

Effective Pronunciation Instruction Using English Accent Coach

English Online Webinar – Current Approaches to
Teaching Pronunciation: Session 2, March 1, 2014

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Immigration Canada

Objective

- Critically reflect on how we arrive at beliefs and practices in pronunciation teaching.
- Introduce one **FREE** evidence-based tool:



Andy Krieger is Confident

- Savior of accented teachers in Arizona?
 - Click on link below, watch, then add any comments you'd like to make in the chat box.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUGAgES2BUY>

Rebecca LinQuist is confident

- “English by the Hour” on major source of foreign accent.
 - Click on link below, watch, then add any comments you’d like to make in the chat box.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SiMb_MkFD0&feature=youtu.be

Rebecca LinQuist is confident

- “English by the Hour” articulation exercises.
 - Click on link below, watch, then add any comments you’d like to make in the chat box.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLgeQh5a9tg&feature=youtu.be>

Are you confident?



Survey says!

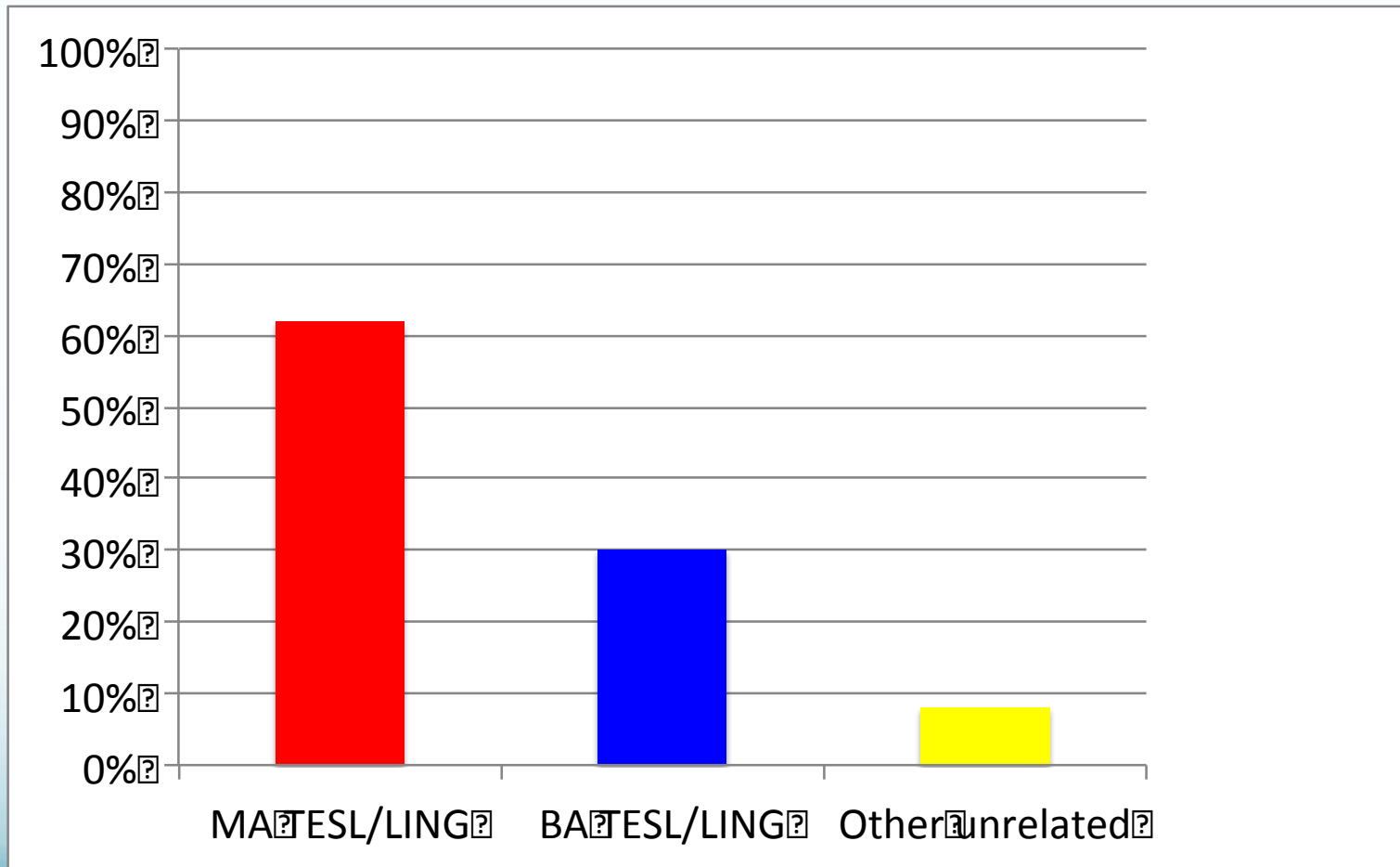
- Part of a larger survey
- Focus here to investigate extent to which ELTs can recognize appropriate/inappropriate beliefs and techniques.
- Respondents indicated extent of agreement with belief/technique statements taken verbatim from:
 - Websites
 - Youtube videos

Survey says!

Respondents

- 60 ELTs
 - 45 in Canada; 15 in United States; 12 Male, 48 Female
 - 51 English NSs; 2 French, and 1 each Chinese, Dutch, Urdu, Hungarian, Portuguese, Russian, Taiwanese

Academic training



Pronunciation/accent specific education and training

- Related linguistics courses
 - **60%**
- Entire university course in pronunciation instruction
 - **19%**
- Sporadic workshops at conferences
 - **66%**

Self-perception of qualifications

Do respondents believe they are qualified to provide pronunciation training:

- **75%** yes or somewhat

Self-perception of qualifications

Do respondents wish they had more training in pronunciation instruction?

- **67% yes**

Statements regarding the nature of foreign accent

	A	D	Unsure
Accents are caused by carrying over the sound systems from students' native languages to their second language.	Survey says		
A key to good pronunciation is learning to hear the sound accurately.			

Statements regarding the nature of foreign accent

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Accents are caused by carrying over the sound systems from students' native languages to their second language.	93	--	7
A key to good pronunciation is learning to hear the sound accurately.	96	2	2

Statements regarding the nature of foreign accent

	A	D	Unsure
Errors in pronunciation result from not having speech muscles that are properly toned for English sounds.	Survey says		
A foreign accent is not unlike other communication disorders			
Improper air-flow is a common cause of a foreign accent.			

Statements regarding the nature of foreign accent

	A	D	Unsure
Errors in pronunciation result from not having speech muscles that are properly toned for English sounds.	75	6	19
A foreign accent is not unlike other communication disorders	3	50	47
Improper air-flow is a common cause of a foreign accent.	41	15	44

Regarding general strategies

	A	D	Unsure
Comparative sounds, alliteration, and tongue twisters can be used as drills to help improve your pronunciation.	Survey says		
Stretching sounds out will help learners to feel how their lips and tongue are supposed to feel while producing the sound.			

Regarding general strategies

	A	D	Unsure
Comparative sounds, alliteration, and tongue twisters can be used as drills to help improve your pronunciation.	77	5	17
Stretching sounds out will help learners to feel how their lips and tongue are supposed to feel while producing the sound.	62	11	27

Regarding specific advice

	A	D	Unsure
Reading aloud in English for 15 to 20 minutes each day can improve your accent by strengthening the muscles of your mouth.	<div>Survey says</div>		
Strengthen your tongue by placing it on the roof of your mouth apply suction and release making a popping sound.			

Regarding specific advice

	A	D	Unsure
Reading aloud in English for 15 to 20 minutes each day can improve your accent by strengthening the muscles of your mouth.	36	31	33
Strengthen your tongue by placing it on the roof of your mouth apply suction and release making a popping sound.	16	29	55

Regarding specific advice

	A	D	Unsure
Instruments placed in your mouth that position the tongue correctly can be used to correctly pronounce words with an American Accent.	<div>Survey says</div>		
Practice speaking with marbles in your mouth while reading. Take out the marbles and you will speak clearly.			

Regarding specific advice

	A	D	Unsure
Instruments placed in your mouth that position the tongue correctly can be used to correctly pronounce words with an American Accent.	12	41	47
Practice speaking with marbles in your mouth while reading. Take out the marbles and you will speak clearly.	4	62	34

Regarding specific advice

	A	D	Unsure
The difference between /p/ and /b/ is that for the first sound you breathe out, while for the second sound, you breathe in.	<div>Survey says</div>		
The /r/ sound comes from your stomach. Your stomach moves in and you can feel it in your stomach.			

Regarding specific advice

	A	D	Unsure
The difference between /p/ and /b/ is that for the first sound you breathe out, while for the second sound, you breathe in.	10	76	14
The /r/ sound comes from your stomach. Your stomach moves in and you can feel it in your stomach.	14	62	24

Regarding specific advice

	A	D	Unsure
When you say a word all you need to focus on is hitting and smashing the beginning. So, in this kind of speaking you have no syllables, in this language of accent reduction there are no syllables, in American English there are no syllables.	<div>Survey says</div>		

Regarding specific advice

	A	D	Unsure
When you say a word all you need to focus on is hitting and smashing the beginning. So, in this kind of speaking you have no syllables, in this language of accent reduction there are no syllables, in American English there are no syllables.	2	77	21

How can we be more confident?

What does it mean for something to be evidence-based?

Example: Do you use minimal pair activities?

- What are our feelings/intuition about them?
- How do we measure whether they work?

How can we be more confident?

Minimal pairs:

- Are they all equally helpful?
 - For example, consider:

Class A: Long and short vowels

mat – mate

mack – make

Class B: sit – seat

mitt – meat

English Accent Coach

Classroom instruction is essential, but has limitations (Derwing, Munro & Thomson, 2013; Derwing, Thomson, Foote, 2011):

- Classroom materials are typically one-size-fits-all
 - First language (L1) differences
 - Individual differences within the same L1 group
- Classroom feedback is limited
 - Never enough time/enough input
 - Usually easier to give feedback on pronunciation rather than perception
 - Feedback in EFL contexts is especially difficult

English Accent Coach

Computer Assisted Pronunciation Training (CAPT) (see Thomson, 2011, among many others):

- Computer and web-based materials are typically flashier versions of traditional classroom materials.
 - Do not harness computers' potential
- Are not evidence-based
- Provide either no feedback, or misleading feedback

English Accent Coach

What makes it different?

- Based on laboratory studies that have consistently found success.
- Web-based, easily accessible.
- Ultimately a research tool.

English Accent Coach

High Variability Phonetic Training Paradigm (Logan, Lively & Pisoni, 1991; Lively, Logan & Pisoni, 1993; Lively, Pisoni, Yamada, Tokhura, & Yamada, 1994).

- Training with multiple voices and in numerous contexts generalizes to new voices and contexts.
- Training in perception improves pronunciation (Thomson, 2011).
- Results in long-term retention.

English Accent Coach beta (sort of)

- Based on Thomson, 2011 & 2012.
- Much broader and deeper range of training sets aimed at linguistic processing in general, not just pronunciation.
 - research links phonological stability and higher order processing such as vocabulary learning.
 - research links phonological working memory and oral fluency.
- Uses General Canadian (American) English as its training model.

www.englishaccentcoach.com

Getting started

The screenshot shows the homepage of the English Accent Coach website. The header features the logo 'ac English Accent Coach' and 'Beta 2.2'. A navigation bar contains links for Home, Tour, Play, About, FAQ, Login, and Register. The main content area welcomes users and describes the game as an interactive online tool for improving English pronunciation. It includes two large buttons: 'Take the Tour' and 'Play Game'. Below these is an 'App Store' badge for iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad. On the right, a section titled 'Average Score by Country' displays a table of scores for Vowels and Consonants across five countries: USA, CHN, CAN, CMR, and ESP. A line graph icon is next to the title. At the bottom of this section are tabs for Today, Yesterday, Tue, Mon, Sun, and Sat.

ac English Accent Coach Beta 2.2

Home Tour Play About FAQ Login Register

Welcome to English Accent Coach!

The interactive online game that improves your English pronunciation.

Start changing your pronunciation the scientific way! English Accent Coach works because it trains the brain to recognize new sounds - an essential foundation for improved pronunciation. You will begin experiencing measurable improvement in your ability to recognize English sounds in just a few short sessions.

Take the Tour

Play Game

iPhone, iPod Touch & iPad **App Store**

Average Score by Country

Vowels		Consonants	
USA	88%	USA	98%
CHN	77%	CAN	97%
CAN	76%		
CMR	55%		
ESP	48%		

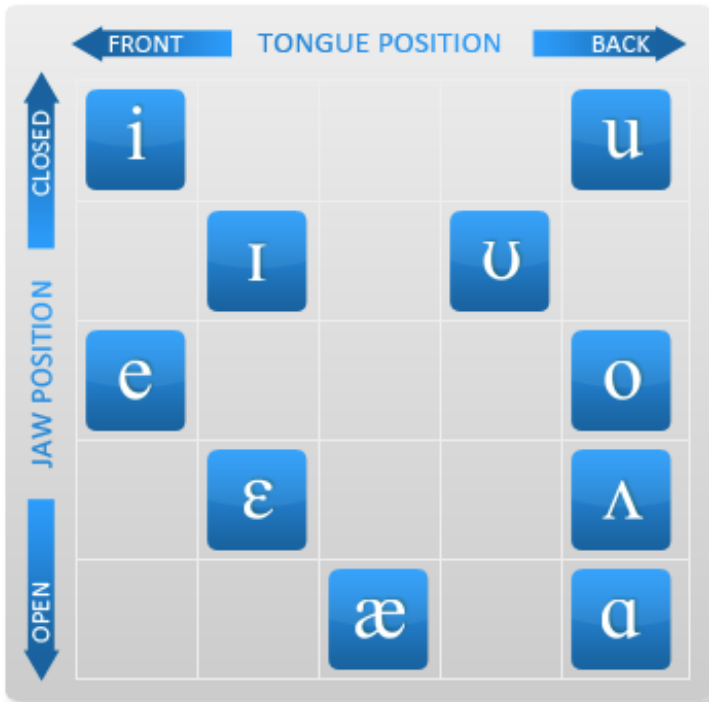
Today Yesterday Tue Mon Sun Sat

Take the tour

[< Previous](#)

Vowel Sounds

[Next >](#)



The orientation of vowel symbols on the left reflects how they are perceived. Those that are closest to each other tend to be most confusable with each other. ➤

Click the symbols in the grid above to hear sample sounds.

I've practiced enough. Let me play!

Take the tour

[< Previous](#)

Consonant Sounds

[Next >](#)



Click the symbols in the grid above
to hear sample sounds.

I've practiced enough. Let me play!

Like the vowel grid, the consonant symbols on the left are roughly grouped to reflect how they are perceptually related. However, since people do not perceive consonants using the same processes they use for vowels, consonant patterns cannot be described in exactly the same way. ➤

Play the game

Login

Username:

Password:

Login

[I Forgot my Password](#)

Create Account

[Privacy Policy](#)

Try as a Guest!
no account required*

Vowels

Consonants

* Applies to Level 1 Consonants and Vowels only.
Please register to play Level 2 and higher.

Play the game

Welcome to English Accent Coach: Vowels!

Word Count:

Standard (100) ▼

Oops, I meant Consonants!

Select Level:

Level 1 ▼

h + vowel

Sounds:

Choose

All

Maximum Guesses:

1 (Recommended) ▼

Begin Session

Play the game

Welcome to English Accent Coach: Vowels!

Start Over

Use Colours



Level 1 - h + vowel

1 of 100



0
Minutes
19
Seconds

Pause

Play the game

Welcome to English Accent Coach: Vowels!

Start Over

Use Colours



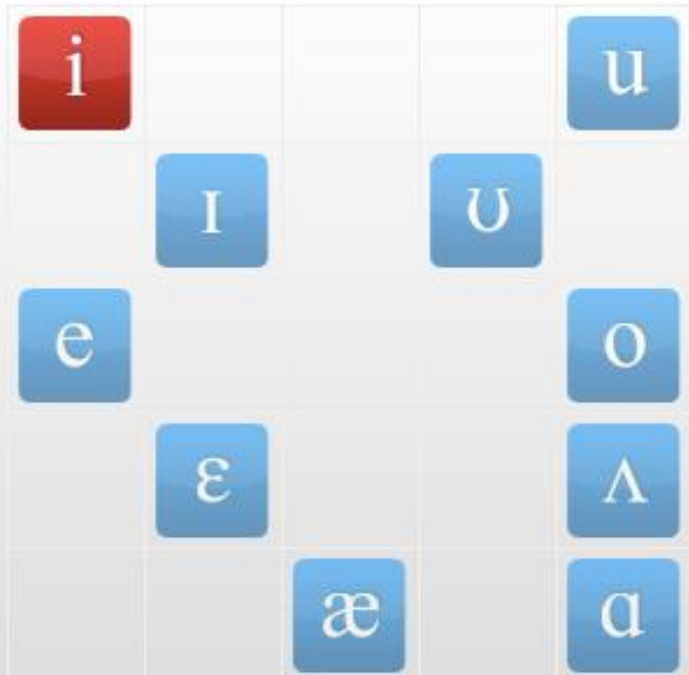
hay

Incorrect

Please click the correct sound to continue

Level 1 - h + vowel

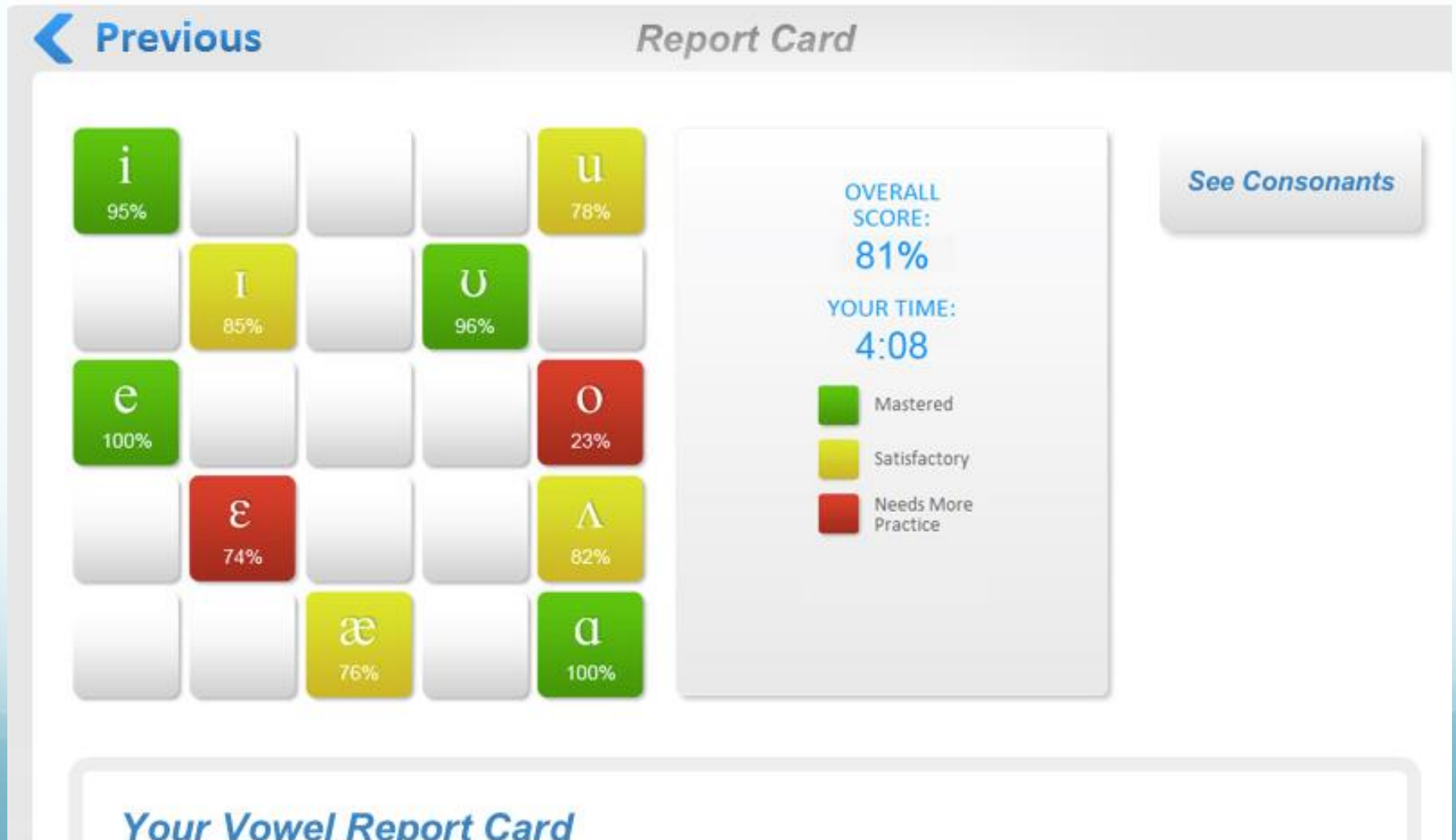
3 of 100



2
Minutes
26
Seconds

Pause

Play the game



Ask questions

- Now is the time to think critically about English Accent Coach. Ask difficult questions. Challenge its design. What doesn't make sense? What do you think is flawed?
- Do you think it is evidence-based?

Breaking news!

English Accent Coach reveals whether English vowel learning transfers from context to context

- 15 English as a Foreign Language learners living in Bogotá, DC, Colombia
 - 5 male; 10 female
 - Mean age 31 years (range 20-60 years)
- Beginner (n=8) and intermediate (n=7) proficiency level
- Taking drip-feed type English classes
- None had lived in an English speaking environment

Breaking news!

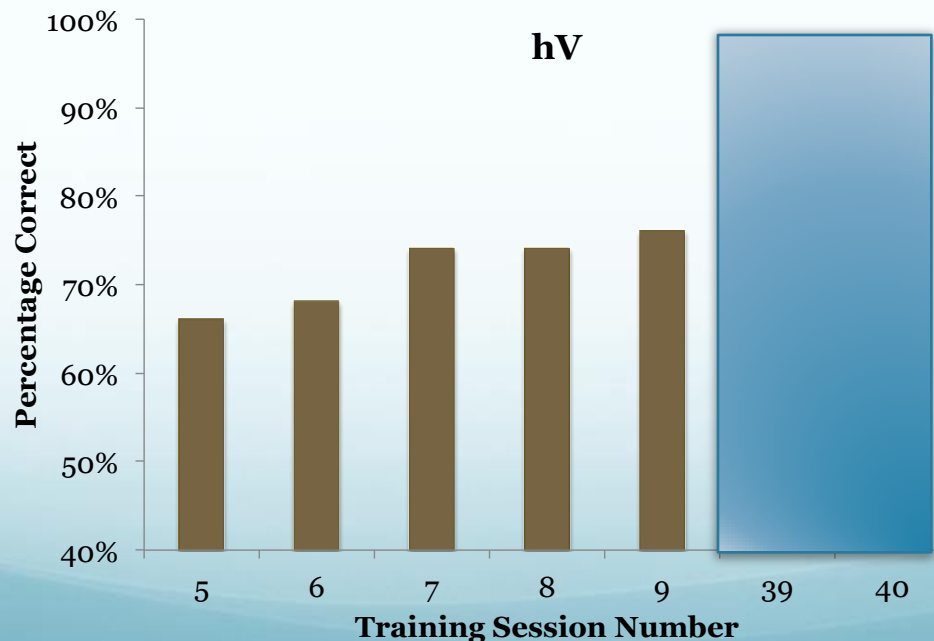
English Accent Coach reveals whether English vowel learning transfers from context to context

- 4 practice sessions; 36 training sessions
 - Context 1: Sessions 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 39, 40
 - Contexts 2-13: Sessions 10-38

Breaking news!

English Accent Coach reveals whether English vowel learning transfers from context to context

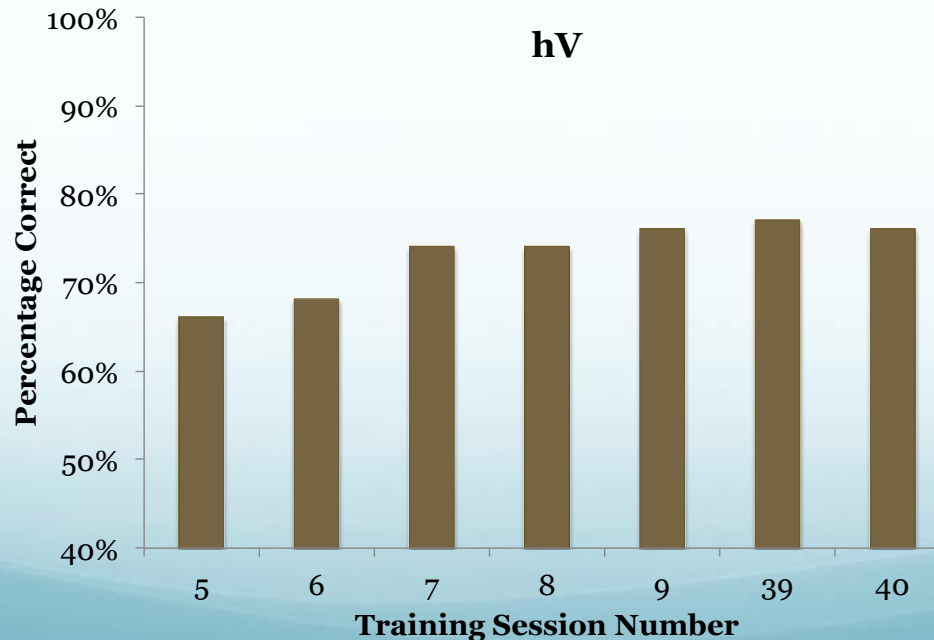
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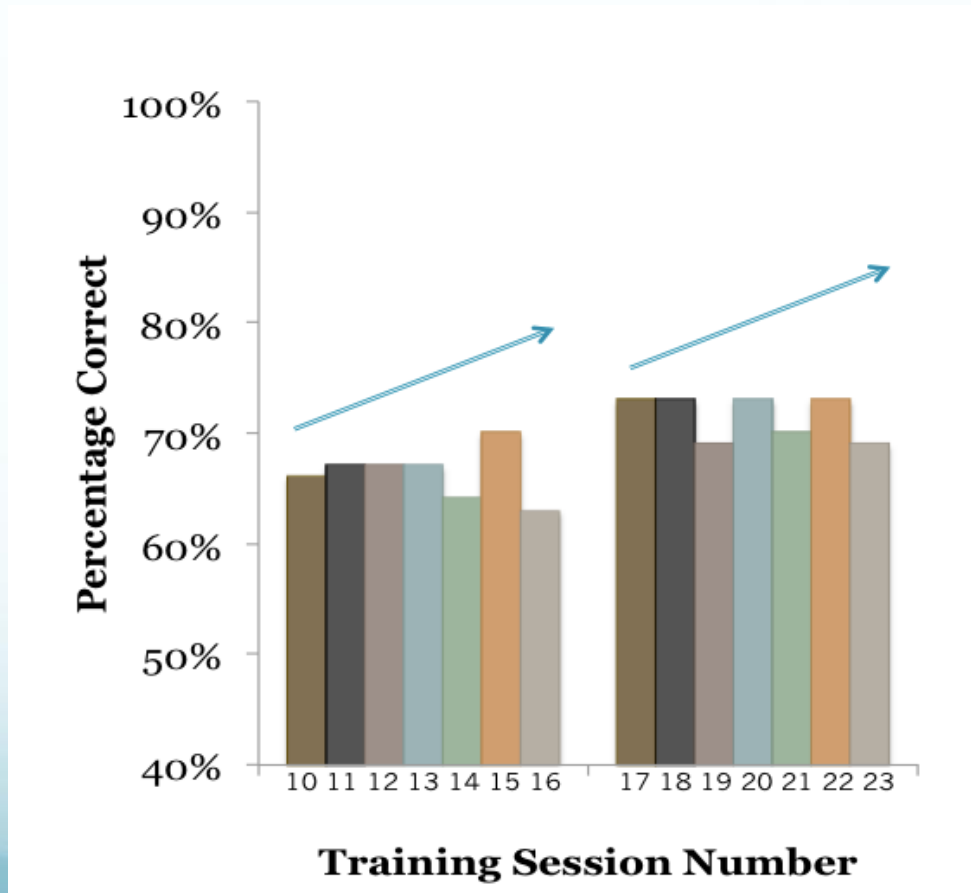
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Ideas for connecting EAC to the classroom

Ideas for extending to the classroom

1. Create a chart of phonetic symbols and have students identify vowels or consonants from the chart in response to:
 - new vocabulary items presented in the classroom
 - lists of words containing sounds known to be problematic
2. Give students a short listening activity (i.e., multisyllabic words, phrases or sentences) and have them identify the vowels in each word.
3. Have more advanced users of EAC transcribe vocabulary lists using the IPA and compare their responses to those found in a dictionary.
4. Have students imitate words after the teacher, producing the same words they have just heard with English Accent Coach.
5. Present students with a list of phonetically transcribed words and have them produce them with immediate feedback.

What can you do now?

- Use it yourself
- Start introducing the site to students
- Collaborate with me on site-based research
- Send me feedback: rthomson@brocku.ca

Thank you for your attention
Questions?