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The nineteen-nineties

Christine Goh
National Institute of Education
Nanyang Technological University
Singapore

In 1991, I was working on my MA dissertation at Birmingham University, in the UK. The research topic was David Brazil's model of discourse intonation (DI). My introduction to the model was reading the monograph *The communicative value of intonation* (Brazil 1985). It was not an easy read, but Brazil's ideas profoundly changed my views about pronunciation teaching. Before I began my postgraduate studies I taught English to secondary school students in Malaysia, so I knew the demands of teaching pronunciation. Like many syllabuses at that time, mine aimed to help learners 'speak using correct pronunciation, with correct intonation, word stress and sentence rhythm'. To me, English intonation seemed fleeting, even capricious. Brazil, however, offered a comprehensive description of intonation as realised in spoken interaction by relating intonation to the function of an utterance. The model also had a simple-to-use notation system that I felt would work equally well for research and teaching. If I was fully convinced of the merits of DI, some of my classmates in the applied linguistics programme, especially those from Britain, were ambivalent. Other than the issue of regional variation they said, there was also the question of why anyone outside of Britain would be interested in this model. The discussion in that seminar room foregrounded for me some of the issues of pronunciation teaching which surfaced in the years that followed.

Shortly after Brazil's 1985 monograph, *Intonation in context*, the first course book based on the DI framework was published (Bradford 1988). This was followed by a collection of research papers (Hewings 1990), a pronunciation course book for pre-intermediate learners (Hewings 1993) and David Brazil's own course (Brazil 1994). Bradford and Brazil devoted their entire course to the various sub-systems in the DI framework, while Hewings presented intonation in one useful chapter that included activities for teaching pronunciation communicatively as advocated by Celce-Murcia (1987). Although the role of DI in pronunciation seemed promising, it is clear in retrospect that its value went mostly unnoticed in the 1990s, ironic in an era when 'communication' and 'contexts' were buzzwords in language teaching. Even in situations where the Hallidayan view of language was prominent, DI (which was based on the same) never truly became an integral part of many language and teacher education programmes. Nevertheless, its application in research has been sustained in comparison. Teachers found the concepts abstract and therefore difficult to explain, teach or perceive. As with all changes and innovations, the central 'precepts' must be disseminated to and understood by potential users. In the case of DI, its value was immediately recognised by those who had direct contact with David Brazil and his work. Unfortunately, these ideas were not always disseminated widely outside the extended Birmingham community. As a result, DI as a

framework for teaching did not acquire a critical mass for it to flourish the way other areas of language teaching did.

Brown's (2000) study towards the end of the decade revealed a general lack of interest in DI. Selecting 29 pronunciation features, he surveyed 33 international experts/ textbook writers and 115 Singaporean teacher trainees. Both groups identified aspects of pronunciation they considered 'high priority' in teaching. Intonation in discourse was not one of them. In spite of the apparent lack of interest in DI in the later part of the 1990s, it is heartening to see recently that its applications in teaching have not only been reinvigorated but also widened considerably, compared to the previous decade. Richard Cauldwell's award-winning 'Streaming Speech' demonstrates how DI can be successfully incorporated into the teaching of speaking as well as listening (Cauldwell 2002). Martin Hewings also shows teacher educators and language learners the potential of DI by presenting intonation as manageable packages that are 'framed within a theory of intonation so that they can be seen as related aspects of a coherent system' (Hewings 2006).

Fifteen years ago, with my rather na¨ıve view of ELT, I believed that many teachers would readily choose to exploit the potential of a discourse model of intonation for teaching pronunciation. The years that followed showed me many realities I had not foreseen. Nevertheless, my experience working with DI in teaching and research over the years (e.g. Goh 1994, 2000) has further convinced me of its relevance in both areas. Although some have suggested that language learners could not perceive and manipulate prosodic features during spoken interaction, my MA project convinced me that language learners are capable of a lot more than we often give them credit for. In closing, I will highlight two issues I think are pertinent to the continued reinvigoration of DI as a framework for teaching and research. Firstly, with the development of English as an international language, we must be able to justify the continuing use of a model of intonation based on 'prestige' varieties of English. Secondly, we must provide opportunities for younger language educators and researchers to become professionally competent in the theory and applications of DI. While it is possible to continue providing justifications for its use, DI can only remain a viable framework if there are new people with fresh ideas to advocate it.

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