

French Pronunciation Unit Assessment

Pilot Study conducted in
Spring & Summer, 2019

What we aimed to do:

The French instructor approached me and asked for my help with developing a new way to help student acquire certain French vowels and consonants that do not exist in the English phonological system. He wanted help with the following levels:

- French 101, 102, 103

Focus of Assessment: How well students produce **vowels and consonants in French** with the aid of the pronunciation analysis program, Praat.

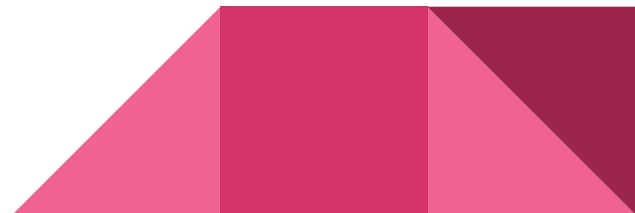
Praat is an open-source program that requires training to use.



What we aimed to do:

French 101 Syllabus SLO was chosen:

- *Interpret basic French spoken at a normal pace*
- I explained the assessment process and requirements to the instructor, and I encouraged him to develop an additional SLO that focused on pronunciation since he thought of it as important
- The instructor resisted doing this for the following reasons:
 - that his syllabus was complete
 - He saw no reason for Stage One of the assessment process
- I decided to go on with the project and do my best
 - I would still be able to develop procedures for Praat



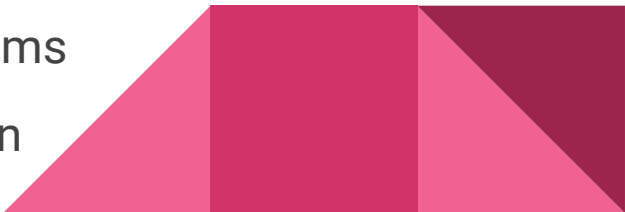
What we did:

Isolated several French vowels and consonants that are difficult for HWC students

Used Praat to make spectrograms of these sounds

- In isolation
- Within words
 - In word initial, word medial, and word final positions

Developed a set of procedures for the students to follow to:

- Hear the sounds
 - See the spectrograms of those sounds
 - Practice the sounds and record their own spectrograms
 - Compare native speaker spectrograms with their own
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What we did:

If we had a pronunciation-related SLO, we would have used this rubric. Alas, not this time...

	<u>Does not meet</u> the Outcome	Demonstrates <u>Emerging Ability</u> toward the Outcome	Demonstrates <u>Competence</u> in the Outcome	Demonstrates <u>Mastery</u> of the Outcome
Hook	No hook is evident	The anecdote, fact, or quote used is off-putting due to unintelligibility, lack of sensitivity to the audience, or excessive length	A <u>clear</u> yet <u>rote</u> anecdote, fact, or quote manages to catch the attention of the audience.	A <u>clear and interesting</u> anecdote, fact, or quote effectively attracts the attention of the audience
Background	No topical background is provided.	The topical background is insufficient and / or does not connect or flow into the preview.	The topical background is established and merges into the preview but in a mechanical or uninspired manner.	The overall topical background is well developed and merges creatively into the preview
Preview	No main points are evident.	Only one or two (rather than three) main points are provided, or one or more of the main points is stated unintelligibly.	Three main points of the speech are stated, but some of the three are somewhat unclear or redundant	Clearly states the three main points of the speech

What we did:


Participants

- HWC Students
 - French 101, 102, 103
- All native English speakers
 - Attended high school in the US
- Several are Bilingual Students
 - Spanish/English
- One student had taken Linguistics at HWC



What we did:

Assessment Procedures:

1. Failed to agree on an SLO
 2. Developed procedures for students to use in class and at home with Praat'
 3. Practiced the procedures on ourselves and with the Unit Liaison Coordinator
 4. Made improvements based on feedback:
 - a. Diagrams of the mouth added to the procedures
 - i. Showing the tongue position while pronouncing specific sounds
 - b. Video demonstrations of how to make specific sounds added
 5. Practiced revised procedures ourselves
 6. Guided students in class as they did this themselves
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What we learned:

Fixating on a tool to use or a procedure to develop is problematic without an agreed upon SLO that can actually measure what we are interested in learning about.

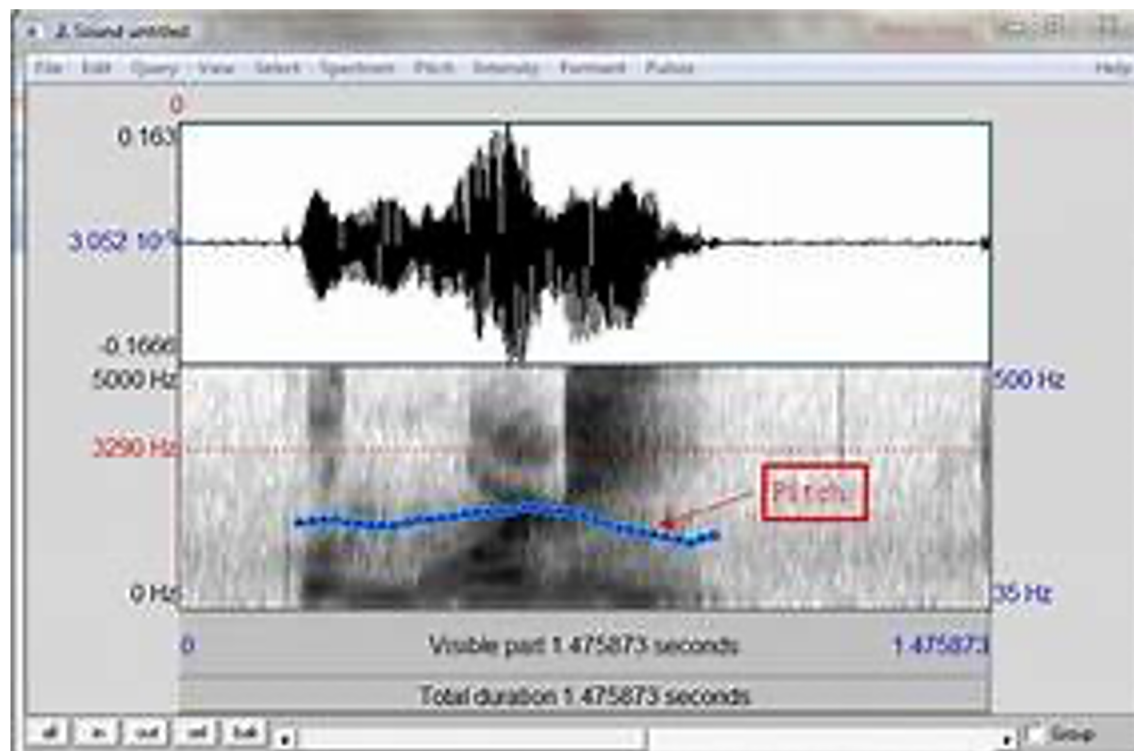
If the instructor is not interested in creating a new SLO to match the tool or procedure he or she is interested in exploring / using, either:

- Convince the instructor to use another rubric / tool, or develop a new procedure
- Convince the instructor to create a new SLO that can measure what he or she wants to learn about

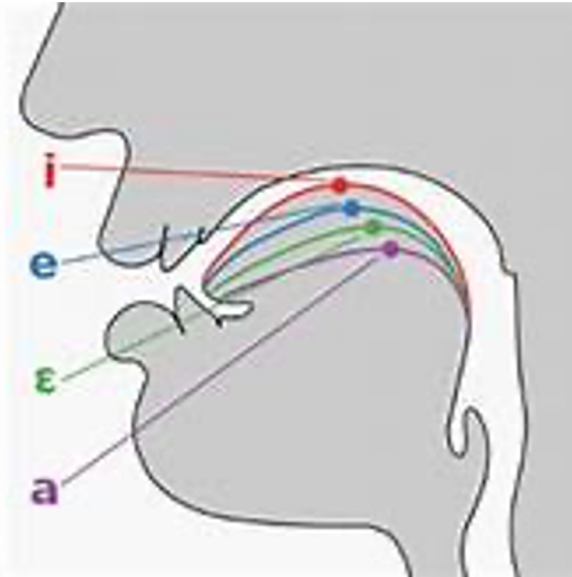
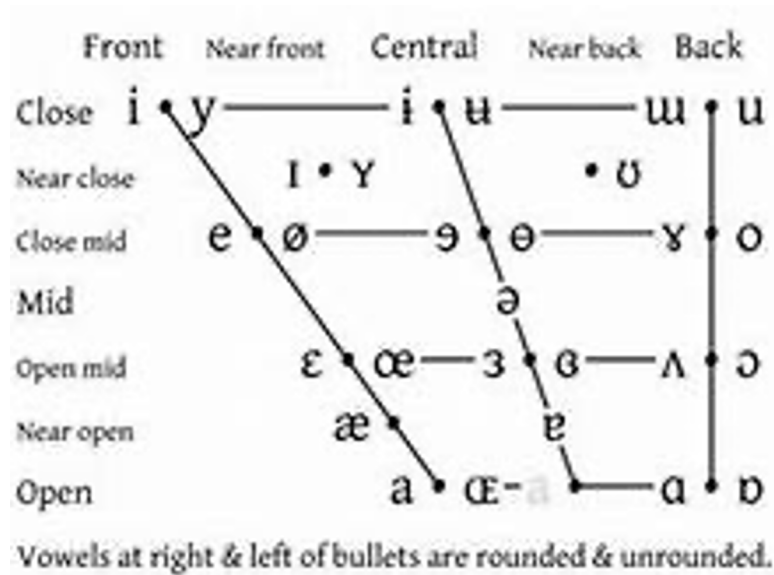
This will take diplomacy (in greater measure than what I possess)



Praat Spectrogram



Vowel chart and tongue position diagram



Next Steps:

Perhaps we could shift to studying the comprehensibility of specific utterances in French that include vocabulary and speech acts.

There is an SLO that covers that in the French 101 syllabus.

The pronunciation practice with Praat would then become a preliminary step that we would not measure.

A new rubric would be written that would measure the underlined items above.

