

**Critical Review:**

**In adult second language speakers of English seeking accent modification, can intervention based on suprasegmental features (i.e. prosody) be more effective than segmental features (consonants, vowels) in modifying foreign accents/improving positive speech characteristics?**

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This critical review examines whether intervention based on suprasegmental features (i.e. teaching prosody) is more effective than segmental features (consonants, vowels), in modifying foreign accents or improving positive speech characteristics. The studies reviewed offer suggestive evidence in support of better outcomes using the suprasegmental approach, despite the wide use of the segmental approach provided in training/education for both instructors and clients. Recommendation for clinical practice and future research are discussed.

perceptible speech difference or foreign accent when learning a second language. The request for accent modification in multi-lingual or bilingual speakers reflects the struggle these speakers des 1 (h) -ve(h) - (a) -(des 1 (h) -ve(h) - (a) -(des 1 (4.88 cm BT 41T Q 0.24 0 0 0.a) -2

is to train the production of segmental features including consonants and vowels

**Methods** Search Strategy

The research articles for this critical review were obtained through a computer database search. The databases included: PubMed, Google Scholar, and Scholars Portal. The following search terms were used (accent modification) OR (accent adjustment) OR (accent reduction) OR (pronunciation training) AND (segmental) AND (suprasegmental).

**Selection Criteria**

The studies that were included compared segmental or related instruction with suprasegmental instruction for 'second' language or nonnative learners of English. Studies that involved children or adolescents age 17 years and younger

point Likert scales similar to Derwing and Rossiter (2003).

A total of 12 rater's scores were appropriately excluded from analysis due to failure to use the full scales as instructed (to reduce the potential of floor effects). Appropriate inter-rater reliability scores were calculated (for non-expert and expert) indicating moderate levels of agreement. An appropriate two-way mixed ANOVA with Time (1 or 2) and teaching method was conducted separately for both comprehensibility scores and the accentedness scores from the 36 raters. Results indicated significant improvement for both the segmental group and suprasegmental group, where as no change occurred in the NSP group. Finally, an appropriate 2-way ANOVA with the 6 expert's ratings on narratives indicated significant improvement in comprehensibility and fluency only for the group receiving global (suprasegmental).

Although non-expert raters may be a strength for judging speech comprehensibility, the exclusion of 12 raters due to failure to score properly raises the possibility that raters were not trained adequately. A strength of the study was the use of blind raters, and matching of the groups to reduce potential systematic



Finally, perhaps a unified way of assessing changes in positive speech characteristics is warranted. The growing demand of motivated workers seeking accent modification services should be met with an equally fervent desire of instructors to supply the most effective teaching method. That is, one that is in the best interest of their clients.

### *References*

Anderson-Hsieh, J., Johnson, R., & Koehler, K. (2006). The relationship between native speaker judgments of nonnative pronunciation and deviance in segmentals, prosody, and