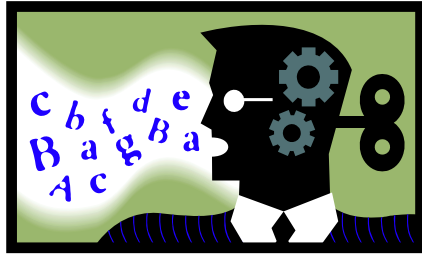


# *Teaching Pronunciation*



## **An Independent Study Course for Teachers of Adult English as a Second Language Learners**

### **Objectives**

- Identify elements of good oral production
- Identify and apply techniques in teaching pronunciation
- Compare textbooks and evaluate their approaches to pronunciation instruction
- Understand how to incorporate pronunciation exercises into lesson plans

When you have completed this course, you will receive 15 Professional Development Hours.

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Teaching Pronunciation – Introduction

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## How to Use the Hyperlinks in this Document



This course is available for Microsoft Word and for Adobe Reader. You will encounter numerous hyperlinks in this course that will direct you to web sites or to specific sections and references within the document. Hyperlinks appear in blue italics.

**Using the MS Word hyperlinks (Windows Vista, XP or older):** To move easily back and forth between the text and hyperlinks in Word you'll need the Web toolbar. Select View-Toolbars-Web, or right-click anywhere in the toolbar ribbon and select Web. You'll see a green forward and back arrow. To use a hyperlink, position the cursor over the hyperlink, push CTRL and left-click on your mouse. You'll be directed to the hyperlink. To return to your text, select the back arrow in the Web toolbar, or in the case of a Web link, simply close your browser window.

**Windows 7:** If you're using Word for Windows 7, the back arrow is in the Quick Access Toolbar at the top left of your screen (where you also find Save, Undo, Redo, etc.).

**Adobe Reader:** Put the cursor over the hyperlink and click once. To return to the previous view select ALT + Left Arrow.

Try it now. Click on this link: [Bibliography](#). Remember, to return to this spot find the **back arrow** on the toolbar (Word) or ALT+Left Arrow (Adobe). It should return you here and the hyperlink will now appear in underlined purple non-italics. If it did, great! You're ready to begin the course. And, if you encounter problems or links that don't work, please let us know!



## Evaluation Page

The purpose of the Evaluation Page is to provide AEFLA Program Directors with an instrument to discuss the effectiveness of the course and verify staff participation in the PD activity. Directors should record the teacher's PD hours in your Annual Professional Development Activity Record.

## The Purpose of the Independent Study Course Series

The Independent Study Courses (ISCs) created by the NCPDC are part of the professional development system for Colorado's adult education and family literacy programs. The ISC created by the NCPDC can be used in a variety of ways for professional development. Programs can choose to use an ISC in a face-to-face training, such as a workshop delivered by a teacher trainer; or collaboration with colleagues, such as a study circle. If the ISC is used in one of these ways, which fall within the corresponding strands (*Workshops, Trainings & Conferences* or *Collaboration with Colleagues*) of the [Guide to Professional Development Reporting](#), the professional development (PD) hours can be used on the Documentation of Training form submitted in a Literacy Instruction Authorization (LIA) portfolio. They may also be used for LIA renewal if a certificate is received upon completion that documents the title of the activity, the institution that sponsored the activity, the facilitator's name, the date of the activity, and the number of contact hours earned in the activity. These hours can also be reported to your AEFLA director.

This Independent Study Course merits 15 PD hours.

If used as self-study the PD hours from this ISC can be used for annual AEFLA reporting to the program director. **Self-study PD hours do not qualify for use in the LIA portfolio, nor can they be used for LIA renewal.**

### Who Is This Course For?

This Independent Study Course is for Colorado's adult ESL practitioners, including novice and experienced teachers, both in classroom/group settings and in one-on-one lab settings. Volunteer tutors may also find the contents valuable.

### How to Use This Study Course

1. After reading the [Introduction](#) and [Theory](#) continue to [Best Practices](#), where you will find descriptions of strategies and techniques you can use in your own classroom, using your own core curricula, to improve the oral production of your students.
2. At the end of the Study Course, you'll find three [Application Activities](#). Do all three application activities and discuss your experiences with your program director.
3. The [Bibliography and Resources](#) link provides you with a list of books and other resources, should you wish to continue to delve further into the topic of pronunciation instruction.

### Program Directors' Page

If you are a program director, use the [Evaluation Form](#), based on the objectives of the course, to verify staff participation in this Independent Study Course.

# Introduction

Communication can be a tricky business, especially when the listener and speaker are from different linguistic backgrounds. There are pitfalls aplenty with poor word choice and improper inflection, and there are numerous reasons a student has difficulty reproducing the sounds of English correctly. Perhaps pronunciation had little focus in previous classes, or maybe the student has never had any formal language instruction. Even students with significant educational experience can have problems. Perhaps early pronunciation was taught by non-native speakers who themselves have oral production problems. Maybe the student's first language contains different phonemes and the student simply cannot hear the sounds, let alone accurately replicate them.

Below are several scenarios from my personal experiences, as well as from my colleagues, as ESL professionals abroad and in the U.S.

## ***I Rove Lak!***

A student in Seoul, South Korea was asked to keep a recorded cassette journal because his teacher was having difficulty understanding his spoken English. The unit topic was *Entertainment* and the student was asked to respond to the question, "What kind of music do you like?" On his cassette journal he proudly professed his love for *Lok* and *Naitch*.

*Lok* was not too difficult to decode, especially given the context. He loves rock-and-roll, but displayed the typical Asian difficulty pronouncing English *L* and *R*. The teacher listened and listened and could not decode *Naitch*. She returned to class the next day, played the tape, and asked the student to write the words on paper. The mystery was solved. He loves New Age music.

This might have been a problem arising from untrained or undisciplined listening skills, or possibly a physical linguistic difference. English requires more open movement of the mouth and jaw than does Korean Hangul. This could explain the absence of the diphthong necessary to move from the long *u* sound in *new* to the long *a* sound in *age*. The mispronunciation of the *g* sound to *ch* was an additional challenge. Whatever the cause, poor oral production interfered with communication.

## ***Put Your Teeth Into It!***

Another colleague in Seoul asked his students to prepare one five-minute presentation for the semester. One student had recently "conquered" the sound of *f* (*f* and *p* are difficult sounds for some Korean students to distinguish). The student displayed a cross-section of a mouth and dutifully explained that there are two ways to produce the sound *f*, one way is to place the top teeth on the bottom lip and blow air. The teacher

nodded in agreement, wondering what on Earth the second method could be. The student happily demonstrated that *f* can also be produced by placing the bottom teeth on the top lip and blowing air. The teacher had to restrain from laughing, but the student had been taught that this was acceptable technique by a Korean Middle School English teacher.

### ***Just Write it Down***

A Hispanic ESL student in Colorado wants to become a United States citizen. He diligently attends English class three nights per week and an ESL literacy laboratory one night per week, moving slowly but steadily up the Student Performance Level (SPL) ladder, based on CASAS listening tests. He holds a fulltime job and attends his children's parent-teacher conferences.

The student once reported that his boss complains about his strong accent. Teachers and tutors have also reported difficulty understanding this student's speech. After much repetition and occasionally asking him to write down what it is he's trying to say, does it become apparent that he comprehends what he's being asked. The student's poor oral production could have numerous negative consequences for him in the future, including difficulties getting a better job and passing the INS interview.

### ***Keep Your Eye on the Prize!***

I once read an article in a Korean-English newspaper about a surgery some Korean parents have had performed on their children, even children as young as six months. The surgery involves clipping the *frenulum*, that little strip of skin that attaches your tongue to the floor of your mouth, believing that the tongue will be more flexible, thereby eliminating problems with production of English *L* and *R*. (Never mind that there are numerous other phonological differences between Korean Hangul and English!) I was horrified, but many of my students truly believed that this extreme and very costly procedure was a viable solution to a problem that, in their minds, would impede their academic success.

Linguists around the world denounced *frenotomy* as cruel, unnecessary, and ineffective and I'm inclined to accept those assertions. One has only to listen to South Korea's opera diva, Cho Su-mi (known as Sumi Jo in America) in her rendition of *I Dreamed I Lived in Marbled Halls* with its heartbreaking refrain, "You loved me still the same," enunciated as clearly as any native speaker, to know that it is possible for a native Korean speaker to form perfect *L*s and *R*s without going under the knife! Listen to Chinese film director Ang Li and you hear the same, perfect pronunciation of these consonants.

I'm happy to say that none of my students ever had a frenotomy, and as we worked on pronunciation in class, I hope that they realized that communication could still occur, despite their accents.

Students may or may not be aware that their oral production is a problem. As teachers, it's up to us to identify the problems, weighing their importance against the student's needs. Keep your eye on the prize: successful communication, not perfection.

How important is it for ESL instructors to incorporate pronunciation practice into their lessons? How much time and effort should be devoted to it? What are the keys to good pronunciation? What are the best classroom strategies and techniques to improve students' oral production? In other words, what do other teachers do?

Stephen Krashen says, "Comprehensible input stimulates natural language acquisition." (*Krashen and Terrell*, P.98). Giving students lots of speaking and listening practice in a context they can understand can help the student untie the pronunciation knots. Access to native speakers is invaluable, be it teachers, friends, coworkers, television, radio, movies, or grocery store clerks.

Pronunciation problems can be based on a number of auditory, physiological, cultural, emotional, even psychological factors. Pronunciation practice should be multidimensional, with emphasis on listening in a contextualized format with ample exposure to the target sounds and utterances, and lots of contextualized oral practice. Listening "is essential not only as a receptive skill but also to the development of spoken language proficiency." (*Nunan and Miller*, p.v.)

Krashen defines the opposite of comprehensible input as noise. Perhaps it can be said, then, that the role of an ESL/EFL teacher in the development of pronunciation is to assist in transforming that noise into discernible and distinguishable sounds with meaning.

### **Reflection**

- Think about the learners in your class now. What problems have you encountered in their pronunciation?
- How have you addressed pronunciation problems in your class? What strategies and techniques have you used?
- How much time in a single lesson do you devote to pronunciation instruction and practice?
- Have you been satisfied with the progress of your students' oral production?

# Theory

Learning a new language requires adequate exposure to the language, the ability to discriminate between phonemic elements, the ability to analyze the grammar and social rules, the ability to recall learned components of the language (grammar, spelling, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.), and to use all of these appropriately. What a task!

Research into the teaching of pronunciation has been less extensive than research into second language acquisition (SLA) and first language (L1) interference. For this Independent Study Course a small sampling of theoretical elements is presented to help you understand challenges facing adult students who are trying to master English pronunciation, and to give you some basis on which to apply pronunciation tasks and exercises in your classroom.

## Teach English, Not *About* English!

Unless you're teaching a Masters class in Second Language Acquisition or Applied Linguistics, chances are you won't be focusing very much of any lesson on the fine minutiae of pronunciation, such as *suprasegmentals* (*stress*, *pitch*, *rhythm*, and *intonation*). It's doubtful that a classroom of ESL students will benefit much from a lesson objective of looking at the *stress-timed* nature of English. However, this is not to say that pronunciation shouldn't be a part of every lesson. Of course, it should, and within contexts that are comprehensible to your learners.

Consider this practice exchange for Level 2 ESL students and some possible errors you might encounter:

- A: Can I please espeak to dapardmend manaher?  
B: I'm esorry, he's not in. Can I take a massage?  
A: Jes, please. My chower is licking.

This dialog provides opportunity for both real-life meaning and substantive oral practice that can be extended to other real-life situations. Adult ESL students want and need meaning. Their pronunciation will improve with practice, time, and most importantly, no pressure! As your students progress, so will their abilities to analyze the language and their own production. In other words, your focus should be to teach English but not teach *about* English.

Good oral production requires a combination of the following elements: correct sound *articulation*, proper *stress* and *pitch*, and appropriate *intonation*. Your students will make pronunciation gaffs in any one, or all of these areas. Every lesson should provide them with exposure to natural language that is simplified appropriately for their level, opportunities for the students to practice the language in relevant contexts, lots of repetition, and review. It's perfectly OK to hone in on a specific phoneme, for example,

or a consonant blend, or a cluster of chunked words in a phrase to improve your students' oral production. But this will be a small piece of your lesson.

There are many factors affecting a non-native English speaker's pronunciation; likewise, there isn't one cure-all method to improve poor oral production. It can be argued that too much focus on pronunciation distracts the learner from the meaning of the content (*Parrish*, P. 107). Understanding what factor(s) could *possibly* be interfering with a student's oral production (there might be several and it's difficult to be absolutely certain) can help the teacher integrate effective pronunciation practice into each lesson.



## Static on the Line – L1 Interference

The role of a student's native language (L1) in second language acquisition is the focus of numerous theories and hypothesis regarding phonological development of a new language. *Contrastive analysis theory* states that the language being learned is filtered through L1. The student's L1 assists SLA where the two languages share common structures, and interferes where those structures are either wildly different or are nonexistent in L1 (*Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin*, P19).

A student's L1 can affect pronunciation in three basic ways: 1) If the L1 sound system is different from English, 2) if the rules for combining sounds into words are different, and 3) if the patterns of stress and intonation are different (*Avery & Ehrlich*, P xv).

## L1 Interference #1 – Phonemic Pitfalls

*Phonemes* from the student's first language (L1) can interfere with auditory recognition and replication of English phonemes. Students whose L1 is from a different linguistic family than English, Mandarin or Vietnamese, for example, might have difficulty hearing and replicating English phonemes.

Teachers of Hispanic students, for example, will hear *estudent* or *eschool* because the English words student and school are being filtered through Spanish, where there are no *initial consonant clusters* beginning with s. French students will likely not pronounce an aspirated h at the beginning of a word because initial h in French is silent. Knowing this, the teacher can be aware of the contrasts and work to correct the filtration process. The *th* sounds in English are particularly difficult for speakers of many languages, ending up more like *t* or *d*, *s* or *z*.

Some students may even overcompensate for difficult sounds and substitute the wrong phoneme altogether. In this case, the student exhibits awareness of the problem and is focusing on the correction (*Lightbown & Spada*, P. 105). Other students may exhibit neither awareness nor recognition of the sounds of English. This phonological deafness could have its basis in lack of exposure to native English, no previous English

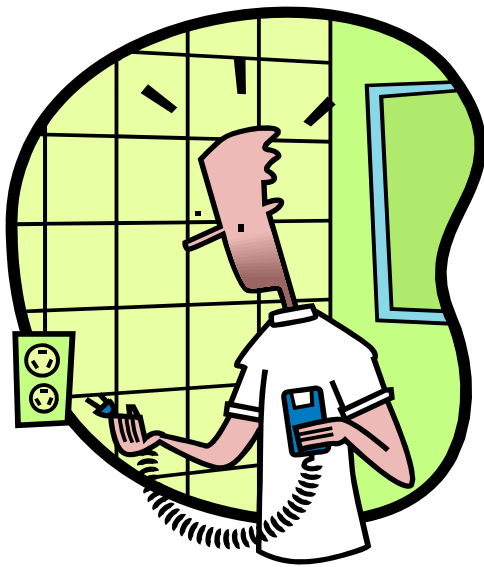
education, instruction by teachers who themselves had L1 accents, or physiological problems, such as hearing loss or learning disabilities.

There can also be physiological barriers. Perhaps the student's L1 requires an entirely different muscular formation than does English. Maybe the student has a physical or learning disability that affects hearing and auditory processing. Post-traumatic stress disorder can also be a factor. "Since language learning demands control, connection, and meaning, adults experiencing effects of past or current trauma are particularly challenged in learning a new language." (*Iserlis*).

There are several ways to improve a student's phonemic discrimination. These are covered in the *Best Practices* section.

## L1 Interference #2 – Coming to School and Breaking the Sound Combination Rules

All languages have rules for combining sounds into words. As children, we absorb these sound rules through listening and trial and error. We develop an



unconscious knowledge of what works and what's inappropriate. We know that we can say *blanket* and there's meaning associated with it, but *bnanket* has no meaning, nor does an English word ever begin with the combination *bn*.

Your students' native languages also have rules of combination and as English is filtered through L1, those rules will surface in the form of mispronounced words.

Take, for example, the word *call*. Low level Hispanic students might say *ky* because in Spanish *ll* is pronounced the same as the initial *y* in English, as in *yellow*.

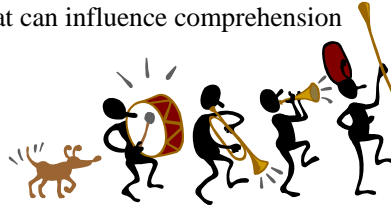
Vowels in other languages are *transparent*, that is a vowel requires the same sound every time. Due to the *opaque* nature of English vowels, which contain numerous oral forms with several different

pronunciations, vowel combinations are likely to be misinterpreted and mispronounced as well. To add insult to injury, English vowels don't always follow their own rules. Is it any wonder that our students scratch their heads when they hear the difference between *woman* and *women*, or the present form of the verb *read* vs. the past form *read*?

## L1 Interference #3 – Stress and Intonation: Putting the emPHASis on the right syllAble!

English is a stress-time language. That means that as we speak, the moments of stress come at regular intervals and the number of stresses in an utterance affect the length of time needed to say it. For example, “I’m going to the **STORE** tomorrow.” This statement takes very little time to say. Maybe you’ll put a little emphasis on *I’m*, but only the destination *store* is strongly stressed. Even the meaning-laden time-marker, *tomorrow*, is unstressed.

Other languages are syllable-timed, with equal time distance between syllables. Therefore, the amount of time it takes to say something depends on the number of syllables in the utterance. A student from a *syllable-timed language* will have a tendency to stress all syllables equally, with a staccato quality that can influence comprehension (Avery & Ehrlich, P. 73).



### What’s With That Accent?

It isn’t necessary for English language learners to learn how to speak English like a native. A good approximation of the sounds of English is all that’s necessary for successful communication. There also are cultural considerations. The student’s accent is part of who he or she is culturally and ethnically (*Diaz-Rico and Weed*, P 83). An immigrant who assimilates into American culture can retain the L1 accent yet function quite effectively in American society.

Remember the prize is effective communication, not the elimination of the student’s accent. Focus on critical errors, the ones that affect communication where the utterance is ambiguous, inappropriate, or completely unintelligible. Provide adequate practice within meaningful contexts to improve communication.

### What’s the Student’s History and Current Living Situation?

An important consideration, often absent in “how-to” books, is the effect of the student’s history on his or her learning capabilities, and pronunciation is no exception. How much experience does the student have with pronunciation practice? Was there any formal English instruction? If so, did it involve drilling isolated vocabulary or sounds out of context? Was the student’s prior instruction taught by instructors whose own pronunciation deviated from the norm? Does the student live in a culturally cohesive neighborhood where only the student’s native language is spoken? Even a student’s attitude and self-image can affect phonological development in a new language.

Whatever the reasons, pronunciation problems might be fixed and systematic (*Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin*, P17). It might take a long time with substantial intervention and practice to supplant serious production errors.

### ***Now Hear This: The Key to the Realm is Listening!***

The design and delivery of ESL instruction in a program is driven by the program's philosophy of learning. Ideally, the curriculum selection is based on learner needs, program objectives, language acquisition theory, and research. The role of pronunciation will vary, depending on these factors.



The key to improved pronunciation is listening, but listening in a context that is both comprehensible to the students and relevant to their lives beyond the classroom walls. Students should be exposed to different voices and through different modes of delivery. Students who only hear the teacher in class may find it very difficult to discriminate sounds or get meaning when they listen to language on a cassette tape.

Oral production is linked to the meaning of the discourse (*Avery & Ehrlich*, P. 163). Provide practice within a contextualized theme, rather than isolating individual sounds out of the context of a word or sentence, and repeat, repeat, repeat!

### ***A Fossilization Plateau is NOT a Dinosaur Dig!***

Second language learners come to the classroom with at least some knowledge *about* the second language, competency in their native language, the ability to use language functions, and their general knowledge of the world. (*Diaz-Rico and Weed*, P. 66). The classroom provides a safe learning environment in which they can experiment and take risks, but it's not enough.

ESL/EFL students need lots of exposure to English outside the classroom where they have to negotiate meaning in a variety of settings with a variety of native speakers. (*Diaz-Rico and Weed*, P. 66) However, hard as some try, there are students who reach a point of *fossilization*, a plateau that requires exceptional effort and motivation to move beyond (*Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin*, P21).

Perhaps this describes one or more of your students, who seemed to move forward quite nicely through lower levels of English, but seem to stall out at the intermediate or advanced levels. This is difficult for teachers and stressful for the students. Have patience. Be supportive. Be consistent. Encourage them to continue to listen to English outside of class as much as possible and practice speaking as much as possible.

## Oh, what to do? What to do? (With no great wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth!)



There is no magic, but there are good practices in developing pronunciation. Progress might be slow in some students while others show dramatic improvement in a shorter time, and you now know that there could be many reasons for these differences.

The key is listening to spoken English. There are many effective listening tasks and activities that help students discriminate and distinguish the sounds of English. Likewise, there are speaking tasks to help them practice their oral production.

The *Best Practices* section of this module presents some tried and true strategies and techniques for you to use in your own classroom.

### Reflections

- Take a moment to reflect on your own teaching style. How are you teaching English? Are you teaching the language or *about* the language?
- Have you noticed any of the interference problems mentioned above in your own learners?
- Do you think you have a better understanding of what the causes *might be* for pronunciation interference(s) with your learners?
- What is your view of your students' accents? Do their accents compromise communication?

# Best Practices – Techniques for Teaching Pronunciation

## *Remove the Scaffolding Gradually and Keep It Natural*

Oral practice in the ESL/EFL classroom should provide the structure of *guided practice* and *scaffolding*, which is gradually reduced and eventually removed, challenging students to retrieve what they've practiced before and apply it in new situations and real-life conversations. Classroom practice can be teacher-student(s), student-student or student(s)-teacher.

Incorporating five to ten minutes per lesson on pronunciation can have a big impact. Learners at all levels benefit from appropriate oral practice. Don't underestimate the value of multiple exposures of the target language and repetition, repetition, repetition.

However you teach pronunciation, whatever techniques you use and whatever tasks in which your students engage themselves, the model language should be as natural as possible. Separating syllables in a very staccato manner ("I... am... from... A-mer-i-ca."), stretching *diphthongs* ("What... is... your... nay-eeem?") might be helpful to some students with a severe sound-to-speech disconnection, but we certainly don't want our students speaking in this manner out in the community. Slow down and simplify your teacher language, but keep it natural.

This course presents listening, speaking, and writing activities, as well as *task-based listening activities*, where students aren't required to produce the oral language, but complete a task that demonstrates their comprehension, instead.

Now, let's get to the good stuff, classroom activities for teaching pronunciation. There are three basic types of activities presented in this course: rhythm & intonation (*suprasegmentals*), visual/physical patterns, and *minimal pair activities*. You will encounter a variety of pronunciation problems among your students. Any of these activities can be custom-fit to identify those specific problems (see *Application Activity #3*).



## *First, Some Tools of the Trade*

Have a clear cross-section diagram of the mouth handy and show students where various sounds are produced in the mouth. For animations of how English sounds are produced in the mouth refer to *TV Tutor* video by [Kay Koschnick Freeman](#) (in the [Bibliography](#)). Long explanations aren't necessary, but physically feeling how and where a sound is produced is an important part of the pronunciation process.

Another excellent resource is [Pronunciation Contrasts in English](#) by Nilsen and Nilsen, which provides minimal pair sets for 51 different foreign languages, including Native American languages.

A small supply of hand mirrors is very useful for students to watch their own mouths form the target sounds. Other useful tools include matches, feathers, large rubber bands, and flyswatters (read on!). For students with extremely poor sound production, create a small listening "phone" by connecting two 3.5-4" PVC pipe joints, available at most hardware stores. A student needs only to speak quietly into the phone and hear his or her pronunciation in one ear while listening to your model in the other ear. [Figure 1].



**Figure 1 – Students with severe pronunciation problems can listen to their own speech with a simple “phone,” created by fitting two 3.5” - 4” PVC pipe joints together.**

A set of Same/Different/I Don't Know cards is useful at all levels. Students listen and respond by holding up the card that reflects their answers. Beginning students can have S on one color card, D on a different color, and a third color to represent *I don't know*. (See the [Minimal Pairs activities](#) below.)

## Best Technique #1 – *Rhythm and Intonation*

As students practice speaking, they're internalizing the sounds and patterns of the language. Proper stress, intonation and pitch patterns will improve the production of vowels and consonants, as well as the meaning of what's being said. These are the *suprasegmentals* and they certainly should not be taken for granted.

Some teachers believe that in a multi-cultural classroom, where learners represent a variety of native languages, teaching the suprasegmentals is more beneficial than teaching the *segmentals*, while other teachers feel that phonemic awareness is more important. However you fall in that debate, you'll want to incorporate practice in the rhythm and intonation of English.

However, this might be easier said than done. It requires that the student hear the patterns correctly and reproduce them. You don't need a lot of fancy technology to teach stress and intonation, but incorporating different learning styles, or *learning modalities*, such as listening, visual, written, and physical activities, can help students assimilate the rhythm and stress of English through multiple channels.

There are books and products to help you teach the rhythm and intonation of English. Carolyn Graham's series of *Jazz Chants*, published by Oxford University Press, were developed to give students repetitive speaking practice in stress and intonation, syntax, and vocabulary. The chants incorporate natural speaking rhythm in fun little poems. Students practice orally but adding hand claps or foot stomps on the downbeats adds a level of fun that some adult students might not expect in the classroom.

*Jazz Chants* have been incorporated into some ESL textbooks and there are specialized *Jazz Chants* books for children and adults. Graham's *Creating Chants and Songs*, contains tips and guidelines for creating your own chants using the target language of your classroom curriculum.

Another text that incorporates the meter and pacing of English is *Clear Speech* by Judy Gilbert.

### Rhythm and Intonation Activity 1.1 – *I Got Rhythm!*

**Appropriate For:** Beginning to intermediate

**Time to Implement:** 5-10 minutes

**Materials:** A list of statements, questions, or a short dialog to which students have already been exposed

**Preparation Time:** 5-10 minutes

**Procedure:** Model the statements or questions, tapping out the beat of normal English conversation in a steady rhythm on a table or by clapping your hands with a steady and slow tempo. Repeat and have students imitate your beats. Remember that English is a stress-timed language. Intervals between your beats will remain fairly constant, even though the number of words between beats can vary widely.

Do this very slowly, stopping between each line of the dialog to “reset” your rhythm. Then practice dialog without tapping. Repeat the activity with other familiar dialogs or statements.

**Examples for Beginners:**

(Beats are indicated by underlines, this is where you tap. Syllables and words between the beats are unstressed. Tap out the empty beats at the ends of lines as well.)

- A: Nice to meet you ( \_ \_ ).  
B: Nice to meet you, too ( \_ ).
- A: Hello, Manuel. How are you today?  
B: I'm fine, Margaret. And you ( \_ )?  
A: I'm fine ( \_ ).  
B: Where are you going?  
A: I'm going to class. What about you?

**Example for Intermediates:**

- A: I'd like a bus ticket, please ( \_ ).  
B: Is that one-way or round trip?  
A: Round trip. ( \_ ) How much is it?  
B: It comes to ninety-six dollars and fifty cents.

<b>Rhythm and Intonation Activity 1.2 – Create a Chant</b>
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**Appropriate For:** High-beginning to intermediate

**Time to Implement:** 5-10 minutes

**Materials:** A short dialog written in a poetic meter, using vocabulary and syntax that is familiar to the students

**Preparation Time:** 20-30 minutes, depending on your language focus

**Procedure:** Model the poem for the class, then have students repeat, trying to keep the same rhythm and the same intonation as your model.

**Example:**

(Again, beats are indicated by underlines, this is where you tap. Syllables and words between the beats are unstressed.)

- A:** *I'm going to the bank, what about you?*
- B:** *I'm going to the store, I need new shoes.*

- A: *I need new shoes, just like you!*
- B: *Then get your money and come along too!*
- A: *That's a great idea for this beautiful day.*
- B: *Let's stop for lunch at that small café.*

Practice the poem teacher to class, class to teacher, and student to student. For extra fun try dividing into teams (men vs. women, people with short hair vs. people with long hair, etc.). Have the A team shout their lines and have the B team whisper theirs; then switch. If you have a small class, line everyone up into a straight line, with you as the leader. Then, march around the room, reciting the poem, keeping time with your feet.

## Best Technique #2: Visualizing Patterns

Students with little experience in English and students with learning disabilities may have a lot of difficulty hearing the sounds of the language, let alone correctly reproducing them. Add to this the fact that all students have different learning styles and you can see that using only one format to teach pronunciation is a recipe for frustration. The teacher can incorporate other *learning modalities* to assist in this process, helping students get the information through different channels.

### Visualizing Patterns Activity 2.1 – *Where is the stress?*

**Appropriate for:** Beginning to Advanced students

**Time to Implement:** 5-10 minutes

**Materials:** A list of 5 or 6 words (for beginners) or full statements and/or questions (intermediate to advanced) students have *previously* practiced (don't use unfamiliar vocabulary!)

**Preparation Time:** 20-30 minutes to type up the sentences and apply bold type or a black ball to identify the point of stress on one or two examples. Preparation time could be minimal if you simply write the sentences on your board or overhead and let students identify the stress.

Using bold and/or underlined type or a black dot to identify stressed syllables in a full utterance will provide visual cues during guided practice to help students assimilate the correct stress and intonation:

*I have to go to work today.*

or...

•

*I have to go to work today.*

After showing one or two examples and demonstrating the pronunciation, ask students to identify where the stress is on your other sentences. Students can highlight or underline on paper (or the board), or draw in the black ball. Students practice with a partner reading all the sentences or words with the proper stress.

**Visualizing Patterns Activity 2.2 – Task-Based Listening: Stress Patterns**

Another approach uses visual cues in the form of small and large circles to show the proper stress on words with more than two syllables:

**Appropriate for:** Intermediate to Advanced students

**Time to Present:** 5-10 minutes

**Materials:** A response form for each student, like the sample below

**Time to Prepare:** 20-30 minutes to create your form.

**Example:** Students whose first language is Spanish often put stress on the final syllable of a word that ends in *-tion*, since this is where the stress occurs in the Spanish cognates that end in *-ción*; *comunicación* for example, and this terminal (final) syllable is the *point of interference*.

Create a chart with three or four columns. Each column corresponds to a stress point in a multi-syllabic word in English; each column heading is a pattern of small o and large O, where large O represents the stressed syllable.

Next, create a list of familiar vocabulary words that fit into your four stress categories. Read each word individually, then in a complete sentence, for example: reFRIGerator I put the milk in the reFRIGerator. Students write each word in the appropriate stress pattern column.

**Students see:**

Listen to the teacher. Listen to the word. Write the word in the column with the correct stress.

o O o	o O o o o	o o o O o	O o o

**Students hear:**

Saturday      communication      forever      refrigerator

After checking their answers, have student practice the vocabulary in meaningful dialogs or sentences, paying attention to the point of stress in the target words.

*I want to learn English for good communication.  
My refrigerator is very small.  
Can you come over on Saturday?  
Forever means eternity.*

### **Visualizing Patterns Activity 2.3 – Drawing the Points of Stress**

**Appropriate for:** High-intermediate to advanced students

**Time to Present:** 5-10 minutes

**Materials:** Overhead, white board, chalk board or paper; a list of previously practiced words or phrases

**Time to Prepare:** Minimal, depending on your medium. You can type up the phrases on paper or do this activity on the board. Compile a list of previously practiced words or phrases. A further application activity is to incorporate all the phrases into a short dialog for pair practice.

**Example:** The intonation of complete sentences is as important as proper intonation of individual words. The *stress-time* of English can be difficult for some students to feel comfortable with. Students whose first language is a syllable-timed language will tend to read and speak in a manner that puts emphasis on nearly every syllable of every word.

Model with an example: Write the first phrase on the board. Say the phrase then draw a flat line where there is no stress and draw a little hill or hump where the stress occurs.

—————  
I went to the library yesterday.  
—————  
Executive Branch

Have students listen and repeat the stress. Continue to the next phrase. Say it and ask a student to demonstrate on the board where the hump should be, or have students draw on their own papers, then listen and repeat the phrase, rising at the hump.

After practicing short phrases, put them into longer utterances and a meaningful dialog. Allow space between lines so students can draw in the intonation and stress points.

A: Where did you go yesterday?

B: I went to the library yesterday to get a book about the President and the Executive Branch.

## Best Technique #3: *Let's Get Physical with the Visuals*

These activities combine visual cues with kinesthetic cues to help students internalize the stress and intonation.

### Visual/Physical Activity 3.1 – *Do the Wave!*

A level 2 class that struggled with the word *refrigerator*, so we practiced saying the word and doing “The Wave,” like fans at a football game. The next day during warm-up, a picture of a refrigerator was posted on the board. Several students instantly said the word and did The Wave. This instantly got a laugh, setting a relaxed atmosphere for the lesson. Best of all, the pronunciation was great!

**Appropriate for:** All levels

**Time to Present:** 2-5 minutes

**Materials:** None

**Time to Prepare:** Minimal

**Procedure:** Identify the target word (for example, *refrigerator*) and model The Wave by sitting for the unstressed syllable *re-* then standing up and raising your arms on the stressed syllable *-frig* and immediately sitting down again for the unstressed *-erator*.

A more “reserved” version of this activity is for students to punch a fist forward or clap hands on the stressed syllables.

### Visual/Physical Activity 3.2 – *Rubber Bands*

Another visual-physical technique is to use a large rubber band. (Be sure to use new ones so that students won't get snapped by old rubber bands that break!)

**Appropriate for:** All levels

**Time to Present:** 2-5 minutes

**Materials:** Large rubber bands (new!)

**Time to Prepare:** Minimal

**Procedure:** Hold the rubber band with the four fingers or the two thumbs. This is the “resting” position. Select your target word or utterance and demonstrate the point of stress by stretching the rubber band slightly and releasing it back to the resting position. Remember, the point of stress might be a syllable within one word (*reFRIGerator*) or one syllable or word within a complete utterance (*I'm going to SCHOOL tomorrow*). If you don't have rubber bands have students mimic the action by holding their hands together and separating them on the stress.

### **Visual/Physical Activity 3.3 – *Feathers and Matches***

Students who struggle with aspirated and explosive vs. implosive consonants might benefit from another visual-physical technique that uses a small feather (available at craft stores) or a lit match. If you don't have a feather, a strip of lightweight tissue paper works well.

**Appropriate for:** All levels

**Time to Present:** 2-5 minutes

**Materials:** Feathers or matches (or lightweight tissue paper)

**Time to Prepare:** Minimal

**Procedure:** Select your target sounds, for example, *pump* vs. *bump*, or *plumber* vs. *plumper*. Hold the lit match or the feather about three inches in front of the student's mouth. If the student properly produces the implosive *b* the match should stay lit or the feather will move only slightly. The properly formed explosive *p* will blow out the match or move the feather considerably more.

Again, putting the target vocabulary into a meaningful dialog for pair practice gives students the opportunity to apply this oral practice.

A: My refrigerator isn't working.

B: Why don't you call the plumber?

A: I don't need a plumber. I need a new refrigerator!

### **Best Techniques #4: *Minimal Pairs and Task-Based Listening***

Regardless of your instructional content, you're likely to encounter *minimal pairs* on a daily basis. A minimal pair consists of two words that almost sound the same, differing only by a single *phoneme*. These pairs can be confusing for students and frustrating for the teacher. The phonemic difference might be minimal, but the communicative value is huge! Is he buying a *ship* or a *sheep*? Is the dress *thirteen* dollars or *thirty*? Does she have a beautiful *face* or a beautiful *vase*? Not to mention the cultural faux pas to be had with pairs such as beach/bitch and others I won't mention here!

Including minimal pair activities adds spice to your lessons and demonstrates to students the importance of pronunciation in communication, and I have included several tried-and-true methods of minimal pair practice. The activities listed below can be first used as *guided practice* with the teacher as the model/director and used later for *communicative practice* between pairs of students.

Several of the minimal pair activities included here are also *task-based listening*. This is an excellent platform on which to present minimal pair activities because students are not required to produce oral or written language, but respond by performing a simple task, such as circling a word or letter on paper or holding up a different colored card, depending on the response.

A very useful resource for identifying minimal pairs that target specific L1 problems is *Pronunciation Contrasts in English* by Nilsen and Nilsen. The authors contrasted fifty-one different foreign and Native American languages and compiled a comprehensive list of vowel sounds, consonant sounds, diphthongs, and blends, along with simple activities pronunciation practice.

A text and teacher's guide with activities that focus on minimal pairs is *Pronunciation Pairs* by Ann Baker and Sharon Goldstein.

The minimal pair activities in this course are presented in order from easiest to more difficult.

### **Minimal Pairs/Task-based Listening 4.1 – Same/Different/I Don't Know Cards**

Same/Different/I Don't Know cards are effective visual assessments of your students' abilities to discriminate between sounds. Students say nothing, they only respond with the appropriate color card.

You'll need three different colored index cards (or construction paper), one for each response. For beginners, write a large S on the color for SAME, a D on the color for DIFFERENT, and nothing on the color for I DON'T KNOW.

For Intermediate to Advanced students it isn't necessary to write anything on the cards. Regardless of level, demonstrate how the cards are to be used. Remind students that they are to say nothing, only hold up a card.

**Appropriate for:** Excellent for beginners, but helpful at all levels.

**Time to Present:** 5-10 minutes (can be used for review or as an evaluation activity)

**Materials:** Same/Different/I Don't Know Cards; two different sets of minimal pairs per pair of students. Depending on the level of student, four or five pairs/student is probably adequate. Students can swap sets to extend practice time.

**Preparation Time:** Approximately 15-20 minutes to prepare one set of three cards for each student.

**Procedure:** Each student gets a set of *Same/Different/I Don't Know*. Using one minimal pair, for example *chop* and *shop*, the teacher says one of the words two times or both of the words one time each. Students listen and hold up S if they think the two words were the same and D if they think the two words were different. If they're not sure, they hold up the *I Don't Know* card. This provides students with a safe and non-threatening way to let you know they're not hearing the differences.

When students get familiar with this activity let them work in pairs to practice their own pronunciation either with the same group of words, or different ones.

**Sample Pairs:**

face – vase	sick – sick	come – gum	I'm – am
house – horse	past – pest	flash – flush	shoe – shoe
pies – buys	calm – comb	bite – bite	peek – pick

four – far      free – three      ride – write      toe – toe

For more challenge, use pairs that can be inserted into similar sentences:

**Put** the flowers here – **Pot** the flowers here  
I don't have the **rent** – I don't have the **wrench**  
She needs a new **pen** – She needs a new **pan**

An alternative for intermediate to advanced students is to use equal and non-equal symbols = ≠ on an answer sheet. Students circle whether they hear same or different.

**Minimal Pairs/Task-Based Listening Activity 4.2 – *Check the Sound You Hear***

**Appropriate for:** Beginning to intermediate students

**Time to Present:** 5-10 minutes

**Materials:** A grid similar to the example below

**Time to Prepare:** 20-30 minutes to create your grid and prepare a list of words

**Procedure:** Students listen to the teacher and make a check mark on a grid that identifies the sounds they hear.

**Example:** Imagine students are practicing the following dialog:

A: Hi, Javier. What are you doing?  
B: I'm eating some potato chips

Imagine that several students have difficulty with the initial *-ch* sound in *chips* and it comes out sounding like *ships*. The initial consonant cluster is the point of interference. You can customize a list of minimal pairs that contains those points of interference.

**Students see:**

Listen to the teacher.  
Listen to the word.  
What sound did you hear?  
Put a check ✓ in the correct box.

	sh	ch
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

**Teacher recites:**

*Chips – I'm eating potato chips.*  
*Sheep – Those are sheep.*  
*She's – She's a student.*  
*Child – I have one child.*

**Minimal Pairs/Task-Based Listening Activity 4.3 – *Point to the Word You Hear***

**Appropriate for:** High-beginning to intermediate students

**Time to Present:** 5-10 minutes

**Materials:** One set of 5 or 6 minimal pairs per pair of students

**Time to Prepare:** 15-20 minutes to type up a list of minimal pairs

**Procedure:** Students work with identical lists of minimal pairs. Student A says one word and Student B repeats the word and then points to the word on the paper. If the response is incorrect, the pair works on the pronunciation together.

**Example:**

- 1) ship – sheep
- 2) favor – flavor
- 3) burn – born

**Minimal Pair/Task-based Listening Activity 4.4 – *Circle the Word You Hear***

**Appropriate for:** Beginning to low-intermediate

**Time to Present/Implement:** 5 – 10 minutes

**Materials:** Sets of minimal pairs for each student

**Preparation Time:** 20-30 minutes to type up the sets of minimal pairs and create answer sheets

**Procedure:** For beginning students, model the activity with the teacher saying the word or phrase and students circling on the answer sheet. Then have students work together in pairs with Student A saying each word or phrase on the list and Student B circling the word he or she heard on the worksheet. Give each pair the same list of words or phrases.

**Examples – Beginning**

Student hears: *caps*

and/or...

*There are three caps.*

Student reads and circles the correct word: *cups*    *caps*

**Example – Intermediate**

Student hears: *cheap*

and/or...

*His pants were very cheap.*

Student reads and circles the correct word: *chip*    *cheap*

**Example – Advanced**

Student hears: *The boys are playing hockey.*

Student reads and circles the correct word: *hockey*            *hooky*

or... circles the correct statement:

*The boys are playing hockey.*            *The boys are playing hooky.*

<p><b>Minimal Pairs/Task-Based Listening Activity 4.5 – <i>Flyswatter Races, Total Physical Fun!</i></b></p>
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Spice up a lesson with a physical competition. As with the task-based listening activities above, begin with the teacher as the prompter. As the students get more confident with their own pronunciation, let them create the oral prompt to which other students will respond.

**Appropriate for:** Beginning to intermediate

**Class Time:** 5-10 minutes (a fun warm-up or lesson ender)

**Materials:** Two light-weight flyswatters, white board or chalkboard, several sets of minimal pairs or trios

**Time to Prepare:** Two minutes

**Procedure:** Write three or four sets of minimal pairs (or trios) on the board in large letters. Space the words evenly apart. Divide the class into two teams. Ask each team to select one member to come to the board and stand side-by-side, facing the board. Give each one a flyswatter.

The teacher says one of the words on the board; this can be either the word alone or in a complete sentence. The first student to slap that word with the flyswatter wins a point for his or her team. Advise students not to be shy, but to really hit the word hard! The winner remains at the board. The student who does not slap the correct word (or doesn't slap it first) sits down and is replaced by a different team member.

After three or four rounds, replace the words on the board with new ones. You can establish a cut-off point, such as the first team to get 21 points.

**Example:**

**Teacher writes on the board:**

match	much	bread	broad
list	lost	give	gave

**Teacher recites:**

Do you have a match?  
I gave her my pen.  
I lost my books.  
This is a broad room.  
Give me a pencil.  
I need some bread.  
This is a list of students.  
I don't have much rice.

**Minimal Pair/Task-based Listening Activity 4.6 – *Sometimes, They Come in Threes***

There are minimal trios. For variety, use a combination of minimal pairs (*wail, well, wail*, for example) and minimal trios (*pen, pain, and pan*, for example) to see if students can identify one word that's different from the other two, if all three words are the same, or if all three are different.

**Appropriate for:** High-intermediate to advanced

**Class Time:** 10-15 minutes

**Materials:** Set of minimal pairs and trios; answer sheets (see sample below)

**Preparation Time:** 30 minutes to create answer sheets and lists of pairs/trios.

**Procedure:** The instructor recites three words, all the same, all different, or only one different from the other two. Students circle the number of the word that sounds different (1, 2 or 3). Circle *Same* if all three words sound the same. Circle *Different* if they all sound different.

If you don't have time to create an answer sheet, instruct students to hold up one finger to represent #1, two fingers for #2, three for #3, and Same/Different cards for *all the same* and *all different*.

**Example:**

- a) Student hears: *wail, well, wail*
- b) Student hears: *pen, pen, pen*
- c) Student hears: *bit, bat, bet*

d) Student hears: *slap, slip, slap*

Sample Student Answer Form:

Listen to the teacher. Listen to the three words. Circle the number of the word that sounds different. If all the words are the same, circle *Same*. If all three words are different, circle *Different*.

a) 1	2	3	Same	Different	b) 1	2	3	Same	Different
c) 1	2	3	Same	Different	d) 1	2	3	Same	Different

**Minimal Pairs/Task-Based Listening Activity 4.7 – Identify the Word You Hear**

**Appropriate For:** High-intermediate to advanced

**Time to Present:** 5-15 minutes

**Materials:** About 10-20 sets of minimal pairs (or trios), a white or chalk board

**Preparation time:** Minimal, just compile your list of pairs.

**Procedure:** Put five or six sets of minimal pairs (or trios) on the board and number each one. Model the pronunciation of each word and have students repeat.

Now say a short statement with one of the words and ask students to tell you the number of the word they think they heard. After modeling this activity, allow students to work together in pairs. Change the sets of words after about 5 minutes.

**Example:**

1 wet  
2 want  
3 went

4 kiss  
5 kits

6 sheep  
7 ship  
8 chip

9 weather  
10 whether  
11 wither

**Instructor recites:**

*Do you know where she went?  
She gave him the kits.  
That's a really big ship.  
I don't know whether he's a teacher or a student.*

**Minimal Pairs/Task-Based Listening Activity 4.8 – Where Is the Sound?**

**Appropriate for:** High-intermediate to advanced students

**Time to Present:** 5-10 minutes

**Materials:** A grid similar to the example below and a list of words with your target sound

**Time to Prepare:** 20-30 minutes to create your grid and prepare a list of words

**Procedure:** Students listen to the teacher and make a check mark on a grid that identifies the location of the target sound in a word.

**Example:** In this activity, students identify where a target sound occurs within a word, at the beginning (initial), in the middle (medial), or at the end (terminal).

**Students see:**

Listen to the teacher. Listen for the sound *ch*.

Where is the *ch* sound in the word? Is it at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the word?

Put a check ✓ in the correct box.

	<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>End</b>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

**Teacher recites:**

1. *Chips*            *I'm eating potato chips.*
2. *Itch*            *You need a prescription for the itch.*
3. *Matches*        *Do you have any matches?*
4. *Choices*        *They have many choices of paint color.*

## Minimal Pair/Task-Based Listening Activity 4.9 – Student to Student Dictations

**Appropriate for:** Intermediate to advanced students

**5-10 minutes** (a good warm-up/review activity)

**Materials:** Sets of two different lists of minimal pairs, one for each student in a pair.

**Preparation Time:** 5 – 15 minutes to type up the minimal pairs

**Procedure:** Student A reads one word from his or her list. Student B writes what he or she hears.

**Example:**

### Student A's List

driver      diver  
whopper    hopper  
snicker     slicker

### Student B's List

crumbled    crumpled  
most        moist  
thirty       thirteen

When finished, have the listeners check their words and spelling, then reverse roles. For more challenge, embed the pairs into similar sentences for dictation.

**Example:**

#### **Student A**

*He's a really good driver.*

*He's a really good diver.*

*The rabbit is a hopper.*

*I'd like a Whopper, please.*

#### **Student B**

*I really like most cake.*

*I really like moist cake.*

*I have thirteen dollars.*

*She's thirty years old.*

## Reflections

- Before you continue to the Application Activities, take a few moments to think about what you've read in this course.
- Do you feel you have a better understanding of the mechanics of and best practices for teaching pronunciation?
- Has poor pronunciation interfered with your communication with a student?
- Has your view of your students' accents changed since reading through this course so far?

# *Application Activities*

Now that you have a bit of pronunciation theory under your belt and you've had a look at some best practices, how can you apply this knowledge?

To complete this course and to earn the full 15 Pd points or 15 LIA renewal points do all three application activities.

Comment [A1]: Kathy, let's discuss.

The *first application activity* allows you to select and use some of the best practices in your own classroom. The *second application activity* involves taking a look at existing ESL text and evaluating each book's approach to pronunciation. In the *third application activity* you will identify some of the significant pronunciation problems within your own group or groups of learners, and make a plan to focus pronunciation practice towards those specific problems.

To print the worksheets, you can print this entire page and make multiple copies of worksheets where needed. Or, highlight the desired worksheet and copy/paste it into MS Word. Print in portrait orientation.

Once you have completed the Application Activities, meet with your director or supervisor with the *Evaluation Form* for the evaluation phase of this independent study course.

# Application Activity #1 Worksheet: *Putting Best Practices to Work*

Select *at least three* Best Practices from this course, one from each section (*Rhythm & Intonation*, *Visual/Physical Patterns*, and *Minimal Pairs*). Adjust or alter each activity as needed for your learners. Try out each activity at least twice with your learners over the course of a few weeks. Document your results. Answer these questions and be prepared to discuss them with your program director or supervisor.

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Activity Selected \_\_\_\_\_

Date Used: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Level: \_\_\_\_\_

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Would you use the activity again? If your answer is, "No," explain why not?

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Did you alter any part of the activity? If so, what did you change? Why?

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Did you observe any improvement in students' pronunciation after the activity? Explain.

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If you believe the activity was successful, why was it successful?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
¶  
<#>Would you use the activity again? If your answer is, "No," then why not?¶  
<#>Did you alter any part of the activity? If so, what did you change? Why?¶  
<#>Did you observe any improvement in students' pronunciation after the activity?¶  
<#>If you believe the activity was successful, why was it successful?¶

Activity Selected

\_\_\_\_\_  
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<#>Would you use the activity again? If your answer is, "No," then why not?¶  
<#>Did you alter any part of the activity? If so, what did you change? Why?¶  
<#>Did you observe any improvement in students' pronunciation after the activity?¶  
<#>If you believe the activity was successful, why was it successful?¶

## Application Activity 2: *Hit the Books!*

Below is a list of some multi-level core texts for ESL adults. These books were selected because they contain activities specifically for pronunciation practice.

Select three and evaluate the approaches to teaching pronunciation, using the worksheet. Be sure to also refer to the teacher's guide for each book selected.

Do the books align with theory and best practices? Is the approach in each of the books adequate to address oral production improvement? If not, what would you change to bring the book more into alignment with theory and best practices?

*All-Star* – © 2005, McGraw Hill

*Crossroads* – © 1991, Oxford University Press

*Downtown, English for Work and Life* – © 2006, Thomson Heinle

*English No Problem!* – © 2004, New Readers Press

*Interchange (Third Edition)* – © 2005, Cambridge University Press

*Stand Out* – © 2005, Thomson Heinle

*Step Forward, Language for Everyday Life* – © 2007, Oxford University Press

*Touchstone* – © 2005 Cambridge University Press

*Ventures* – © 2007, Cambridge University Press

Many of these books are available for check out from the [Colorado Adult Education Professional Development Centers](#). Refer to their catalogs for availability:

[Denver Metro Professional Development Resource Center](#)

[Four Corners Virtual Resource Center](#)

[Northern Colorado Professional Development Resource Center](#)

[Southern Colorado Professional Development Resource Center](#)

Print the following two worksheets for this Application Activity:

Teaching Pronunciation -- Applications

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## Teaching Pronunciation Application #2 Worksheet 1: Hit the Books!

Select one adult ESL core text from the list provided and answer the following questions about each one.

**Book 1 Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Describe the pronunciation activities in this book:**

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**2. Does this book's approach to pronunciation align with what you know about theory and best practices?**

**Yes? Briefly describe how this puts pronunciation theory into practice.**

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**No? If not, what theory is the book not putting into practice?**

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**3. What would you do to improve this book's approach to pronunciation theory? What would you change? How would you provide practice?**

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*Highlight and print one copy of this form.*

## Teaching Pronunciation Application #2 Worksheet 2: Hit the Books!

Select a second adult ESL core text from the list provided and answer the following questions about each one.

**Book 2 Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Describe the pronunciation activities in this book:**

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**2. Does this book's approach to pronunciation align with what you know about theory and best practices?**

**Yes? Briefly describe how this puts pronunciation theory into practice.**

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**No? If not, what theory is the book not putting into practice?**

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**3. What would you do to improve this book's approach to pronunciation theory? What would you change? How would you provide practice?**

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### **Application Activity 3: *Focus on Your Learners***

To really serve the needs of your learners, it helps to know what particular pronunciation problems they encounter. Teachers can usually pinpoint the points of interference with a particular student simply by listening to the student in class and in normal everyday English conversation. A class with mixed nationalities will present a variety of pronunciation problems for which you can customize pronunciation practice in your lessons, using any of the *Best Practices* provided in this course.

*Pronunciation Contrasts in English* by Nilsen and Nilsen, provides minimal pair sets for 51 different foreign languages, including Native American languages. In many cases different languages share the same or similar problems with the same minimal pairs.

Identify a maximum of five *points of interference*, or specific sounds or sound combinations that your students struggle with in your class, and design pronunciation activities around the problems. Document your activities on the worksheet and be prepared to talk about them with your director or supervisor.

Whenever possible, use material directly from the text(s) you're using in that class. This is especially important for beginning and low-intermediate students. Use vocabulary and dialogs that students have practiced and are familiar with.

Also, remember that your goal is effective communication, not the eradication of student accents.

**Teaching Pronunciation Application #3 Worksheet 3.1 –  
Customized Pronunciation Practice**

**Sound Focus** – Which vowel, consonant or letter blend is the focus of the practice?

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**Activity** – What activity did you select for this focus (E.g.: *Rhythm & Intonation, Visual or Physical Patterns, or Minimal Pairs/Trios*)?

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**Implementation** – How did you conduct the activity?

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**Evaluation** – What is your overall impression of the effectiveness of the activity?

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*Highlight and print this form. You need one copy of this form for each sound focus selected.*

## *Teaching Pronunciation*

### **An Independent Study Course for Teachers of Adult English as a Second Language Learners**

#### **Evaluation**

Instructions for project directors and coordinators:

- ❖ Print the evaluation form below in landscape orientation
- ❖ Discuss with your teacher the outcomes of this independent study course
- ❖ Make notations on the evaluation form

**Teaching Pronunciation – Evaluation Form for Program Directors and Teacher Coordinators**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Teacher Demonstrates Knowledge of this Topic</b>	<b>Teacher Needs to Expand Knowledge in this Topic</b>	<b>Teacher Demonstrates Little or No Knowledge of this Topic</b>
Identify the basic principles of teaching pronunciation.			
Identify, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of some best practices in teaching pronunciation. Document on the worksheets provided.			
Compare three adult ESL core textbooks and evaluate their approaches to pronunciation instruction. Document on the worksheets provided.			
Identify a maximum of five points of interference that your current students struggle with in class. Design activities around the problems. Document on the worksheet provided.			

*Highlight and print in LANDSCAPE orientation.*

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# Glossary of Terms

- Articulation** The production of sounds and sound combinations in spoken language
- Clarification Strategies** Short phrases that assist in communication, such as, *Could you repeat that, please? I'm sorry, I didn't catch that. Or Is this right?*
- Communicative Practice** Less structured classroom oral practice that includes simulations, story-telling, guessing games, group puzzles, research, reports, etc.
- Contrastive Analysis Theory** The comparison of a learner's native language (L1) to a target language (L2) in the belief that L1 filters L2 and that one can predict what problems might arise from that filtering process.
- Dictation** A speaking-listening activity in which one individual (the teacher or another student) dictates to a student, who write what he or she hears.
- Diphthong** A speech sound that begins with one vowel and gradually changes to another vowel within the same syllable, such as *boy* or *high*.
- Fossilization** Features in a student's target language that stop changing.
- Guided Practice** Structured practice in a classroom environment, monitored by the instructor, that includes formulaic exchanges (greetings, saying, "Good-bye," etc.), role-play, dialogs, etc.
- Initial Consonant Cluster** A combination of consonants that occur at the beginning of a word, such as *brick* or *splendid*.
- Intonation** The pattern of pitch changes while speaking
- Learning Modalities** Also called *learning styles*, the channels through which information is processed in the brain. Typically, there are four modalities: *visual, auditory, reading, and kinesthetic*. A person can be dominant in one modality, or have a combination of two or more.

<b>Minimal Pair</b>	A pair of words that differ in sound by only one phonemic element, such as <i>chair</i> and <i>share</i> , or <i>nice</i> and <i>niece</i> .
<b>Opaque Vowels</b>	Vowels that contain numerous oral forms. English vowels are opaque, with several different pronunciations.
<b>Phonemes</b>	The individual sounds of language that can contain meaning. . Change the phoneme of a word and you change its meaning, <i>back</i> to <i>bake</i> , for example.
<b>Pitch</b>	The tonal rising or falling of one's voice when speaking
<b>Point of Interference</b>	The identified location of mispronunciation in a word or sentence.
<b>Rhythm</b>	The combination of syllable and word stress in speech
<b>Scaffolding</b>	Contextualized framework and support provided by the teacher to help students develop their skills and gain confidence.
<b>Segmentals</b>	The individual sounds of language
<b>Stress</b>	The accent or emphasis placed on a syllable within a word, or a word within a phrase
<b>Stress-timed Language</b>	In English, only certain words or certain syllables are stressed. The words and syllables between stresses are compressed into unstressed segments. More syllables do not necessarily require more time to say.
<b>Suprasegmentals</b>	The melody and rhythm of spoken language
<b>Syllable-timed Language</b>	A language in which every syllable receives the same amount of timing. A sentence with more syllables will require more time to say.
<b>Task-Based Listening</b>	An activity in which students are not required to produce oral language, but complete a task that demonstrates they comprehend what they hear.
<b>Total Physical Response</b>	

A listening-based activity in which students respond to an auditory prompt with some physical activity, rather than spoken language.

**Transparent vowels** Vowels in a language that each have only one oral sound.

# Bibliography and Other Resources\*

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\*Many of these books are available for check out from the [Colorado Adult Education Professional Development Centers](#). Refer to their catalogs for availability:  
[Denver Metro Professional Development Resource Center](#)  
[Four Corners Virtual Resource Center](#)  
[Northern Colorado Professional Development Resource Center](#)  
[Southern Colorado Professional Development Resource Center](#)

In most cases, a book can be mailed directly to you.

#### **Web Resources:**

Dave's ESL Café  
<http://www.eslcafe.com/teachers/>

North Carolina State University  
Index of Learning Styles  
<http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html>

Pizzaz! Tongue Twisters  
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~leslieob/twisters.html>

Sounds of English  
<http://www.soundsofenglish.org/>

University of Iowa Phonetics Flash Animation Project  
<http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/>

VARK Guide to Learning Styles  
<http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>