

# Teaching Pronunciation



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# **THE IMPORTANCE OF PRONUNCIATION**

# Discussion Question

- Can you think of a situation where mispronunciation brought about confusion, embarrassment, or some other types of problem?

Read the statements carefully and decide if you agree or disagree with them.  
Try to give reasons for your decisions.

1. Ss need to be able to read phonetic transcripts of words.
2. Ss need to be able to write phonetic transcripts for words.
3. Ss need to know phonetics in order to learn English.
4. Poor pronunciation may cause problems for the learning of other skills.
5. Adult learners need to focus on pronunciation, but young learners don't.
6. Both consistency and accuracy in pronunciation are very important.
7. Stress and intonation aren't important for beginning learners.
8. Stress in pronunciation is sometimes as important as grammar,
9. Bad intonation can lead to serious misunderstandings.



# **GENERAL ISSUES ON TEACHING PRONUNCIATION**

# Native like pronunciation: Myth or Reality?

- Learners' native language
  - Learners' exposure to English
  - Learners' age
  - Individual Ss have different phonetic ability
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- Generally, EFL learners can't acquire native-like pronunciation

# General rules

- Ss should not be led to focus on phonetic transcripts of words, esp. young learners
- Phonetic rules should be avoided at the beginning stage
- Stress & Intonation should be taught from the beginning




# **COMMON PROBLEMS FOR VIETNAMESE LEARNERS**



# Pronunciation Errors

- *Where do errors come from?*
- *What errors do most of Vietnamese students have?*

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- Sounds that do not exist in Vietnamese:  
Judge, shore, world, cook ...
  - Final sounds
  - Simple vowels instead of diphthongs: map,  
tear
  - Consonant clusters
  - Stress and Intonation



# **INDIVIDUAL SOUNDS**

# When to teach

- Whole lesson
- Discrete slots
- Integrated phases
- Opportunistic teaching

# Steps for presenting sounds

- Say the sound alone
- Say the sound in a word
- Contrast it with other sounds if Ss confuse 2 similar sounds
- Explain how to make the sound
- Get Ss to repeat the sound in chorus
- Get individual Ss to repeat the sound

# Group Practice

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- Teacher: Choose a sound. Teach it to the others in your group. Help them with any difficulties
- Others: Imagine you are Ss. Make the same mistakes as your own Ss would.

# Teaching individual sounds

- Minimal pairs
- Missing words
- Making sentences
- Same or different
- Odd man out
- Completion

# Minimal pairs

- Minimal pairs are two words which have only one different sound

Examples: Listen and say the number 1 or 2

- will well
- till tell
- fill fell
- lid led
- ship sheep
- bid bed



# Missing words

- The teacher says short sentences or phrases in which one word is missing. The students guess the word, which contains the sound that the teacher wishes to practice.
- Example /ei/
  - *Children love to ..... games.*
  - *Black and white together make .....*
  - *After April comes .....*

# Making sentences

- The teacher writes words on the board, and students say sentences using them.
- Example /dʒ/
  - John job judge
  - just jam jump
  - gym join

# Same or different

- Met meet met met
- Well well well will

# Odd man out

- Bit bit bid bit
- Port port part port

# Completion

● -it      -it      -it      -it      -it      -it

# Group practice

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- ① Work in groups. Choose a sound that your Ss find difficult & make up an exercise.
- ① Try out the exercise, using other teachers as a class.



# **STRESS**

# Strong & weak syllables

- Strong syllables are stressed
- Weak syllables are not stressed
- Vowel in the unstressed syllable is often pronounced /ə/ or /ɪ/



# Reduced vowels

- Functional words (prepositions, auxiliary, modal verbs, pronouns, articles etc.) change their pronunciation when in isolation and in the sentence/phrase

*I ate bread and cheese.* /aɪ eɪt 'bred ən 'tʃi:z/

*Look at us.* /'lʊk ət 'ʌs/

# Underline stressed syllables and circle the reduced vowels

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- Disappointed
- Attractive
- Trousers
- Suppose
- Perfect
- A kilo of sugar
- Give me an orange
- I'd like some coffee
- He was late again
- We can leave as soon  
as you are ready

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# English is a stress-timed language

e.g.:

- He *wrote a letter*.
- He *wrote a **long** letter*.
- He *wrote a **very long** letter*.

In each sentence, the syllables ('a', 'a long', 'a **very long**') took about the same amount of time to say: so 'a very long' had to be said more quickly.

- *Take John*.
- *Take it to John*.

The two unstressed syllables ('it to') are said quickly to fill the space which would normally be left between two stressed syllables ('Take - John').

# Word stress

- Primary stress
- Secondary stress
- Unstressed

rándermize

prímary

láptòp

cómpòund

áccent

létterhèad

nècessáryly

acúte

snówshòe

# Sentence Stress

- Content words are stressed while form words are not

*I 'saw your 'brother 'yesterday.*

*Would you 'like a 'glass of 'beer?*

*Can I 'carry your 'suitcase?*

*I must be 'going.*

*My 'wife's 'waiting for me at the 'corner of the 'street.*

# General rules for stressed words

1. Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are stressed.
2. Prepositions, articles, conjunctions and pronouns are unstressed.
3. This, that, these and those are stressed.
4. Negative words are stressed .
5. Wh- question words are stressed.
6. Helping (auxiliary) verbs are unstressed (ex: be, do, have)

## ❖ Techniques for teaching stress

### 1. Using your voice:

- Saying the sentence, exaggerating the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables.
- Representing each syllable with a sound, e.g. *a kilo of sugar* = de-DA-de-de-DA-de.

### 2. Using gestures:

- Thump the air when saying the stressed syllable
- Make a downward stroke of the hand - marking the beat like a conductor.
- Punch the palm of his other hand.
- Clap your hands
- Bang your hand against something.

### 3. Using blackboard:

- Writing dots and dashes: e.g. *a kilo of sugar* : .-.-
- Underlining the stressed syllables: *a kilo of sugar*
- Writing the stressed syllable in heavier letters: *a **KIlo** of **SUgar***. (This technique is often used in textbooks, and would be suitable for wall charts.)

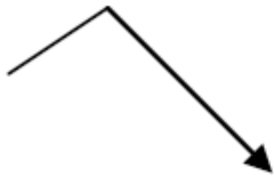




# **INTONATION**

# Functions of intonation

- Indicate grammatical meaning
  - He loves coffee.
  - He loves coffee?
- Indicate functions



*Sorry!* (Apology)



*Sorry?* (please repeat.)

- It can change meaning

*I want to see your son 'Harry.* (the son is called Harry)

*I want to see your 'son, Harry.* (the speaker is talking to Harry, who has a son, whose name we do not know.)

- Indicate speaker's attitude

- It's cool!

- It's cool?

For teaching oral English at a fairly low level, teachers need to be aware of two basic intonation patterns:

- **Rising tone:** used in asking Yes/No questions, and to express surprise, disbelief, etc. The voice rises sharply on the stressed syllable.

*Really? ↗      Is he your friend? ↗      Do you want some tea? ↗*

- **Falling tone:** used for normal statements, commands, and for WH-questions. The voice rises slightly earlier in the sentence, and then falls on the key word being stressed.

*Open your book, please. ↘      How long have you been learning English? ↘*

# Practising stress and intonation

- The easiest way is **by repetition**
- Teaching tips
  - Give a good model of the sentence; saying it at a normal speed, making a clear difference between stress and unstressed syllables, using natural intonation
  - Indicate the stress and intonation clearly, using gestures
  - Make sure that the Ss pay attention to stress and intonation when they repeat the sentence

# Back chaining technique

Back-chaining can be used as part of a repetition drill.

- i) Say the whole sentence. Show the stress and intonation using gestures. Students listen.

T: Listen. How *long* have you been *living here*? How *long* have you been *living here*? De-DA-de-de-de-DA-de-de. How *long* have you been *living here*?

- ii) Students repeat, starting from the end.

T: *Living here. Living here.* Everybody.

Ss: *Living here.*

T: *Been living here.*

Ss: *Been living here.*

T: *Have you been living here.*

Ss: *Have you been living here.*

T: *How long have you been living here?*

Ss: *How long have you been living here?*

- iii) Groups of students repeat the whole sentence, then individual students.

T: (*gesture to indicate a group*)

G: *How long have you been living here? (and so on)*

# Teaching practice

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*Practice teaching stress & intonation in the following sentences. Mark stressed syllables & places you could divide for back chaining.*

- How long have you been living here?
- Have you ever been to London?
- She's wearing a green dress.
- What are you doing?
- I haven't seen her for years.
- Do you mind if I open the window?
- You can sit down if you like.

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# Teaching practice

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- Do some ELT2 exam questions.  
Practice teaching if possible.