Please Say That Again: Virtual Pronunciation Instruction for Adult ESL Learners

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Webinar Objectives

• Establish guiding principles for pronunciation instruction

• Understand three different pronunciation features and how they impact intelligibility:
  • Voice Quality Settings
  • Word Stress
  • Intonation

• Learn different activities to integrate pronunciation instruction into virtual teaching
Why are we here?

There is a "threshold level" that NNSs of English have to obtain, and that if their pronunciation abilities stay below this level, they will have verbal communication problems, no matter how much grammar and vocabulary they master (Celce-Murcia, et. al., 2010).

For many lower level learners, the classroom is their only source for developing the L2, and may also be the only place that they feel safe enough to practice speaking their new language out loud (Strube, 2009).
Guiding Principles

• Pronunciation should be embedded within the curriculum
• Teach pronunciation explicitly
• Don’t wait to start teaching pronunciation – teach it from the beginning levels
• Prioritize pronunciation needs and focus features that will have the greatest impact on intelligibility
• Focus on intelligibility, not accent reduction
Segmentals
Voice Quality Settings

The long-term postures of the larynx, pharynx, tongue, velopharyngeal system and lips, as well as long-term laryngeal configurations (Esling & Wong, 1983)
Why are Voice Quality Settings Important?

• If an adult EL learner can be taught the features of English that characterize its voice quality settings, their pronunciation of segmentals should noticeably improve as a result (Esling & Wong, 1983; Jenkins, 2000; Kerr, 2000; Thornberry, 1993).

• The kinesthetic feedback that happens with voice quality settings instruction may be more accessible to literacy level learners than auditory feedback (Kerr, 2000).
Why are Voice Quality Settings Important?
English  Both  Korean
How can we teach VQS to English learners?
• Use a fluent English speaker to model mouth movements
• Have learners imitate the movements watching themselves on their video
• Lip read words and phrases

Let’s see what this looks like!
Minimal Pairs: Mirroring
Read My Lips

Right
Light
Fry
Fly
Rental
Lentil
Grass
Glass
What’s Your Number?

0 – pack
1 – back
2 – rope
3 – robe
4 – big
5 – pig
6 – rip
7 – rib
8 – beach
9 – peach
Show Me the Sound
A Somali learner says “I cook bees in a ban. I never eat big.”

How would you help this learner?
Your Turn!

What are other ways you could practice voice quality settings or minimal pairs?

Voice Quality Setting Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vz7zXYecpY&list=PL-NrZkT8VAybRqATwsx5TL1THogjiq3m5&index=8
Suprasegmentals
What is Word Stress?
For words with two or more syllables…
• one syllable will receive more importance than the others
• this syllable receives the primary word stress
• compared to the other ones, the vowel sound of that syllable will be slightly:
  o louder
  o longer
  o at a higher pitch

comPUser
GOvernment
enVIrOnment
particPAtion
beHAVior
reSUME
Why is Word Stress important?

• “The most convenient focal point for pronunciation instruction; an area of maximum overlap of communicative importance and teachability” (Dalton & Seidlhoffer, 1994)

• English speakers tend to store words according to stress patterns; if the stress pattern is wrong the listener will search for stored words in the wrong category (Gilbert, 2014)

• Lexical-stress identity often overrides segmental information and can cause false word recognition (Benrabah, 1997)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Word</th>
<th>Speaker Pronunciation</th>
<th>Listener Heard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>suiT Able</td>
<td>the level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>written</td>
<td>wriTT EN</td>
<td>retain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normally</td>
<td>norM ALly</td>
<td>no money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why is Word Stress important?
How do we teach word stress to English learners?

1. Listen for and count syllables
   - tapping
   - clapping
   - finger counting
For breakfast I eat fruit.

I eat dates and pineapple.

For lunch, I eat vegetables.

I eat broccoli, peppers, and tomatoes.

For dinner, I eat many foods.

I eat spaghetti, sambuusa, onions, and bread.

I drink milk and water.
How do we teach word stress to English learners?

1. Listen for and count syllables
   - tapping
   - clapping
   - finger counting
2. Identify the stressed syllable
Bubble the Stress
How do we teach word stress to English learners?

1. Listen for and count syllables
   - tapping
   - clapping
   - finger counting

2. Identify the stressed syllable

3. Controlled practice producing the stressed syllable
Rubber Bands
For breakfast I eat fruit.
I eat dates and pineapple.

For lunch, I eat vegetables.
I eat broccoli, peppers, and tomatoes.

For dinner, I eat many foods.
I eat spaghetti, sambuusa, onions, and bread.

I drink milk and water.
How do we teach word stress to English learners?

1. Listen for and count syllables
   - tapping
   - clapping
   - finger counting
2. Identify the stressed syllable
3. Controlled practice producing the stressed syllable
4. Group words by word stress patterns
How do we teach word stress to English learners?

1. Listen for and count syllables
   - tapping
   - clapping
   - finger counting
2. Identify the stressed syllable
3. Controlled practice producing the stressed syllable
4. Group words by word stress patterns
5. Put the words back into context
For breakfast I eat fruit.
I eat dates and pineapple.

For lunch, I eat vegetables.
I eat broccoli, peppers, and tomatoes.

For dinner, I eat many foods.
I eat spaghetti, sambuusa, onions, and bread.

I drink milk and water.
How would you help this learner?

Your Spanish learner says “I went to the capital yesterday.”
Your Turn!

What are other ways you could practice word stress?

Word Stress Videos

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5PtGQCJAWs&list=PL-NrZkT8VAshRqATwsx5TL1THogjiq3m5&index=5
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pakQhAmBf3U&list=PL-NrZkT8VAshRqATwsx5TL1THogjiq3m5&index=5&t=324s
What is intonation?

Intonation is…
• The pattern or melody of pitch changes in connected speech
• About how we say things, rather than what we say
• The music of speech
What does intonation do?

Intonation can be used to...
• emphasize or draw attention to certain words.

I told you to call me.
I told you to call me.
I told you to call me.
I told you to call me.
I told you to call me.

Is my order ready?
Sorry, only half of your order is ready.

Do you want to talk on the phone or on Zoom?

I told you to call me.
I told you to call me.
I told you to call me.
I told you to call me.
I told you to call me.
What does intonation do?

Intonation can be used to...

• to signal thought groups, or how break speech into smaller, more digestible chunks.

I’ll get you / my pretty / and your little dog too!
What does intonation do?

Intonation can be used to...

- signal the difference between a statement and a question, or distinguish between an information question or a yes/no question

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JmA2ClUvUY
What does intonation do?

Intonation can be used to...

- convey additional information about the speaker’s mood, feelings, emotions, or attitude.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k29ogXL_S2U
Why is intonation important?

• Carries a high communicative load in terms of structuring information, providing listeners with prosaic cues, and rapport building between speakers (Kang & Pickering, 2011; Pickering, 2001)
• Acts as a “grammar of cohesion” (Wennerstrom, 1998)
• People assume that the basic signals of rhythm and melody are a natural part of all human speech, but they are language specific (Gilbert, 2014)
How can we teach intonation to English learners?
Activities for all levels: Theater Games
Activities for all levels: Statement or Question

You like chicken. You like chicken?

He is fine. He is fine?

She has 3 children. She has 3 children?

It is correct. It is correct?
Activities for all levels: Hum or Kazoos
Activity for Higher Levels: Transcript

• Take script (or transcript) and turn it into a “poem” with one thought group per line.
• Write emphasized word(s) in CAPITAL LETTERS.
• Have student read each phrase, then look up and say it to you.
  • First: rubber band
  • Second: pitch movement

• Caveats:
  • Students shouldn’t read!
  • They should use rubber band ONLY for emphasized word.
Ayten’s Transcript

• It also worked the same in her RESEARCH. //
• When she asks people about LOVE,
  • they tell her about HEARTBREAK. //
• When she asks people about BELONGING,
  • they tell her their most excruciating experiences of being EXCLUDED. //
• And when she asks people about CONNECTION,
  • they tell her stories about DISconnection.//
• She didn't UNDERSTAND it.//
Video Example
How would you help this learner?

Your Ethiopian learner says “I HAVE GONE TO SCHOOL FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS.”
Your Turn!

What are other ways you could practice intonation?

Intonation Videos

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HZ2c5G3SaQ&t=5s

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9VaN113Vsw&list=PL-NrZkT8VAubRqATwsx5TL1THogj1q3m5&index=9
Let’s Talk!

What pronunciation activity are you going to try out?
Questions?

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