

CeLTA Fellowship 2014-2015
Report
Anne Violin-Wigent

1. Project completion

Data for the project was collected in the fall semester of 2014. Additional data was collected in the spring of 2015 as well in order to supplement the first set of data with qualitative comments. The overall project was completed in April 2015, though a more refined and developed version will be presented in October 2015 at the annual Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching conference in Dallas, TX. An article is expected to follow soon after the presentation.

2. Outcomes

This project investigated students' attitude and preference toward native speaker models vs. non-native models. Two main results came out of the study. First, students have a very strong preference for imitating models who match their own gender. Second, the selection of a native speaker vs. a non-native speaker as a model for improving pronunciation seems to be based on the distinction between accuracy vs. realistic goal, where native speakers are perceived as more accurate models, but non-native speakers represent a more attainable goal for students. The question of the relationship between achievement/grades and model is currently being investigated in 2015-16 as a follow-up to this study.

3. Impact on language teaching

Coupled with the study currently under way, these findings can have an impact on how instructors select models and reference points for students in terms on improving pronunciation. We may have to revisit and question the long-held belief on the superiority of native speaker models.

At a more local level, depending on results, I may include options for native vs. non-native models in my future pronunciation classes. In addition, as I will soon be working on the 2nd edition of my French pronunciation textbook, the results of these studies will impact the recordings we decide to include with the textbook.