the character Peter Rabbit walking down a garden path looking back and gesturing with his hand out in a way that said, "come on, let's go" could be used. Such an image depicts the meaning of the target word 'persuade' and reflects the narrative device being used. To read more about the effectiveness of narrative devices and visual anchors in this study, see Mister et al. (2022). Visual anchors will become helpful in later stages to promote productive learning of target words because the images can be used to trigger productive recall of phonological form. To create visual anchors, imaging activities can be used to link target words with their representative images, such as a simple image matching task in which learners match images to

target words and definitions. The provision of target word definitions is essential at this stage to further strengthen form-meaning links.

Stage 2: Develop Internal Network

The second stage of the teaching model is *Develop Internal Network*, which uses receptive learning techniques to enrich the knowledge of the semantic and conceptual domains of target words. At this stage of the teaching model, teachers need to utilise activities that focus on enhancing semantic maps of target words. By doing this, learners can use knowledge of associated words to improve their understanding of target words, ultimately enriching their internal networks. Activities at this stage of the teaching model need to focus learners' attention on the grammatical properties of target words, such as parts of speech (e.g., verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc.) and word parts such as prefixes and suffixes. Activities must also focus on how target words relate to other words within the same conceptual domain, such as synonyms and antonyms.

To illustrate the second stage of the teaching model, the Taboo game will be used as an example of an activity that incorporates both receptive and productive learning. The receptive learning component of the Taboo game can lead to productive learning of target words, and the receptive learning component of the game can enrich the knowledge of target words. To play the game, one student draws a game card that contains the target word in conjunction with associated words (see Appendix B for Taboo game card example for target word 'persuade'). This student then can gain a deeper understanding of the target word by associating it with the words on the card. For example, a student whose L1 is Spanish need to know the association between the target word, 'persuade', and the associated word 'convince', as presented on the card. However, their knowledge of this word association will likely be enriched by playing the Taboo game because the English word 'convince' is similar to the Spanish translation 'convencer'. Therefore, this activity utilises receptive learning focused on enhancing semantic networks of target words to facilitate the development of the productive oral vocabulary (for more specific details of this method, see Mister et al., 2022).

Stage 3: Proceduralise Output

The third stage of the teaching model is *Proceduralise Output* which is the first stage that utilises productive learning techniques. This stage aims to develop learners' ability to control the use of words in speech and is defined as a critical bridge that activates the transformation of receptive knowledge to become productive. For the vital bridge to be effective, it contains three activators, and they must all be present in the learning environment. It is expected that the first two bridges (i.e., focus on lexical stress and exposure to input) will trigger the activation of the third bridge (i.e.,

peer discussion). Therefore, teaching environments must be designed to incorporate communicative tasks, which allow for peer discussion after pronunciation training and exposure to input.

The first activator in this stage is pronunciation training that focuses on lexical stress. This pronunciation training must aim to develop learners' awareness of the concept of stress and productive control of target word lexical stress. To achieve this, it is advised that teachers construct lessons that follow Baker's (2021) *Pronunciation Pedagogy Model – From Awareness to Clear and Fluent Pronunciation.* Therefore, initial lessons need to focus on developing learner awareness of the concept of stress in English and the stress patterns of target words. Lessons need to then undertake stages of controlled, guided, and freer practice so that learners are provided with sufficient opportunities to experiment with stress placement and enhance their ability to produce accurate stress. A recommended pronunciation training technique is the Rhythmic Fight Club (RFC), which has been shown to be highly effective (for more specific details of this method, see Mister et al., 2021). Although there are a multitude of pronunciation techniques that can be used to teach lexical stress, the incorporation of physical movements is highly beneficial. Using gesture in pronunciation training can create a physical memory of target words, providing a mental anchor that can facilitate subsequent form recall of the words (Folse, 2007; Mister & Burri, 2019). Some other methods of using movement to internalise the pronunciation of words include clapping, snapping fingers, raising eyebrows, standing up on toes, and stretching rubber bands (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

The second activator in this stage is exposure to words embedded within a variety of rich and meaningful contexts. Interestingly, pronunciation training provides a significant opportunity for this activator to be feasible in classroom contexts because the very nature of pronunciation training requires L2 learners to be provided with the language to be practised. Exposure to target words embedded within rich and meaningful contexts during pronunciation training can provide learners with opportunities for receptive learning to occur. Learners must be encouraged to notice the target words' semantic nuances and grammatical structure. This stage also focuses on productive learning because students are practising oral production of target words. Therefore, pronunciation training presents teachers with ample opportunities to repeatedly expose learners to target words in meaningful contexts (Mister et al., 2022). It is recommended that teachers prepare a bank of sentences for each target word that contains rich and meaningful contexts and exposes learners to target words in various grammatical structures. These sentences can then be used for pronunciation training (see Appendix C for an example bank of sentences that might be used for target idiom 'at each other's throats').

The third activator in this stage is for learners to engage in a peer discussion of target words, with a particular focus on phonological form. This activator calls for learners to engage in social learning that provides them with opportunities to practise using words in speaking. For teachers to promote discussions, they need to provide learners with substantial opportunities to use target words in communicative tasks after they have undertaken pronunciation training. Tasks used for this purpose require learners to work in pairs or small groups. The objective of tasks needs to be for learner attention to be focused on constructing novel sentences or longer stretches of speech using target words. Please refer to Appendix A for further explanation of two examples of activities that could be used to achieve this objective (i.e., Taboo game and Collective Story). Although these communicative tasks are also features of the fourth stage of the teaching model, they will allow this third stage to continue as learners identify errors, share lexical knowledge and resolve breakdowns in communication. The discussions that learners have with their peers will provide them with key lexical knowledge that will enable them to use words more successfully in subsequent attempts.

Stage 4: Focus on Productive Use

The fourth stage of the teaching model is *Focus on Productive Use*, which provides learners with repeated opportunities to use words in progressively longer outputs. After vocabulary-focused learning, teachers need to provide learners with a controlled environment that elicits target words to be used in communicative tasks. This will allow learners to experiment with words in new contexts and stabilise their control over linguistic production. Communicative tasks require learners to use words in increasingly longer outputs to demonstrate their ability to use words in progressively more informative contexts. This condition allows learners to produce language that incorporates details that elaborate on core lexical meaning, such as the inclusion of synonyms or detailed descriptions. Example communicative activities would be to move from sentence creation (i.e., Taboo game) onto the design of a composition (i.e., Collective Story) and finish with an opportunity to use words in longer, more descriptive outputs, such as a 2-minute monologue (i.e., 2/2/2). Please see Appendix A for further explanation of these three example activities.

The following example illustrates how a student might incorporate target words within progressively more informative contexts. In the Taboo game a student might produce the simple sentence 'I tried to persuade my sister to come here'. In this sentence, the target word is used correctly but the context does not incorporate significant clues to demonstrate knowledge of target word meaning. The same student might then use the target word in a longer context during the Collective Story task and produce 'Jack's friends don't like science. So, Jack tried to persuade his friends to be

interested in science experiments'. The longer context provided allows the learner to incorporate additional information demonstrating their knowledge of the target word meaning. Finally, in the most extended output opportunity, a student might produce the following construct during a 2-minute monologue talk 'They are disappointed with my ideas, but I tried to explain the reasons for my ideas and the benefits of those ideas. So, I tried to persuade them to change their minds and accept my ideas'. This example is a demonstration of incorporating the target word in an informative context that includes rich clues to target word meaning.

Therefore, teachers must encourage students to use target words in progressively longer outputs and incorporate rich clues to demonstrate their knowledge of them. Such knowledge includes understanding word meaning and phonological form, which results in the ability to use target words in speech. This will provide opportunities to discuss the accuracy of output with peers but allow students to experiment with word use as they gain control of their ability to produce words in increasingly complex communicative acts.

Conclusion

This pronunciation-integrated teaching model to facilitate productive oral vocabulary development informs classroom-based teaching for adult learners. It takes into account the premise that vocabulary knowledge develops on a continuum (Henriksen, 1999) and provides instructors with a systematic model for teaching productive oral vocabulary. An approach to teaching vocabulary that acknowledges the importance of teaching pronunciation systematically, and by extension any feature of language, can enhance adult learners' oral proficiency, resulting in improved communication abilities (Baker, 2021; Sicola & Darcy, 2015).

The earlier stages of the teaching model focus on receptive learning and the later stages focus on productive learning, with the third stage defined as the critical bridge that transforms receptive vocabulary to become productive. It is my hope that this teaching model inspires teachers to develop classroom learning activities that empower students to use more words in oral communication. In my experience of teaching vocabulary through this model, I have observed students enjoying the process of playing and experimenting with target word pronunciation and using words in speech. One student I worked with quite aptly stated, "I wish all teachers teach in this way. It feels like playing but I am learning. Now I know more about the words and can speak better".

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Description of suggested activities for each stage

Stage targeted	Activity description
Stage 1	**Listen to Story**
	Learners listened to a story containing target words. Then, in pairs, they matched the target words and definitions to their respective images. This time the images had clear visual links to the story that was listened to.
Stage 2	**Word Domains**
	Learners created semantic maps with a focus on developing lexical network to include associated words, such as synonyms and antonyms.
Stage 3	**RFC with meaningful input**
	Learners engaged in the RFC technique in repeated sessions that moved from language awareness to controlled practice to guided and freer practice. The structure of these sessions was in line with Baker's (2021) Coaching Model to Clear and Fluent Pronunciation. In the first session, students were guided by the teacher as they engaged in choral repetition. Then, in subsequent sessions, students engaged in more independent production to identify target phonological form with minimal teacher assistance.
Stages 2, 3, and 4	**Taboo Game**
	Similar to the Hasbro game of the same name, learners worked in pairs to describe and guess target words. To do this, learners were given a set of game cards. Each card contained a target word and a list of associated words that were not allowed to be used in the description of the word. Once a word was guessed, learners practised creating sentences using the target words
Stages 3 and 4	**Collective Story**
	Learners took turns to draw an image representing a target word. Then after recalling the word form, the learners incorporated the word into a continuous oral narrative. With each turn, learners developed the oral story further and added onto what had already been created in previous turns.
Stages 3 and 4	**2/2/2**
	Learners repeated the same two-minute narrative three times with a focus on using the target words. This is an adaptation of the 3/2/1 technique, see Boers (2014) for more detail. In between monologue talks, listeners would provide speakers with feedback relating to their use of the target words.

EXAMPLE OF THE TABOO GAME CARD FOR THE TARGET WORD 'PERSUADE'

PERSUADE

You can't say these words

Convince

Influence

APPENDIX C

EXAMPLE OF SENTENCES FOR TARGET IDIOM 'AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS'

When learners were exposed to the sentences	The sentences provided for the target idiom: *at each other's throats*
Day 1: Sentence embedded within the narrative	Peter and the mean farmer were always *at each other's throats*; they would **fight and argue** all the time.
Day 2: Practised during pronunciation training	My brother and sister **don't have a good relationship;** they are always *at each other's throats*.
Day 3: Practised during pronunciation training	My neighbour and I used to be *at each other's throats,* but **now we're friends**. My parents were not *at each other's throats on the weekend;* we had a **peaceful time together.**
Day 4: Practised during pronunciation training	My parents were *at each other's throats* all the time, so now they are **divorced**.