13 Teaching pronunciation

A Pronunciation issues

Almost all English language teachers get students to study grammar and vocabulary, practise functional dialogues, take part in productive skill activities, and become competent in listening and reading. Yet some of these same teachers make little attempt to teach pronunciation in any overt way and only give attention to it in passing. It is possible that they are nervous of dealing with sounds and intonation; perhaps they feel they have too much to do already and pronunciation teaching will only make things worse. They may claim that even without a formal pronunciation syllabus, and without specific pronunciation teaching, many students seem to acquire serviceable pronunciation in the course of their studies.

However, the fact that some students are able to acquire reasonable pronunciation without overt pronunciation teaching should not blind us to the benefits of a focus on pronunciation in our lessons. Pronunciation teaching not only makes students aware of different sounds and sound features (and what these mean), but can also improve their speaking immeasurably. Concentrating on sounds, showing where they are made in the mouth, making students aware of where words should be stressed – all these things give them extra information about spoken English and help them achieve the goal of improved comprehension and intelligibility.

In some particular cases pronunciation help allows students to get over serious intelligibility problems. Joan Kerr, a speech pathologist, described (in a paper at the 1998 ELICOS conference in Melbourne, Australia) how she was able to help a Cantonese speaker of English achieve considerably greater intelligibility by working on his point of articulation – changing his focus of resonance. Whereas many Cantonese vowels happen towards the back of the mouth, English ones are frequently articulated nearer the front or in the centre of the mouth. The moment you can get Cantonese speakers, she suggested, to bring their vowels further forward, increased intelligibility occurs. With other language groups it may be a problem of nasality (e.g. Vietnamese) or the degree to which speakers do or do not open their mouths. Other language groups may have trouble with intonation or stress patterns in phrases and sentences (see Chapter 2, D2 and D5), and there are many individual sounds which cause difficulty for different first language speakers.

For all these people, being made aware of pronunciation issues will be of immense benefit not only to their own production, but also to their own understanding of spoken English.

A1 Perfection versus intelligibility

A question we need to answer is how good our students' pronunciation ought to be. Should they sound like native speakers, so perfect that just by listening to them we would assume that they were British or American or Australian? Or is this asking too much? Perhaps we should be happy if they can at least make themselves understood.

The degree to which students acquire 'perfect' pronunciation seems to depend very much on their attitude to how they speak and how well they hear. In the case of attitude there are a number of psychological issues which may well affect how 'foreign' a person sounds when they speak. For example, many students do not especially want to sound like native speakers; frequently they wish to be speakers of English as an international language and this does not necessarily imply trying to sound exactly like someone from Britain or Canada, for example. Frequently foreign language speakers want to retain their own accent when they speak the foreign language because that is part of their identity. Thus speaking English with, say, a Mexican accent is fine for the speaker who wishes to retain his or her 'Mexican-ness' in the foreign language.

Under the pressure of such cultural considerations it has become customary for language teachers to consider intelligibility as the prime goal of pronunciation teaching. This implies that the students should be able to use pronunciation which is good enough for them to be always understood. If their pronunciation is not up to this standard, it is thought, then there is a serious danger that they will fail to communicate effectively.

If intelligibility is the goal then it suggests that some pronunciation features are more important than others. Some sounds, for example, have to be right if the speaker is to get their message across (for example /n/ as in /sɪnɪŋ/ versus /ŋ/ as in /sɪŋɪŋ/) though others (for example /ð/ and /θ/) may not cause a lack of intelligibility if they are confused. Stressing words and phrases correctly is vital if emphasis is to be given to the important parts of messages and if words are to be understood correctly. Intonation – the ability to vary the pitch and tune of speech – is an important meaning carrier too.

The fact that we may want our students to work towards an intelligible pronunciation rather than achieve a native-speaker quality may not appeal to all, however. Despite what we have said about identity, some may wish to sound exactly like a native speaker. In such circumstances it would be churlish to deny them such an objective.

A2 Problems

Two particular problems occur in much pronunciation teaching and learning:

- **What students can hear:** some students have great difficulty hearing pronunciation features which we want them to reproduce. Frequently speakers of different first languages have problems with different sounds, especially where, as with /b/ and /v/ for Spanish speakers, there are not the same two sounds in their language. If they cannot distinguish between them,

they will find it almost impossible to produce the two different English phonemes.

There are two ways of dealing with this: in the first place we can show students how sounds are made through demonstration, diagrams, and explanation. But we can also draw the sounds to their attention every time they appear on a tape or in our own conversation. In this way we gradually train the students' ears. When they can hear correctly they are on the way to being able to speak correctly.

- **The intonation problem:** for many teachers the most problematic area of pronunciation is intonation. Some of us (and many of our students) find it extremely difficult to hear 'tunes' or to identify the different patterns of rising and falling tones. In such situations it would be foolish to try and teach them.

  However, the fact that we may have difficulty recognising specific intonation tunes does not mean that we should abandon intonation teaching altogether. Most of us can hear when someone is being enthusiastic or bored, when they are surprised, or when they are really asking a question rather than just confirming something they already know. One of our tasks, then, is to give students opportunities to recognise such moods and intentions either on tape or through the way we ourselves model them (see Chapter 4, D2). We can then get students to imitate the way these moods are articulated, even though we may not (be able to) discuss the technicalities of the different intonation patterns themselves.

The key to successful pronunciation teaching, however, is not so much getting students to produce correct sounds or intonation tunes, but rather to have them listen and notice how English is spoken – either on audio or videotape or from the teachers themselves. The more aware they are the greater the chance that their own intelligibility levels will rise.

A3 The phonemic alphabet: to use or not to use?

It is perfectly possible to work on the sounds of English without ever using any phonemic symbols. We can get students to hear the difference, say, between *sheep* and *cheap* or between *ship* and *sheep* just by saying the words enough times. There is no reason why this should not be effective. We can also describe how the sounds are made (by demonstrating, drawing pictures of the mouth and lips, or explaining where the sounds are made).

However, since English is bedevilled, for many students (and even first language speakers), by problems of sound and spelling correspondence, it may make sense for them to be aware of the different phonemes, and the clearest way of promoting this awareness is to introduce the various symbols.

There are other reasons for using phonemic symbols too. Dictionaries usually give the pronunciation of their words in phonemic symbols. If students can read these symbols they can know how the word is said even without having to hear it. When both teacher and students know the symbols it is easier to explain what mistake has

occurred and why it has happened; we can also use the symbols for pronunciation tasks and games.

Some teachers complain that learning the symbols places an unnecessary burden on students. For certain groups this may be true, and the level of strain is greatly increased if they are asked to write in phonemic script (Newton 1999). But if they are only asked to recognise rather than produce the different symbols, then the strain is not so great, especially if they are introduced to the various symbols gradually rather than all at once.

In this chapter we assume that the knowledge of phonemic script is of benefit to students.

A4 When to teach pronunciation

Just as with any aspect of language – grammar, vocabulary, etc. – teachers have to decide when to include pronunciation teaching into lesson sequences. There are a number of alternatives to choose from:

- **Whole lessons:** some teachers devote whole lesson sequences to pronunciation, and some schools timetable pronunciation lessons at various stages during the week.

  Though it would be difficult to spend a whole class period working on one or two sounds, it can make sense to work on connected speech concentrating on stress and intonation over some forty-five minutes, provided that we follow normal planning principles (see Chapter 22A). Thus we could have students do recognition work on intonation patterns, work on the stress in certain key phrases, and then move on to the rehearsing and performing of a short play extract which exemplified some of the issues we worked on.

  Making pronunciation the main focus of a lesson does not mean that every minute of that lesson has to be spent on pronunciation work. Sometimes students may also listen to a longer tape, working on listening skills before moving to the pronunciation part of the sequence. Sometimes students may work on aspects of vocabulary before going on to work on word stress, sounds, and spelling.

- **Discrete slots:** some teachers insert short, separate bits of pronunciation work into lesson sequences. Over a period of weeks they work on all the individual phonemes either separately or in contrasting pairs. At other times they spend a few minutes on a particular aspect of intonation, say, or on the contrast between two or more sounds.

  Such separate pronunciation slots can be extremely useful, and provide a welcome change of pace and activity during a lesson. Many students enjoy them, and they succeed precisely because we do not spend too long on any one issue. However, pronunciation is not a separate skill; it is part of the way we speak. Even if we want to keep our separate pronunciation phases for the reasons we have suggested, we will also need times when we integrate pronunciation work into longer lesson sequences.

- **Integrated phases:** many teachers get students to focus on pronunciation issues as an integral part of a lesson. When students listen to a tape, for example, one of the things which we can do is draw their attention to pronunciation features on the tape, if necessary having students work on sounds that are especially prominent, or getting them to imitate intonation patterns for questions, for example.

  Pronunciation teaching forms a part of many sequences where students study language form (see Chapter 11). When we model words and phrases we draw our students' attention to the way they are said; one of the things we want to concentrate on during an accurate reproduction stage (see Chapter 11, A1) is the students' correct pronunciation.

- **Opportunistic teaching:** just as teachers may stray from their original plan when lesson realities make this inevitable, and teach vocabulary or grammar opportunistically because it has 'come up' (see Chapter 11, A2), so there are good reasons why we may want to stop what we are doing and spend a minute or two on some pronunciation issue that has arisen in the course of an activity. A lot will depend on what kind of activity the students are involved in since we will be reluctant to interrupt fluency work inappropriately (see Chapter 7, C3), but tackling a problem at the moment when it occurs can be a successful way of dealing with pronunciation.

Although whole pronunciation lessons may be an unaffordable luxury for classes under syllabus and timetable pressure, many teachers tackle pronunciation in a mixture of the ways suggested above.

Examples of pronunciation teaching

The areas of pronunciation which we need to draw our students' attention to include individual sounds they are having difficulty with, word and phrase/sentence stress, and intonation. But students will also need help with connected speech for fluency and the correspondence between sounds and spelling. All of these areas are touched on in the examples below.

Working with sounds

We often ask students to focus on one particular sound. This allows us to demonstrate how it is made and show how it can be spelt – a major concern with English since there is far less one-to-one correspondence between sound and spelling than there is in some other languages – especially Romance languages.

We could follow the approach taken in the *Lifelines Intermediate* books and have students identify which words in a list (including *bird, word, worm, worth, curl, heard, first, lurch*, etc.) have the sound /ɜː/ (Hutchinson 1998: 45). They are then asked to identify the one consonant (r) which is always present in the spelling of words with this sound. We could also show or demonstrate the position of the lips when this sound is made and get students to make the sound and say words which include it.

Two more examples show specific approaches to the teaching and practising of sounds:

Example 1: *Ship* and *chip* — Sounds: /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ — Level: intermediate

Contrasting two sounds which are very similar and often confused is a popular way of getting students to concentrate on specific aspects of pronunciation.

The sequence starts with students listening to pairs of words and practising the difference between /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, for example:

ship	chip	washing	watching
sherry	cherry	cash	catch
shoes	choose	mash	match
sheep	cheap	wish	which, witch

From *Sounds English* by J O'Connor and C Fletcher (Pearson Education Ltd). The teaching sequence described here comes directly from this book.

If they have no problem with these sounds the teacher may well move on to other sounds and/or merely do a short practice exercise as a reminder of the difference between them. But if the students have difficulty discriminating between /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ the teacher asks them to listen to a tape and, in a series of exercises, they have to work out which word they hear, for example:

1 Small shops/chops are often expensive.
2 The dishes/ditches need cleaning.
3 I couldn't mash/match these things up.
4 She enjoys washing/watching the children.

They now move on to exercises which practise each sound separately, for example:

It's very cheap.
a grey chair
a cheese sandwich
You cheat!
no chance
a pretty child

before doing a communication task which has words with the target sounds built into it, for example:

How much do you enjoy the things in the chart below?
1 very much 2 not much 3 not at all
Fill in the chart for yourself, and then ask three other people.

	You		
playing chess			
watching TV			
washing up			
going to a football match			
cooking chips			
eating chips			
lying in the sunshine			
shopping			

If, during this teaching sequence, students seem to be having trouble with either of the sounds, the teacher may well refer to a diagram of the mouth to help students see where the sounds are made, for example:

Contrasting sounds in this way has a lot to recommend it. It helps students concentrate on detail, especially when they are listening to hear the small difference between the sounds. It identifies sounds that are frequently confused by various nationalities. It is manageable for the teacher (rather than taking on a whole range of sounds at the same time), and it can be good fun for the students.

This kind of exercise can be done whether or not the teacher and students work with phonemic symbols.

Example 2: The phonemic chart | Sounds: all | Level: any

The writer Adrian Underhill is unambiguous about the use of phonemic symbols (see A3 above) and has produced a 'phonemic chart', which he recommends integrating into English lessons at various points.

The phonemic chart is laid out in relation to where in the mouth the forty-four sounds of southern British English are produced. In its top right-hand corner little boxes are used to describe stress patterns, and arrows are used to describe the five basic intonation patterns (i.e. fall, rise, fall–rise, rise–fall, and level):

iː	ɪ	ʊ	uː	ɪə	eɪ	ː X
e	ə	ɜː	ɔː	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ
æ	ʌ	ɑː	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ

p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j

The phonemic chart from *Sound Foundations* by A Underhill (Macmillan Heinemann)

What makes this chart special are the ways in which Adrian Underhill suggests that it should be used. Because each sound has a separate square, either the teacher or the students can point to that square to ask students to produce that sound or to show they recognise which sound is being produced. For example, the teacher might point to three sounds one after the other (/ʃ/, /ɑ/, and /p/) to get the students to say *shop.* Among other possibilities, the teacher can say a sound or a word and the student has to point to the sound(s) on the chart. When learners say something and produce an incorrect sound, the teacher can point to the sound they should have made. When the teacher first models a sound he can point to it on the chart to identify it for the students (Underhill 1994: 101).

The phonemic chart can be carried around by the teacher or left on the classroom wall. If it is permanently there and easily accessible, the teacher can use it at any stage when it becomes appropriate. Such a usable resource is a wonderful teaching aid as a visit to many classrooms where the chart is in evidence will demonstrate.

There are many other techniques and activities for teaching sounds apart from the ones we have shown here. Some teachers play sound bingo where the squares on the bingo card have sounds, or phonemically 'spelt' words instead of ordinary orthographic words. When the teacher says the sound or the word the student can cross off that square of their board. When all their squares are covered they shout 'bingo'. Noughts and crosses can be played in the same way, where each square has a sound and the students have to say a word with that sound in it to get that square, for example:

/æ/	/dʒ/	/t/
/iː/	/ə/	/d/
/ə/	/ɔː/	/z/

Teachers can get students to say 'tongue-twisters' sometimes too (e.g. *She sells sea shells by the sea shore*) or to find rhymes for poetry/limerick lines. When students are familiar with the phonemic alphabet they can play 'odd man out' (five vocabulary items where one does not fit in with the others), but the words are written in phonemic script rather than ordinary orthography.

B2 Working with stress

Stress is important in individual words, in phrases, and in sentences. By shifting it around in a phrase or a sentence we can change emphasis or meaning.

As we saw in Figure 16 in Chapter 10C, it is assumed that when students meet new words in class (and if the new words end up on the board) the teacher will mark the stress of those words (using a consistent system of stress marking). Another common way of drawing our students' attention to stress issues is to show where the weak vowel sounds occur in words (rather than focusing on the stressed syllables themselves). We can draw attention to the **schwa** /ə/ in words like /fət'ɒgrəfə/ (*photographer*), or /ɒpətju:nɪtɪ/ (*opportunity*).

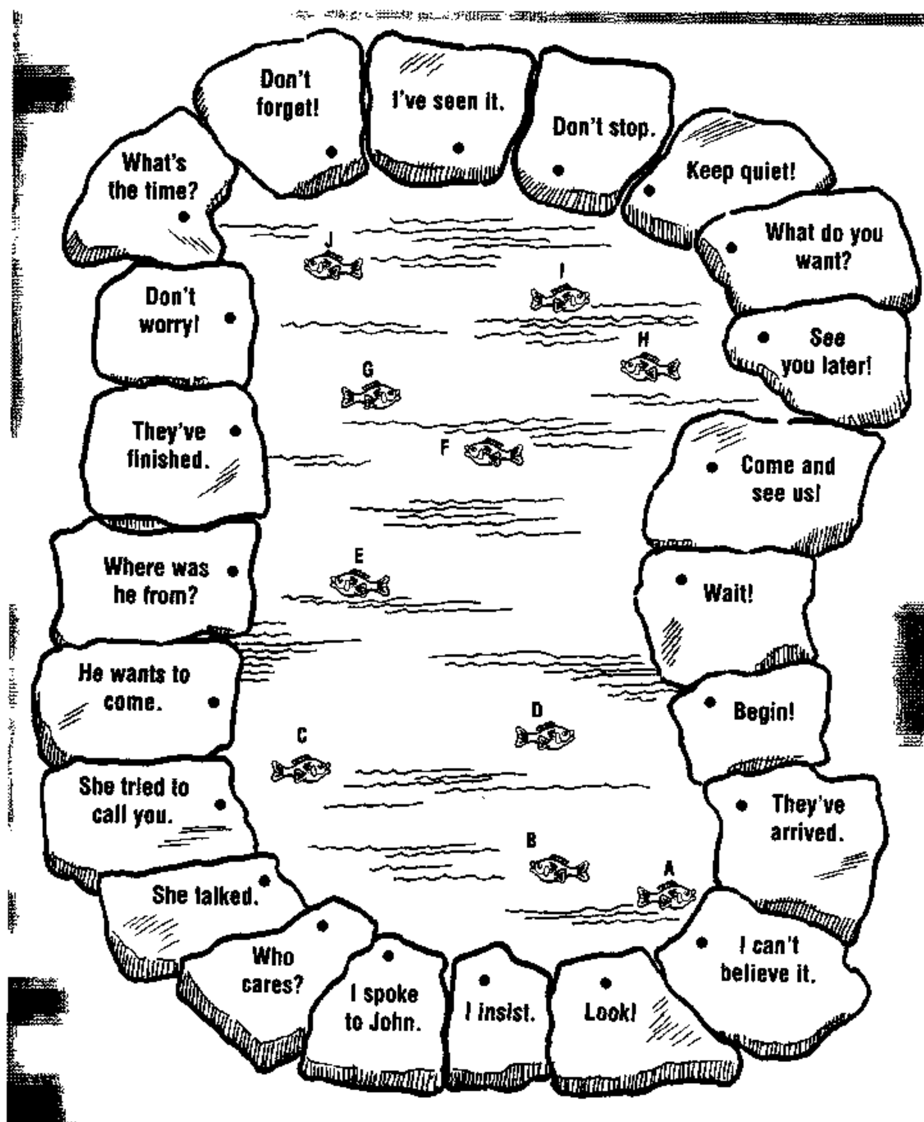
However, we can also focus on stress issues in longer phrases and in sentences, as the following two examples demonstrate.

Example 3: Fishing | Sounds: phrase stress patterns | Level: pre-intermediate upwards

The following activity (in which students are asked to recognise stress patterns in phrases) comes from a book of pronunciation games which are designed to '... engage learners in a challenge and, at the same time, highlight an aspect of pronunciation' (Hancock 1995: 1).

The sequence starts when the teacher chooses some short phrases which the students are familiar with and writes them on the board. She then reads the phrases aloud and, as she does so, draws a large circle under each stressed syllable (which will be in the content words like *bel'ieve* and *'later*, as opposed to grammatical words like *to*, *of*, and *by*) and small circles under the unstressed syllables.

Now that students are clued in to the big and small circles the teacher gives them a copy of the following game board:



From *Pronunciation Games* by M Hancock (Cambridge University Press)

Using the 'circles' stress patterns they have to join pairs of phrases with the same stress patterns, e.g. *Look – wait!*, *Begin! – she talked*, *Who cares? – Don't stop!* The object of the game is to discover which fish is caught (a fish is caught when it is completely surrounded by lines). If students get the exercise right they will have encircled fish B.

Students can now say the phrases and teachers can ask them to come up with their own phrases to follow the various stress patterns – or teachers can make their own game along similar lines.

Example 4: Special stress | Sounds: variable stress
Level: elementary

The stress in phrases changes depending upon what we want to say. The following exercise draws students' attention to this fact and gets them to ask why it happens.

Students listen to the following conversations:

3 Special stress

1 **T.9.3.A.** Walter is a waiter in a busy snack bar.
Listen to some of his conversations with the customers.

a **W** So that's two coffees, a beef sandwich, and a tomato soup ...
C *No, a chicken sandwich.*
W Sorry, sir ...

b **W** Yes, sir?
C A small mushroom pizza, please.
W Okay ...
C *No, make that a large mushroom pizza.*
W Certainly, sir ...

c **W** Okay, so you want one coffee, six colas, four strawberry ice-creams, two chocolate ice-creams and a piece of apple pie ...
C *No, four chocolate ice-creams and two strawberry ...*
W Anything else?

From *Headway Elementary Pronunciation* by S Cunningham and P Moor (Oxford University Press)

They are now asked to listen again and look at the lines in italics. They should underline the words that are specially stressed and then say why they think this happens in this particular conversation (because the customer is correcting a mistake). Students can then practise saying the dialogues.

We might also give students a straightforward sentence like *I lent my sister ten pounds for a train ticket last week* and ask them what it would mean if different words took the main stress, e.g. *I LENT my sister ten pounds ...* (= I didn't give it to her), or *I lent my sister ten pounds for a train ticket last WEEK* (= Can you believe it? She still hasn't paid me back!).

There are many other ways of teaching and demonstrating stress. Some teachers like to choose appropriate texts and have students read them aloud after they have

done some work on which bits of phrases and sentences take the main stress. Some teachers like to train students in the performance of dialogues, much as a theatre director might do with actors. This will involve identifying the main stress in phrases and seeing this in relation to the intonation patterns (see B3 below).

Cuisenaire rods (see Chapter 10D) are also useful in that they can provide graphic illustrations of how words and phrases are stressed. These rods of different lengths and colours can be set up to demonstrate the stress patterns of phrases and sentences as in the following example *I'll ring you next WEEK*:

Whereas if we want to say *I'll RING you next week* (= I won't come and see you), we can organise the rods like this:

For stress in words, we can ask students to put words in correct columns depending upon their stress patterns, for example:

• • ■ •	• ■ • •
information	discovery
consultation	recovery
aggravation	acknowledgement
insulation	catastrophe
agoraphobic	photographer

B3 Working with intonation

We need to draw our students' attention to the way we use changes in pitch to convey meaning, to reflect the thematic structure of what we are saying, and to convey mood.

One simple way of doing this is to show how many different meanings can be squeezed out of just one word such as *yes*. To do this we can get students to ask us any 'yes/no' question (e.g. *Are you happy?*) and answer *Yes* to it in a neutral way. Now we get them to ask the question again. This time, through changing our intonation, we use *Yes* to mean something different, e.g. *I'm not sure* or *How wonderful of you to ask that question* or *How dare you ask that question*. Students can be asked to identify

what we mean each time by using words for emotions or matching our intonation to pictures of faces with different expressions. We can now get them to ask each other similar 'yes/no' questions and, when they answer, use intonation to convey particular meanings which their classmates have to identify.

The point of exercises like this is not so much to identify specific intonation patterns, but rather to raise the students' awareness of the power of intonation and to encourage them to vary their own speech. It also trains them to listen more carefully to understand what messages are being given to them.

Example 5: Falling and rising tones — Sounds: falling and rising tones — Level: pre-intermediate

In the following exercise students listen to identify nuclear stress (that is the main stress where there is a change of pitch) in phrases and to hear falling and rising intonation:

1 Listen to these examples. Prominent words are in capital letters. Notice how the voice FALLS at the end.

It's MINE. She's from ROME. Is it YOURS?
I MET him at a DISCO.

Now listen to these examples. Notice how the voice RISES at the end.

I THINK so. PROBABLY. Are they HERE yet?
Is THIS the PARIS train?

From *Pronunciation Tasks* by M Hewings (Cambridge University Press)

When they have done this the teacher may ask them to repeat the phrases with the right intonation before moving on to Exercise 2 where they have to listen to a tape and identify whether the voice falls or rises:

2 Listen to these sentence halves. Write (↘) in the space if the voice falls at the end and write (↗) if it goes up. Two are done for you.

	a)	b)
1	I went to London ... (↘)	... on Saturday. (↗)
2	David ... ( )	... works in a bookshop. ( )
3	There's some cake ... ( )	... in the kitchen. ( )
4	In Hong Kong ... ( )	... last year. ( )
5	I'm fairly sure ... ( )	... it's upstairs. ( )
6	Yes, ... ( )	... of course. ( )
7	Turn left here ...	... then go straight on. ( )
8	Oh dear, ... ( )	... I *am* sorry. ( )
9	I like it ... ( )	... very much. ( )
10	I don't smoke ... (	... thank you. ( )

They then join the sentence halves together before working in pairs to answer questions with their new complete sentences, e.g. *What does your son do now? David works in a bookshop*, etc. Later they make their own conversations after noticing how a character uses a rising tone for a subject which is already being talked about and a falling tone to give new information.

This exercise not only gets students to listen carefully to intonation patterns, but by dividing sentences in two before joining them up again it allows them to identify

basic fall–rise patterns. We can also get students to listen to the way speakers react to see whether words like *okay* or *really* indicate enthusiasm, boredom, or indifference.

There are other ways to teach intonation too: some teachers like to get their students to make dialogues without words – humming the 'tune' of what they want to say in such a way that other students can understand them. Many teachers also use a variety of devices such as arrows on the board and arm movements which 'draw' patterns in the air to demonstrate intonation. Some teachers exaggerate (and get their students to exaggerate) intonation patterns which can be extremely amusing and which also makes patterns very clear.

B4 Sounds and spelling

Although there are many regularities in English spelling (such as word roots and grammatical endings) the fact that there is no complete one-to-one correspondence between letters and phonemes causes many problems for learners. The following two exercises are designed to teach sound–spelling correspondence for particular spellings.

Example 6: Sounds of *ou* Level: elementary

Students are asked to listen to a tape and see how many different pronunciations they can find for the *ou* spelling in words like the following:

could	rough	country
sound	foul	thought
ground	though	house
through	out	unconscious
round	young	

They can record the different sounds in their vocabulary books (see Chapter 24, A1).

Teachers can also help students by giving them typical spellings for sounds every time they work on them. In a class on /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, for example, they can be given the following information:

SPELLING		
/ʃ/ Shop *Common:* ALL **sh** shop, wish, bishop *Endings with* **ti** + *vowel or* **ci** + *vowel* education, initial, musician, delicious	*Less common.* **ch** *in words of French origin:* machine, champagne **s** insurance	/tʃ/ chin MOST **ch** chin, rich ALL **tch** match, butcher, kitchen ALL **t** + ure future, nature, picture

From *Sounds English* by J O'Connor and C Fletcher (Pearson Education Ltd)

Example 7: Looking for rules Level: intermediate and above

In this exercise students are asked to read the following two lists of words aloud. When they have agreed that the letter *c* can be pronounced in two ways, we can ask them if they can see what the rule is which decides which pronunciation will be used. We might have to prompt them by suggesting that they look at the letter which follows the *c*.

These are the lists they see:

A		B	
cell	certain	cat	catch
place	dance	cup	coffee
city	cycle	cry	coin
policy	cent	call	cake
decide	cinema	came	cost
		custom	could

From *Teaching English Pronunciation* by J Kenworthy (Pearson Education Ltd)

This kind of discovery approach (see Chapter 11, B2) to sound and spelling rules allows students to become aware that English spelling is not quite so random as they might think.

5 Connected speech and fluency

Good pronunciation does not just mean saying individual words or even individual sounds correctly. The sounds of words change when they come into contact with each other. This is something we need to draw students' attention to in our pronunciation teaching.

We can adopt a three-stage procedure for teaching students about features such as elision and assimilation (see Chapter 2, D4):

- **Stage 1/comparing:** we can start by showing students sentences and phrases and having them pronounce the words correctly in isolation, e.g. *I am going to see him tomorrow* /aɪ/ /æm/ /gəʊɪŋ/ /tu:/ /si:/ /hɪm/ /təmɒrəʊ/. We then play them a tape of someone saying the sentences in normal connected speech (or we say them ourselves), e.g. /aɪmgɔnəsɪjɪmtəmɔrəʊ/. We ask students what differences they can hear.

- **Stage 2/identifying:** we have students listen to recordings of connected speech (or we say the phrases ourselves), and the students have to write out a full grammatical equivalent of what they heard. Thus we could say /dʒəwɔnəkɔfɪ/ and expect the students to write *Do you want a coffee?*, or we could play them a tape with someone saying /aɪdəvkʌmbɪfɔ:/ and expect them to write *I would have come before.*

- **Stage 3/production:** in our modelling and teaching of phrases and sentences we will give students the connected version, including contractions where necessary, and get them to say the phrases and sentences in this way.

Fluency is also helped by having students say phrases and sentences (such as the ones used in stages 1–3 above) as quickly as possible, starting slowly and then speeding up. Getting students to perform dialogues and play extracts – if we spend some time coaching them – will also make them aware of speaking customs and help them to improve their overall fluency.

Chapter notes and further reading

- **Meaning and perfection**

  For a discussion about what pronunciation norms and models we should get our students to aim for, see J Jenkins (1998). See also C Dalton and B Seidlhofer (1995: Chapter 1).

- **Different languages**

  For the pronunciation difficulties experienced by different first language speakers, see J Kenworthy (1987: Part 2). G Kelly (2000: Appendix B) lists English sounds that cause problems for different speakers.

- **Phonemic chart**

  G Kelly (2000: Appendix A) has created a different pronunciation chart for students which categorises sounds in terms of their place of articulation, and whether they are voiced or voiceless – in the case of consonants.

- **Sounds and spelling**

  See J Kenworthy (1987: Chapter 5) and G Kelly (2000: Appendix C).