

# The 7P's: A Framework for Building Communication Skills

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## Abstract

This paper describes a practical pedagogical implementation for developing communicative competence. English communication skills are becoming more relevant as societies become more thoroughly intertwined through globalization and internationalization. The exchange of goods and information in English across international borders has become commonplace and necessary in certain contexts. The ability to use English is rapidly becoming a requirement for academic and professional success and individuals who are not competent users are at a clear disadvantage in the international scene. The framework presented herein identifies specific communicative strategies and provides ideas about how to target them with instruction. The framework has been borne out of thousands of hours of classroom instruction in Japanese universities combined with applied phonetics research; it equips teachers with foundational knowledge from which they can build.

## I. Introduction

The way one speaks conveys many things: origin, education, formality, confidence, intimacy, .... Everyone speaks with an accent and that accent is part of an individual's identity. This is as true for a first language as it is for a second, third, or fourth language (Lx). For too long, the majority of English language learners have been misguided toward believing that proficiency in English equated to sounding like a 'native speaker'. For too long, the ELT field overlooked the fact that the idea of 'native speaker' was based on a non-existent, idealized, imagined monolithic entity that was of no use other than serving as an inhibiting and intimidating target.

Times have changed and continue to do so. We now find ourselves in a world where English is being used as a tool for international communication. More people use English as an additional language than as a first language on a daily basis. Most learners of English perceive it as a tool that can be used for personal and professional development in a globalizing society.

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ELT is gradually acknowledging the shift in perspective as debate, discussion, and inquiry into English as an International Language (also referred to as English as a Lingua Franca and various other nomenclatures in the literature) is flourishing in fields such as sociolinguistics and applied linguistics.

One point that is no longer under contention in academic circles is that whoever speaks English owns English, that any variety of English is as legitimate as any other. The message is slowly trickling down to the classrooms in Japan. We should speed up the delivery if we want to ensure that our students stay on equal footing with their international counterparts. In many parts of the world, English has become a basic skill of educated individuals, just like computer literacy. In Europe, university students can interact in English and often another language in addition to their mother tongue. In China, the government is taking great strides to guarantee that university graduates are proficient in English. To graduate from university, students must pass the College English Test, a national English proficiency exam, which is now accepted at some international universities in place of the TOEFL and/or IELTS.

The spread of English as a tool for international communication also means that students are more likely to use the language with people with a range of linguistic and culture backgrounds. It means that the chances that they will need to use the language in the workplace in the future are increasing. It means that they will benefit from being able to envision themselves as part of the international community of English users. This shift in circumstance has certain implications for the ELT field. In terms of attainment goals, students need training that will help them develop the skills, knowledge, and demeanor to handle interactions with flexibility, tolerance, and confidence.

As speakers of a language we are constantly making decisions regarding how to talk depending on who we are talking to. We play with word choice, intonation and stress patterns, articulatory precision, length of turn, etc. as we engage our interlocutors and, depending on the reactions we receive, we adjust our speech in an effort to communicate effectively. This kind of real-time monitoring is a natural part of communication, whether we are speaking a first or additional language. In short, successful communication results from the abilities of the participants to monitor and accommodate each other.

This paper describes a framework developed and implemented over the years by the author in an effort to help students develop their communication skills. The framework encompasses relevant aspects of pronunciation while at the same time addressing affective factors that influence intelligibility and comprehensibility; comprehensibility referring to the ease with which a listener is able to process the sounds being heard and intelligibility referring to the extent to which the listener can grasp the meaning of what is being said (Derwing and Munro, 1997; Hahn, 2004).

Experience has led to the use of a mnemonic device, The 7P's, that has proven useful in raising

student awareness of concrete features they can target in order to communicate more effectively and more confidently. The 7P's are *pronunciation, pace, pause, punch, power, passion, and posture*. In the discussion that follows, each of the 7P's is described, their impact on communication is considered, and concrete classroom implementations are provided. Comments from students who received training in the framework are also provided throughout.

## II. The 7P's

### 1. Pronunciation

Pronunciation within this framework is best thought of as clear enunciation; that is, using the muscles to produce clear and easily distinguishable sounds. The relevance of this aspect of speech production should not be underestimated. The individual sounds of a language serve to distinguish larger meaningful units by combining to form morphemes which are combined to form words which are combined to form thought groups which are combined to create one's message. The contrastive sounds of a language (i.e. those that distinguish meaning) are at the heart of intelligibility and comprehensibility. If sounds are not recognizable, it becomes a burden on the listener and may slow or disrupt processing, and subsequently communication.

Most people do not realize that pronunciation is a physical activity, a motor skill. Growing up speaking our mother tongue, the muscle movements underlying speech production are generally not given a second thought. However, by paying attention to the tongue, jaw, lips, and vocal folds, we can notice that slight, and sometimes subtle, changes in the position of these articulators produce different sounds. Take, for example, the vowel sound in the English word *beat*, /i/. To make this sound, the root of the tongue is positioned high and front in the mouth, the lips are spread, and the vocal folds are engaged. To produce the vowel sound in the English word *boot*, /uw/, the tongue is positioned high and back in the mouth, the lips are rounded, and the vocal folds are engaged. If we position the tongue high and front and then round the lips, we produce /y/, a sound that is contrastive in many languages (e.g. French, Turkish, and Chinese) but not in English. Anyone, L1 and Lx speakers alike, can improve their communicative efficacy by paying attention to muscle movements.

The physical nature of pronunciation is good news for our students because it means that they can change their pronunciation with training, by developing their motor skills. In this way, pronunciation is like a sport and practice and persistence will yield results. The first step in promoting greater intelligibility and comprehensibility is to make a conscious effort to open one's mouth when talking. This will automatically result in more directed use of the articulators and, subsequently, clearer enunciation. Students should be reminded regularly to open their mouths when they speak. The difference in speech clarity is immediately obvious and it is a simple and easy beginning to more effective communication.

Next, students should be trained in the articulation of particular sounds that are more likely to disrupt communication. It is worth noting that in the case of English and Japanese, targeting only a handful of contrasts significantly improves intelligibility. Functional load analysis of the high frequency words of English (Gilner and Morales, 2010) indicates that the front vowels are used more than the back vowels and that the high front vowel contrast (e.g. *beat* - *bit*) distinguishes more words than any other contrast. The mid front contrast, as in *bait* and *bet*, ranks second in the number of words these sounds differentiate. While the sounds in *beat* and *bait* are similar enough in English and Japanese not to cause confusion, the contrasting sounds in *bit* and *bet* are not used in Japanese. Students need to develop a new category in their phonetic repertoire if they want to increase intelligibility. Appropriate categorization is also necessary for accurate perception. That means training in the production of contrasts will facilitate listening comprehension.

The vowel continuum is a useful exercise that helps raise awareness of how changing the position of the tongue, lips, and jaw produces different sounds. The high front vowel /i/, low central vowel /a/, and high back vowel /u/ can serve as reference points for the exercise. Starting with the high front sound and gliding to the high back clearly illustrates how moving the tongue forward and backward results in different sounds. Gliding from /i/ to /a/ further reinforces the effect of tongue movements as students associate the change in sound production that occurs when shifting upward and downward. Once students are aware of how the articulators are used, the target contrasts can be more readily produced and identified.

*“Now, I feel less nervous when I speak in front of others....I found voice exercises such as [the vowel continuum] interesting. By doing, I became more positive for speaking. So, it was effective both physically and mentally.” (Student B, 1st-year university)*

*“Before this class, I had misunderstood that good pronunciation was equivalent to that of native speaker, but that was wrong. Good pronunciation is the way of speaking that is easy to hear and understand for listeners. This is not always equal to native speaker enunciation. I was relieved and encouraged to hear that. I will study and use English with more confidence from now on.” (Student H, 1st-year university)*

## **2. Pace**

Pace within this framework refers to speaking rate. It goes without saying that communication will be facilitated by a speaking rate that allows the listener to capture, decode, and process the input. It is safe to say that, in principle, slower is better. In the EIL context, a slower speaking rate gives listeners from a wide range of linguistic backgrounds and with varied linguistic experience

more time to process and decode the input. At the same time, variation in pace is a means by which we convey emotion; Findings from research in psychology and psycholinguistics suggest certain universal strategies for encoding (and subsequently decoding) emotion in speech. For example, when people across diverse language groups are happy they tend to speak more loudly and quickly, modulating the pitch quality of their speech. Sadness, on the other hand, is expressed through soft, slow, monotone speech (Scherer, 1986). Modulating the speaking rate is a way to make our speech more expressive and, therefore, more intelligible.

Pace, then, is a tool that allows a speaker to convey the message more effectively and expressively. Students can improve their communicative power by varying speaking rate. As the previously-mentioned research findings indicate, this is something that humans do naturally. Making students aware of this tendency can go a long way toward helping them apply it when they use the target language. Activities that will help raise student awareness of the role of speaking rate in communication include watching, discussing, and evaluating model input while considering positive and negative evidence of efficacy. A wealth of examples (e.g. famous speeches, presentations by well-known scholars and personalities) are readily accessible on the internet through websites such as TED.com and YouTube. English Language Listening Lab Online ([www.ello.org](http://www.ello.org)), The Speech Accent Archive ([accent.gmu.edu/browse\\_atlas.php](http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_atlas.php)), and Accents of English from Around the World ([www.soundcomparisons.com](http://www.soundcomparisons.com)) are relevant resources for exposure to communicative styles and accents from around the world. Classroom teachers are also in a position to model how pace can be used to make passages from classroom texts more interesting, comprehensible, and intelligible. Poems, stories, speeches, and common everyday phrases provide useful sources for productive practice. Consider, for instance, how a common phrase such as *'I can't believe it'* sounds when said in reaction to hearing bad news versus when responding to good news. Encouraging students to 'play around' with this kind of recyclable chunk using a happy voice, a sad voice, a surprised voice, an angry voice, and so on helps illustrate the function pace has on speech production. It can also lead to greater fluency since the speed with which lexical chunks are retrieved and produced is fundamental to fluent speech production (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Pawley, 1992).

*"I thought it's important to change the pace of the reading depending on the level of emotion." (Student G, 1st-year university)*

*"I tried to master Pace and Pause; By separating a sentence into some chunks decided by their meaning or logical connection, I found I could read and comprehend the material more fluently." (Student H, 1st-year university)*

### 3. Pause

The third P is pause. Speakers use pause to divide the speech stream into chunks referred to as thought groups or tone units. These chunks identify sequences of words that form “a semantically and grammatically coherent segment of discourse” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996, p. 175), generally coinciding with syntactic boundaries. Thought groups structure discourse and show the relationship between ideas. Skillful use of pause also helps isolate key points and, combined with changes in pace, can be used to indicate emphasis. As listeners, pauses give us time to process the incoming message; they allow the brain to catch up with the ears. In English, the terms ‘dramatic pause’ and ‘pregnant pause’ are used to refer to times when pause is used to build suspense and anticipation in the mind of the listener. We often rely on dramatic pauses when telling jokes and stories. Effective public speakers use pause to chunk their message into easily processible segments, often repeating the chunks throughout their speech to reinforce key ideas. *‘I have a dream’, ‘Let freedom ring’...* Some 60 years later, the words of Martin Luther King Jr. are still widely recognizable in part due to his oratorical skill. Pause can be used to make our talk more meaningful and engaging, thereby, increasing intelligibility.

The use of pause (or lack thereof) has clear consequences on communicative efficacy. Lack of pause adds to the listener’s processing burden in various ways: the listener is forced to organize the incoming speech stream into thought groups without cues from the speaker; this self-organization could lead to misinterpretation. Additionally, the listener has less time to process what is being said; parts of the message are likely to be lost due to cognitive overload. This in turn can lead to communication breakdown. In sum, there is much to be gained by making students aware of the various functions of pause in speech. Gilbert (1993) recommends using simple mathematical equations to illustrate the influence pause placement has on interpretation. Take for example:

- a)  $5 + 5 \times 10 - 2 = ??$
- b)  $5 + (5 \times 10) - 2 = ??$
- c)  $(5 + 5) \times (10 - 2) = ??$

Changing where the pauses are placed yields different answers. Simple math equations like these can be used for receptive and productive practice. Students can make up their own equations and share them with the class. Checking to see if their classmates arrived at the desired answer provides immediate feedback for both listeners and speakers. An additional benefit is that students recognize the universal importance of being able to manage basic mathematics across languages, which usually leads to increased attention and interest.

The influence of pause on interpretation in conversation is also easily demonstrated. Consider

the following examples:

a)

Have you met my brother Joe? (one thought group; Joe = my brother)

Have you met my brother, Joe? (two thought groups; Joe = you, the listener)

b)

He said wait here. (indirect quotation = one thought group)

He said, "Wait here." (direct quotation = two thought groups)

In written English, commas are often helpful in understanding the relationship between ideas. Pauses can be thought of as spoken commas. Simple examples like the ones above are easily accessible to students, even at the most basic proficiency level. Different types of texts such as news reports, movie scripts, and stories can be used to give students opportunity to chunk up the discourse in a meaningful way by indicating where they think pauses should be placed.

*"I found that reading aloud enables me not only to practice pronouncing but also to understand the sentences meaning properly because if I don't understand the structure and meaning of the sentences, I can't read them with proper pause." (Student D, 1st-year university)*

#### **4. Punch**

Punch in this framework is used to refer to stress and/or prominence at both the lexical and phrasal levels. Lexical stress refers to the relative prominence of syllables within a word, common convention distinguishing strongly stressed syllables from lightly stressed and unstressed syllables (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). At the phrase level, the term tonic or nuclear stress refers to the use of stress to signal the prominent element within a thought group (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Gilbert, 2006). In this way, pause and punch are interrelated; pause is used to isolate thought groups and punch is used to draw the listener's attention to the prominent element within the thought group.

Stress placement has been found to impact intelligibility and comprehensibility. Research findings suggest that word stress is connected to lexical retrieval in the brain and that processing is hindered when stress placement does not coincide with listeners' expectations (Casper, 2012; Cutler, 1984; Field, 2005). Jenkins (2000) posits that, because English lacks indicative morphology and has a rigid word order, nuclear stress is an essential cue for topic marking as well as for the salience of the thought group itself: "Failure to divide the speech stream into these units can result in grammatical ambiguity or misinterpretation" (p. 45).

Proper use of lexical stress can help students communicate more effectively and students can be made aware of lexical stress in a variety of ways. Teachers should encourage students to pay attention to lexical stress when learning new vocabulary. It is an important piece of word knowledge and will impact the prosodic contour of phrases and longer stretches of discourse. In the case of Japanese learners, helping students notice the difference between stress patterns of English and Katakana Eigo words can facilitate communication. A large number of frequently occurring English words have Katakana equivalents. The prominent beat of a given word is generally obscured within the Japanese system due to fundamental differences in the prosodic nature of the two languages (i.e. syllable-timed versus stress-timed). If students are consciously aware of the differences, they can better adjust their speech to try and match listeners expectations if the need arises.

Numbers are another lexical group that merit special attention. Pairs such as 13 - 30, 14 - 40, 15 - 50, and so on present good opportunity to practice appropriate stress placement.

*thir.teen - thir.ty                      four.teen - for.ty                      fif.teen - fif.ty ....*

These pairs are easily confused (by L1 and Lx speakers) and students appreciate being made aware of the prosodic cue to help them with both processing and production. Numbers can be addressed through drilling, games like bingo, dictation, math quizzes as well as highlighted when they come up in reading and listening material.

Listening and reading materials can also be used to help students understand the role nuclear stress plays in effective communication. Shadowing and/or transcribing any listening passage can give students a chance to identify thought groups and nuclear stress which can then serve as the topic of pair and group discussion as well as the source of expressive reading aloud. The same goes for a given written text. Students can develop their communication abilities by marking the elements that they think should receive nuclear stress. This is a challenging activity that demands thorough comprehension of the text. Encouraging students to read the text aloud according to their analysis will help improve fluency and confidence.

*“When I read a text that I am unfamiliar with, I am prone to read it in a monotone voice. It’s indispensable to understand the meaning of the text in order to read it with full punch and pause.” (Student E, 1st-year university)*

*“...reading a text rhythmically, punching the essence of the message is essential.” (Student F, 1st-year university)*

## 5. Power

Power within the framework of the 7 Ps refers to a constellation of non-linguistic features that lend to one's public speaking persona. The use of voice, eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions all contribute to one's presence as a speaker and, consequently, one's effectiveness as a communicator. A strong voice makes it easier for the listener to hear while at the same time making the prosodic features such as lexical and nuclear stress more readily identifiable. Eye contact serves to engage listeners and maintains a connection with them. It also helps speakers stay vigilant to whether or not listeners are following what is being said. Gestures and facial expressions increase expressiveness and can be used to reinforce important points of the message.

Wide-spread access to media (particularly coverage of politicians) has done much to establish criteria by which we judge the communicative efficacy of an individual. A quick comparison of the mental images we have of effective and ineffective communicators will lead to the identification of shared features for each type of speaker. Effective communicators project the voice, connect with the audience through eye contact, and use the whole body to get the message across including gestures and facial expressions. Ineffective communicators, on the other hand, seem like they want escape the situation; they use a weak voice, mumbled words, and monotone expression. They usually look down and try to avoid eye contact.

The impact that a strong presence has on one's ability to communicate is worthy of attention. People are more likely and more willing to listen to an individual who appears calm, controlled, confident, and comfortable, regardless of the content of the message. The general public seems to be drawn to people with a strong presence perhaps due to the fact that speaking to an audience is one of the things most feared by many. Public speaking has actually been identified as the number one fear among Americans (Cunningham, Lefkoe, & Sechrest, 2006) and it is unlikely that this fear is particular to one culture or society. In fact, people tend to show a desire to interact with a person who appears calm, confident, and comfortable with him/herself as if the attributes might be somehow contagious.

Students can increase their communicative efficacy by exploiting non-linguistic aspects such as voice, eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions. Teachers need to help students overcome insecurities and self-doubt associated with public speaking, in general, and communicating in the target language, in particular. This can be done by encouraging students to get used to using a strong voice whenever they speak (in the L1 or Lx). Activities ranging from controlled practice (reading answers and passages aloud) to rehearsed practice (e.g. speeches, presentations, textbook dialogues) to spontaneous productive practice (e.g. Q & A, debates, discussions) are all good practice opportunities. The use of eye contact is likely to increase if students are aware of the fact that feeling nervous is a natural reaction to speaking to a group, even a small one. Students should

count on feeling nervous and learn that using a strong voice and making eye contact will make the listeners feel more comfortable which will in turn make them, as speakers, feel more at ease and motivated to continue speaking. The use of gestures and facial expressions is likely to increase if students are able to embrace the communicative event as a chance to express themselves and share their ideas; that is to say, if activities give students a chance to talk about things that are important to them, if the content of the message is personally meaningful to them. Natural gestures and facial expressions are integrally connected to the message being conveyed and some people make more use of them than others. The point for our students to understand is that if they focus on their message rather than themselves, their bodies will naturally support the effort through gestures and facial expressions.

“During everyday communication, especially face-to-face interaction, vocal and visible behaviors are typically coordinated in ways that provide for their mutual performance. When people talk, they also locate their bodies, assume various postures, direct their eyes, perhaps move their hands, altogether behaving in ways that constitute an interactive event.” (Jones & LeBaron, 2002, p. 499).

## **6. Passion**

The sixth P, Passion, is to a large extent the aggregation of the other Ps. Pronunciation, pace, pause, punch, and power work together to create the expressive force, the passion, with which a message is conveyed. Passion is included within this framework as a separate feature with the aim of highlighting the idea that the more expressive we make our message, the more likely we are to increase the effectiveness of communication. It is also meant to address affective factors that influence intelligibility and comprehensibility.

Affective variables such as self-esteem, inhibition, language ego, extroversion, empathy, stress, etc. have been singled out by researchers such as Brown (2000), Guiora et al. (1972), and Schumann (1999) to be influential, if not crucial, to communicative efficacy regardless of the level of proficiency. In Japan, it is not uncommon to hear students say that they feel shy and lack confidence when it comes to expressing their opinions, regardless of the language they use. This kind of inhibiting self-perception often prevents students from engaging in interactions and developing their communication skills. Additionally, inhibitions result in the truncation of one’s personality and expressiveness. The speech of a fluent speaker, even one with exceptional verbal dexterity, can be rendered halted, broken, even incomprehensible, by feelings of insecurity, negative self-perception, or self-doubt. Conversely, feelings of confidence, self-assurance, or lack of inhibition can disguise shortcomings in the speech of a speaker of moderate fluency and capacity.

Teachers can help students move beyond their insecurities in a variety of ways. Fundamentally,

students will benefit from knowing that their goal is to develop a speaking style that works for them rather than one that mimics an imaginary 'native speaker'. The target language should be perceived as an extension of one's personality, a tool by which to better express oneself. Meaning-focused activities help shift students' attention to communicative intent. The challenge for the teacher is to choose activities that actually allow students to develop their identity through the use of the L2. In the context of English as an International Language (EIL), Honna (2010) recommends engaging students in work that promotes English as "a community language for internationalization" (para. 17). Honna suggests that students can build their language skills by preparing English-language websites for Japanese companies as well as English-language information sheets and recordings for tourist attractions while they get accustomed to using English as an additional language for self-expression.

Another useful activity is the Extremely Short Story. The challenge here is to write a story composed of exactly 50 words. This is a task that is not bound by proficiency level, as demonstrated by the submissions from high school and junior high school students (among others) available online at the Japan Association for Asian Englishes Extremely Short Story Competition website ([www.jafae.org/essc/en/](http://www.jafae.org/essc/en/)). These stories are, by their very nature, an outlet for self-expression. And, because the 50-word cap is perceived as manageable, students generally do not feel the intimidation that the task of writing longer essays and reports may bring with it. These stories also provide a great opportunity for developing expressive reading aloud skills, for communicating the passion one feels for something. In my experience, giving students the chance to read their stories for their classmates in pairs or small groups is an enjoyable meaning-focused activity that promotes communication skills and confidence. Summing up, students need to be encouraged to focus on what they want to say rather than how they say and they need to allow themselves to express how they feel (joy, anger, concern, determination, enthusiasm) about what they are saying.

*"If I learn the script by heart completely, paradoxically, I come to speak with no emotion. It's not enough to only memorize, I thought the most important point is passion for the contents." (Student E, 1st-year university)*

## **7. Posture**

Posture, is the 7th and final P, referring to how one positions the body. While it is integrally related to Power because it lends to establishing a certain presence, it is included in this framework as a separate feature in order to emphasize the function of body language in communication. Our bodies are always communicating something. The way we sit or stand, the direction we face, the position of the hands and feet and so on indicate our disposition toward a given interaction.

To gauge the impact posture can have on communication, recall to mind once again the images of an effective communicator and that of a weaker one. Strong, charismatic communicators stand comfortably erect with shoulders back and face up toward the listener. We could say they use an ‘open’ posture which emanates confidence and control. Open posture is often taken as indication of a friendly and positive attitude (Rossberg-Gempton & Poole, 1993). Poor communicators usually have rounded shoulders, their heads are held downward, and they tend to shift their weight from one foot to another. The posture is ‘closed’ and communicates uneasiness and discomfort. Closed posture is generally perceived as conveying a negative disposition such as disinterest or detachment (Rossberg-Gempton & Poole, 1993).

Students can augment their communication skills by exploiting the communicative function of posture. By paying attention to what they are doing with their bodies, they can change how they are perceived and how they feel about what they are doing. Teachers should encourage their students to adopt an erect, relaxed posture, to orient themselves toward the people they are talking or listening to, and to hold their heads up. A ‘positive’ posture is useful regardless of the activity students are engaged. Whether they are listening to the teacher, working at their desks, giving a presentation, reading aloud, or speaking to the class, a positive posture is likely to foster better performance because of the connection between body and mind, because of the physiological tendency toward mutual support (Jones & LeBaron, 2002).

### III. Conclusion

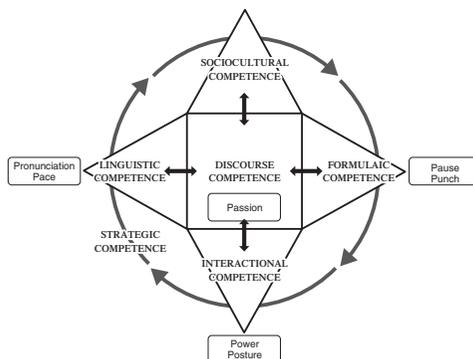
This paper has detailed a framework that can be, and has been, used to promote students’ intelligibility and comprehensibility. The discussion has described the 7P’s with English language learning in mind; however, the framework could similarly be applied to learning other languages or simply improving oratorical skills in the L1. From the practical point of view, the framework operationalizes the communicative functions of features of spoken language, of which most speakers (L1 and Lx) are not cognizant. The mnemonic was devised in the hopes of making the features more memorable; however, the 7P’s have also proven to be a means by which students can evaluate and talk about communicative events.

*“I changed my recognition about “pronunciation”. Good pronunciation is not necessarily fluent but easy listening. What is most important is how many people can understand and think about that which we speak. Good pronunciation is always with good pace and good pause because reading with moderate speed and giving the audience time to consider about our speech will make it easier to understand. And good punch and power help us keep them because they are very useful to package the message. Making*

*sentences into blocks naturally makes us take a pause. Finally, we attract the audience by our passion and posture. What I want to say is these 7 pieces can be divided like a formation of soccer, 3-2-2. They should be closely related; When the 7 pieces pass to each other, the speech can score a goal. I find reading aloud an interesting and effective way to study. I will continue doing the activity. I have a dream. One day, the seven pieces will enable me to make a good speech and, then, I will be a charismatic speaker (like Martin Luther King Jr.).” (Student A, First-year university)*

*“... I learned many things by listening and watching speeches in English from the viewpoint of 7Ps. Our messages are received when we are making efforts to speak clearly even if it is so called ‘Japanese-English’ (pronunciation). We should speak slowly and clearly with exquisite pauses to convey our ideas accurately (pace and pause). In speech, when we strengthen our voice on certain timings, the contents of the speech will impress the audience (punch). When we speak passionately, of course it is natural if the contents are the things you really want to say, the audience will be attracted and listen to the speech with sympathy (power and passion).” (Student C, First-year university)*

From the theoretical perspective, the 7P's framework addresses key components of communicative competence. Communicative competence is a construct that is often used to formulate pedagogical targets in language education circles. While it can be applied to language use in general, the construct has evolved over the years as the contexts in which English is used have expanded and the users of the language have diversified. In its latest incarnation as described by Celce-Murcia (2007), communicative competence is viewed as composed of five subcomponents that together contribute to an individual's strategic competence. The figure below (reproduced from Celce-Murcia, 2007) encapsulates the complex relationship between all the competencies and shows where the 7P's fit in.



Briefly put, Pronunciation and Pace address phonological knowledge, one of four types of knowledge within linguistic competence, including “both segmentals (vowels, consonants, syllable types) and suprasegmentals (prominence/stress, intonation, and rhythm)” (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 47). Pause and Punch address formulaic competence by targeting “fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interactions” (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 47). Power and Posture address the non-verbal/paralinguistic aspect of interactional competence. Passion addresses discourse competence which is “where the top-down communicative intent and sociocultural knowledge intersect with the lexical and grammatical resources to express messages and attitudes and to create coherent texts” (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 47). Sociocultural competence can be addressed by careful selection of materials since students can be exposed to and learn to critically evaluate different varieties and registers through listening and reading material.

Teachers generally do not receive training in pronunciation instruction and tend to avoid dealing with pronunciation in the classroom (Breitkreutz, Derwing, and Rossiter, 2002; MacDonald, 2002; Walker, 1999). This leaves our students at a disadvantage. The framework presented here demonstrates the role each of the 7P’s plays in communication. It is hoped that the ideas contained herein will help teachers move away from antiquated views of pronunciation instruction and consider the impact that proper training can have on intelligibility and comprehensibility.

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