

Still Pictures for Learning Foreign Language Sounds

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Abstract : This study explores how visual information helps us to learn foreign language pronunciation. Visual assistance and its effect for learning foreign language have been discussed widely. For example, simplified illustrations in textbooks are used for telling learners which part of the articulation organs are used for pronouncing sounds. Vowels are put into a chart that depicts a vowel space. Consonants are put into a table that contains two axes of place and manner of articulation. When comparing a still picture and a moving picture for visualizing learners' pronunciation, it becomes clear that the former works better than the latter. The visualization of vowels was applied to class activities in which native and non-native speakers' English was compared and the learners' feedback was collected: the positions of six vowels did not scatter as much as they were expected to do. Specifically, two vowels were not discriminated and were arranged very close in the vowel space. It was surprising for the author to find that learners liked analyzing their own pronunciation by linking formant ones and twos on a sheet of paper with a pencil. Even a simple method works well if it leads learners to think about their pronunciation analytically.

Keywords : feedback, pronunciation, visualization, vowel

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