



**Review of Fraser, H. (2000) Learn to Speak Clearly in English (CD-ROM for adult learners of English as a second language) Canberra: DETYA (ANTA Innovative Project)**

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Pronunciation can undoubtedly be a key factor in developing a sense of personal identity within a new linguistic and cultural setting. It may contribute to the amount of successful contact that new migrants or international students have with the culture and, in some cases, determine whether employment and other goals are achieved.

For many students pronunciation is not perceived as an issue needing specific attention until negative feedback suddenly makes it so. In my observation, feedback about lack of intelligibility often hits home only when it comes from 'real world' conversation partners, rather than from language learning peers or an English language teacher. This may occur in such high stakes situations as when students are required to present a seminar for assessment purposes, or attend an interview. In Language and Academic Skills advising the students who present for assistance with pronunciation are often final year undergraduate or postgraduate students who have an assessment barrier or a job search looming.

With limited one-to-one time available it is not possible to allocate much time to the pronunciation needs of these students. The issue is often that they need to become more aware of the role of pronunciation in communication and to have an overview of the way in which top-down and bottom-up aspects of communication function in the total package.

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Helen Fraser of the University of New England has developed the materials in this CD-ROM for just this situation. The underlying message is that it is possible to change pronunciation and that it is within the capacity of the individual to do so. Pronunciation is presented as an aspect of the shared process of communication. It is also acknowledged that speakers will be interacting with people who have different accents and varieties of English. The author has recognised that students often lack the metalanguage for talking about pronunciation, so has made an effort to keep this to a minimum and to discuss the topic in simple language. The four sections to the package cover a brief description of communication, the role of sentence and word stress and the usefulness of critical listening. There are brief exercises to demonstrate key points.

This CD-ROM is clearly aimed at lower level language learners. However I have asked students at advanced levels to trial it as an overview of areas for pronunciation improvement. Only one the six students who trialled it had a negative reaction to the language and examples. All six recognised the importance of the points discussed and could elaborate on ways they could apply these to forthcoming communication situations. While there are numbers of texts to help students improve aspects of pronunciation, few take the time to explain in comprehensible language why this is important and where to start. This gap is ably filled by 'Learn to Speak Clearly in English'.

Note: Helen Fraser has also produced a companion CD-ROM for teachers titled 'Teaching Pronunciation: A guide for teachers of ESL'. Both are available from Language Australia, at about \$30. Postal Address: GPO 372F Melbourne VIC 3001, URL: (<http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/language-australia/>) Email: sales@la.ames.vic.edu.au, Phone: 03 99264779 Fax: 03 9926 4780

