

Reading Aloud Tandem Course: A Sound Experiment (?)

Goals

Employ tandem reading aloud (RA) method to improve L2 speaking confidence, pronunciation (prosodic sense, fluency), graphemic–phonemic correspondence, and writing.

Rationale

RA stresses articulating comprehensible language, without considering grammar or vocabulary, allowing greater focus on L1 interference.

Target Audience

B2-level learners (L) who are shy, have not lived in an L2 context, are inhibited by perfectionism, or want to accelerate progress.

Preparation

First weeks of class: form tandem pairs and provide guidance regarding key prosodic features of each L2, fruitful feedback, RA as a skill, and how to gauge importance of errors to focus on. Partners negotiate how “perfect” they would like to sound and discuss regional accents they may have.

Method

- 1) Ls read/prepare text on own, graphically marking and chunking as needed.
- 2) In class or via Skype, L2 L records RA and L1 L evaluates, notating own copy.
- 3) L1 partner reads L2’s text aloud, provides feedback to L2, who then re-reads. Partners may also shadow RA.
- 4) After discussion, repeat process for other L2 text on related topic.
- 5) Baseline text to read/record on first and last sessions to gauge progress.

Text Genres

Poetry, accompanied by professionally recorded versions
Talk programs, with audio and text transcripts for comparison
Excerpts from plays, with partners each reading roles
Fiction: young-adult or simply written, dialogic and descriptive
News items, with partners constructing own reports to RA
Own written work, with RA to check coherence and flow

Expected Challenges

- Ls remain unaware of L1 influence on L2 pronunciation
- Deeply entrenched shyness or impatience
- Tandem breakdown: cultural, personal or accent-based
- Poor feedback between Ls
- Progress difficult to gauge
- Texts too difficult or uninteresting for Ls

Teacher Role

Initial preparatory input
Early pair monitoring and occasionally during semester, guiding Ls towards sensitive yet productive feedback

Evaluation

Confidence: readiness to speak unprompted; greater tolerance for error
Graphemic–phonetic correspondence: decreased mispronunciation
Prosody: feeling for melody/stress/chunking/rhythm
Fluency: speed, accuracy, complexity of utterances
Writing: greater coherence, flow, and accuracy

