

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to draw an instructional plan for improving the speech intelligibility in an academic setting for Spanish speakers for whom English is their second language. The students are visiting school faculty, or aspiring ESL/EFL teachers, who have great motivation to change their pronunciation patterns. The final goal is to demonstrate how theory of pronunciation instruction and practice can be bridged and how this can be done in a meaningful way so learners can relate to their everyday contexts.

An increasing number of school districts are offering employment to teachers of Spanish, Mathematics, Arts, Language Arts and etc, in order to provide instruction to elementary, middle or high school students. These teachers come from various countries of South America and some come from Spain. Screening based on language ability is done by the employing companies such as VIF (Visiting International Faculty) or Latpro, which will place the employees in the schools. They first carry out a telephone and then a face-to-face interview to make sure the candidate has the qualification and the capability of communicating in an educational setting. Still, these teachers face tremendous difficulties at first to communicate and understand students, parents and their colleagues. Many of them have trouble giving intelligible instructions and explanations and, as a consequence, possess poor classroom management. Lack of understanding on the students' part may also take place.

Parents sometimes are at a loss when there is the need to communicate with the teachers over the phone or in meetings. These professionals would also be able to improve their relations with the school administration and the community if they were able to communicate by improving their control of segmental and suprasegmental features. There have been several studies that show that there is bias against foreign accents (e.g.: Munro & Derwing, 1999). As a

result, some teachers may feel they are at a disadvantage in terms of career opportunities. This pronunciation course and the sections of this paper were based on the stages suggested by Firth (1992):

- 1- Assessing Learner Variables
- 2- Collection of Speech Samples
- 3- Diagnosis of Speech Samples
- 4- Syllabus Design

Assessing Learners' Variables

Subjects

Two teachers were interviewed for the project. Neither of them was receiving English lessons when the interview took place. Both teach Spanish in the public school system and both intend to teach ESL when they go back to their country or in the United States if the opportunity arises. Therefore, they are eager to increase fluency along with pronunciation in order to help them become more intelligible to deal with American students, colleagues, parents, and also to give them a head start when they return to their countries. Nonetheless, they both share the opinion that it is very unlikely that they will completely lose their accent. By the same token, they felt that their accent is part of their identity and it is acceptable to have a slight one.

Neither received instruction specifically for accent modification but they are both familiar with the sound system of English, although they were unsure about some of the vowel symbols. Unlike sentence and word stress, when asked about how important it is for them to improve stress and rhythm for better comprehensibility, they considered it not as important.

Their detailed profile are as follows:

Subject 1: Jocabet is a 30-year-old exchange teacher from Peru and has lived in the United States for almost two years. She started learning English at the age of 15. She had classes for 5 uninterrupted years. She considers her English proficiency level to be Intermediate. The skills that she thinks are her strengths are reading and listening and areas that require improvement are vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. Since she has the intention of applying for a Master’s degree in Psychology, pronunciation enhancement was rated as very important, along with fluency.

Jocabet displayed awareness of the fact that she pronounces a voiced bilabial stop /b/ or a bilabial fricative /β/ instead of a voiced labiodental fricative/v/. Jocabet reported that this is a feature she feels uncomfortable with and if she were able to change it, it would markedly reduce her accent. Her “Needs and Attitudes Assessment” is duplicated in the following chart (Grant 2001):

| Tasks | A. How important is it in your work/studies? (1=not at all...4 very important) | B. What is your ability in this area? (1=poor...4=good) |
|---|---|--|
| 1-Participating in informal conversations | 2 | 4 |
| 2-Participating in discussions | 4 | 2 |
| 3-Managing group discussions | 4 | 3 |
| 4-Giving short presentations | 2 | 2 |
| 5-Giving long presentations | 3 | 2 |
| 6-Giving information or instruction | 4 | 2 |

| | |
|---|---|
| What is your easiest speaking situation? | Participating in informal conversations |
| What is your most difficult speaking situation? | Giving long presentations |

Subject 2: Marta is a 31-year -old teacher from Spain and has lived in the United States for a year and a half. Her instruction in English started when she was 8 years old but was interrupted at the completion of high school. She then restarted when she was 25 and passed the FCE exam (First Certificate in English). Listening and fluency are her strengths and pronunciation and vocabulary her shortcomings. When asked to rate from 1 to 4 (1=not at all/4= very important) the importance of improving her pronunciation, the answer was 3.

Marta feels that vowels such as the high front /iy/ and the high back tense /uw/ and the voiced alveolar semi-vowel /r/ pose a challenge. Her “Needs and Attitudes Assessment” was completed as follows:

| Tasks | A. How important is it in your work/studies? (1=not at all...4 very important) | B. What is your ability in this area? (1=Poor...4=good) |
|---|---|--|
| 1-Participating in informal conversations | 1 | 4 |
| 2-Participating in discussions | 3 | 4 |
| 3-Managing group discussions | 4 | 3 |
| 4-Giving short presentations | 4 | 3 |
| 5-Giving long presentations | 4 | 2 |
| 6-Giving information or instruction | 4 | 3 |

| | |
|---|---|
| What is your easiest speaking situation? | Participating in informal conversations |
| What is your most difficult speaking situation? | Giving long presentations |

Note: The information concerning the students will be used strictly for academic purposes.

Collection of Speech Samples

The speech to be analyzed was collected individually through oral reading and spontaneous speech (Firth, 1992). Students chose a passage from the *Well Said* course book (Grant, 2001) to read aloud. After being given 5 minutes for practice, their reading was recorded

(Firth, 1992). They were then requested to ask each other the following impromptu questions (Grant 2001, p. 3).

- 1- What is your educational background and/or your work history?
- 2- What is your purpose for studying English?
- 3- How much English do you speak each day? In what situations do you speak it?
- 4- What do you hope to achieve in this class?
- 5- What do you hope to be doing in five years?

The purpose of asking the students to read the questions was to collect data on intonation of Wh-questions, tag questions and yes-no questions. Also, L1 interference can occur more often in informal productions than in formal ones (Pennington, 1994), which justifies the use of spontaneous speech for analysis.

The following questions were created in order to assess intonation in tag and yes/no questions:

- 6- You feel there are sounds you have difficulty producing, don't you?
- 7- Many people believe it's very important to take a course in order to reduce accent. Don't you?
- 8- Do you feel comfortable about your accent?

Finally, Marta and Jocabet were asked to work together. They spent a few minutes interviewing and getting to know each other while taking notes. They then reported back on what they had learned.

The session was closed with the request to fill out the "Needs and Attitude Assessment" questionnaire (Grant, 2001, p. 5).

Diagnosis of Speech Samples

After the interviews were carried out, a diagnostic profile was completed based on each of the participants' responses using the form suggested by Firth (1992):

LEARNER VARIABLES

Background

Name: Jocabet Age: 31 Length of residence: 18 months
 Native Language: Spanish Other languages spoken: English
 Education: BA in Early Childhood Education
 Occupation: Spanish teacher
 Is English used in the workplace? yes
 Frequency of use of English: every day but for short periods of time
 English proficiency level: Basic Intermediate Advanced
 Standardized test scores: none

General speaking habits

a Clarity very intelligible unintelligible
 b Speed very fast very slow
 c Loudness easily heard difficult to hear
 d Breath groups too many pauses not enough pauses
 e Eye gaze appropriate inappropriate
 f Fluency fluent halting
 g Voice pitch range too narrow? Yes Voice too nasal? No
 H Other:

Intonation

a Statement (final rising-falling) satisfactory for most part but not consistent
 b Yes-No question (final rising) unsatisfactory
 c Wh-question (final rising-falling) unsatisfactory
 d Tag question (final rising and final rising-falling) unsatisfactory
 e Series (non-final rising) satisfactory

Stress and rhythm

a Word level stress: satisfactory
 b Phrase/sentence-level stress: syllable-timed stress
 c Linking: unsatisfactory vowel reduction and palatalized form, identical consonant linking

LEARNER VARIABLES

Background

Name: Marta Age: 31 Length of residence: 18 months

Native Language: Spanish Other languages spoken: English/French

Education: MA in Education

Occupation: Spanish teacher

Is English used in the workplace? yes

Frequency of use of English: everyday but for short periods

English proficiency level: Basic Intermediate Advanced

Standardized test scores: FCE (C)

General speaking habits

- a Clarity very intelligible unintelligible
- b Speed very fast very slow
- c Loudness easily heard difficult to hear
- d Breath groups too many pauses not enough pauses
- e Eye gaze appropriate inappropriate
- f Fluency fluent halting
- g Voice pitch range too narrow? Yes Voice too nasal? No
- H Other:

Intonation

- a Statement (final rising-falling) satisfactory
- b Yes-No question (final rising) satisfactory
- c Wh-question (final rising-falling) unsatisfactory
- d Tag question (final rising and final rising-falling) unsatisfactory
- e Series (non-final rising) satisfactory

Stress and rhythm

- a Word level stress: tendency to place stress in a forward syllable
- b Phrase/sentence-level stress: syllable-timed
- c Linking: unsatisfactory consonant-consonant linking/ consonant deletion/contraction

Segmental Analysis

| Consonants | Key Word | Substitution | Omission | Articulation | Clusters | Linking | Rank ¹ |
|------------|------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------|-------------------|
| /p/ | Poland | | | (MJ) aspiration | | | 5 |
| /b/ | Bolivia | | | | | | |
| /m/ | Mexico | | | | | | |
| /f/ | Finland | | | | | | |
| /v/ | Vietnam | (MJ)for /β//b/ | MJfinal position | | | | 1 |
| /θ/ | Lithuania | (J) for /t/ | | | | | 6 |
| /ð/ | The U.S | (J) for /d/ | | | | | 2 |
| /t/ | Tanzania | | | (MJ) aspiration | | | 9 |
| /d/ | Denmark | | | | (MJ)suffix -ed | | 10 |
| /s/ | Singapore | | | | | | |
| /z/ | Zambia | (MJ)for /s/ | | | | | 11 |
| /n/ | Norway | | | | | | |
| /l/ | Libya | | | | | | |
| /r/ | Romania | | | (M) trilled /r/ | | | 3 |
| /š/ | Bangladesh | | | | | | |
| /ž/ | Malaysia | | | | | | |
| /tš/ | China | | | | | | 4 |
| /dž/ | Japan | (MJ)/y/ | | | | | 13 |
| /k/ | Canada | | | (MJ) aspiration | | | 7 |
| /g/ | Guyana | | | | | | |
| /ŋ / | Hong Kong | | | | (J)suffix ing | | 8 |
| /w/ | Wales | | | | | | |
| /y/ | Yemen | | | | | | |
| /h/ | Hungary | | | | | | |

¹ Order in which the issues presented in this table would be dealt with if more instructional time was available.

| Vowel | Key Word | Substitution | Articulation | Length | Reduction | Linking | Rank |
|-------|-----------|--------------|--------------|--------|-----------|---------|------|
| /iy/ | green | | | (JM) | | | 2 |
| /ɪ / | pink | | | | | | |
| /ey/ | grey | | | | | | |
| /ɛ / | red | | | | | | |
| /æ/ | black | (M) for /a/ | | | | | 3 |
| /ay/ | sky blue | | | | | | |
| /aw/ | brown | | | | | | |
| /oy/ | turquoise | | | | | | |
| /ɔɪ/ | purple | | | | | | |
| /ʌ/ | mustard | (J)for /a/ | | | | | 4 |
| /ə/ | tomato | | | | (JM) | | 1 |
| /uw/ | blue | | (M) | | | | 5 |
| /ʊ/ | wood | | | | | | |
| /ow/ | yellow | | | | | | |
| /ɔ / | auburn | | | | | | |
| /a/ | olive | | | | | | |

Note: M=Marta and J=Jocabet

Consonants: Analysis according to the Manner and Place of Articulation

- unaspirated instead of aspirated /p/
- bilabial stop /b/ instead of labio-dental fricative /v/
- bilabial fricative /β/ instead of labio-dental fricative /v/
- alveolar stop /t/ instead of dental fricative /θ/
- dental stop /d/ instead of dental fricative /ð/
- unaspirated instead of aspirated /t/
- voiceless sibilant instead of voices /z/ in final position
- trilled instead of non-trilled /r/
- palatal fricative instead of affricative /dʒ/
- unaspirated instead of aspirated /k/
- affricative instead of glide /y/

Vowels:

- high front lax /ɪ / instead of tense /iy/
- low-central /a/instead low-front /æ/
- low central /a/ instead of mid- central /ə/ in stressed syllables
- unreduced mid-central /ə/

In addition to these pronunciation features presented by the students, the –ed and –ing suffixes are omitted. At first sight, this may appear to be a grammatical error, “but it is more likely to be the result of Spanish learners` general problem in producing final consonant clusters.”(Avery & Ehrlich, 1992).

Suprasegmental Analysis

There were few occurrences of erroneous word-level stress (e.g.: caTHOlic instead of CAtholic). Nonetheless, sentence-level stress was somewhat deficient. For example, Jocabet uttered the following sentence:

On the other hand,...I was a little bit sad....to leave them...to leave my family....

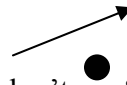
The expected stressed words :

On the other hand, I was a little sad to leave them...to leave my family.

There were many pauses, possibly to allow time for thinking or to fit the student's L1 syllable-timed stress of Spanish. This affected the rhythm and intonation. Therefore, it made the speech quite flat and unappealing to listen to. Even though Marta's speech did not present many pauses and hesitations, all words also tended to receive the same stress.

In terms of intonation, both students used final rising intonation contours when they should have used rising-falling contour that would indicate that the speaker needs confirmation of the information. Besides, the stress is shifted to the last word of the tag question. On the other hand, the second question was posed with an appropriate rising intonation to indicate that the listener is to provide information.

You feel there are sounds you have difficulty producing, don't you?



In opposition to :

You feel there are sounds you have difficulty producing, don't you?



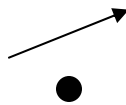
Many people believe it's very important to take a course in order to reduce accent.

● Don't you?



As for Wh-questions, Jocabet used a rising falling intonation but Marta use a rising intonation contour.

How much English do you speak each day?



In opposition to:

How much English do you speak each day?



Connected Speech

There are some features in the participants' rapid speech with relation to linking words that hindered rhythm. They are as follows:

- Failure to use the weak form with function words, e.g.: [hæv] instead of [əv],[v]
- Failure to contract 'will', 'had' and 'have' with or without 'not'
- Failure to link consonant to consonant (stops followed by another consonant), e.g.: "keep studying English"
- Failure to link nearly identical sounds, e.g.: "with things"
- Failure to delete consonants, e.g.: [lɛft] instead of [lɛf]
- Failure to palatalize, e.g.: would you [wʊd juw] instead of [wʊdʒə]

Syllabus Design

Several factors such as age, exposure to target language, instruction and learners' attitude, aptitude, motivation and first language can influence the acquisition of the phonological system of a target language (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2000).

Lenneberg (1967) proposes that learners lose the ability to reach nativelike language competence around puberty. According to him, "the physiological demands of verbal behavior quickly declines" (p.158) after the critical period due to the lateralization of the brain, when linguistic functions are settled on different sides of the brain hemispheres. Nowadays, it is believed (Massaro, as cited in Celce-Murcia, et al., 2000) that the differences between a young learner and an adult are also due to external circumstances such as type of instruction and cultural identity rather than solely to innate ability. For this reason, we have considered several

factors when designing the syllabus: time restraints, native language, students' goals, self-perception and learner's attitude to English.

Priority will be given to features that:

- (1) affect comprehensibility of students' speech in their work setting;
- (2) occur in high-frequency contexts;
- (3) will assist students "comprehend incoming messages"(Dickerson, 1994, p.19);
- (4) are "stereotyped markers" that might create "stronger negative reactions" (Pennington, 1994, p. 103)

As suggested by Morley (1994), the lessons will deal with both segmental and suprasegmental features. Two sample lessons are designed for the former and one for the latter. More emphasis will be given to suprasegmentals because they "have the greatest impact on the comprehensibility of learners' English" and "greater change can be affected in a short time" (McNerney & Mendelsohn 1992, p. 186). The third lesson will focus on a segmental sound. The reason why we are focusing on only one sound is that "individual sounds can usually be inferred from the context"(Maureen & Mendelsohn, 1992, p. 185) and "lead to minor repairable misunderstandings" (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2000, p. 131). Furthermore, the choice of prioritized features is in line with the "Zoom Principle" laid out by Firth (1992, p. 173), in which suprasegmentals takes precedence over segmentals.

The lessons will be presented as follows:

1. Sentence-level stress and rhythm. It plays an essential role in the production of English rhythm, which is a combination of word and sentence stress (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2000). Considerable emphasis will be given to oral presentations due to the fact that the target

students use English mostly to lecture. According to Anderson-Hsieh (2000, p.59), “accented syllables in lectures stand out more prominently”.

2. Linking and palatalization and reduced forms. Linking and palatalization not only promote fluency but also help non-native speakers (NNS) comprehend native speakers’ speech (Avery, Ehrlich, & Jull, 1992), with whom students will be communicating in their jobs.
3. The segmental units /v/ and /b/. These phonological features not only hinder intelligibility but also may be perceived as markers of accentedness.

Since only three classes will be designed in this paper, not all pronunciation issues will be addressed. However, it is important to stress that they should be considered for inclusion in a pronunciation course program.

Class Structure and Procedures

The ESL pronunciation course described here will take place over a span of 2 months and students will have three sessions a week of one hour and a half each session. The class will have eight Spanish-speaking students who are aspiring ESL teachers. Some are currently teaching other subjects (Spanish, Math, etc).

The classes will be planned according to the teaching steps laid out by Celce-Murcia et al. (2000, p. 36):

1. Description and analysis
2. Listening Discrimination
3. Controlled practice and feedback
4. Guided practice and feedback

5. Communicative practice and feedback

The choice of input will be circumscribed according to authenticity. In other words, the situations presented will reflect the ones students may experience outside the classroom (Moyer, 1999). The topics will, as much as possible, progress through the five stages so that the transition from one activity to the next will be smooth. In the beginning of the class, the teacher will play a central role, when s/he will provide explicit explanation and monitoring. As students build up confidence by having several opportunities to practice the focal point of the lesson, the class will become student-centered. They will also begin with vocal exercises that are directly related to the class objective.

Feedback will be a major element in this planned instruction. The teacher will be observing each student's performance throughout the class and provide whole-class feedback at the end of each activity. According to the study carried out by Mayer (1999), the type of feedback makes a greater impact than the amount of feedback. Recent research (Leeman, 2003) has yielded that learners who receive input with recast perform significantly better than those who received input with enhanced salience and negative evidence. Hence, recast will be the main form of feedback provided. Recast is defined as when the teacher reformulates all or part of the student's erroneous utterance right after it occurs, except for the error. It may contrast with student's utterance grammatically, phonologically, semantically or syntactically without altering the main idea. For example:

Student: I need informations about the trip.

Teacher: You need information? Here is the information you need.

The teacher will also meet individually with the students once a week.

Students will also be encouraged to provide feedback to each other. They will be aware of the teacher's monitoring of their progress, but it will also be emphasized that they are accountable for their own learning and they must explore their potential resources and strengths during and after the completion of the course (Acton, 1984; Dickerson, 1994). One way of doing so is by having a 20-minute weekly discussion when students will talk about the strategies used that week which made them feel successful as speakers, the difficulties they have faced, and the goals for the following week.

When working on individual sounds, the following steps will be taken based on Celce-Murcia's suggestion (1987, p. 10) on how to develop communicative tasks:

- 1- identify students' problem areas;
- 2- find lexical/grammatical contexts with many natural occurrences of the problem sound(s);
- 3- develop communicative tasks that incorporate the word;
- 4- develop at least three or four exercises so that you can recycle the problem and keep practicing the target sound(s) with new contexts.

Since the students will be communicating in an academic setting, we will incorporate into the activities the 100 most frequent words that appear in the AWL (Academic Word List) (Coxhead, 2000).

Class Warm up

Teachers are in many ways like actors: they have to convey a precise message to a large audience for an extended period of time. Thus, they need to use appropriate volume, rate and pitch to get and hold the students' attention. In order to do this, they also need to warm up and

isolate their facial muscles, jaw, lips and tongue. Archibald (1992, p 223-225) suggests a number of techniques used in drama classes that will be used for five minutes at the beginning of each class. The students will benefit from them during the pronunciation classes as well as outside of the classroom.

The routine exercise will take place with the lights off or dimmed to allow relaxation and to keep embarrassment at bay. More emphasis may be given to certain exercises according to the lesson objective.

For the lips

Make sure the lips are as spread as they can be for [iy] and as rounded as they can for [uw].

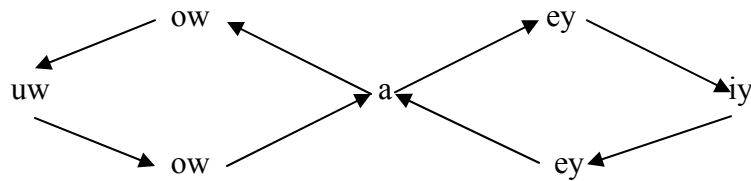
iy uw iy uw iy uw

For the lips and jaw:

On the /a/ sound, make sure the jaw is open wide with no lip rounding.

For the tongue, lips and jaw

This is a good exercise to concentrate on the tense vowels /ey/ and /ow/



For the jaw and the middle tongue

Make the sound [yʌ] as in ‘Yuppie’

- 1- by opening and closing the jaw like a puppy
- 2- by moving only the tongue

For the first part, do not move the tongue; see how fast you can open the jaw. The second part can be quite difficult. Open the jaw and make sure that it does not move. You can do this by resting the hand slightly on the chin. Move only the middle of the tongue.

For the back of the tongue and velum:

a g a g a g a g a g a g a g etc.

Consonants

pɪ pɪ pɪ pɪ pɪ pɪ pɪ pɪ pɪ pɪ pa

tɪ tɪ tɪ tɪ tɪ tɪ tɪ tɪ tɪ ta

kɪ kɪ kɪ kɪ kɪ kɪ kɪ kɪ kɪ ka

bɪ bɪ bɪ bɪ bɪ bɪ bɪ bɪ bɪ ba

dɪ dɪ dɪ dɪ dɪ dɪ dɪ dɪ dɪ da

gɪ gɪ gɪ gɪ gɪ gɪ gɪ gɪ gɪ ga

This exercise works on consonants made with the lips, the tip and back of the tongue, as well as raising and lowering the velum.

For /v/ and /ð / as in ‘this’

vvvimmm vvvinnnn vvvi---
---immm ---innn ---i---

Concentrate on keeping these consonants fully voiced.

For pitch, volume and rate

Starting at a comfortable pitch, the student simply counts from 1 to 5 with each number being on a higher pitch than the last one. Then, the pitch and the numbers descend from 5 to 1. Next, the student counts while lowering the pitch with each number (1 to 5) and then returns to the starting pitch.

An exercise of this type has two benefits;

- 1- the student gets used to hearing greater pitch variation in their voices;
- 2- the muscles used for pitch control are exercised.

Making students ready for varying pitch ranges is key for students who need English for lecturing and conversations. Lecture mode requires a wider pitch range on accented syllables than in conversation mode. In lectures, pitch highlights important information, and, therefore makes the discourse easier to be followed and more appealing (Anderson-Hsieh, 2000).

For volume

Practice making a sound that starts very quietly and gets progressively louder.



For variety

“An interesting voice must have variety. Obviously, a voice that is a monotone is not interesting to listen to.”(Archibald, 1992) In order to be effective educators, their speech organs need to be prepared to produce varying levels of volume, pitch and rate.

The exercise below combines pitch, volume and rate. Students memorize a sentence or poem (a nursery rhyme) and then practice changing the variables:

Sentence

Quiet \longrightarrow loud For volume

Sentence

High \longrightarrow loud For pitch

Then work with two variables:

sentence

quiet loud
and \longrightarrow and
high low For volume and pitch

And finally, work with three variables:

| | | | |
|-------|----------|------|----------------------------|
| | sentence | | |
| quiet | | loud | |
| and | | and | |
| high | | low | |
| and | → | and | |
| fast | | slow | For volume, pitch and rate |

Note: Since these classes have not been taught, the length of each activity is only an estimate.

Lesson Plan 1

Objective: Students will be able to identify and place sentence-level stress on content words and reduce the function words in order to produce stress-timed rhythm.

Class warm-up: Start the class with exercises for pitch volume and rate described above.

Stage 1- Description and Analysis

Teacher starts the class by having a student quickly drag the end of a ruler on the classroom blind and on an irregular surface such as a stack of books/bottles of varying sizes/shapes (adapted from Grant, 2001). This activity is used to illustrate stress-timed and syllable-timed languages, followed by the definition of each. *Time: 5 minutes*

2- Listening Discrimination

After having listened to an audio taped speech in Spanish and English (and other languages if available), students make correlations with their own language (or a third language

they know) and talk about their perception of the English rhythm. Finally, they determine which language is syllable-stressed and which is time-stressed. The rationale for devoting part of the class to discussing this matter is to allow students to have a clear understanding of the difference between the stress-timed nature of English and syllable –timed stress of Spanish, as advocated by Celce-Murcia et al. (2000). *Time: 10 minutes*

1- Description and Analysis

Sentence stress awareness will be built on students` knowledge of word stress. (Celce-Murcia, et al., 2000). It is important to remind students that a tonic syllable has a longer duration, is louder and has a more prominent pitch movement (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994). They are given a handout (Exercise 1,Appendix A) that shows the connection between word stress and sentence stress. Then, students differentiate function from context words (Exercise 2, Handout 1, Appendix A). They will also be given a list of “Content Versus Function Words”.(Celce-Murcia, et al., 2000) (Handout 2, Appendix A). *Time: 5 minutes*

2-Listening Discrimination

Students listen to the sentences and mark the stressed word with a dot. (Activity 3, Handout 1, Appendix A). *Time:3 minutes*

Nice to meet you

My name is Ray

I`ve got to go.

I`m sorry.

Wanna a ride?

That`d be great!

What do you do?

I`m a physician.

Now that students have identified stress in short sentences, they can be introduced to longer stretches of speech. A listening discrimination activity that is amusing as well as effective is jazz chanting. The teacher can use Jazz Chants page 37 entitled “Would you walk to China if you had the time?” by Graham (1978, p. 37). (Handout 3, Appendix A). *Time: 10 minutes*

The teacher provides an explanation and an example of primary and secondary stress. Students predict where the stresses are. They also attempt to mark the primary stress with a large dot and the secondary stress with a smaller one over the word. Thus, the teacher should pause after every sentence or have the students close their eyes so that they will focus on speech rather than the writing. *Time: 10 minutes*

3- Controlled Practice and Feedback

Students practice the short dialog (Exercise 4, Appendix A) containing words from the AWL. As they practice with their partners, they tap their knuckles on the desk on the unstressed words and their fists on the stressed words. Alternatively, they can clap their hands or stomp their feet to mark the stresses or use rubber bands if they are failing to lengthen the tonic syllable enough. As the teacher is walking around to identify problems, she/he can suggest alternatives.

Time: 10 minutes

Celce-Murcia, et al. (2000) support that a kinesthetic approach reinforces the learning process. Thus, we will incorporate signals and body movements at various points in during the lessons.

Now that students are familiar with identifying the stressed word and to some extent produce it, this activity can be extended to provide sentence stress practice in longer utterances.

In order to do this, the class will have a teacher-directed demonstration using a sentence containing short, high-frequency words. As demonstrated by Tri Nguyen (Class notes, AL8320, GSU, March 25, 2004), one side of the class stomps their feet as the stressed words are said in order to set the rhythm. The other side of the class not only stomps the feet as they say the stressed words but also repeats increasingly long sentences fitting the function words in between the stomps.

As students become more confident, they practice in groups of four or dyads with sentences containing words from the Academic Word List (AWL) (see Appendix A). The purpose in using the AWL is to make the practice as authentic as possible by including words educators tend to use or hear in academic settings. *Time: 15 minutes*

An entertaining way of closing the Controlled Practice step would be to have students chant the jazz chant used in the Listening Discrimination stage. This activity can also be a prelude for palatalization (“Would you”) and linking (“take care”). However, these features should not be touched on at this point. This particular chant has long sentences and questions with multiple stresses. It would make students clump the function words together in order to keep up with the rhythm. *Time: 6 minutes*

4- Guided Practice and Feedback

The teacher has students imagine themselves in a cafeteria crowded with yelling kids or teenagers. They have to call out a message across the cafeteria to another teacher. Since it is very noisy, the other teacher will not be able to understand every single word, but it is their

appointments. Alternatively, they can record a greeting message for the front office that will provide information about school office hours, extensions, location etc. *Time: 10 minutes*

Lesson Plan 2

Objective: Review sentence stress and reduced forms of function words. Students will exhibit the ability to identify and produce palatalized, contracted and blended forms, consonant to consonant and identical consonant linking and consonant deletion.

At this point, students may be able to comprehend and even produce the stress-timed nature of English. Nonetheless, they may lack awareness and/or practice to link the word and phrases to maintain an English-like rhythm.

Class warm up: vocal exercises focuses mainly on the jaw and middle of the tongue because that may assist the class in the production of the voiced and voiceless alveopalatal affricative /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ respectively.

1- Description and Analysis

The teacher will start by introducing the strong and weak forms of function words and blendings that occur in different environments in spoken English. They will also receive a list of contractions and blendings with related single-word homophones (Handout 1, Appendix B). This list is of great help to students due to the relation it makes to familiar words and it shows clearly that blending and contractions should be perceived as one word and not two, as some students do.

Students will also be presented with a handout with examples of palatalized forms, consonant deletion and linking of consonant to consonant and identical consonants. (Handout 2, Appendix

B). After a discussion of each feature of connected speech, students are requested to write their own examples based on words or phrases they might use on their jobs or that they might have heard. *Time: 15 minutes*

2- Listening Discrimination

Students receive a full transcription of a parent conference that they pretend they are attending. They are supposed to circle the blended sounds and contractions they have been introduced to.

Teacher might need to read it or play it more than once. *Time: 5 minutes*

3- Controlled Practice and Feedback

Students practice the conversation that was presented in the previous stage. They are encouraged to make some minor adjustments to suit their reality. For instance, if the conversation is between a math teacher but the student is a Spanish teacher, she/he may say “Nice to meet you. I am ...(name).....’s Spanish teacher.” instead of “math teacher.” *Time: 8 minutes*

The jazz chant “I’m sorry, but...”(Graham, 1978, p. 61) can be a relaxing alternative to practice contractions and linking because it not only has you’ve got to, I’m, it’s, can’t, won’t, I’ll, don’t, but also the language teachers utilize in the classroom such as “Try a little harder”, “you’ve got to work harder”, “do a little better”, and “it’s not good enough”. *Time: 8 minutes*

4- Guided Practice and Feedback

This activity aims at providing practice palatalization as well as linking.

Several word cards are laid down on a big table (Handout 3, Appendix B). Students pick a word and have 30 seconds to describe the rule presented in the Description and Analysis phase. The winner is the one who is able to justify the largest number of word chunks correctly. Time: 15 minutes.

Using the cards from the game, students are asked to create and act out a dialog between two students who had a fight in the classroom and have been sent to the principal's office. One is the student who asks the questions created by students beforehand (e.g.: Did you act up in class? Could you stop fiddling and look at me? Would you stop that please?) The interlocutor is the student who is supposed to incorporate the words from the game into his or her responses. Obviously, the cards must contain phrases or word chunk appropriate for the context suggested by the teacher. *Time: 15 minutes*

5-Communicative Practice and Feedback

This activity is based on a comedy show entitled "Whose line is it anyway?" First, students are asked to write any word or phrase on a slip of paper and they are then given a context. On each speaker's turn, they draw a paper out of their pocket and they have to include that word or phrase in the dialog. The impromptu conversation, which promotes fluency, takes unexpected twists, requiring students to be very attentive and imaginative to keep up with the conversation.

The suggested context for this activity is a teacher trying to convince the parents that their spoiled child has behavior problems in class. The parents should convince the teacher of the contrary.

The teacher provides feedback on how students' use of the contractions and linking.

Time: 15 minutes

Lesson Plan 3

Objective: Review palatalized, contracted and blended forms, consonant to consonant and identical consonant linking and consonant deletion. Students will be able to distinguish and produce the phonemes /b/ and /v/ in a communicative context.

Class warm-up: all the articulation exercises will be done with particular emphasis on consonants, lips and jaws since learners will be practicing bilabial and labiodental sounds.

1- Description and Analysis

The focus of this class will be introduced with a kinesthetic approach that will require a mirror and a piece of paper. First, students are asked to look at the mirror, put the lips together, and drop the jaw without any airflow. After a few times making this motion, they are asked to let the airflow build up in their mouth and suddenly release it to make the voiced bilabial stop /b/. They will then be asked to touch the lower lips on the front teeth, like a bunny, first without any airflow and then with it in order to make the voiced labiodental fricative /v/. Next, they will produce both sounds very close to the mirror. The intention is to raise awareness of the manner of articulation of these sounds by having them notice that the former steams up the mirror and latter does not. Another technique is to have them place a small piece of paper in front of the mouth and say both sounds. They will notice that the voiced bilabial stop will cause the paper to move and the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ will not.

Finally, minimal pairs are presented to illustrate the difference: (From Avery & Ehrlich, 1992)

| | |
|-------|-------|
| /b/ | /v/ |
| boat | vote |
| buy | vie |
| rebel | revel |
| robe | rove |

Time: 15 minutes

2- *Listening Discrimination*

On the board, there is a big letter B on the left and a letter V on the right-hand side. As teacher reads a lecture, she will pause after every word that has a /b/ or /v/ sound so that students point to the sound they hear. This helps them associate the sound with the orthographic symbol. Alternatively, students are split in two groups of four and they choose a team name that will start with /b/ and the other with a /v/, for example, Big Bunch and Victor or Victoria. As the teacher reads a word or sentence with their “team sound”, they shout their team name. This activity is a prelude for Controlled Practice. If there is access to technology, students may play a matching game on HotPotatoes where that need to match the initial consonant sound with the picture.

Time: 4 minutes either activity

3- *Controlled Practice and Feedback*

Students are presented with a short lecture where there is some interaction with the students to allow for turn taking and, as a result, make it more dynamic. The lecture contains words the sounds /b/ and /v/ taken from the AWL. (Handout 1, Appendix C) *Time: 10 minutes*

A second activity for tired students is to use tongue twisters. This can be turned into a competitive activity that will motivate them and provide practice. (Handout 2, Appendix C). Number two in particular can be beneficial for practicing connected speech and rhythm. However, as the focus at this point is on the segmental units, it is desirable that it is done at a later stage. *Time: 10 minutes*

4-Guided Practice and Feedback

This activity was devised using the AWL that have the sounds /b/ or /v/ in initial or medial position. It will not only provide practice on segmental sounds, but also on the suprasegmental elements taught previously. Students are supposed to write a lecture with a view to teaching something in their realm of knowledge.

They should include as many words as possible from the AWL: available, variables, labor, involve(d), publish(ed), volume, convention, benefit(ed) benefit (noun), derive(ed), distribution or the verb, establish(ed), debate(d), debate (noun), structure, individual, evaluation, relevant, investment, obtain(ed), considerable, etc *Time: 15 minutes*

For homework, they audio tape the lecture at least four times as Acton suggests in his article (1984): The first time in rhythm groups, the second time in clausal groups, the third and fourth times as an entire text. The last time should be read on the day prior to the class. The tape should be turned in and the teacher provides feedback on the target sounds. Although emphasis should be given to the /b/ and /v/ sounds, the teacher can have students pay attention to rhythm as a form of integrating segmentals with suprasegmentals. In other words, the smaller units should be placed in the larger structure of speech.

5-Communicative Practice and Feedback

Students present their lecture only with the aid of notes. The listeners are supposed to make comments about the presenter's pronunciation of the sounds /b/ and /v/ and other features the class has been practicing thus far. They can choose to give oral or written feedback. The reason for giving them a choice is that some students might feel uncomfortable to point out their peer's weaknesses and strengths. *Time: 25 minutes*

Conclusion

This paper has presented a plan of action in order to increase intelligibility and oral fluency of Spanish-speaking students and also to connect theory and practice through communicative activities. The plan tackles problems that are deemed a hindrance to student's comprehensibility in job-related tasks. Therefore, it presents contexts that are familiar to the students so they can relate them to their own lives.

The words of the Academic Word List, which most activities were based on, address the needs of international teachers who come to the U.S. to teach Spanish and other subjects and are likely to use such words in job-related contexts.

It is important to stress, however, that Spanish, like English, has a variety of dialects. Since this project was based on just two individuals, it cannot be assumed that all Spanish speakers will have the same phonological characteristics.

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Appendix A

Handout 1, Lesson 1

1-Listen to your teacher or the speaker on the tape say these word/phrase pairs. In each pair, the rhythm pattern of the word is repeated in the phrase. (Adapted from Grant (2001))

| Words | Phrases |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1- engineer ● | He was here. ● |
| 2- overthrow ● | In a row. ● |
| 3- create ● | I'm Ray ● |
| 4- convert (verb) ● | He's hurt. ● |
| 5- presented ● | She sent it. ● |
| 6- progressed ● | The best. ● |
| 7- permit (noun) ● | Learn it. ● |
| 8- volunteer ● | I can hear it. ● |

2-Look at activity 1. List the words that were stressed and the ones that were not stressed.

What types of words are stressed? What types are unstressed?

Unstressed

Stressed

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3-Listen to the phrases and write down the stressed words:

1-.....

2-.....

3-.....

4-.....

5-.....

6-.....

7-.....

8-.....

4- Imagine you are teaching a class on the American constitution. Practice the short dialogs with your partner.

Teacher: What is the principle of our legislation?

Students: It is based on tradition.

T: What's its role?

S: To transfer resources to individuals.

T: What should it achieve?

S: It should create social structure.

From Celce-Murcia, M. (2000). *Teaching Pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge University Press, p 152.

5-Say the sentences out loud placing the stress on the dotted words.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|------|---------------|--|---------|--------|--|--|------|--|
| | ● | | | ● | | | | ● | |
| | CATS | | | CHASE | | | | MICE | |
| The | CATS | have | | CHASED | | | | MICE | |
| The | CATS | will | | CHASE | the | | | MICE | |
| The | CATS | have been | | CHASing | the | | | MICE | |
| The | CATS | could've been | | CHASED | by the | | | MICE | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|---------------|--|---------|--------|--|--|-----------|--|
| | ● | | | ● | | | | ● | |
| | ROLE | | | CREATE | | | | STRUCTURE | |
| Their | ROLE | is to | | CREATE | | | | STRUCTURE | |
| Their | ROLES | will | | CREATE | some | | | STRUCTURE | |
| Their | ROLES | would have | | CREATED | some | | | STRUCTURE | |
| Their | ROLES | could've been | | CREATED | by the | | | STRUCTURE | |

Extra practice:

| | | | | |
|-------------|--|-----------|--|---------------|
| ● | | ● | | ● |
| RELIGION | | RESTRICT | | PARTICIPATION |
| ● | | ● | | ● |
| LEGISLATION | | ESTABLISH | | ORDER |

Handout 2, Lesson 1

From Celce-Murcia, M. (2000). *Teaching Pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge University Press, p 153.

Content Versus Function Words

| Content/Information words Often Stressed | X | Function Words (usually unstressed, unless In final position or when used emphatically) |
|---|---|--|
| Nouns | | Articles |
| Main verbs | | Auxiliary verbs |
| Adjectives | | Personal pronouns |
| Possessive pronouns | | Possessive adjectives |
| Interrogatives | | Demonstrative adjectives |
| (not)negative contraction | | Prepositions |
| adverbs | | Conjunctions |
| adverbial particles | | |

Handout 3, Lesson 1

Would you walk to China if you had the time?

Would you walk to China if you had the time?

Would you leave at a quarter to three?

Would you walk to China if you had the time?

Would you walk to China with me?

Of course, I'd walk to China if I had the time.

I'd leave at a quarter to three.

If course I'd leave to Chine tomorrow night,

If I were only free.

Why can't you walk to China tomorrow night?

Why can't you go to China at three?

Why can't you walk out on your sweet sugar cat

And sail to China with me?

Well, I have to stay at home and take care of my plants

Take care of my darling too,

And I'd never walk out on my sweet sugar cat

And go to China with you.

Handout 4, Lesson 1

The busses will be dropping the students off in 10 minutes.

The students should be in a straight line to get breakfast.

Lunch will be served between 11:00 and 1:00.

The principal will make an announcement this morning.

Appendix B

Handout 1, Lesson 2

| Contraction/blending | Single-word homophones |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| I'll | aisle, isle |
| You're | your |
| You'll | yule |
| He'll | heel, hill |
| He'd | heed |
| We'll | will, weal |
| We've | weave |
| They're | their, there |
| Who's | whose |
| Where's | wears |
| Where're | wearer |
| Why's | wise |
| Why'd | wide |
| Why'll | while |
| How's | house (v.) |
| How'll | howl |

From Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D.M., & Goodwin, J.M. (2000). *Teaching Pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge University Press, p 239.

Handout 2, Lesson 2

From Avery, P., Ehrlich, S. & Jull D. (1992). Connected speech. In P.Avery & S.Ehrlich (Ed.) *Teaching American English Pronunciation*. (73-90). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

| Linking Consonant to Consonant | | |
|--|---------------|------------------|
| Rule: When word that ends with a stop consonant is followed by a word that begins with a consonant, the first stop is not released . | | |
| | Example | Your own example |
| p+t | stop trying | ..... |
| t+l | pet lizard | ..... |
| t+tʃ | fat chance | ..... |
| t+k | pet crocodile | ..... |
| d+dʒ | bad judgment | ..... |
| p+s | keep speaking | ..... |
| p+d | lap dog | ..... |
| g+k | log cabin | ..... |
| g+z | big zoo | ..... |
| g+b | big boy | ..... |
| t+d | let down | ..... |
| k+ʃ | deck shoes | ..... |

| Palatalized forms | Examples | your own example |
|--|------------------|-------------------------|
| /t/ + /y/= /tš/ | What you..... | ..... |
| /d/ + /y/ = /dž/ | Did you..... | ..... |
| /s/ + /z/ = /š/ | This year | ..... |
| /z/ + /y/= /ž/ | Please yourself | ..... |
| Consonant deletion | | |
| Rule 1: cluster + consonant= no deletion | | |
| Example: | Your own example | |
| nd hand out | ..... |  |
| st last offer | ..... |  |
| st nest up | ..... |  |
| ft left out | ..... |  |
| Rule 2: cluster+ consonant= unreleased or deleted | | |
| Example | Your own example | |
| nd band shell | ..... |  |
| ft left field | ..... |  |
| st past president | ..... |  |
| st next month | ..... |  |
| Rule 3: The consonants are deleted in words that have suffixes or are compounds: | | |
| nd kin(d)ness | ..... |  |
| ft sof(t)ness | ..... |  |
| st pos(t)man | ..... |  |
| st tex(t)book | ..... |  |

Rule 4 – Verb + ed=no deletion of ed sound

| | Example | Your own example |
|----|------------------------|------------------|
| nd | canned peaches | ..... |
| ft | laugh ed hard | ..... |
| st | miss ed chances | ..... |
| st | tax ed me | ..... |

Linking identical consonants

Rule: when the consonant that ends one word is identical to the consonant that begins the next word, the two consonants are pronounced as as one long consonant.

| | Example | Your own example |
|-----|-------------|------------------|
| p+p | hurt Tom | ..... |
| l+l | fall leaves | ..... |

Handout 3, Lesson 2

Keep talking

It' d

Short time

Blackboard

Did you

Appendix C

Handout 1, Lesson 3

Teacher 1: There's **been** a lot of **investment** in **available** sources of energy. Last year, Georgia alone **obtained** **over** three **billion** dollars of **investment** compared to the **previous** year's 1 **billion**.

Students: So, **basically** how's the **budget** **established**?

Teacher 2: There are many **variables** that are analyzed **by** the **government**: first **volume** and second **demand**.

Handout 2, Lesson 3

Tongue Twister (Source: Staley, C.T. (2003, June 4). *The tongue twisters database*. Retrieved March 26, 2004, from <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/8136/tonguetwisters.html>)

1-A box of biscuits, a batch of mixed biscuits

2-Betty Botter had some butter,

"But," she said, "this butter's bitter.

If I bake this bitter butter,

it would make my batter bitter.

But a bit of better butter--

that would make my batter better."

So she bought a bit of butter,

better than her bitter butter,

and she baked it in her batter,

and the batter was not bitter.

So 'twas better Betty Botter

bought a bit of better butter

3-Vincent vowed vengeance very vehemently.