

LANGUAGE SYSTEMS | PRONUNCIATION

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is the general term used to refer to the **phonology** of a language, i.e. the **study** of the **sound system** of a language. This also includes **phonetics**, how sounds are produced, and should not be confused with **phonics**, a method to teach children how to read.

Pronunciation is one of the core **sub-skills** of **speaking** and it involves speech features like **vowel** and **consonant sounds** (in isolation and in **continuous speech**), **word** and **sentence stress**, **rhythm** and **intonation**.

A basic distinction can be made between:

- **segmental** features: individual sounds (*phonemes*) – these denote and impact **meaning**
- **suprasegmental** features: stress, rhythm and intonation (*prosody*) – these denote and impact **attitude**

Pronunciation plays an important role in communication, not only **linguistically** in relation to **intelligibility** between speakers, but also **socially** in relation to a speaker's **identity**. These are two aspects that have strongly influenced the teaching of pronunciation and recent trends advocate an approach that emphasizes **international intelligibility** (as opposed to native-like proficiency) as a more realistic and practical **objective** for learners, and acknowledges the learners' personal **identities**, **goals** and **desires**.

This has implications for teaching as pronunciation **standards** and **varieties** may need to include a wider range of models that go beyond native prestige varieties. On one hand, learners, like native speakers, may want to preserve their **cultural roots** and signal their identities through their unique **accents**. On the other hand, in a globalized world where English has become the current **lingua franca** for international communication, learners may need (and want) to familiarize themselves with other **non-native** varieties.

The teaching of pronunciation has also been influenced by shifts in **pedagogical** beliefs and, whereas in the past the emphasis was placed on the **mastery** of individual sounds, it has now been observed that **changes** in stress, rhythm and intonation can actually have a more profound impact on **intelligibility** and **communication**, and should therefore be given greater **attention**.

Pronunciation can generally be **taught** like any other **language system** and teachers have a number of **options** to **integrate** it in their courses and lessons. Pronunciation can be the focus of an **entire lesson** and revolve around dedicated awareness-raising and practice activities, or it can feature as **part of a lesson** focused on a different language point (e.g. grammar or vocabulary) or skill (e.g. speaking or listening). Like many other language aspects, pronunciation is also something that teachers can deal with as **needs** emerge during the lesson. Teachers often provide quick clarifications and feedback on pronunciation '**off the cuff**', according to the kind of activity learners are working on and their immediate needs and wants.

There seems to be agreement that the **effectiveness** of pronunciation instruction can be influenced by a number of factors. The following are some examples.

- The learners' **native language**: phonological similarities and differences between the two languages can make pronunciation more or less difficult.
- **Age** (learners under the age of puberty tend to acquire native-like pronunciation more easily than older learners; beyond puberty, there is no particular age-related advantage).
- **Exposure**: the quality and intensity of exposure to the target language can facilitate the development of accurate pronunciation.
- **Aptitude**: some learners have a better ability to hear and produce sounds – those who don't should be encouraged to increase their awareness of personal limitations and make a conscious effort to compensate them.
- **Identity**: learners with a stronger language 'ego' tend to find adapting to a second language identity more challenging – positive and negative attitudes towards the speakers of the target language can also play a role.
- **Motivation**: learners with a stronger concern for pronunciation will inevitably make a greater effort to achieve correct pronunciation.

VOWEL SOUNDS

Vowels are sounds produced without any major **obstruction** or **constriction** of the **air** flowing through the mouth. This means that when we produce vowel sounds the lips are open, the tongue is not touching the roof of the mouth or the teeth, etc. thus not limiting or stopping the flow of air.

In written English, vowel sounds are generally reproduced using **5 letters**: *a, e, i, o, u*. However, this doesn't represent the total number of vowels sounds present in spoken English. For example, a variety like British English (RP- Received Pronunciation) has **20 vowel sounds**.

A basic distinction can be made between:

- **monophthongs**: vowel sounds that consist of only one sound, e.g. CAP → /æ/
- **diphthongs**: vowels sounds that consist of a glide from one vowel sound to another, e.g. CAPE → /eɪ/

The following is a **phonemic chart** showing the vowel sounds of British English (RP) and their corresponding **phonetic symbols**.

MONOPHTHONGS				DIPHTHONGS		
/iː/	/ɪ/	/ʊ/	/uː/	/ɪə/	/eɪ/	
(<u>R</u> EAD)	(S <u>I</u> T)	(B <u>O</u> OK)	(T <u>OO</u>)	(<u>E</u> AR)	(D <u>A</u> Y)	
/e/	/ə/	/ɜː/	/ɔː/	/ʊə/	/ɔɪ/	/əʊ/
(R <u>E</u> D)	(<u>A</u> MERICA)	(G <u>I</u> RL)	(T <u>A</u> LK)	(C <u>U</u> RE)	(B <u>O</u> Y)	(G <u>O</u>)
/æ/	/ʌ/	/ɑː/	/ɒ/	/eə/	/aɪ/	/aʊ/
(C <u>A</u> T)	(C <u>U</u> P)	(C <u>A</u> R)	(H <u>O</u> T)	(<u>A</u> IR)	(P <u>I</u> E)	(C <u>O</u> W)

Adapted from: Underhill (2005)

Another distinction can be made between long (/iː/ as in SHEEP) and short vowels (/ɪ/ as in SHIP). Long vowels are marked by a **diacritic** (the two dots similar to the colon) and this indicates a higher duration and quality of the sounds.

Vowels are generally classified according to:

- **positioning**: the way we position the tongue to produce the sounds. This can be **vertical**, e.g. the tongue is raised for a sounds like /iː/ whereas it's lowered for a sound like /æ/ or **horizontal**, e.g. the tongue is pushed forward for a sound like /iː/ whereas it's retracted for a sound like /uː/;
- **rounding**: the way we shape our lips to produce the sounds. This can be **rounded**, e.g. the lips form a circle for a sound like /uː/; **spread**, e.g. the lips are stretched for a sound like /iː/ or **neutral**, e.g. the lips are relaxed and neither rounded nor spread for a sound like /ɜː/.

The most common vowel sound in English is the schwa (/ə/ as in AMERICA), a short unstressed vowel sound produced with the tongue in a middle position and the lips relaxed.

For a more comprehensive description of vowel sounds, please refer to the **handout**:

- **Vowel and consonant sounds**

CONSONANT SOUNDS

Consonants are sounds produced by **obstructing** or **constricting** the **air** flowing through the mouth. This means that when we produce consonant sound we use the throat, the tongue, the lips, the teeth, the nose, etc. to limit or stop the flow of air.

In written English, consonant sounds are generally reproduced using **21 letters**, e.g. *b, c, d, etc.* However, this doesn't represent the total number of consonant sounds present in spoken English. For example, a variety like British English (RP- Received Pronunciation) has **24 consonant sounds**.

The following is a **phonemic chart** showing the consonant sounds of British English (RP) and their corresponding **phonetic symbols**.

CONSONANT SOUNDS							
/p/	/b/	/t/	/d/	/tʃ/	/dʒ/	/k/	/g/
(PEN)	(BED)	(TEA)	(DICE)	(CHAIR)	(JAM)	(CAT)	(GO)
/f/	/v/	/θ/	/ð/	/s/	/z/	/ʃ/	/ʒ/
(FAN)	(VAN)	(THIN)	(THIS)	(SOAP)	(ZOO)	(SHOE)	(VISION)
/m/	/n/	/ŋ/	/h/	/l/	/r/	/w/	/j/
(MAN)	(NOT)	(SING)	(HOT)	(LEG)	(RED)	(WET)	(YES)

Adapted from: Underhill (2005)

Consonants are generally classified according to:

- **point of articulation**: the place in the oral cavity where the obstruction or constriction of air occurs, e.g. the lips for a sound like /p/ or the back of tongue and soft palate for a sound like /k/;
- **manner of articulation**: the way in which we create the obstruction or constriction of air, e.g. by blocking the airflow before releasing it for sounds like /p/ and /k/ or by creating a 'hissing' for sounds like /f/ and /s/;
- **voicing**: whether the vocal cords are activated (i.e. vibrate) or not when we produce the sounds (i.e. *voiced vs unvoiced* sounds), e.g. the vocal cords don't vibrate for a sound like /p/ whereas they do for a sound like /b/. This vibration can be easily felt by plugging your ears and saying the two sounds.

Some consonant sounds like /p/, /t/ and /k/ tend to be pronounced slightly differently depending on their position in a word and the sounds around them.

These sounds are generally **aspirated** (i.e. pronounced with a puff of air) if they appear at the beginning of a word or before a stressed syllable, e.g. *pot & appeal, top & attend, cat & account*. They are generally **unaspirated** if they appear after the sound /s/, e.g. *special, stone, school*. They are generally **unreleased** (i.e. not completely pronounced) if they appear at the end of a word, e.g. *mop, cat, pick*. These slightly different sounds of the same phoneme are called **allophones**.

Very often consonant sounds can be found in groups of two or more. These are called **consonant clusters**, e.g. *stop, strong, desk, explain, etc.*

For a more comprehensive description of vowel sounds, please refer to the handout:

- **Vowel and consonant sounds**

STRESS

Stress can be defined as the emphasis placed on particular **syllable** in a word or on a particular **word** in an **utterance**. This is characterized by an increase in sound **length**, **loudness** and **pitch**.

WORD STRESS

Word stress refers to **stressed** and **unstressed syllables** in a word. Words can be divided into syllables by simply counting the number of vowel sounds. For example, the word CUP is made of 1 syllable, WIN-DOW is made of 2 syllables, BA-NA-NA is made of 3 syllables, etc.

If words are made of 2 or more syllables, one of these syllables is **stressed** more than the others. Consider the following examples.

• •
coffee

• •
teaching

• • •
untidy

• •
softly

• •
teapot

• •
crossword

• •
rebel

• •
rebel

If we take these words as examples, we can 'roughly' conclude that:

- many 'everyday' words of two-syllable length are stressed on the **first** syllable, e.g. SIster, WAter, TAble, etc.
- prefixes and suffixes are usually **not stressed** in English, e.g. QUietly oRiginally, deFEctive, etc. (Note the exceptions, though, among prefixes, like BlCycle and DISLocate.)
- words formed from a combination of two words tend to be stressed on the **first** element, e.g. POSTman, NEWSpaper, PASSport, etc.
- words which can be used as either a noun or a verb, the noun will tend to be stressed on the **first** syllable and the verb on the **last** syllable, e.g. IMPort (n) - imPORT (v), INCrease (n), - inCREASE (v), etc.

Adapted from: Kelly (2000:69)

These rules can be useful but what is really important for learners to notice is that **unstressed** syllables generally contain **reduced** (weaker) vowel sounds, often a less clear vowel sound like the schwa /ə/. Consider the following examples. The reduced sounds are underlined.

- /ə/, e.g. about, sofa, computer
- /ə/, e.g. curtail, water, entertain
- /ɪ/, e.g. music, eating, childish
- /i/, e.g. city, pretty, candy
- /o/, e.g. narrow, hotol
- /u/, e.g. into, menu, venue

Adapted from: Celce-Murcia et al. (n.d.: 12)

SENTENCE STRESS

Sentence stress refers to **stressed words** in an utterance. A distinction needs to be made between:

- content words:** words that carry information and have meaning even when used in isolation, e.g. *table*, *go*, *happy*, etc.
- function words:** words that show the grammatical relationship of words in a sentence; these have little meaning when used in isolation, e.g. *the*, *and*, *to*, etc.

In a sentence, **content words** are likely to be **stressed** whereas **functions words** are **not**, unless they appear at the **end** of a sentence. So, if nothing in particular needs to be emphasized, the following words are likely to be stressed in the following sentences.

• • • •
I bought a new book on Saturday.

• • •
What are you waiting for?

The following **content words** are generally **stressed**: *nouns*, *main verbs*, *adjectives*, *possessive pronouns*, *demonstrative pronouns*, *interrogatives (question words)*, *not* and *negative contractions*, *adverbs*, and *adverbial particles*.

The following **function words** are generally **not stressed**: *articles*, *auxiliary verbs*, *personal pronouns*, *possessive adjectives*, *demonstrative adjectives*, *prepositions*, and *conjunctions*.

Adapted from: Celce-Murcia et al. (2010: 153)

RHYTHM

Word and sentence stress create the rhythm, i.e. the **regular beats** of **stressed** and **unstressed syllables** that mark the **tempo** of a language. In **English**, these beats move from stressed syllable to stressed syllable, regardless of the number of unstressed syllables in between.

To better understand this phenomenon, consider the following distinction and examples.

- **Stress-timing** (e.g. *English*) – the intervals between two stressed syllables tends to be equal.
- **Syllable-timing** (e.g. *Italian*) – the intervals between every syllable tends to be equal.

If we take the following sentence as an example, we can say that the total number of **syllables** is **15**.

➡ I went to the shopping center and bought a new computer.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

If we follow the rules of sentence stress (see the previous section) and apply the concept of stress-timing, we can say that, despite the **15** syllables, the number of **stressed syllables** is only **6** and this sentence is made of **6 beats** of roughly the same length. Vowel sounds in between would be **reduced** (see previous section). This would be the rhythm of this sentence.

➡ I went to the shopping center and bought a new computer.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

If this sentence was uttered by a learner who was trying to follow his first language's syllable-timed rhythm, the beats would not be timed by the stressed syllables, but would be timed by every single syllable. As the sentence is made of **15** syllables, the learner would be tempted to produce **15 beats** of roughly the same length. Vowel sounds in between would be less likely to be reduced (see previous section). This would be the rhythm of the learner's sentence.

➡ I went to the shopping center and bought a new computer.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Giving similar weight and length to each syllable would give the learner's utterance a more 'regular' and 'monotone' rhythm.

The **stress-timed nature** of the **rhythm** of English, can be exemplified even more clearly if we consider the following utterances.

•	•	•
MICE	EAT	CHEESE
The MICE	EAT	the CHEESE
The MICE	will have	EATen
The MICE	might have been	EATing
		the CHEESE

Celce-Murcia et al. (2010: 155)

Even if the utterances above have a **different** number of **actual syllables**, they have the **same** number of **stressed syllables** and it should therefore take the **same** amount of **time** to say them. This means that the other syllables in between are likely to have **reduced** vowel sounds. This often causes comprehension **problems** for learners, and this is why they often complain that English speakers '*eat their words*'.

INTONATION

Intonation is associated to the way speakers **raise** or **lower** the **pitch** of their voice while speaking. Together with stress and rhythm, intonation is what gives a language its distinct '**melody**'.

Intonation is an aspect of pronunciation that can be said to have several **functions**.

- **Linguistic:** it can indicate the 'grammatical' meaning of an utterance. For example, the word *COFFEE* with a rising intonation can represent a question, whereas *COFFEE* with a falling intonation can represent a statement.
- **Attitudinal:** it can indicate the intentions, attitudes, emotions, etc. of the speaker. For example, the word *COFFEE* with a rising intonation can express an offer, whereas with a falling then rising intonation can express doubt or dislike.
- **Informational:** it can indicate which information in an utterance is new and which is already known. It also allows the speaker to bring some parts of an utterance into focus. Consider the following question: - *What did you buy? I bought some PASTA.* This is also called **prominence** (see the next section).
- **Discourse:** it can allow a speaker to structure speech in coherent and cohesive sequences of clauses and sentences. It works like sentences and paragraphs in written text. It can also help regulate turns in a conversation by showing whether a speaker wants to keep talking or has finished.
- **Psychological:** it can help a speaker organize speech in units that are easier to perceive, memorize and perform. For example, in an utterance like '*I'd like 4 apples, 2 pears and 3 bananas*', intonation is likely to rise for the first 2 items and fall for the 3rd, '*I'd like 4 apples (↗) | 2 pears (↗) | and 3 bananas (↘)*'. This would make the information easier to say but also easier to listen to.
- **Indexical:** it can mark personal and social identity, and like other features of pronunciation, it can make mothers sound like mothers, newsreaders like newsreaders, priests like priests, etc.

Adapted from: Wells (2006: 11-12)

When we speak, we organize a long stream of speech into smaller units. These units can be called '*thought groups*' and they are divided by pauses. Their **function** is to make it easier for the speaker to produce speech and for the listener to comprehend it. Each *thought group* can be said to have its own meaning, grammar and intonation. *Thought groups* are also called **intonation units**. They are generally characterized by the following features:

- **pauses** (before and after, but not usually within);
- a **prominent** element (a word which is more emphasized than others);
- unique **intonation** (a unique pitch pattern);
- coherent **grammatical structure** (a word or set of words forming a clause, sentence, etc.).

PROMINENCE

An important feature of intonation units is **prominence**, i.e. the **extra emphasis** given to a particular word that a speaker wishes to **highlight**. As mentioned in the previous section, all function words tend to receive some stress, but one may receive more emphasis than others. This can be observed in the following situations.

- **New information:** new information is generally spoken with a stronger stress and higher pitch.
- *I'd like to buy a COMPUTER. ➡ A LAPTOP computer? ➡ Yes, a laptop computer with a TOUCH screen.*
- **Emphatic stress:** information which the speaker wants to give special importance to.
- *Is it a fast computer? ➡ Yes, it's SUPER fast.*
- **Contrastive stress:** information which is in contrast to other information.
- *Would you like a BLACK or GREY one?*

Prominence is very dependent on the **context** in which something is said and the **intentions** of the speaker. Notice how prominence can shift and affect the meaning of the same utterance.

My car is BLACK
(not another color)

My CAR is black
(not my truck)

MY car is black
(not someone else's)

Highlighting information in an utterance is something which can be achieved in different **ways** in different languages. Some languages, for example, achieve this effect by shifting the order of the words in a sentence. This means that for some learners, prominence can be particularly difficult to **recognize** and **utilize**, and can be the source of communication **challenges** and **misunderstandings**.

INTONATION PATTERNS

As mentioned in the introduction of this section, intonation is linked to the way speakers **raise** or **lower** the **pitch** of their voice while speaking. In English, these variations in pitch depend on multiple factors such as the grammatical **form** of a sentence, the **attitude** of the speaker, the **context** of the situation, etc. (see previous section – functions of intonation), and it is extremely difficult to formulate absolute rules that describe and define this phenomenon. However, if we apply a **neutral** tone (i.e. without particular emphasis), some generalizations can be made. Consider the following examples.

▪ Statements	<i>This pen is blue. (↘)</i>	Falling
▪ Commands	<i>Take the pen. (↘)</i>	Falling
▪ Wh- questions (information)	<i>What color is the pen? (↘)</i>	Falling
▪ Wh- questions (repetition)	<i>Sorry... what color is the pen? (↗)</i>	Rising
▪ Yes/No questions	<i>Is the pen blue? (↗)</i>	Rising
▪ 'Choice' questions	<i>Would you like a red or blue pen? (↗)</i>	Rising
▪ 'Surprise' questions	<i>What? The pen is blue? (↗)</i>	Rising
▪ Tag questions (information)	<i>It's a good pen, isn't it? (↗) (I'm not sure about the answer)</i>	Rising
▪ Tag questions (confirmation)	<i>It's a good pen, isn't it? (↘) (I expect the answer to be yes)</i>	Falling
▪ Lists	<i>I'd like a red (↗), a black (↗) and a blue pen. (↘)</i>	Rising, rising, falling.

Adapted from: Celce-Murcia et al. (2010)

These examples are a simplification of a wider range of existing descriptions and should be treated with caution. Although they can provide some guidelines for learners, teachers should be aware that 'studying' rules such as these without considering the specific situation in which something is said can be less useful. Intonation **patterns** are perhaps best observed and analyzed through exposure to authentic **models** in their unique **contexts**.

CONNECTED SPEECH

Connected speech refers to the way sounds change and blend in continuous spoken language. This means that the sounds of the following sentence are different if analyzed in isolation or as a continuous stream.

SOUNDS IN ISOLATION

Would – you – like – a – cup – of – black – coffee?
/wʊd/ /ju:/ /laɪk/ /eɪ/ /kʌp/ /ɒv/ /blæk/ /kɒfi/

SOUNDS IN CONNECTED SPEECH

Would you like a cup of black coffee?
/wədʒjə laɪ kə kʌ pəv blæk kɒfi/

This phenomenon affects changes in:

- sounds e.g. /wʊd/ /ju:/ → /wədʒjə/
- boundaries between words e.g. /kʌp/ /ɒv/ → /kʌ pəv/

WEAK FORMS

As previously mentioned, **function words** tend to be affected by sentence stress (i.e. they are **unstressed**) and the quality of their **vowel** sounds is **reduced** to allow the speaker to focus on content words more easily. This means that function words tend to have a higher quality and length when pronounced in isolation (**strong form**) and display a lower quality and length when encountered in a stream of speech (**weak form**).

Common examples include:

- auxiliary and modal verbs e.g. *am* /æm/ → /əm/ or /m/
- prepositions e.g. *to* /tu:/ → /tə/
- personal pronouns e.g. *you* /ju:/ → /jə/
- conjunctions e.g. *and* /ænd/ → /ənd/
- articles e.g. *a* /eɪ/ → /ə/
- indefinite adjectives e.g. *some* /sʌm/ → /səm/

Speakers generally produce the **weak form** of these words, unless these words appear at the **end** of a sentence, like for example in 'You're from (frəm) Russia' Vs 'Where are you from (frəm)?'

LINKING

Linking (also known as **liaison**) is a process in which the **final** sound of a word or syllable **connects** to the **initial** sound of the next.

The following are common examples:

- the final consonant links to the following vowel e.g. *blackand white*
- the last consonant in a cluster links to the following vowel e.g. *leftarm*
- two identical consonants blend into one longer consonant e.g. *shorttime*
- a stop followed by a stop or affricate: the first stop is not released e.g. *bigchurch*

Words can also be linked by adding an **extra** sound between two vowel sounds:

- add a /j/ e.g. *Say it*
- add a /w/ e.g. *Go w out*
- add a /r/ e.g. *Media r event*

ASSIMILATION

Assimilation is a process in which a sound **changes** and becomes more **similar** to a sound that comes **before** or **after** it.

The following are a few common examples:

- /t/ becomes similar to /p/ e.g. *That boy* → /ðæpbɔɪ/
- /d/ becomes similar to /g/ e.g. *Should come* → /ʃʊɡkʌm/
- /n/ becomes similar to /m/ e.g. *Ten percent* → /tempəsent/
- /t/ changes into /tʃ/ if followed by /j/ e.g. *Last year* → /lɑːstʃiə(r)/

A type of assimilation can also be observed in the following examples.

- have to /hæv/ /tuː/ → /hæftə/
- has to /hæz/ /tuː/ → /hæstə/
- used to /juːzd/ /tuː/ → /juːstə/

DELETION/ELISION

Deletion (also known as **omission** and **elision**) is a process in which a sound **disappears** or is not clearly pronounced.

The following are common contexts in which this phenomenon can be observed.

- /t/ and /d/ in consonant clusters e.g. *don'(t) know, nex(t) day, you an(d) me, stan(d) there, etc.*
- complex consonant clusters e.g. *facts /fæks/, texts /teks/, mustn't /mʌsnt/, etc.*
- /ə/ in some unstressed syllables e.g. *p(o)lice, int(e)resting, rest(au)rant, choc(o)late, etc.*
- /v/ in 'of' /ɒv/ before a consonant e.g. *lots o(f) money, 1st o(f) November, waste o(f) time, etc.*
- /h/ and /ð/ in pronouns e.g. *ask (h)er, help (h)im, tell (th)em, etc.*

For a more comprehensive description of **adjustments** in **connected speech**, please refer to the handout:

- **Adjustments in connected speech**

TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

The following is a list of useful resources for **analyzing** pronunciation and **planning** pronunciation lessons.

- *How to Teach Pronunciation* by G. Kelly (Pearson)
- *Sound Foundations. Learning and teaching pronunciation* by A. Underhill (Macmillan)
- *Teaching Pronunciation. A Coursebook and Reference Guide* by M. Celce-Murcia and others (Cambridge University Press)

The following is a list of resources to better understand pronunciation **challenges** experienced by learners of different language backgrounds.

- *Learner English. A teachers' guide to interference and other problems* by M. Swan and B. Smith (Cambridge University Press)
- *Teaching English Pronunciation* by J. Kenworthy (Longman)

The following is a list of resources with pronunciation **activities** for classroom use.

- *Pronunciation Games* by M. Hancock (Cambridge University Press)
- *Pronunciation Practice Activities. A resource book for teaching English Pronunciation* by M. Hewings (Cambridge University Press)
- *Resource Books for Teachers. Pronunciation* by C. Laroy (Oxford University Press)
- *Ship or Sheep? An intermediate pronunciation course* by A. Baker (Cambridge University Press)
- *The Book of Pronunciation. Proposals for a Practical Pedagogy* by J. Marks and T. Bowen (Delta)
- *The Pronunciation Book. Student-centred activities for pronunciation work* by T. Bowen and J. Marks (Pilgrims Longman)
- *Tree or Three? An elementary pronunciation course* by A. Baker (Cambridge University Press)

TEACHING TIPS

- Try not to make pronunciation a burden and promote intelligibility before complete accuracy. The development of pronunciation accuracy can take a very long time. Don't expect too much in a single drill or lesson.
- Help learners set realistic pronunciation goals. Although learner may aspire to achieve native-like pronunciation and accents, encourage them to aim at intelligibility and accuracy.
- Survey the learners' needs and preferences for pronunciation models/varieties. These can be receptive (being able to understand these models) and/or productive (being able to align their production to these models). In the classroom, use the variety you know and bring authentic materials to expose learners to these preferred models/varieties.
- Try to allow comprehension and recognition of sounds before production. Learner will need to fine-tune their ears to new sounds before they can reproduce them.
- Teach learners phonetic symbols and use the phonetic chart in your lessons. This can enhance recognition of sounds, it can support correction and, ultimately, it makes learners more independent (all learner dictionaries include phonetic transcriptions of vocabulary).
- Although dedicated pronunciation lessons can be extremely beneficial (especially to address known challenges and fossilized/stabilized errors), many teachers tend to be more 'systematic' and integrate pronunciation work in grammar, vocabulary, speaking, etc. lessons. Teachers also tend to be more 'opportunistic' and include remedial pronunciation work as it arises during any kind of lesson.
- Raise awareness of the physical element involved in pronunciation. Teach learners how the articulation of sounds work.
- Promote self-evaluation of pronunciation challenges instead of top-down prescriptions. Allow learners to identify their challenges and equip them with strategies to overcome them.
- Although the accuracy of individual sounds is generally very important to avoid communication breakdowns, context usually ensures meaning is conveyed and interpreted correctly. Raise awareness of stress, rhythm and intonation as these can be even more distracting.
- Pronunciation and speech recognition software can be very useful provided it give learners immediate feedback. Help learners select solutions that allow self-recording and comparison with accurate models.
- Be sensitive to different factors that may affect pronunciation. These can be related to the learners' first language, age (although there is less evidence that after puberty 'younger is better'), exposure, aptitude, identity, motivation and personal goals.

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