
Honing your pronunciation teaching skills

Webinar handout

By Ana Paula Biazon Rocha

1. Why is it important to learn about and teach pronunciation?

'You might never devote an entire lesson to pronunciation, but **every** lesson is a pronunciation lesson to some extent, because every lesson involves talking (unless it's a writing test, perhaps) - and nobody can talk without pronouncing!' (Marks & Bowen, 2012, p. 167)

Despite this many teachers

- lack confidence, knowledge and adequate training
- have reduced or limited access to pronunciation teaching resources
- believe that pronunciation is learned incidentally or implicitly
- are unsure about how to integrate pronunciation into lessons/don't plan for this

2. Four practical tips to teach pronunciation

1. You can use your **hands** or **realia**, such as hair bobbles / scrunchies, or rubber bands, to teach **word stress** (Rocha, 2021). That way, learners can 'visualise' and 'feel' that a **stressed syllable** has a **full vowel sound**, and it's **longer, louder and higher**.

You should integrate word stress practice into your lessons whenever introducing new language. Get learners to mark the stressed syllable in their notebooks. As a teacher, **be consistent** with the way you mark the stressed syllable on the board. For example:

- environment (using dots/bubbles)
- environment (underlining)
- enVIronment (using capitals)

2. When differentiating between two sounds or talking about sound production in general, **exaggerate the articulation of sounds**.

Learners need to 'visualise' the articulation of sounds to help the brain process it, especially if it is a new sound that does not exist in their L1.

3. In many course books, pronunciation practice consists of listening and repeating. Although this is also important, it does not provide learners with a sense of how pronunciation works in real-life exchanges: we do not speak sounds or words in isolation but within speech. Thus, use multi-staged **follow-up activities** to **expand** pronunciation work, for example:

Stage 1: Guided practice (for example, on word and/or sentence stress)

A: How's <u>this word</u> pronounced? B: en-VI-ron-ment.	A: <u>My car's</u> been <u>stolen</u> . B: Oh <u>no</u> ! Have you <u>called</u> the <u>police</u> ?
---	---

Stage 2: Followed by communicative practice

Crime Investigation: Tell students that a crime was committed last night. They have to come up with the story behind it. It should include:
A stolen car / A house built in 1998 / Someone who has been offered a job / An airport that will be finished by the end of next year

3. Exploring online resources to teach pronunciation:

- Seeing the articulation of sounds: <https://tfcs.baruch.cuny.edu/about-tools-to-go/> or <https://seeingspeech.ac.uk/>
- Online phonemic chart: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/TEphonemic_GreyBlue2.png
- Different varieties of English: <https://www.dialectsarchive.com/>
- Authentic / real-life examples of pronunciation: <https://youglish.com/>
- Pronunciation course: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/training/teachingenglish-how-teach-pronunciation>

References

Marks, J. & Bowen, T. (2012). *The Book of Pronunciation. Proposals for a practical pedagogy*. Delta Publishing.

Rocha, A. P. B. (2021). Using your hands to teach pronunciation?! IATEFL PronSIG Blog. Available at <https://pronsig.iatefl.org/using-hands/>

A recording of Ana Paula's webinar can be watched here:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/pronunciation-our-classrooms-mini-event>