

Eve Ribeiro – Sound System – Spring 2004

Acton, William (1984). Changing Fossilized Pronunciation. *Tesol Quarterly*, 18(1).

### Key Words

Fossilized pronunciation  
Adult ESL education  
Foreign professionals  
Monitoring strategies

Non-verbal correlates  
Ego permeability

---

This article describes a method aimed at changing “fossilized pronunciation” : pronunciation of adult professionals whose language ability has reached a plateau and tend to be less pliable.

The target population: Professionals who have a bachelor`s degree and have been living in the US for an average of five years or more.

Course duration: 48 hours

Recommended # of students: Up to 20.

### Four Assumptions

- The context of learning and change
- Learner resources
- Responsibility for changing
- Intelligibility

### Preparation for Change

Inside-out changes: psychological aspects (self-esteem, confidence, relaxation, “ego permeability”, stress) affecting pronunciation accuracy.

Outside-in change: Physical aspects (breathing, heart rate control, posture) affecting psychological aspects and that, in turn, change one`s attitude towards pronunciation.

### The Method

- Conversational control (attending skills): speaker/ attender/ observer
- Monitoring Strategies:
  - 1- students are discouraged to self-monitor until half-way through the course.
  - 2- “post hoc monitoring”
  - 3- kinesthetic monitoring
- Non-verbal correlates of pronunciation
  - 1- Tracking: Word-by word repetition
  - 2- Mirroring: mimic posture, body movement, gesture, facial expression

- Dictionary use: aids visual recollection of pronunciation
- Oral reading: audio taping of texts
- Informant use: “Train” a native speaker to assist the learner
- Integration of pronunciation change: Integrate in on-the-job conversations what was practiced formally.

### Results

- Attrition of 25%.
- 33% do not finish enough of the work to show noticeable change.
- By the middle of the course, peers and supervisor report improvement of learners’ pronunciation.
- Assessment of pre and post audio-taped speeches by independent judges indicate a significant change.
- Enthusiastic response to the program by the students.
- Students continue to use the techniques after completing the program

### Questions

- 1- Think of a phoneme and how its physical sensation can be explored kinesthetically with learners in your instructional context.
- 2- What strategy/strategies would be most/least effective in your teaching setting? Would you make any adjustments to suit your class?