

Researcher

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**Title of Project**

The Effect of Web-based Pragma-Prosodic Instruction
and Aptitude on Learner Pragmatic Development

Research Supervisor

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TIRF Research Topic Investigated

Digital Technology in Language Education

Project Summary

The study investigates the extent to which English learners' interaction skills can improve as a result of contextualized prosody instruction on a web-based platform. In step with advancing globalization, learners are increasingly more likely to participate in diverse English-mediated interactions (Crystal, 2003). Effective participation in such interactions requires the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts, known as pragmatic competence (Taguchi, 2009). Among the components of pragmatic competence, prosody (e.g., intonation and sentence stress) is fundamental for successful interaction. Learners need to be aware of not just what they say and to whom, but also *how* they say it. Despite the importance of prosody in interaction and the difficulties English learners face to use it appropriately (Herrero & Devís, 2020), pragmatic functions of prosody have been largely ignored in textbooks and classroom instruction. In this mixed-methods quasi-experimental study, 60 English learners from China will be randomly assigned to the instruction group or the control group. Learners' use of prosody in requests before and after instruction will be recorded through video-based role plays, evaluated for appropriateness by 20 trained raters, and analyzed acoustically. Quantitative data will be triangulated with learners' survey responses about perceived instructional effectiveness. To provide a complete picture of instruction effectiveness, the study will account for variation in learners' aptitude for acquiring prosodic properties of English. Results of the study will provide important guidance for designing effective and practical digitally mediated contextualized prosody instruction and help to better understand the role of learners' aptitude in its effectiveness.