

Addressing concerns in linguistics and pedagogy through collaboration

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Our presentation showcases interdisciplinary work between linguistics, language teaching, musicology, and computer science. This project started as a linguistics-focused study on the pitch patterns of Blackfoot (Algonquian, spoken in Montana and Alberta). Our initial goal was to document the prosodic structure of Blackfoot, which, until recently, was not extensively discussed in the literature (e.g., Miyashita and Weber 2020). However, this research brought to light linguistic and pedagogical concerns regarding suprasegmentals in Blackfoot; Many Blackfoot native speakers insist on accurate pronunciation from learners, but often are not aware the problem is prosodic structures, which is not explicitly represented in instruction. Consequently, these structures are unclear to learners. Further, research on Blackfoot prosody is inaccessible to teachers making instruction in pitch difficult or sometimes impossible (e.g., Frantz 2017; Taylor 1969). To address the problems of implicit pitch, and inaccessibility of research we developed two tools; (1) Pitch Art, a visual representation of pitch patterns to help learners acquire Blackfoot pitch patterns (Fish and Miyashita 2017) and (2) Melodic Transcription in Language Documentation and Application (MeTILDA), a website which enables instructors to easily create Pitch Art and provides students with a program to facilitate learning accurate pronunciation (Lee 2019). Our experience suggests that the gap between academia and pedagogical concerns may be filled by (i) expanding the scope of research to include pedagogical specialists or (ii) considering both concerns in the development of research projects.

Topic/sub-discipline: Phonetics-phonology, applied linguistics

Keywords: phonology, prosody, pitch, community-based research, learnability

Preference: presentation

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