TESL-EJ Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language

The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language

Enhancing Adult ESL Learners' Vocabulary Use through Pronunciation-Focused Discussion

August 2025 – Volume 29, Number 2
https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.29114a4

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Abstract

Analysing Language-Related Episodes (LREs) in classroom discourse provides valuable insights into understanding how learners respond to problematic linguistic features. While much of the existing research has emphasised vocabulary and grammar related episodes, pronunciation-related episodes (PREs) remain underexplored. Yet pronunciation is a critical, and often overlooked, dimension of communicative competence, directly impacting learners' confidence and intelligibility in real-world contexts. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the impact of embedding phonological training into vocabulary-focused instruction on learners' productive oral use of target vocabulary. Employing a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach, the instructional design was iteratively refined over two cycles to ensure contextual relevance and effectiveness. Results from the final iteration demonstrate that combining phonological training with explicit vocabulary instruction and communicative practice can foster PREs; which can help learners recognise the link between spoken word forms and other aspects of vocabulary knowledge, ultimately supporting the use of target words in speech. These findings offer practical implications for language educators seeking to design more integrated and responsive instruction that empowers learners to bridge the gap between learning and oral performance.

Keywords: productive oral vocabulary, pronunciation, language-related episodes, second language acquisition.

A strong, productive oral vocabulary is fundamental to meaningful oral communication in any language. However, developing sufficiently proficient vocabulary use within the confines of the L2 classroom can be challenging. Productive oral vocabulary, defined as the ability to use words in spoken communication, develops by transforming receptive vocabulary – words understood through reading and listening – into active use in speech. However, research has shown that textbooks alone may not provide adequate levels of learning that would allow learners to "actively manipulate the words" (de Azevedo & Tomitch, 2019, p. 17), a variable that leads to vocabulary development (Nation, 2013). Classroom teachers, therefore, need to integrate supplementary activities into their pedagogical practices to enhance the development of learners' productive oral vocabulary.

Literature Review

An instrumental framework for classroom teachers to follow is Nation's (2013) nine aspects of vocabulary knowledge. This model provides a systematic framework on which teachers can

draw to guide the development of training materials and learning objectives. In this way vocabulary learning can be more targeted and allow learners identify aspect of vocabulary knowledge requiring further development.

Table 1. Aspects of Knowing a Word (Adapted from Nation, 2013, p. 49)

Aspect of knowledge	Description of knowledge
1. Spoken form	Receptive: What does the word sound like? Productive: How is the word pronounced?
2. Written form	Receptive: What does the word look like? Productive: How is the word spelled?
3. Word parts	Receptive: What parts are recognisable in this word? Productive: What word parts are needed to express meaning?
4. Form and meaning	Receptive: What meaning does this form signal? Productive: What word form can be used to express meaning?
5. Concept and referents	Receptive: What is included in the concept? Productive: What items can the concept refer to?
6. Associations	Receptive: What other words does this word make us think of? Productive: What other words could we use instead of this one?
7. Grammatical Function	Receptive: In what patterns does the word occur? Productive: In what patterns must we use this word?
8. Collocation	Receptive: What words or types of words occur with this one? Productive: What words or types of words must we use with this one?
9. Constraints on Use	Receptive: Where, when and how would we meet this word? Productive: Where, when and how often can we use this word?

Not only is Nation's model the most frequently cited by researchers (e.g., Chung & Fung, 2022; González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017), it is also practical for classroom teachers to use as a guide for teaching each aspect of knowledge and distinguishing productive learning from receptive. However, for all its virtues, Nation's framework offers limited insight into how the different parts of vocabulary knowledge relate to each other.

Vocabulary Knowledge

Understanding the relationship between various aspects of vocabulary knowledge is essential for words to be used effectively in speech, particularly in recognising changes to phonological form. For words to be used appropriately in speech, learners require an understanding of how spoken form changes in relation to other aspects of word knowledge, such as the relationship between lexical stress and grammatical function (e.g., word stress of 'permit' as a noun vs. a verb). Just as syllables are stressed within words to make them more prominent, stressing certain words at the discourse level enhances their prominence (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Prominence at a discourse level tends to highlight essential content words in creating meaning (Goh & Burns, 2012); however, shifts in prominence can occur due to specific communicative contexts (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). To illustrate this, consider the word *good*. When taught in isolation, the vowel /ʊ/ is typically pronounced as a long vowel (i.e., /gʊd/). However, in a

sentence such as *I had a good time*, we may want to draw attention to the fact that this event occurred in the past. Therefore, prominence would shift to the past tense verb *had*, causing the vowel in *good* to be reduced to /ə/ (i.e., /aɪ hæd ə gəd taɪm/). This demonstrates how stress and vowel quality can change depending on which element of the sentence is emphasised. Yet, despite its significance, there is limited research on how classroom activities can help learners understand these changes in spoken form to enhance their vocabulary use in speech.

Learners' understanding of the relationship between phonological form and other aspects of word knowledge may be enriched using collaborative problem-solving in classroom contexts. Past research has shown that collaborative problem solving, where learners work together to solve a problem, is highly advantageous to language development because it enables learners to solve language-related problems and co-construct new knowledge (e.g Basterrechea & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2020; Leeser, 2004; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). For example, Swain and Lapkin (1998) found that co-constructed knowledge can be retained as learners are "able to use the language of others (and the mental process that interaction has constructed)" (p. 321). One recent study by Gallardo-del-Puerto and Martínez-Adrián (2022) reported that discussion with peers during collaborative problem solving led to subsequent use of the previously discussed lexical features in spontaneous speech. Moreover, Suzuki (2025) found that collaborative speaking tasks effectively support target form learning, reinforcing their pedagogical value. However, her study relied on a written delayed post-test and did not examine gains in oral proficiency. As a result, there is a lack of research specifically examining the effects of collaborative problem-solving on understanding the relationship between different aspects of productive oral vocabulary.

Language Related Episodes

Analysis of Language-related Episodes (LREs) may offer great insight into how classroom discussion might enrich such understanding of the relationship between phonological form and other aspects of vocabulary knowledge. LREs are defined as "any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others" (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 326). Analysing LREs is beneficial because it allows episodes to be categorised, providing deeper insights into how learners address recently acquired or problematic linguistic features (Jackson, 2001). Moreover, Leeser (2004) argues that it is crucial to understand that LREs are not decontextualised discussions of language and that they always appear in the context of a communicative task. Yet, most SLA research of language production focuses on decontextualised, mechanical practice tasks, prompting recent calls for investigating the impact of more contextualised practice and its effects on acquisition (Suzuki, 2025). Nonetheless, LREs push learners to reflect on their language use and have been shown to provide learners with more opportunities to focus on grammar and use metatalk to solve problems, such as breakdowns in communication (Basturkmen et al., 2002; Fernández Dobao, 2014; Leeser, 2004). From a cognitive-psycholinguistic viewpoint, noticing linguistic forms plays a vital role in language acquisition (Ellis et al., 2020). Likewise, it has been suggested that the 'metatalk' arising during LREs can facilitate the uptake of knowledge by providing learners with a foundation for developing form-meaning links necessary to process input in subsequent encounters (Chen & Myhill, 2016; Van Patten, 2000). Therefore, analysing LREs can provide critical insight into how productive oral vocabulary is used in speech.

Most past research has categorised LREs as either vocabulary or grammar-related, often overlooking pronunciation-related episodes. However, some valuable insights can be gained from these studies to inform investigation of pronunciation-related LREs hereafter referred to as PREs). First of all, engaging in LREs during learning tasks appears to enable the application

of knowledge gained from these episodes in subsequent tasks (Williams, 2001). Furthermore, a recent study showed that form-based LREs occurred significantly more often in tasks that included an oral production component compared to those without (Gallardo-del-Puerto & Martínez-Adrián, 2022). The authors reported that learners discussed both morphosyntactic and phonological features, but their discussions were slightly more detailed for phonological aspects. This suggests that engaging in speaking tasks stimulate deeper attention to phonological forms, supporting their development through interactive language use. Therefore, in a similar vein, learners who engage in LREs focusing on the relationship between grammatical function and phonological form may enhance their ability to use the discussed feature of the target words in subsequent speaking tasks.

Pronunciation Related Episodes

Although limited, some research specifically on pronunciation-related episodes (PREs) has been conducted. It is commonly known in vocabulary research that linguistic input containing target words facilitates the development of form-meaning links of those words (Nation, 2013). To support this, Loewen and Isbell (2017) found that tasks containing substantial levels of linguistic input resulted in an increased frequency of PREs. Despite this finding, the authors did not explore the relationship between linguistic input and the quality of speech that was the focus of the discussion. Therefore, further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the types of PREs generated through activities that build on prior knowledge of lexical meaning and expose learners to relevant linguistic input.

Another condition associated with increased rates of PREs is the incorporation of oral communication tasks and two-way information exchange tasks; yet the specific focus of PREs remains unexplored. Lasito and Storch (2013) found that oral communication tasks undertaken in pairs generated PREs at 6% of total counted LREs; a rate that increased to 16% when tasks were conducted in small groups. Moreover, several studies have reported that two-way information exchange tasks can generate high rates of PREs, ranging from 16% (Loewen & Isbell, 2017) to 28% (Zhao & Bitchener, 2007), with some studies reporting rates as high as 40% (Bueno-Alastuey & Camino, 2013) of total counted LREs. Interestingly, Smit and Finker (2022) found that PREs tended to occur mainly when pronunciation hindered comprehension. Supported by findings of Strawbridge (2021) who found that 21% of LREs were responses to communication breakdowns resulting from phonetic issues in speech. Important to realise is that of all the aforementioned studies investigating PREs, Loewen and Isbell (2017) was the only study to distinguish any qualities of speech within PREs. The authors discriminated between segmental and suprasegmental features of speech discussed during PREs. Their findings reported that 90% of PREs focused on segmental components, whilst 8% concentrated on suprasegmental features, with the remaining percentage coded as “other”. These findings highlight a gap in the research regarding the classroom conditions that may foster PREs, particularly in terms of their specific focus and the factors that influence their occurrence.

Finally, it appears that the generation of PREs can be promoted with instruction on phonological form. Except for one study, no research has examined the specific correlations between phonological instruction and PREs. Namely, Darcy et al. (2021) examined instances of PREs in three teaching contexts: instruction focused on phonological form (only), instruction focused on phonological form and communicative focus at the same time, and no emphasis on phonological form. Unsurprisingly, the authors reported increased instances of PREs in the first two groups and fewer instances in the group that received no instruction on phonological form. Although they found that explicit instruction of phonological form is beneficial in promoting PREs, they did not investigate learners’ ability to use these phonological features in their study.

In conclusion, there is a need for research that focuses on how embedding phonological training into vocabulary-focused instruction influences learners' ability to use those words productively in speech. To address this gap, this study investigated the effects of a vocabulary workshop that incorporated a simultaneous focus on phonological form and meaning. Specifically, it analysed the types of PREs that emerged during the workshop to explore learners' ability to use the discussed feature of the target words in subsequent speaking tasks."

The Present Study

Building on the rationale outlined above, this study draws on data collected as part of a larger study examining a pedagogic solution designed to develop adult learners' productive oral vocabulary. The main goal of the present study was to better understand how integrating phonological training within vocabulary-focused instruction supports learners' productive oral use of target words. Using Design-Based Research (DBR), this study examined the effectiveness of this instructional approach in fostering usage of productive oral vocabulary in a real classroom context. The advantage of DBR is its ability to explore the effectiveness of pedagogical tools to solve real-world problems by providing deeper insights into how, when, and why educational innovations are successful (Van den Akker et al., 2006). Using this methodology, the instructional approach of combining phonological training with vocabulary-focused teaching was evaluated through multiple iterative cycles. Each cycle aimed to assess how well this approach addressed the core issue: promoting learners' productive oral use of target vocabulary in a real-world classroom context. Four data sources informed each round of evaluation: teacher focus groups, student focus groups, classroom observations, and student learning outcomes. Although the present study focuses on findings from the second iteration, the summary below provides an overview of both iterations for contextual understanding.

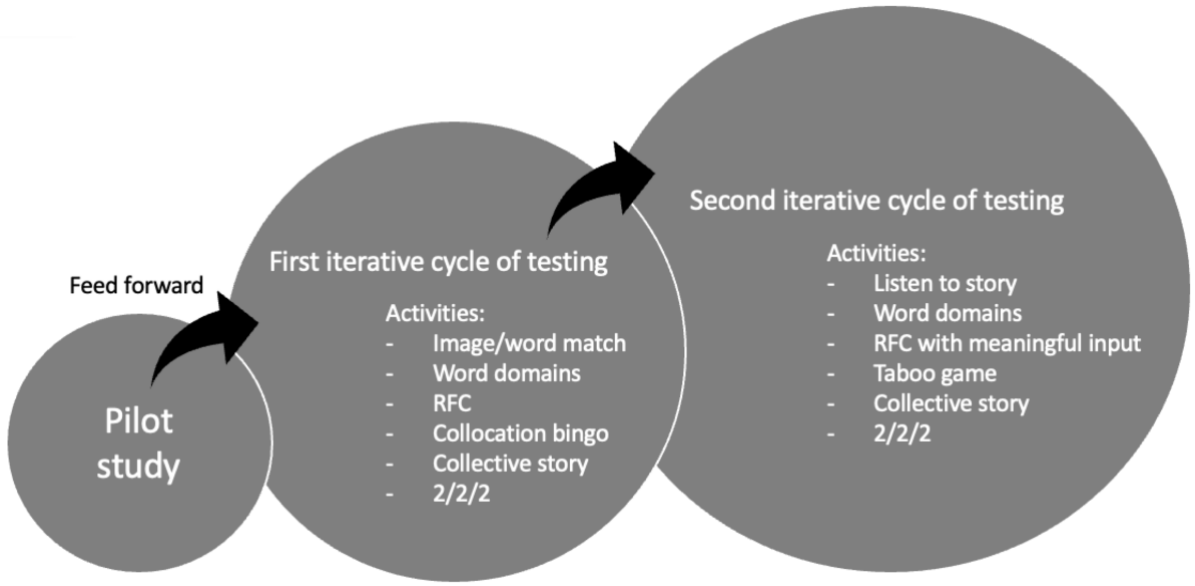

Figure 1. Iterative cycle of testing summary

The second iteration of the intervention, which is the focus of the present study, was designed in response to limitations identified in the first iteration. Initially, learners were exposed only to simple sentences containing the target vocabulary, with little access to a rich or varied contexts. As a result, they tended to reproduce the input verbatim, showing limited evidence of complex or original language use. To address this, the second iteration introduced more diverse and meaningful language input, giving learners opportunities to engage with target words across varied contexts (for further detail relating to those findings, see Mister et al., 2022). Although previous research supports the role of rich contextual input in vocabulary acquisition

(e.g., Teng, 2019), evidence linking this type of input to productive oral vocabulary use remains limited.

Research questions:

1. How does repeated exposure to target vocabulary embedded in various meaningful contexts affect learners ability to use those target words in speaking tasks?
2. How does classroom instruction of phonological form affect productive oral vocabulary usage of target words?

Site and Participants

This present study was conducted at an international English as a Second Language (ESL) school in Sydney, Australia. It investigated the effectiveness of embedding phonological training into vocabulary-focused lessons, focusing on how this integration influenced learners' productive oral use of target vocabulary within an intact class. The workshop took place in the second week of an intermediate-level course. All learners completed a placement test, which assessed their overall language ability and were subsequently placed into the intermediate class accordingly. At the research site, classes typically consist of learners with mixed speaking proficiency, despite their overall language proficiency being assessed as intermediate. However, the variation in learners' oral proficiency was not explicitly addressed during instruction, and any pair work was conducted in self-selected dyads rather than forming proficiency-matched pairs. This approach was chosen to maintain learner autonomy, which is particularly important in speaking-focused tasks that may otherwise heighten anxiety or reduce participation (Dörnyei, 2005). Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, that their academic performance would not be affected, and that their responses might be included in a published article. Written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. An overview of teacher and student participants is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Participants

Teacher pseudonym	Number of student participants in cohort	Student country of origin			Student L1	Teacher qualifications	Years of experience teaching ESL
Jack	11	Bulgaria	x	1	Bulgarian	CELTA	20
		Colombia	x	3	Spanish	Bachelor of Arts	
		Brazil	x	2	Portuguese	(Communication	
		India	x	1	Punjabi	Certificate IV in	
		Mongolia	x	1	Mongolian	Training and	
		Thailand	x	1	Thai	Assessment	
		Japan	x	2	Japanese		

Target Vocabulary

Measuring specific vocabulary requirements for learners at this level can be challenging, but Milton and Alexiou (2009) have provided valuable insight into the expected vocabulary size of various CERF levels. For example, they claim that at the A2 level, learners should understand between 1,500 and 2,500 words, and learners at the B1 level should know between 2,750 and 3,250 words. Therefore, the learners in this study, who are transitioning from A2 to B1, could be assumed to have knowledge of words anywhere within these ranges. At the same time, successful participation in spoken modes of communication requires speakers to have knowledge of approximately 95% of the most frequent 3,000 words (Adolphs & Schmitt, 2003). Yet, a pilot study by Mister (2019) indicated that a specific group of students within the

educational context did not have sufficient knowledge of a selection of S3 words taken from the *Longman Communication 3,000.*

As the workshop was embedded in an intact classroom, the target vocabulary needed to align with the coursebook. The theme of Unit 6 in the coursebook *Speakout Intermediate* (Clare et al., 2015) was "emotions," so S3 words related to this theme were selected as target vocabulary for the workshop. The following nine words, which appeared as focus vocabulary in Unit 6 of the student coursebook, were selected for inclusion in the productive oral vocabulary workshop: *enjoyable*, *shocked*, *angry*, *disappointed*, *persuade*, *confusing*, *escape*, *fascinating*, and the idiom *at each other's throats*.

The idiomatic phrase *at each other's throats* was included due to its relevance to the unit theme and its lexical properties. In addition to the word *throat* being classified as an S3 word, the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English lists the idiom *at each other's throats* as a high-frequency expression defined as *"if two people are at each other's throats, they are fighting or arguing,",* which aligns closely with the theme of the unit. Importantly, the idiom was never taught or analysed as individual words during the workshop but treated as a single semantic unit, carrying one figurative meaning.

The Learning Material

The innovative vocabulary workshop used in this study consisted of 30-minutes of class time per day for five consecutive days. It was integrated into an intact classroom, in which the participants studied English for four hours a day, five days per week. Therefore, the vocabulary workshop entailed 2.5 hours of study during a one-week period. On the first day of the workshop, learners focused on the meaning of target words. The objective of this was to facilitate the development of form-meaning links of target words, which would be used as prior knowledge in subsequent learning activities. On the second day of the workshop, learners received instruction on the phonological form of target words using the Haptic Rhythm Fight Club (RFC) technique (Acton et al., 2013), which focuses explicitly on lexical stress and phrasal prominence. On the third and fourth days of the workshop, learners used the RFC technique in conjunction with communicative tasks. The communicative task on the third day was a Taboo activity, which is a communicative information exchange task; and on the fourth day they constructed a Collective Story. All activities are described in detail below.

The Haptic Rhythm Fight Club (RFC). The present study focuses on prominence as a feature of pronunciation, with other aspects of pronunciation beyond its scope, and RFC was chosen to focus on this target feature. The RFC technique uses boxing-like movements (kinaesthetic) to focus learner attention on syllable structure and prominence in continuous speech (Acton et al., 2013). Pronunciation training should be fun and supportive because when students feel comfortable, they can better improve intelligible pronunciation (Burri, 2021). Haptic senses support the punch-like movements in that learners hold a ball in the palm of their hand, which they can squeeze (tactile), while they physically produce target words in speech and assume repeated vocal rehearsal of target phrases. Although speaking can often induce anxiety in learners, the physical nature of this method can help reduce angst so that learning can be maximised (Acton et al., 2013). In this study, learners engaged in 30 minutes of pronunciation training using the RFC technique on the second day of the workshop and for an additional 10 minutes on both the third and fourth days. It has been shown that opportunities to improve the speech intelligibility, with relation to lexical stress, can be maximised by repeating the same procedure (Jung et al., 2017). In this study, learner attention was directed to pitch variation, which is used to express attitudinal and pragmatic meanings (Levis & Wichmann, 2015). In addition, the RFC technique was adapted to provide students with images as a visual prompt. Students were supported to recall phonological forms of words from memory before engaging

in vocal rehearsals. By doing so, it is expected that verbal memory traces will be enhanced, subsequently improving the ability to produce accurate phonological representations of target words.

Taboo. On the third day of the workshop, after completing 10 minutes of the RFC technique, learners engaged in a Taboo game for 20 minutes. Taboo is inspired by the Hasbro board game of the same name, the *Vocabulary Exchange Game* (Lange, 1994) and *Hot Seat* (Dodigovic, 2018). The *Taboo* game provided learners with associated words, enriching vocabulary knowledge by developing relationships between words and enhancing form-meaning associations (Nation, 2013). In line with socio-cultural learning theories, such games allow knowledge to be co-constructed through social interaction (Dodigovic, 2018). In this game, students work in pairs where one student (the describer) draws a card and must describe the target word for their partner (the guesser). However, the describer cannot use any of the associated words listed on the card.

Figure 2. Example of Taboo Game Card

After the guesser has produced the target word, the two students take turns to construct as many sentences as possible using the target vocabulary. This game allows for both incidental and deliberate learning and can elicit various metalinguistic knowledge in the description of target words (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, word parts, etc.). The primary aims of this game are:

1) the describer will gain a richer conceptual understanding of the target word by describing the meaning;
2) the describer will enhance their form-meaning mapping of the target word by engaging with associated words on the card;
3) the guesser will have the opportunity to engage in the productive recall of target vocabulary; and
4) both learners will have the chance to enlist their thought processes and create novel linguistic structures.

Collective Story. On the fourth day of the workshop, after completing 10 minutes of the RFC technique, learners engaged in a Collective Story activity for 20 minutes. This activity has been adapted from a game readily available in gaming stores called *Rory's Story Cubes* and inspired by various storytelling activities commonly used in ESL classrooms. The objective of the Collective Story is to give learners further opportunities to use target words in continuous speech. This activity deliberately draws on strategies to consolidate prior knowledge of target words, which facilitates the conversion of receptive knowledge to productive knowledge (Nation, 2013). This activity is fun and creative, which increases motivation by creating an

atmosphere where learners can freely experiment with target words (Dodigovic, 2018). The key to success is to provide learners with all the tools necessary to create a story; this will help reduce the cognitive burden and enhance learner focus on using the target words. For this activity students were placed in pairs and given: 1) a *character card* containng information about the lead character in the story; and 2) a pile of vocabulary cards to be used in the creation of the story. The learners drew vocabulary cards and incorporated the words as they developed a continuous narrative. To maximise the opportunity to produce target words, the teacher instructed students to recycle as many of the target words into the story as they could at each turn.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data set analysed for this paper was collected during the second iteration of testing. It consisted of classroom audio data collected during the Taboo and Collective Story activities on days three and four of the workshop, a monologue task on day five of the workshop and a three-week delayed monologue. A total of 12 recordings of classroom discussions, equating to around 308 minutes, were analysed, which represents 30 minutes of classroom time. Six recordings were taken from the Taboo activity and six from the Collective story activity. The monologue recordings are not calculated in this total. This is because they were not analysed for the occurrence of LREs but used to identify the correlation between PREs and ability to use words in speech.

Students worked in pairs to create the audio recordings by placing a recorder on the table between them. For the two monologue activities, students also worked in pairs, in which one student was speaking, and the other was listening. The audio files were transcribed and analysed to identify LREs specifically focused on the target vocabulary items and use of target items in the three-week delayed monologue. LREs that did not relate to the target vocabulary items were not included in the analysis. The identified LREs were then classified as pronunciation-related, or 'other' and the pronunciation LREs were coded to identify interactions that focused on understanding the relationship between phonological form and other aspects of vocabulary knowledge according to Nation's (2013) framework. To analyse longer term retention of target words, the researcher identified instances of students discussing target words during PREs and using the same target words in their three-week delayed monologue.

The guiding questions from Nation's (2013) framework of *what is involved in knowing a word* for productive vocabulary knowledge was used to classify PREs. These episodes were first analysed to identify instances of learners discussing "How is the word pronounced? *(knowledge of spoken form)"* then they were analysed to identify discussions of how spoken form can change with relation to any of the following questions:

> Q1: What word parts are needed to express meaning? *(knowledge of word parts)*
>
> Q2: What word form can be used to express meaning? *(knowledge of form and meaning)*
>
> Q3: What items can the concept refer to? *(knowledge of concept and referents)*
>
> Q4: What other words could we use instead of this one? *(knowledge of associations)*
>
> Q5: In what patterns must we use this word? *(knowledge of grammatical function)*
>
> Q6: What words or types of words must we use with this one? *(knowledge of collocation)*

Q7: Where, when and how often can we use this word? *(knowledge of constraints on use)*

As will be detailed in the results, only three aspects of vocabulary knowledge were discussed during the PREs recorded in this study. Therefore, this paper will only focus on the relationship between spoken form of target words (i.e., prominence) and knowledge of word parts (Q1), knowledge of grammatical function (Q5) and knowledge of collocation (Q6).

The following examples from the data illustrate these three identified categorisations of PREs, in which prominent syllables are marked with capitals. This paper uses capitalisation to highlight prominent syllables as uttered by the students. It should be noted that not all prominence has been highlighted, but only where it is relevant to target words and to the analysis.

(1) Hyo the museum is so fascinating.

Pedro Hmmm the museum is fasciNAtion? Maybe is FAscinating?

Hyo The museum is FAsci-naysh… huh?

Pedro FAscinating. With I-N-G.

Hyo Oh, yes. Right. The museum is FAscinating.

Example (1) illustrates a discussion of how target word stress can shift with respect to *word parts.* This exchange highlights the complexity of PREs and how various aspects of vocabulary knowledge can be negotiated within a single incidence. In the example, the students focus on the lexical stress of the target word as they negotiate lexical stress with relation to the suffix of the target word *fascinating.* Furthermore, the exchange shows learners' experimentation of lexical stress placed on the third syllable with the suffix *-tion* and the first syllable with the suffix *-ing.* Therefore, this exchange was coded as a PRE focusing on understanding the relationship between *spoken form* and *word parts*.

(2) Suraya my work is not enJOYable.

Kiri oh. You like your work? I thought you hate.

Suraya no no, my work is not enJOYable; it IS so boring.

Kiri I think is 'my work is NOT enjoyable; it is SO boring.'

Suraya yes yes 'my work is NOT enjoyable; it is SO boring.'

Example (2) illustrates a discussion of how target word stress can shift concerning *grammatical function.* At the beginning of the exchange, there is a breakdown of communication in which Kiri understands that Suraya enjoys her work but suspects a misunderstanding because she appears to have prior knowledge of Suraya 'hating' her work. The pair then engaged in a discussion of focal stress placement related to the negative grammatical auxiliary 'not'. Thus, this exchange was coded as a PRE focusing on understanding the relationship between *spoken form* and *grammatical function*.

(3) Mary my boss is TERRible. He angry WITH every time.

Sofia He ANgry with?

Mary yes

Sofia Who? WHO's he ANgry with?

Mary With ME. He ANgry with ME every days.

Example (3) illustrates a discussion of how target word stress can shift with respect to *collocation.* In this exchange, the students discuss the spoken form of the target word *angry* with relation to the preposition *with.* In the beginning, Mary places stress on the *collocation* as she utters an incomplete thought group. Sofia recognises that the idea is vague and attempts to extract the missing information while correcting the focal stress placed on the target word. Ultimately Mary produces a complete utterance with correct stress placement. Hence, this exchange was coded as a PRE focusing on understanding the relationship between *spoken form* and *collocation.*

Results and Discussion

Findings in this study indicate that the structure of the productive oral vocabulary workshop produced a large proportion of PREs. As detailed in Table 3 below, 33 LREs were identified among the Taboo activity recordings, of which 10 (30.3%) were pronunciation-related, and among the Collective Story recordings, 92 LREs were identified, of which 42 (45.7%) were pronunciation-related. That is a total of 125 LREs being identified in all recordings, of which 52 (41.6%) were pronunciation-related and 73 (58.4%) were related to target vocabulary but not pronunciation. All instances of PREs were related to the suprasegmental feature of stress, either word or sentence level stress, in continuous speech.

Table 3. Analysis of LREs

Target word	**Taboo activity**			**Collective Story activity**			**Combined Taboo activity and Collective Story**		
	Total LREs	*PREs*	*Other LREs*	*Total LREs*	*PREs*	*Other LREs*	*Total LREs*	*PREs*	*Other LREs*
escape	6	0	6	16	7	9	22	7	15
fascinating	5	3	2	13	6	7	18	9	9
persuade	7	0	7	14	3	11	21	3	18
shocked	3	1	2	13	7	6	16	8	8
enjoyable	5	2	3	11	4	7	16	6	10
disappointed	5	3	2	9	4	5	14	7	7
angry	1	1	0	8	6	2	9	7	2
confusing	0	0	0	4	3	1	4	3	1
at each other's throats	1	0	1	4	2	2	5	2	3
Total number	33	10	23	92	42	50	125	52	73
Percentage of total LREs		30.3%	69.7%		45.7%	54.3%		41.6%	58.4%

The finding of 45.7% of total LREs in this study can be considered as high compared with previous studies in which the lowest report of LREs was 14.1% (Loewen & Isbell, 2017) and the highest was 40% (Bueno-Alastuey & Camino, 2013). The significance of this is that LREs are beneficial to learning because they either impact learning positively or not at all, but that a higher frequency of LREs is highly advantageous to learning (Lyle, 2015). Furthermore, this finding supports Darcy et al. (2021) who claimed that integrating explicit pronunciation instruction into existing syllabi can successfully lead to up to a third of the class time spent on PREs. Therefore, in contexts focused on improving spoken communication, including

productive oral vocabulary, explicit instruction of pronunciation can be expected to increase the frequency of PREs, which may enhance ability to use words in speech.

As outlined in Table 4 below, the analysis of PREs exposed three types of discussions taking place: 1) the relationship between *spoken form* and *grammatical function*; 2) the relationship between *spoken form* and *collocation;* and 3) the relationship between *spoken form* and *word parts*. Each of these three categorisations will now be discussed in greater detail.

Table 4. Analysis of PREs

	Number of PREs focused on the relationship between spoken form and another aspect of target word knowledge		
	Spoken form and grammatical function	*Spoken form and collocation*	*Spoken form and word parts*
escape	5	2	0
fascinating	4	0	5
persuade	3	0	0
shocked	2	4	2
enjoyable	6	0	0
disappointed	1	5	1
angry	3	4	0
confusing	2	0	1
at each other's throats	2	0	0
Total number	28	15	9
Percentage of total PREs (n=52)	53.8%	28.8%	17.3%
Percentage of total LREs (n=125)	22.4%	12%	7.2%

The Relationship Between Spoken Form and Grammatical Function

Findings showed that 28 episodes focused on discussion of phonological form with relation to grammatical function, which represents 53.8% of PREs and 22.4% of total LREs. Specifically, they concentrated on changes to target word pronunciation depending on shifting focal stress between the target word and a grammatical function word, as was illustrated in Example (2). Understanding the relationship between grammar and phonological form has long since been highlighted as an important aspect of pronunciation training (Sicola & Darcy, 2015). When compared to previously reported rates of LREs, which ranged from 6 - 40% (e.g., Bueno-Alastuey & Camino, 2013; Lasito & Storch, 2013), the rate of 22.4% of total LREs identified in this study falls in the mid-range and is a very promising finding.

Further analysis showed that 15 of these episodes focused on discussion related to shifting emphatic stress between target word and auxiliary *not*, which is 28.8% of PREs and 12% of total LREs. The remainder of these episodes focused on discussions relating to the phonological form of the target word with relation to focal stress being placed on the target word or the grammatical function words within three different structures, each of which is illustrated in the following three examples.

By in passive structures with 2 episodes (3.8% of PREs and 1.6% of total LREs). Example (4) below illustrates this type of PRE:

(4) Christian When I CAME here, I was shocked BY the new CULture.
Pedro I think you punch on shocked. Remember we punch the words?
Christian Oh, yes.

Pedro So, is SHOCKed by
Gianni Right. I was SHOCKed by the new CULture.

The *grammatical subject* with 4 episodes (7.7% of PREs and 3.2% of total LREs). Example (5) below illustrates a discussion that prompted a shift in focal stress from the grammatical subject *friend* to the main verb and target word *persuade.* Incidentally, the target word *persuade* was unintelligible until the focal stress was corrected.

(5) Boris My FRIEND swayed me to GO to the casino.

Gianni What did your friend do? He go to the casino?

Boris He PERsuade ME to go.

Gianni Oh, he convince you to go?

Boris Yeah, he perSUADE me with promises that I will MAKE some MONey there.

The verb *to be* with 7 instances (13.5% of PREs and 5.6% of total LREs). Example (6) below illustrates focal stress initially being placed on *was* that prompted a discussion of the omitted suffix -ed on the target word form, *disappointed*. Although Hyo did not recast the entire initial structure containing *was,* he did correct the phonological form of the target word, *disappointed.*

(6)	Hyo	He WAS disappoint because his DREAM is be a RICH LAWyer, but he isn't a GOOD student.
	Christian	DisaPPOINTed. He was disaPPOINTed.
	Hyo	Yes, disaPPOINTed. He need to study MORE.

Meaningful input provided to learners during pronunciation training can potentially explain the considerably higher rate of PREs focused on understanding how the phonological form changes with relation to grammatical function of auxiliary *not*. On each of the days in which learners trained using the RFC technique, meaningful sentences containing the target words were provided and used as the focus of pronunciation practice. The negative grammatical aspect was the only one of these grammatical functions to be incorporated into the sentences, in which learners were required to identify the placement of stress in pairs. However the relationship between focal stress and negative aspect was not deliberately highlighted. For example, learners were presented with the sentence "The book is not confusing; it is clear and simple." without focal stress being highlighted. Learners were then required to work in pairs to identify focal stress as being placed on "*not*" rather than "*confusing*" in the first clause, and on "*clear"* and "*simple"* in the second clause. This finding expands on Darcy et al. (2021), who showed that phonological training could promote PREs. The present study further emphasises the contextually mediated nature of LREs (Lyle, 2015). Furthermore, it indicates that phonological training can promote more nuanced PREs by implicitly drawing learners' attention to the relationship between phonological form and specific grammatical functions. Therefore, results from the present study may suggest that the integration of pronunciation teaching with grammar teaching can generate complex PREs leading to enriched understanding of the phonological form of target words.

The analysis revealed that nine students who participated in the 28 episodes focused on understanding the relationship between spoken form and grammatical function. Of these nine students, six subsequently used the target word that was discussed in the PRE in their three-week delayed monologue. Interestingly, the three learners who did not use target word in delayed production were observed to have lower levels of oral proficiency at the outset of the

program. This may have limited their ability to notice or retain form-function relationships, despite participating in the same instructional activities. These individual differences highlight the need to consider baseline proficiency when evaluating learners' uptake and application of vocabulary instruction. Nonetheless, this finding supports previous research that has shown that explicit vocabulary teaching in conjunction with textual and aural input sustains productive vocabulary gains after a two-week delay collaborative (Jones & Waller, 2017). It is also consistent with previous research that has shown that collaborative problem solving helps learners to solve language-related problems (Basterrechea & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2020; Leeser, 2004; Swain & Lapkin, 1998) and can enable learners to 'use the language of others' in subsequent productive tasks (Swain & Lapkin, 1998).

The Relationship Between Spoken Form and Collocation

Findings showed that 15 episodes focused on discussion of phonological form in relation to collocations, which is 28.8% of PREs and 12% of total LREs. Of these episodes, 10 (66.7%) learners attempted to negotiate a missing object by using stress placement on a collocation, as previously illustrated in example (3). The episodes related to collocations *shocked by* (3 episodes), *disappointed with* (3 episodes), and *angry with* (4 episodes). Although collocation was not a feature emphasised during the pronunciation training, it was the focus of activities related to the development of form-meaning links on the first day of the workshop. Therefore, learners had prior knowledge of collocational relationships that would enable such problem solving to take place.

This finding supports claims that actively manipulating words can be a sign of deeper levels of learning, which can lead to vocabulary development (de Azevedo & Tomitch, 2019). In the present study, six different students were involved in the ten episodes in which learners negotiated a missing object. All six students spontaneously used at least one of these collocations in their monologue on the fifth day of the workshop, with one student using two. Then, two of the six students were able to spontaneously use one of these collocation in a three-week delayed monologue. This finding builds on previous reports of grammatical LREs leading to improved accuracy of target features in subsequent writing tasks (Basterrechea & Leeser, 2019) to show that complex PREs can lead to the ability to use the discussed lexical feature in subsequent speaking tasks.

The Relationship Between Spoken Form and Word Parts

Findings showed that nine episodes focused on discussion of the phonological form of target words with relation to word parts, that is, 17.3% of PREs and 7.2% of total LREs. For example, learners negotiated the placement of lexical stress related to one of the following suffixes: *-ed, -ing, -able* or *-tion* suffixes, as previously illustrated in example (1). As with collocation, there was a deliberate focus on identifying word parts on the first day of the workshop. The objective was to develop an understanding of the relationship between lexical meaning and part of speech, for example, suffixes that change parts of speech from verb to noun or adjective.

Further analysis of the data demonstrated that all five students involved in these nine episodes used the target word, which was the subject of discussion in the PRE, spontaneously in a monologue on the fifth day of the workshop. This finding is consistent with reports that LREs during learning tasks can facilitate the use of acquired knowledge in subsequent tasks (Williams, 2001). Moreover, in all instances of the target word being used in the monologue, students self-corrected their production of the target phonological form. Instances of self-correction were either focused on correcting lexical stress of the target form or self-correction of the word form (i.e., initially using the wrong suffix and then self-correcting).

This finding is supported by theories of speech development, which state that initial productions will be unstable and become more stable with repeated output (Altman, 1997; Karmiloff-Smith, 1986). In the final stages of speech development, learners increasingly use self-correction strategies to regulate verbal output, which can also be viewed as a form of repetition to further stabilise accuracy of oral production (Karmiloff-Smith, 1986). Therefore, this finding indicates that engaging in PREs may have helped learners to reach the final stages of productive oral development.

As a result, it seems that this dual focus on morphological structure and phonological form during classes offered learners with an opportunity to reinforce vocabulary knowledge in a more integrated way. By explicitly teaching how suffixes influence both grammatical function and lexical stress patterns, learners appeared to develop an ability to predict pronunciation and use target vocabulary in speech. Therefore teaching word parts and phonological form simultaneously, may support deeper lexical processing and facilitate the transition from receptive to productive word use.

Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

This study is the first to demonstrate that integrating pronunciation training into vocabulary-focused instruction can promote instance of PREs in classroom discussions. With 41.6% of all LREs in the study focusing on pronunciation, the findings reinforce the value of explicitly linking phonological form to other aspects of word knowledge. The results suggest that PREs may play a critical role in enhancing learners' ability to use the discussed feature of target words in subsequent speaking tasks. For educators, this highlights the potential benefits of embedding pronunciation instruction, especially suprasegmental features such as prominence, into vocabulary teaching to support deeper lexical understanding and oral fluency.

Although prior research (e.g., Ellis et al., 2001) questioned whether PREs translate into spontaneous language use, the current study provides preliminary evidence that learners can indeed transfer such learning into delayed production tasks. However, these results are based on a small sample, limiting generalisability. Additional research involving larger cohorts is necessary to confirm these outcomes and investigate the long-term retention of phonological and lexical knowledge.

Future research should also explore how instructional activities can be designed to elicit PREs targeting specific features such as stress-suffix awareness and how these can be adapted to suit learners at different proficiency levels. Follow-up tasks and delayed post-tests are recommended to assess the durability and transferability of learning. For practitioners seeking classroom-ready strategies, a companion publication (Mister, 2023) outlines the pronunciation-integrated teaching model employed in this study, offering concrete guidance for implementation. Ultimately, scalable and context-sensitive pedagogical frameworks are needed to embed these insights into sustainable language teaching practice.

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To Cite this Article

Mister, B. (2025). Enhancing Adult ESL Learners' Vocabulary Use through Pronunciation-Focused Discussion. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ), 29*(2). https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.29114a4

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