

The section on pronunciation in conversational speech (93) stuck out in particular to me. Speaking two and a half languages, this has been one of the most difficult things. As I am learning Spanish I often reflect on how difficult it must have been to learn English at such a young age other than to just listen and repeat what people were saying. The book is absolutely right in saying, "In conversational speech, the pronunciation of words may differ very strongly from the way the same words are produced when they are read aloud carefully from a list." (93) And so as my mother leaned over my crib in the morning and enunciated very clearly, "Good Morning Sam", I probably didn't understand that it meant the same thing as when my dad would greet my sister with "g'mornin' Emm". It's the same with learning Spanish now, where I am practicing vocabulary, and the proper way to say words and conjugate verbs, and put sentences together, but in reality, conversational speech doesn't always strictly adhere to pronunciation guidelines and verb agreements. So when I listen to Spanish being spoken it is often hard to pick out exactly what is being said and I will need to do a lot of context reading in order to figure it out. Similarly, generations have different speech patterns, and even pronunciations. For example, I know many people that are my grandparents' age or maybe a little younger who use "I says" instead of "I said". But somehow I learned what they really meant without having to be told. It seems that my brain realized what they meant to say and just corrected it for them. At the same time if I used the acronyms of shorthand "texting" language in speech, older generations may not understand what I'm saying, but will be able to infer a context from what I'm saying all together.