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Introduction: Extending the reach of English pronunciation issues and practices

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English Pronunciation: Issues & Practices is an international bi-annual conference devoted to how English pronunciation is taught and learnt, together with the associated scientific, social, and pedagogical issues. The central goal of EPIP conferences is to bring together teachers and researchers at all stages of their careers, from undergraduate students to well-established and internationally renowned scholars.

These proceedings provide extended accounts of selected oral presentations, posters, and workshops from EPIP7,¹ held in 2022 at the Université Grenoble-Alpes in France. As our aim was to bring out people's best work and to help authors at the beginning of their career paths, we asked reviewers to provide constructive criticism, as well as analyses of each paper's strengths and weaknesses. Although the double-blind peer-review process resulted in the rejection of some contributions, the ones included here cover a range of current research themes, as shown by the words with at least 41 occurrences in the proceedings (Table 1):²

Table 1

Number of Occurrences (#) of Keywords in Compiled Proceedings (82,756 tokens; 6513 types)

# – Keyword	# – Keyword	# – Keyword	# – Keyword
554 pronunciation	136 vowels (pl.)	79 instruction	55 sentences
552 English	127 target	74 perception	54 errors
432 learners (pl.)	125 accent	71 orthographic	54 listeners
288 participants	102 learner	69 British	51 transcription
243 speech	99 French	66 intonation	49 syllables (pl.)

¹ Earlier EPIP conferences were held in Skopje, North Macedonia (2019), Caen, France (2017), Prague, Czech Republic (2015), Murcia, Spain (2013), Grahamstown, South Africa (2011), after being launched in Chambéry, France (2009).

² These results were extracted from the compiled Proceedings using the software AntConc (Anthony, 2022).

# – Keyword	# – Keyword	# – Keyword	# – Keyword
229 teaching	94 tasks	66 syllable	48 comprehensibility
214 vowel	91 intelligibility	64 Czech	45 prosody
194 teachers (pl.)	90 accents (pl.)	64 pointing	45 rising
183 learning	90 teacher	62 awareness	43 contrasts (pl.)
179 native	89 training	61 accented	42 gestures
176 language	88 sound	60 feedback	41 Spanish
150 stress	85 input	60 proficiency	
141 production	85 phonological	59 MOOC	

Note. The words followed by (pl.) also occur in the singular form.

The search terms are merely the keywords suggested by authors or terms which seemed important to the editors, so the results do not provide a representative picture of the field of L2 pronunciation research. Nevertheless, it will be interesting to see how such results change over time, and having online proceedings for EPIP makes this sort of text query much more accessible. For example, will MOOCs and gestures appear more frequently as objects of study? Will the interest in researching orthography, strategies, intelligibility or comprehensibility endure? And which populations or aspects of spoken English will dominate future studies?

As editors, we wanted to make sure that EPIP proceedings are accessible to as wide and varied a readership as possible. We also felt that it was an ideal time for the EPIP community to benefit from a new format, rather than the printed books published following previous editions of EPIP (Henderson, 2010; Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2021; Mompeán & Fouz-González, 2015; Volin & Skarnitzl, 2018). Although these books were fine accomplishments and remain tremendously useful, each one took up to 3 years to produce and was often relegated to dusty shelves. Our challenge was, therefore, to find a way of sharing research more quickly and more openly. A major source of inspiration in this quest was the online PSLLT archives³ at Iowa State University. These archives are a recognised source of stimulating, often-cutting edge work in our field and many of us frequently browse them to update our knowledge, even if we were able to attend the actual conference in North America. It therefore seemed logical to publish proceedings to EPIP conferences online and thereby create another reliable location for publishing and sharing research freely.

One means of presenting research online is to create a website, another is to extend a conference website and host the contributions within it. We discussed the available options with the reference librarians at Université Grenoble-Alpes, and they argued that the best way to promote our field in general, as well as the individual authors and the LIDILEM⁴ research group, was to opt for Open Access and to procure Digital Object Identifiers (DOI) for each text. DOIs make it easier to retrieve documents and these remain accessible over the long term, because the identifier is not linked to a conference or research group website. Moreover, some countries give more value to documents with a DOI when assessing public research institutions, so DOIs are also strategically important for many researchers' careers. Working in Europe, and given the urgent need to promote the values of freedom, peace, social justice, scientific progress, and cultural and linguistic diversity, in line with European Union aims,⁵ we felt it was important to obtain the DOIs from a European institution, rather than from a commercial service. To our surprise, we learned that we could obtain DOIs from a repository called Zenodo,

³ <https://apling.engl.iastate.edu/conferences/pronunciation-in-second-language-learning-and-teaching-conference/psllt-archive/>

⁴ <https://lidilem.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/>

⁵ https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/aims-and-values_en

“a memory institution for particle physics”⁶ founded in 2013 at CERN⁷ and originally intended for European Community funded research. Zenodo’s mindset is perfectly in sync with ours at EPIP:

To fully understand and reproduce research performed by others, it is necessary to have all the details. In the digital age, that means all the digital artefacts, which are all welcomed in Zenodo. [...] Quite literally we wish there to be no reason for researchers not to share!
(Zenodo, About section, para. 7)

Zenodo is one manifestation of the international open access and open data movement, which we fully support. However, we also wanted to have an online space where we could assemble the contributions as a recognisable object. We thus chose the open science archive created by France’s ministry for research and higher education. Known as HAL, the archive ensures that all uploaded documents are “well referenced by search engines and interconnected with other services (ORCID, preprint servers).”⁸ Each time a reader opens or downloads a text via HAL, their actions are cross-referenced. This raises the on-line profiles of researchers and, more broadly, bolsters the field’s representation in citation and abstract databases.

Investigating the technicalities of Open Science, DOIs, and Creative Commons licenses is one way we have tried to show respect for our contributors. Authors’ trust and reviewers’ generosity must be encouraged and facilitated, as they are crucial to all of us in the field and essential in preventing the commodification of academia. Indeed, many of us have been contacted by journals or publishers who will publish research work, but only for a fee. By supporting Open Science, we can foster the ideal of sharing our work widely without such fees, but it is up to us to remain our own gatekeepers while ensuring (and raising) the quality of our work. The entire field can benefit from this, but it requires us to engage in rigorous, double-blind, peer review.

The rest of this introduction briefly summarises the 23 contributions included in these proceedings and reflects the diversity of issues, approaches, and contexts. The Table of Contents lists contributions in author-alphabetical order, as we chose not to group them into sections (thematically or based on the format of the conference contribution). Because all the contributions start with a detailed abstract, the following summary presents them in relation to three aspects which often guide how we read proceedings. These aspects are not always self-evident from titles or abstracts, yet may inspire readers to seek deeper contact with each contribution:

- *contextual*: Where are the researchers working? What type of participants are involved?
- *methodological*: Is the work quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods – and if the latter, which methods and tools have been combined?
- *pedagogical*: Is a transfer to teaching made explicit or implied?

First, the research contexts are predominantly European, reflecting the fact that all EPIPs but one have been hosted in a European country. One contribution is about Ecuadorian students and another involves listeners from 81 countries, but otherwise the participants are all European – ranging from English teachers in Britain, to users of Catalan and Spanish, Czech, Finnish, French, Italian, Macedonian, or Polish, in their respective countries. Participants are primarily

⁶ <https://about.zenodo.org/>

⁷ <https://www.home.cern/>

⁸ <https://hal.science/>

in the 19 to 25-year-old bracket and majoring in English at university, although two studies focus on teenagers in high school (Mora-Plaza; Galimberti). Proficiency levels vary from intermediate to advanced (B1–C2). In future we hope to see work from other contexts and countries, and with learners who are younger or older than the average here, especially as research into ageing and language learning gains momentum. Five contributions focus on future or in-service teachers, addressing teacher cognition (Čtvrtěcková et al.), degree of pedagogical content knowledge (Červinková Poesová), issues related to accent and models (Baratta), choice of teaching/learning paradigm (Messum & Young), and the value of pointing on charts (Young & Messum). Four contributions explore technology – phone apps (Coulange), a website with a real-time 3D spectrogram (Edensor-Costille), a plugin for visualising prosody (Herment), and a MOOC (Rupp et al.) – and are primarily aimed at adults, even though these tools can be accessed by people of any age and from anywhere on Earth with a good Internet connection.

The widest diversity is found in relation to methodology and tools, which is a sign of a dynamic field that brings together researchers from many academic and professional backgrounds. Mixed methods seem to be well-established, with more than half of the contributions combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. For example, numerous contributions include acoustic analyses of learner productions and combine them with questionnaire data, and/or interviews, and/or Likert-scale assessments. One exploits learner diaries of strategy use (Duckinoska-Mihajlovska & Kirkova-Naskova), and another taps into peer teaching observations and reflections, lesson plans, and feedback provided by the teacher trainer (Červinková Poesová). Such combinations enrich the explanatory power of discussion sections and provide new insights. Two contributions draw on spoken corpus data, one from tandem conversations (Horgues & Scheuer), and one from both read-aloud and spontaneous speech (Herment). One contribution tackles the methodological issues of measuring intelligibility with extremely diverse listener populations (Thir), while another provides an honest, semi-narrative account of how difficult it can be for a multinational team to agree on measures (Martin-Rubió). We are delighted to be able to include a longitudinal study (Pesantez & Dellwo), as we need to know more about what happens over the long term – what is retained and what fades, at what rate, and by whom.

Finally, it is encouraging that so many contributors address pedagogical implications or applications, as we did not require contributors to include a detailed section on this.⁹ Eight intervention studies explore issues such as word stress and strategy instruction (Duckinoska-Mihajlovska & Kirkova-Naskova); input types (hand gestures, Xi et al.; audio-synchronised textual enhancement, Galimberti et al.; written forms, Mouquet & Mairano); task-based pronunciation teaching (Mora-Plaza); using lyrics to promote phonetic awareness (Nowacka); using a web-based tool (Edensor-Costille); and promoting phonological self-awareness (Kivistö-De Souza & Lintunen). These constitute solid responses to the need for more research on teaching interventions, to determine what works. Twelve contributions either imply or make clear recommendations on the following: how to analyse apps and the need for more collaboration between teachers, researchers, and engineers (Coulange); how technology can promote social, cultural, and linguistic inclusion (Rupp et al.); the need for teachers to be aware of the paradigms they adopt or set aside (Messum & Young); how reflecting on teaching practices and contexts can be empowering (Baratta; Kirkova-Naskova); the importance of individual differences in learning trajectories (Pesantez & Dellwo) and of multimodal pronunciation teaching strategies (Xi et al.); the importance of not trying to cover too much (Nowacka); the need to take into consideration the orthographic systems available to learners

⁹ This was obligatory for the book which followed EPIP6 (Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2021). Similarly, the title of a recent book from a related conference – *Accents*, founded by Prof. Ewa Waniek-Klimczak at the University of Łódź, Poland – showcases pedagogical implications (Sardegna & Jarosz, 2023).

(Mouquet & Mairano); and, finally, the influence of learners' proficiency levels when choosing how to broach intonation (Herment), vowels in nasalising contexts (Sanvicente et al.), or connected speech phenomena (Kalvodová & Skarnitzl).

To conclude, we believe that readers from many different horizons will find something of interest in these proceedings. They may discover new authors to follow in the future, or even discover work by established researchers of which they were unaware. Hopefully delving into the proceedings will be as enjoyable as the experience of editing them.

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About the authors

Alice Henderson is an Associate Professor at Université Grenoble - Alpes, France where she teaches English for Specific Purposes to Science & Technology students. She taught English phonetics and phonology to English majors for 24 years and has been involved in training teachers in France, Norway, Poland, and Spain. In 2009 she initiated the international bi-annual conference *English Pronunciation: Issues & Practices*. Her research interests include English pronunciation teaching and learning, the perception of foreign-accented speech, and English Medium Instruction (EMI). Much of her research has focused on speakers, but she is now intrigued by listeners' roles, from an intercultural and sociolinguistic perspective.

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