Pop-up Pronunciation: Integrating Pronunciation Mini-lessons into All Skills

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Introduction: Why Pop-ups?

• Many programs do not offer pronunciation courses, but students still need it
• Teachers have a limited amount of time to address all course outcomes, so we need small but powerful activities that can perform linguistic multitasking
• Pronunciation connects to every skill, and improving pronunciation can help improve listening, reading, grammar, and even writing
Considerations

• Explain from the beginning that you’ll be injecting pronunciation throughout the course—and why
• Whatever the class, teach or review basic terminology
  • Vowels and consonants (plus sounds)
  • Parts of speech
  • Phrases and clauses (as appropriate to level)
• While the other skills are largely cerebral, pronunciation has a physical aspect, students must become more aware of their bodies—regardless of the class, it’s well worth it to take 5 or 10 minutes at the beginning of the semester to set the stage (and to reinforce periodically)
  • Lip rounding, jaw and tongue position, voicing
    • Mirrors or smartphones in selfie mode
    • Boba straws and lollipops
    • Oral calisthenics (have students shift between high/low vowels, front/back vowels, etc. and then explain to the teacher what they feel their jaws, tongues, and lips doing)
• Consider coming up with a common set of motions or gestures to reinforce stress, intonation, linking, etc.
• Use inductive methods to get students to engage with the material and figure out connections.
  • When giving a vocabulary list with two-syllable nouns and verbs, or when teaching suffixes, read the words, ask the students to identify the stress, and ask if they notice anything interesting.
  • When teaching articles, write lists of words that use “a” or “an” and ask the students to figure out the rule.
  • Instead of just identifying common phoneme or spelling errors, ask students to briefly analyze why they might be making them (“fry” versus “fly”); if feasible, ask how they would represent those sounds in their first language.
    — Make it general rather than singling out individual students!
  • Ask students about their problem areas—they know what they can and can’t do; help them figure out why.
• Be mindful of appropriate times to correct (and not to correct) pronunciation.
Reading

• Students should learn pronunciation whenever they acquire new vocabulary
  • Syllables (plus syllable changes for certain verbs and plural nouns)
  • Word stress (and stress shift across word families)
  • Quality of the stressed vowel—should be clear
• Recognize the importance of phonics in addition to phonemic awareness (keeping in mind that while English has 26 letters, it has approximately 40 phonemes (and 250 possible spellings)
  
  **Maisy ate eight grey cakes today.**
  
  **The pharmacist gave Fred enough stuff for his cough.**
• Introduce chunking and blending when teaching thought groups
Reading and Vocabulary Pop-ups

• Syllable scavenger hunt/word stress scavenger hunt—after introducing syllables and/or word stress, have students race to find examples in a given text
• Grouping activities—a great warm-up, especially if your students make and keep decks of flash cards
  • Syllable number
  • Stress pattern
  • Vowel sound
• Mark texts before reading aloud—for longer readings, assign one paragraph to a pair of students; only focus on one or two aspects of pronunciation
• A twist on popcorn reading—switch at each thought group; reinforce pausing and intonation

*NOTE: We’ll be focusing more on reading and vocabulary in tomorrow’s presentation! Come see us again on Thursday at 3 p.m. in this same room.
Grammar

Pronunciation informs grammar (and vice versa)

• Intonation connects to question formation
  • Yes/No versus Wh-?

• Parts of speech connect to prosody
  • Content words and function words

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• Don’t forget homographs—noun/verb pairs
• Continue sentence stress with can and can’t
• Consider teaching elision and blending with pronouns
  • He gave ḥer a call.
  • Please send ťem the information.
  • Would you, could you, should you /d/+/j/ = /dʒ/
• Take a little more time when going over homework to focus on quality oral responses
Grammar Pop-ups

• Review syllables when teaching plural nouns, 3rd person singular present tense verbs, and simple past tense endings
  • Inductive “What do you see?” activities
  • Quick syllable-counting (hold up fingers)
  • Sound Swat
• “I’m going on a trip to ____” listing game
• 5-minute mysteries
• Find Someone Who for “can” and “can’t”
• “Some” or “All” with adjective clauses
Writing

• In some programs, ESL students may take only writing before entering credit programs (and no other ESL courses)

• Aforementioned issues of phonics and phonemic awareness should be considered and addressed based on language backgrounds
  • Interference with spelling (Japanese students who confuse /l/ and /r/ in writing, Vietnamese students who omit final consonants and consonant clusters)

• For sentence-level practice, reinforce sentence-level pronunciation such as focus stress, linking, and blending

• Highlight transitions and other signal words

• Read student writing aloud when doing peer editing, and encourage reading aloud at home for self-checks
Writing Pop-ups

• 5-minute dictation warm-ups—focus on a minimal pair, consonant cluster, or word ending issue that you’ve noticed in student writing
• Thought-group story circles
• Sentence-Combination activities
Sample Sentence Combination Activity

1. Monica likes to go to museums. Paul prefers to go to hockey games.
2. A huge winter storm struck the area. Power lines were knocked down.
3. Mix the butter, sugar, and eggs. Add the vanilla.

In a regular writing class, students would determine the logical connection between ideas, choose an appropriate connector, and be done with it. Add a pronunciation layer by asking students to find the key words, identify the intonation patterns, and insert appropriate pauses.

- Easily adapted to be a quick pairing activity
• Mark-ups--have students mark up one or two of their paragraphs for stress, intonation, thought groups, and linking, and practice reading aloud

• Adapt Reader’s Theater activities that use student writing
  • Dialogues and plays for creative writing
  • Newscasts for more academic writing

Reading aloud can also help students hear and identify errors in their writing (and that of their peers).
• Re-examine whatever you’re teaching with an eye on pronunciation. You’ll start to see connections everywhere.

Questions? Suggestions?

Thank you!

After TESOL, visit www.soundsofenglish.org for a link to this presentation and additional activities and resources!