Oral Communication for Non-Native Speakers of English, 2nd Edition

Oral Communication for Non-Native Speakers of English, 2nd Edition

Agata Guskaroska; Erik Goodale; Timothy Kochem; Monica Ghosh; Lily Compton; and Elena Cotos

Denise Vrchota ; Kimberly Becker; Idée Edalatishams; Liberato Silva dos Santos; and Kristin Terrill

Iowa State University is located on the ancestral lands and territory of the Baxoje (bah-kho-dzhe), or Ioway Nation. The United States obtained the land from the Meskwaki and Sauk nations in the Treaty of 1842. We wish to recognize our obligations to this land and to the people who took care of it, as well as to the 17,000 Native people who live in Iowa today.

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of *Oral Communication for Non-native Speakers of English*!

This book is an essential instructional tool for developing oral communication skills in academic settings, specifically designed for international graduate students, teaching assistants, postdoctoral researchers, and those preparing to enter academia. The second edition introduces dedicated chapters on developing listening, speaking, and pronunciation.

The book has been constructed to be either a self-paced instructional tool for learners or classroom material for speaking or pronunciation courses.

The practice activities reinforce chapter content through real-world application and relatable situations. Each skill's description is complemented with relatable scenarios, discussion prompts, and interactive online activities. Through this approach, learners can actively develop the skills needed for success in English-speaking academic environments.

As classroom material, we have two additional sections per skill: Teacher's Corner and Additional Practice. The Teacher's Corner provides important considerations for skill development, helpful tips, resources, and additional ideas for activities for teachers. The Additional Practice provides extended activities (e.g., homework, additional in-class activities) meant to be paired with classroom practice.

PART I. FUNDAMENTALS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION

Effective communication begins with developing both listening and speaking skills. When we communicate, our ability to understand others and express ourselves clearly determines how successfully we connect with those around us and get our message across.

Part I of this book focuses on oral communication fundamentals, covering two essential chapters: listening and speaking. These interconnected skills have been organized to help ESL/EFL learners develop their ability to comprehend spoken English and communicate their thoughts with confidence and clarity.

Chapter 1. Listening

Listening: Overview

In this chapter, we will explore the world of listening skills for ESL/EFL learners. This chapter starts with a scenario describing a listening issue to encourage you to think and discuss before diving into the topic. We will explore strategies to become **active listeners,** learn how to receive and interpret the information we need, respond and take turns in conversations, and boost your overall English comprehension.

Scenario A: Lost in Conversation

🎬 Scenario Spotlight

Moises is often accused of not listening. He disagrees. When others speak to him, he always makes a point of letting them talk and doesn't speak himself. Still, he admits there was a time recently when he went to meet his friends for coffee and discovered everyone else had gone to a different coffee house. He realizes his romantic partner gets annoyed with him because he doesn't remember things she has told him that she says are important. Despite these experiences, Moises feels he is a good listener and thinks the mix-ups and the misunderstandings lie with others.

👥 1-1 Discussion

Instructions: Read Scenario A, think, and discuss with your classmates.

- What issues has Moises had?

- Why do you think this is happening?

- What are some possible explanations about his behavior?

- Moises believes he's a good listener because he lets others talk without interruption. Do you think simply staying silent equates to good listening? Why or why not?

- What strategies could Moises implement to become a more effective listener?

Listening as Communication

Listening is a complex, active process of hearing, attending (paying attention), receiving, interpreting, and responding. Communication is a two-way street where two people are engaged in conversation; one person is speaking, and the other one is listening. This collaborative process is essential for successful communication in any situation. In Scenario A, was Moises hearing but not really listening? Let's take a closer look at each of the components of effective listening:

- **Hearing** is a physical process that requires the parts of the ear to function correctly for an individual to receive auditory stimulation.

- **Focusing or Paying Attention** is the decision to focus on one source of sound, for example:
  - focusing on the person you are with and tuning out all the chatter of people around you.
  - paying attention to the background music rather than the person sitting next to you;
  - eavesdropping on the couple at the next restaurant table rather than the group you are seated with;

- **Receiving** is the process of acquiring information the speaker is disclosing to you. Receiving includes not only the speaker's words, but also nonverbal actions:
  - the sound of the person's voice,
  - their facial expressions,
  - whether the individual is making eye contact.

- **Interpreting** is the crucial task of decoding the message. It requires the listener to give meaning to the verbal and nonverbal symbols used by the speaker. This involves paying close attention to all the information received and piecing it together to grasp the intended message. Sometimes, additional information might be necessary to crack the code. This is where asking clarifying questions or paraphrasing what you heard in your own words comes in handy. These strategies ensure you have accurately interpreted the speaker's message.

- **Responding** is the listener's reaction to the speaker's message. The response is important for two reasons:

- it allows the listener to check the accuracy of their interpretation of the speaker's message (verbal and nonverbal);
- it allows the speaker to clarify or expand upon the message if there's been a misunderstanding.

Scenario Resolution

In Scenario A, it seems that Moises was hearing other people's speech as he stated that he kept quiet, and he was "letting them talk". But have you ever zoned out when someone was talking? Or felt that you could hear them, but could not understand a word they were saying? This is likely due to Moises not being focused on the speaker's message, for example, when he went to meet his friends in a different coffee house, he might not have paid close attention to the specific information that he needed (i.e., name of the coffee house) and he just focused, perhaps, on the meeting time. As English learners, we need to focus on listening to the main message or specific information that we want to understand from the speaker. For example, if you are an International Teaching Assistant (ITA), and you are talking to your student who needs your help with solving a certain issue, you need to focus on understanding what specifically they need your help with.

Moises also stated that his romantic partner gets annoyed with him because he does not remember things she said were important. Besides focusing on the message, you also need to receive the message and interpret the speaker's nonverbal signals. Notice, is the speaker trying to emphasize something by using different intonation or body language? Does their voice sound excited when they are sharing something? All of this plays an important role in the process of listening. As an English learner, for example, when talking to your supervisor, you need to make sure you are paying attention to the parts they are trying to emphasize. It is also advisable to use clarifying questions or paraphrasing to ensure you understood the message correctly. The next section will provide activities to help you improve your listening comprehension by working on each of the above-described areas.

Glossary

- **Active listeners:** learners who go beyond simply hearing the speaker. They focus, engage, and try to understand the meaning by asking questions and showing they are following along.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools:** Software programs designed to accomplish specific tasks using AI technology. AI tools can analyze data, identify patterns, and automate processes.
- **Hearing:** a physical process that requires the parts of the ear to function correctly for an individual to receive auditory stimulation.
- **Paying Attention**: the decision to focus on one source of sound.
- **Receiving:** the process of acquiring information the speaker is disclosing to you including nonverbal actions.
- **Interpreting:** the task of decoding the message that requires the listener to give meaning to the verbal and nonverbal symbols used by the speaker.
- **Responding:** the listener's reaction to the speaker's message.

Effective Listening Strategies

Chapter Outline

- [Listening to Pay Attention: Focusing on the Speaker](#)
- [Listening to Receive: Receiving as a Nonverbal Process](#)
- [Listening to Interpret: Checking Understanding](#)
- [Listening to Respond: Being Engaged](#)

Listening is an integral part of developing oral communication skills. To be able to communicate successfully, we first need to learn how to understand the other speakers. Developing strong listening strategies allows us to accurately understand the speaker's message, respond thoughtfully, and build stronger relationships. Using these strategies can help us actively participate in conversations, avoid misunderstandings, and learn from others (e.g., understand important lectures or conference presentations).

In this section, we will help you develop effective listening strategies through various group and individual activities. The group activities can be used with a large or small group of learners while the individual activities can be used for individual, self-directed learning or as homework activities.

Listening to Pay Attention: Focusing on the Speaker

👥 1-2: Discussion

Instructions: Read the questions and discuss them with your classmates. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal.

1. **Do you consider yourself a good listener?** Share examples of your perception of what makes good or bad listeners.
2. **Hearing Vs Listening:** Discuss the quotes below:
   a. *"Everyone can hear, but not everyone listens."*
   b. *"Listening requires concentration, while hearing requires no effort."*

👥🧑 1-3: Listening with different goals

Instructions: Listen to the conversation in the video and answer the questions below.

> 🖼 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=332#oembed-1*

> 🖼 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=332#h5p-31*

Reflection Question: Focus on humor

- How do Monica and Phoebe use humor in their conversation? Can you identify any specific jokes or wordplay?

Listening to Receive: Receiving as a Nonverbal Process

👥 👤 1-4 Active listening & nonverbal communication

Instructions: Follow the instructions to observe and analyze active listening strategies and nonverbal communication.

> 📰 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=332#oembed-2

Listening #1:

Watch the video with the sound off and focus solely on Amy's body language and facial expressions. Can you guess Amy's emotions (nervousness, excitement) when she speaks?

Listening #2:

Mark the strategy in the table below each time you observe the corresponding active listening behavior in the video.

Active Listening Strategies

Strategy	Description
Nods in Agreement	Leans head slightly and nods up and down
Maintains Eye Contact	Keeps eye contact with the speaker most of the time
Asks a Clarifying Question	Asks a question to better understand the speaker
Uses Verbal Affirmations	Says things like "uh-huh," "okay," or "I see"
Offers Encouragement	Smiles or says something positive to show support
Summarizes Key Points	Briefly restates what the speaker has said
Leans Forward	Shows physical interest in what the speaker is saying
Avoids Interruptions	Lets the speaker finish their thought before speaking
Repeats Back Key Words	Repeats a key phrase or word for confirmation

Strategy	Description
Takes Notes	Marks down notes while listening

👥 1-5 Discussion

Instructions: Read the prompts and discuss them with your classmates. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal.

- Discuss how some nonverbal cues might be considered universal (e.g., a smile expressing happiness), while others can vary greatly depending on culture (e.g., eye contact, personal space).

- Explore how some nonverbal cues are intentional and used strategically (e.g., a handshake), while others are unconscious and can reveal hidden emotions (e.g., fidgeting).

- Discuss situations where nonverbal communication might contradict verbal messages. How do we determine the true meaning in such cases?

- Discuss the importance of effective nonverbal communication in professional settings (e.g., job interviews, presentations, meetings).

- Explore how nonverbal cues can enhance or hinder communication in personal relationships.

- Analyze the challenges and opportunities of nonverbal communication when interacting with people from different cultures

Listening to Interpret: Checking Understanding

👤 1-6 Summarize the language

Instructions: Listen to a video twice. For the first round, listen actively and try to internalize as much as you can. Feel free to stop it and replay certain parts if you had trouble hearing what was said. On the second round, do your best to take notes on key themes and ideas.

👤 1-7 Paraphrasing & asking questions in active listening

Instructions: Listen to the video about using Artificial Intelligence in teaching and research or listen to an academic talk relevant to your research. After each slide or paragraph, imagine yourself in a conversation with the speaker by pausing to summarize (i.e., paraphrase) what the speaker has said as well as to ask clarification questions on anything you don't (yet) understand.

Here are some helpful phrases to include:

- *You mean that… You're saying that …What you're saying is ….*
- *If I understand correctly… If I'm understanding you correctly…*
- *If I'm hearing you correctly…*

Do this activity for 10-15 minutes every day until you can also paraphrase well in live conversation. (You will probably be surprised at how quickly this happens!)

👥👤 1-8 Paraphrasing Practice

Instructions: Looking at your notes from activity 1-7, summarize the key themes and ideas from the video lecture. Record your answer, then listen to your speech, and reflect on your response by responding to the questions below:

- Did I capture the main points of the video lecture in my summary?

- Would my summary be helpful to someone who hadn't watched the video?

- Did I use clear and concise language in my summary?

- What are my strengths in paraphrasing and summarizing information?

- What areas can I improve on when actively listening and summarizing lectures?

Once done with the bullet points above, swap recordings with a partner and listen to each other's summaries. Compare what your partner included/excluded with what you did in your own summary. Give feedback to your partner.

Listening to Respond: Being Engaged

1-9 Is it my turn now? Discussion

Instructions: Read the questions and discuss them with your classmates. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal.

- What is **turn taking**?

- What are your strategies to give the floor to another speaker?

- Are there cultural differences in turn taking?

Turn Taking Strategies

Strategy	Description	Examples
Backchanneling	Indicating active listening and encouraging the speaker to continue.	"I see," "Right," "Uh-huh," "Really?" "Makes sense, Interesting"
Signaling the end of a turn	Giving the floor to another speaker.	"That's all I wanted to say," "What do you think about that?" "I'd like to hear your thoughts."
Holding the floor	Maintaining a turn if a speaker is not finished.	Using fillers ("uh, um"), rephrasing, or summarizing points.
Interrupting politely	Taking over the floor in a polite manner when you need clarification or have something important to add to the conversation.	"Excuse me, could I add something?" "Sorry to interrupt, but…"
Encouraging	Inviting others into the conversation	"What are your thoughts on this?" "Do

Strategy	Description	Examples
participation	with phrases like	you have any ideas about…?"
Non-verbal cues	Using non-verbal cues to signal the end of a turn or to indicate a desire to speak.	**Body language:** softening body posture, turning towards the next speaker. **Facial expressions:** slight smile, making eye contact with the speaker.

1-10 Managing dominant speakers: Discussion

Instructions: Read the prompt and discuss with your classmates. If working alone, respond to the prompts in the form of an audio/video journal.

- Discuss strategies for dealing with dominant speakers in a group, such as gently redirecting the conversation or setting rules for equal participation.

- Discuss what strategies work for you, which don't, and why.

1-11 Debate

Instructions: Organize a debate where you can practice turn-taking strategies

Debate topic: "Rise of the Machines"

- Group 1: Automation will displace more jobs than it creates in the coming years.

- Group 2: Automation will create more jobs than it displaces.

Additional Activities

Scenario B: International Teaching Assistant

🎬 Scenario Spotlight

This is Ester's first year in the USA. She is a PhD student in the Agronomy department, and as part of her assistantship, she is teaching an undergraduate course in her department. While her TOEFL scores were high, and she was confident about her English language skills while she was in her country, she sometimes struggles to understand her students when they are asking questions. She asks them to repeat, and when the students pronounce the words more slowly, she sometimes manages to understand them. She feels like they talk too fast and that's the only issue that is causing the miscommunication.

👥 1-13 Discussion

Instructions: Read Scenario B carefully. Think about the situation and discuss it with your classmates following the discussion prompts. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal.

- What issues has Ester had?
- Why do you think this is happening?
- What are some possible explanations about her students' behavior?
- Ester believes that the issue lies with her students' fast speech. Do you think this is the main issue? Why or why not?
- What strategies could Ester implement to become a more effective listener?

> **(Hint) Think about:**
>
> - Students' regional dialects
> - Informal speech
> - Slang
> - Cultural references
> - Using effective listening strategies

Listening Activities

Listening for Academic Purposes

- The **esl-lab website** covers a large number of topics using academic language. For more activities on listening where you can select different levels for students, explore **www.esl-lab.com**

1-14 Role play

Instructions: Imagine yourself in a specific daily life situation that involves communication. The prompt describes the situation and what you are expected to do in that situation. Assign roles with your classmates, initiate the conversation, explain the situation, and serve as a good listener. If the situation is problematic, you need to find a solution. Practice effective listening strategies, turn-taking, and nonverbal communication.

1-14 Role Play

Situation	Task
A group of friends are at the beach. Some argue that sunbathing can be very harmful for a person's skin, while others argue it is no big deal.	• Express your opinion about the topic. Propose ways to deal with this problem. Provide arguments to support your

Situation	Task
	statement.
A graduate student and their advisor are having a discussion. The advisor states that working solely as a graduate assistant is better than having both a part-time job on campus and working as a graduate assistant, but the student disagrees.	• Student: Argue that you need the extra money and how you can effectively work both positions. • Advisor: Express your concerns regarding workload, work quality, etc.
Several graduate students are planning a local conference/research group and are discussing what food to order. Some want healthy food and others want unhealthy food.	• Express your opinion and defend it.
A graduate student is preparing for their first conference presentation and needs to present their research findings together with their major professor. However, the student suffers from severe public speaking anxiety and is meeting with their professor to discuss this along with their progress with the presentation slides.	• Student: Explain your situation to your professor and ask for advice to overcome the fear. • Professor: Provide empathy and advice such as adequate preparation/practice, positive self-talk, relaxation techniques, self-care, etc.[1]
An undergraduate student comes to their TA during office hours to complain about their grade.	• Student: Respectfully express your concerns and try to convince the TA raise your grade. • TA: Listen to your student's complaints and try to resolve the issue.

1. More ideas can be found in Table 1 here: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8508314/

Teacher's Corner

Using AI Tools for Listening Activities

How can AI help you create or adapt listening materials for your students? More specifically, in this section we will talk about the free version of Google's Gemini which has access to the internet. When you open Gemini, you can enter a prompt to explain how the AI can help you. Here are some suggestions:

Finding Listening Materials

To ask Gemini to help you find listening materials, you need to provide a detailed prompt that will help the AI locate these types of materials on the web. The section below provides suggestions for successful AI prompting.

🧠 AI Prompting

When drafting your prompt, think about including the following:

- **Target Level:** What is the proficiency level of your students (beginner, intermediate, advanced)?
- **Topic**: Is there a specific topic or theme you'd like the listening material to focus on? (e.g., science, current events, daily life conversations)
- **Listening Activity Type**: Do you have a preferred type of listening activity in mind (e.g., gap-filling exercise, true/false questions, summarizing, finding specific information)?
- **Format:** Would you prefer audio or video materials?
- **Desired Length**: Is there a preferred length for the listening material (short clip, full lecture, etc.)?
- **Goal: What is the goal of your lecture** (e.g., to improve active listening strategies, to improve summarizing skills)?
- **Accent/dialect:** Do you want to focus on American, British, Canadian English, or another accent?

Example prompt:

"Help me find intermediate ESL listening materials about environmental issues. I need 3-5 minute audio clips with American English speakers [that include comprehension questions]. The materials should help students practice identifying main ideas and supporting details. Include sources that are freely accessible online."

Brainstorming and Creating Listening Activities

Gemini can help you brainstorm ways to include different listening formats to keep your exercises engaging. This could include short audio clips, YouTube videos, longer lectures, interviews, dialogues, or even songs. Simply describe your context to Gemini following the prompt suggestion above and ask for help with brainstorming creative ideas.

Example prompt:

"I need creative listening activities for my intermediate English class of graduate students focusing on negotiation skills. Students struggle with understanding different accents and processing information quickly. Please suggest 5 diverse listening formats (audio clips, videos, etc.) and accompanying activities that practice note-taking, identifying key points, and recognizing tone."

🔒 Key Points

- Strong listening skills are essential for successful communication.
- Listening is a complex, active process that involves hearing, focusing your attention, receiving verbal and nonverbal cues, interpreting the message, and responding to show understanding.
- Working on developing effective listening strategies can help English learners improve their comprehension and general communication skills.

Chapter 2. Speaking

Speaking: Overview

In this chapter, we will explore the development of speaking skills for ESL/EFL learners. This chapter starts with a scenario illustrating common struggles that language learners face when acquiring speaking proficiency to help you think and reflect on your own experiences. We will examine the building blocks that make up strong speaking skills and learn how to speak effortlessly and correctly, organize your ideas, expand your vocabulary and sentence structure, and adjust the language according to the listeners.

Scenario C: Finding the Words

🎬 Scenario Spotlight

Isabella frequently has issues communicating her ideas to her friends and colleagues. A recent example of this is when she had to give a presentation at work, and her colleagues seemed confused by what she was saying. When she speaks, Isabella always makes a point of using a lot of details and explaining her thoughts thoroughly. She realizes that this causes her to often pause as she searches for the right words and complex phrases that she uses in her writing. However, Isabella believes the extra details and thoroughness should make her message clearer for people to understand despite the pauses, and she struggles to understand what the issues are.

👥 2-1 Discussion

Instructions: Read Scenario C, think, and discuss with your classmates.

- What issues has Isabella had?

- Why do you think this is happening?

- What are some possible explanations for her confusion?

- Isabella believes that using complex academic phrases will improve her speech and she will sound more professional. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

- What strategies could Isabella use to become a better speaker?

Understanding Speaking Proficiency

Speaking proficiency in a second language involves the ability to communicate effectively and effortlessly in various situations. This proficiency can be analyzed through different aspects. One of the most comprehensive models is Skehan's CAF model, which breaks down language proficiency into three key components: **Fluency, Accuracy**, and **Complexity.**

Fluency is the ability to speak smoothly for a period of time, without excessive pauses, hesitations, or repetitions. However, it is important to note that being fluent is not the same as being fast, nor does it involve the elimination of all pauses. In fact, well-placed pauses are essential for clarity. One key aspect of fluency is the use of **thought groups,** units of meaning separated by natural pauses. For example, "I like to eat apples / but not bananas / because they are too sweet." The appropriate insertion of these pauses helps listeners follow the grammatical structure of what is being said, thus contributing to the natural flow and enhancing comprehension. Finally, fluency also depends on the ability to organize thoughts effectively and easily express ideas, allowing for smooth and coherent communication.

Accuracy is the ability to use correct and appropriate components of language, such as grammar and pronunciation, to convey meaning. In terms of grammar, accuracy involves using proper sentence structures, verb tenses, and word choices to avoid confusion or misinterpretation. Pronunciation encompasses both **segmentals** (individual speech sounds) and **suprasegmentals** (**stress**, **prominence**, **intonation**), which are crucial for clear and effective communication. Using accurate language allows the listeners to correctly receive, interpret, and understand the message.

Complexity refers to the use of **diverse** vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures appropriately for different contexts. In professional and academic settings, using a variety of sentence structures, transitions, and precise vocabulary enhances clarity and sophistication. However, learners who are primarily exposed to complex academic language may struggle to adapt their speech for casual conversations with friends and colleagues. Effective communication requires adjusting language complexity based on the listener and the context, ensuring both clarity and engagement.

Scenario Resolution

In Scenario C, Isabella seems to be struggling with fluency and complexity. She says that she pauses often, searching for the right words and complex phrases that she uses in her writing. This results in slow and interrupted speech, making it difficult for listeners to follow her ideas. One contributing factor is her struggle with complexity. Isabella might be unaware or struggling to accept that academic writing and academic speech are different English registers with their own unique forms of complexity. Furthermore, Isabella might also have accepted the myth that equates sounding sophisticated and erudite with using unnecessarily complicated speech and superfluous details when instead it is often done by speaking simply and succinctly. To improve, her language should be adapted to the audience, organized logically, and flow naturally with effective transitions.

Glossary

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools:** Software programs designed to accomplish specific tasks using AI technology. AI tools can analyze data, identify patterns, and automate processes.
- **Accuracy**: The ability to use correct and appropriate language components, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, to convey meaning.
- **Fluency**: The ability to speak smoothly and effortlessly, without excessive pauses, hesitations, or repetitions.
- **Complexity:** The ability to use varied language structures, including advanced grammar, diverse vocabulary, and sentence constructions appropriately to for different contexts.
- **Impromptu Speaking**: The ability to speak spontaneously and coherently on a given topic without prior preparation, demonstrating accuracy, fluency, and complexity in real-time communication.
- **Small Talk**: Casual conversation that helps make connections when meeting new people, and fill awkward silences with friends, acquaintances and colleagues, often involving light, non-controversial topics.

Effective Speaking Strategies

Chapter Outline

- [Developing Fluency](#)
- [Improving Accuracy](#)
- [Language Complexity](#)

Speaking is the essence of the language. This skill must be well developed to have a successful conversation and communicate the message to the listeners. There are various strategies that can be used to improve a person's fluency, accuracy, and complexity.

In this section, we will explore these strategies through various group and individual activities. We will work on fluency building, improving accuracy, organizing your thoughts, developing varied language structures, shaping your language according to the listeners, and expanding your vocabulary. The group activities can be used with a large or small group of learners while the individual activities can be used for individual, self-directed learning or as homework activities.

Developing Fluency

Building Natural Fluency

Fluency develops through consistent practice and refinement. This section focuses on structured activities that help speakers refine their message, practice speaking in engaging contexts, and analyze effective speech patterns to build natural fluency in communication.

👥 2-2 Discussion

Instructions: Read the questions and discuss them with your classmates. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal.

- Do you consider yourself an effective communicator? Why or why not?

- Share examples of times when you found it easy or difficult to communicate your ideas clearly.

- Discuss the difference between being detailed and being clear. How can too much detail impact understanding?

- Reflect on the role of pauses and hesitations in communication. How can they affect the listener's perception?

- How do you handle situations when you feel misunderstood? What strategies do you use to clarify your points?

👥 👤 2-3 Successive speaking (4/3/2)

Instructions: Select some topic of interest (e.g., a general speaking prompt [*see activity 2-7 for topic ideas*], an article, a movie, a concept in your field, or a common job interview question).

- Outline (Optional): Spend 1 minute outlining key points.

- **4-Minute Talk:** Set a timer for 4 minutes and deliver your talk to a partner or record your speech using the recorder below [add h5p recorder] (continue despite mistakes).

- **3-Minute Talk:** Set a timer for 3 minutes and repeat your talk on the same topic.

- **2-Minute Talk:** Set a timer for 2 minutes and repeat your talk again on the same topic.

- **Goal**: Notice and reflect on improvements in fluency with each round.

👥 2-4 Communicative speech practice

Instructions: Use the picture prompts for speaking practice with your partner by using these questions:

- Describe what you see in this picture.

- What do you think this picture represents?

- What comes to your mind when you look at this picture?

- What is your opinion about this issue?

- What is the message that the photographer is trying to send?

Image Source: [Nicole Michalou via Pexels](#)

Image Source: [Arthur Krijgsman via Pexels](#)

Image Source: [Anna Shvets via Pexels](#)

👤 2-5 Autonomous fluency buildup

Instructions: Follow the steps below following a video of your interest. The goal of this activity is to notice and observe pauses and emphasis in a person's speech.

- **Choose a video**: Select a video that interests you (e.g., Friends TV series, The Office for interpersonal; TED talks for presentational). You can start with the video example that we provided below, mark the pauses, then check the answer key.

- **Get the transcript**: Copy and paste the transcript text into a text editor (e.g., Microsoft Word).

- **Mark pauses**: Watch the video, inserting "/" for short pauses and "//" for long pauses in your transcript.

- **Practice phrases:**

◦ Say the first phrase 5 times without pauses, emphasizing the speaker's emphasis.

◦ Say the first and second phrase together 3 times, pausing only between phrases (e.g., "When you see a diagram like this, "//").

- **Build up:**
  ◦ Continue adding one phrase at a time.

  ◦ Listen to the video as needed, a few sentences at a time.

  ◦ Practice until you can say an entire paragraph fluently, pausing only where the speaker paused.

Sample Video

Mark the pauses in the video below,[1] then click to see our answer. The video is 10 minutes long, so you can start with the first 2 minutes to avoid fatigue. Complete the remainder of the video at your leisure.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* [*https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=430#oembed-1*](https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=430#oembed-1)

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1. Treasure, J. [TED]. (2014). How to speak so that people want to listen [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved August 14, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elho2S0ZahI

Answer key and transcript:

The human voice: // It's the instrument we all play. // It's the most powerful sound in the world, / probably.// It's the only one that can start a war / or say / "I love you." // And yet / many people have the experience that when they speak, / people don't listen to them. // And why is that? / How can we speak powerfully / to make change / in the world? //

00:24

What I'd like to suggest, / there are a number of habits that we need to move away from.// I've assembled for your / pleasure here seven deadly sins of speaking. / I'm not pretending this is an exhaustive list, / but / these seven, I think, are pretty large / habits that we can all fall into. /

00:40

First, // gossip. // Speaking ill of somebody who's not present. // Not a nice habit, / and we know perfectly well the person gossiping, / five minutes later, / will be gossiping / about us. //

00:53

Second, / judging. // We know people who / are like this in conversation, / and it's very hard to listen to somebody / if / you know that you're being judged / and found wanting / at the same time. //

01:03

Third, negativity. // You can fall into this. / My mother, / in the last years of her life, / became very very negative, / and it's hard to listen. // I remember one day, / I said to her, // "It's October 1 today," and she said, "I know, isn't it dreadful?" //

01:16

　　　(Laughter)

01:18

It's hard to listen when somebody's that negative. //

01:21

　　　(Laughter)

It's hard to listen when somebody's that negative. //

01:22

And another form of negativity, / complaining. // Well, this is the national / art of the U.K. // It's our national sport. / We complain about the weather, / about sport, / about politics, /

about everything, / but actually, / complaining is viral misery. // It's not spreading sunshine and lightness in the world. //

01:39

Excuses. //

01:41

We've all / met this guy. Maybe / we've all been this guy. / Some people / have a blamethrower. // They just / pass it on to everybody else and don't take responsibility for their actions, /and again, / hard to listen to somebody who is being like that. //

01:54

Penultimate, / the sixth of the seven, // embroidery, // exaggeration. // It demeans our language, actually, sometimes. / For example, if I see something that really is awesome, / what do I call it? //

02:06

(Laughter)

02:09

And then, of course, this exaggeration becomes lying, / out and out lying, / and we don't want to listen to people we know are lying to us. //

02:15

And finally, // dogmatism. // The confusion of facts / with opinions. / When those two things get conflated, / you're listening into the wind. You know, somebody is bombarding you with their opinions as if they were true. / It's difficult to listen / to that. //

02:32

So here they are, // seven // deadly sins of speaking. / These are things / I think / we need to avoid. // But is there a positive / way to think about this? // Yes, there is. // I'd like to suggest that there are four really powerful / cornerstones, foundations, / that we can stand on / if we want our speech / to be powerful / and to make change in the world. // Fortunately, these things spell a word. // The word is "hail," / and it has a great definition / as well. I'm not talking about the stuff that falls from the sky and hits you on the head. // I'm talking about this definition, to / greet or acclaim enthusiastically, which is how I think our words will be received // if we stand on these four things.

03:10 (There is not a pause here.)

So what do they stand for? // See if you can guess. // The H, // honesty, / of course, / being true in what you say, being straight and clear. / The A is authenticity, / just / being yourself.

/ A friend of mine described it as standing in your own truth, / which I think is a lovely way to put it. / The I is integrity, / being your word, actually doing what you say, / and being somebody people can trust. // And the L // is love. // I don't mean romantic love, // but I do mean wishing people well, // for two reasons. First of all, I think / absolute honesty may not be what we want. I mean, my goodness, you look ugly this morning. // Hmm. Perhaps // that's not necessary. // Tempered with love, of course, honesty is a great thing. / But also, / if you're really wishing somebody well, / it's very hard to judge them at the same time. // I'm not even sure you can do those two things / simultaneously. // So hail. //

04:08

Also, now that's what you say, and it's like the old song, it is what you say, it's also / the way that you say it. // You have an amazing toolbox. This instrument is incredible, / and yet this is a toolbox that very few people have ever opened. / I'd like to have a little rummage in there / with you now and just pull a few tools out that you might like to take away and play with, / which will increase the power of your speaking. //

04:29

Register, for example. / Now, falsetto register may not be very useful / most of the time, / but / there's a register in between. I'm not going to get very technical about this for any of you who are voice coaches. / You can locate your voice, however. / So if I talk up here in my nose, you can hear the difference. If I go down here in my throat, which is where / most of us speak from most of the time. // But / if you want weight, / you need to go down here to the chest. / You hear the difference? // We vote for politicians // with lower voices, // it's true, // because we associate depth // with power // and with authority. // That's register. //

05:07

Then we have timbre. // It's the / the way your voice feels. / Again, the research shows that we prefer voices which are rich, / smooth, / warm, / like hot chocolate. // Well if that's not you, // that's not the end of the world, / because you can train. // Go get a voice coach. // And there are amazing things you can do with breathing, with posture, / and with exercises / to improve the timbre of your voice. //

05:30

Then prosody. I love prosody. This is the sing-song, the meta-language / that we use in order to impart meaning. It's root one for meaning / in conversation. / People who speak all on one / note are really quite hard to listen to / if they don't have any prosody at all. / That's where the word / "monotonic" / comes from, or monotonous, monotone. // Also, we have / repetitive prosody now coming in, // where every sentence ends as if it were a question // when it's actually not a question, it's a statement. //

06:00

(Laughter)

06:02

And if you repeat that one, it's actually restricting your ability to communicate through prosody, which I think is a shame, / so let's try and break that habit. //

06:12

Pace. /

06:13

I can get very excited by saying something really quickly, / or / I can slow right down / to emphasize, / and at the end of that, of course, is our old friend / silence. // There's nothing wrong with a bit of silence // in a talk, is there? // We don't have to fill it with ums / and ahs. / It can be very powerful. //

06:35

Of course, pitch / often goes along with pace to indicate arousal, but you can do it just with pitch. // Where did you leave my keys? // (Higher pitch) Where did you leave my keys?! // So, slightly different / meaning in those two deliveries. //

06:47

And finally, volume. // (Loud) I can get really excited // by using volume. Sorry about that, if I startled anybody. // Or, I can have you really pay attention by getting very quiet. // Some people broadcast the whole time. Try not to do that. / That's called sodcasting, //

07:05

(Laughter)

07:06

Imposing your sound on people around you / carelessly / and inconsiderately. Not nice. //

07:12

Of course, / where this all comes into play most of all / is when you've got something really important to do. It might be standing on a stage / like this / and giving a talk to people. / It might be proposing marriage, // asking for a raise, // a wedding speech. Whatever it is, // if it's really important, you owe it to yourself // to look at this / toolbox / and the engine / that it's going to work on, and no engine works well without being warmed up. // Warm up your voice. //

07:38

Actually, // let me show you how to do that. Would you all like to stand up / for a moment? // I'm going to show you the six vocal warm-up exercises / that I do / before every talk I ever do. // Any time you're going to talk to anybody important, / do these. // First, arms up, // deep breath in, / and and sigh out, ahhhhh, like that. / One more time. // Ahhhh, very good. / Now we're going to warm up our lips, and we're going to go Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba, Ba. Very good. / And now, brrrrrrrrrr, just like when you were a kid. / Brrrr. / Now your lips should be coming alive. / We're going to do the tongue next / with exaggerated / la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la. / Beautiful. You're getting really good at this. And then, roll an R. / Rrrrrrr. / That's like champagne for the tongue. // Finally, / and if I can only do one, // the pros call this the siren. / It's really good. / It starts with "we" and goes to "aw." The "we" is high, the "aw" is low. So you go, / weeeaawww, weeeaawww. /

08:46

Fantastic. Give yourselves a round of applause. Take a seat, thank you. //

08:49

(Applause)

08:51

Next time you speak, // do those / in advance.

08:53 (There is not a pause here.)

Now let me just put this in context to close. // This is a serious point here. // This is / where we are now, right? We speak not very well / into people who simply aren't listening in an environment that's all about noise and bad acoustics. I have / talked about that on this stage in different / phases. / What would the world be like // if we were speaking powerfully // to people who were listening consciously // in environments which were actually fit for purpose? // Or to make that a bit larger, // what would the world be like / if we were creating sound consciously // and consuming sound consciously / and designing all our environments / consciously for sound? / That would be a world that does sound beautiful, // and one where understanding // would be the norm, / and that / is an idea worth spreading. //

09:40

Thank you.

09:41

(Applause)

Organizing Your Thoughts

One key to fluency is the ability to think and organize speech in real time, whether responding spontaneously or delivering a structured message. Even when the speaker is using their native language, in order to sound fluent and easy to understand, it's important for the speaker to be able to structure their ideas quickly and logically. This section focuses on developing fluency through the ability to organize ideas quickly, practice through engaging conversation topics, and structure concise yet impactful speech.

🧠 Thinking on Your Feet: Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking involves delivering a speech without prior preparation. The MEET Acronym is an effective approach that allows the speaker to organize and present their ideas in a manner that is easy to follow.

- **M**ain Idea

- **E**xample/Explanation

- **E**xample/Explanation

- **T**akeaway

This method helps structure thoughts quickly, ensuring clear and engaging communication.

👥 👤 2-6 Impromptu Speaking Activity

Instructions: Read the questions and discuss them with your classmates. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal.

The table below provides several ideas for prompts on general topics that you can use to practice impromptu speaking focused on developing certain language functions. Language functions are the purposes for using language, such as describing, comparing, or hypothesizing, each requiring different language skills and structures.

Prompts for Impromptu Speaking

Functions	Sample Prompts on General Topics
• Convey abstract and complex ideas	• Some people believe that graduate students should not have any grades. How else could grad students be motivated to study?
• Explore hypotheses and alternative possibilities	• If you were the president of your country, what would you do for students? • Small cities are often thought to be boring. What could be done to make them more entertaining for residents?
• Express and defend opinions • Explain in detail • Describe in detail • Narrate fully	• Some people believe that online learning does not offer the same quality of learning as the in-person learning experience. Do you agree or disagree? Why? • Some people believe that wearing face masks can interfere with speech intelligibility. Argue for or against this opinion. • Some people think that studying in a foreign country is more challenging than studying in their home country. Do you agree or disagree? Why? • Some people believe that watching TV can harm your eyesight. Do you agree or disagree? Why? • Some advisors believe that international students should live in the dorms their first year instead of an apartment so that they can meet more American students. Argue for or against this opinion.
• Construct an argument • Explain in detail • Describe in detail • Narrate fully	• A new university is often thought to be hard to get acclimated to. What could be done to make it more welcoming to new international students? • What do you think could be done to motivate people to go outside more? • What do you think could be done to motivate people to dedicate more time for self-care? • Some people believe that children should not spend time indoors but should focus on having fun with friends outdoors. Argue for or against this opinion. • What qualities are professors looking for when accepting new students? Why are these qualities important? • Some people believe that private companies should provide higher salaries for their employees. Do you agree or not? Support your argument. • What measures could be taken to make schools safe?

Functions	Sample Prompts on General Topics
• Compare and contrast	What are some advantages and disadvantages of… • Being a teacher • Living overseas • Learning a new language (in a foreign country) • Attending a live concert vs TV • Cinema vs a TV movie • Driving a car in a big city • Living near the beach • Living in the village or a big city • Teaching small and large classes • Being famous
• Express opinion	• Why do you think some people buy cheaper brands of products? • Which do you think is a safer way to travel, by airplane or by car? Why? • Which do you think is more dangerous, a tornado or a tsunami? Why?
• Explain/narrate	• Why might it be difficult for some people to maintain a healthy diet? • Why may it be difficult for some people to go back to school after being away from school a long time? • What are some of the best and the worst aspects of being a teacher?

2-7 Conversation topics for advanced learners

Instructions: Read the questions and discuss them with your classmates. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal. If you are not familiar with the words, look them up in a dictionary.

Consumerism

• What is Consumerism?
• What are the positive and negative effects of consumerism?
• Did previous generations consume as much?
• Should people be encouraged to consume less? Why? How?

Entrepreneurship

• What is Entrepreneurship?

- If you could start your own business, what kind of business would you start? Why?
- Is entrepreneurship a popular dream in your country? Why or why not?
- Is it better to be a boss or employee? Why?

Elevator speech

- What is an Elevator speech?
- What is the goal of the Elevator speech?
- Have you ever had a chance to pitch your ideas?

Misbehavior & parenting

- What type of child were you? Were you a naughty child? Quiet child? Clever child?
- Would you consider yourself a troublemaker as a teenager? Why or why not?
- Have you heard the phrase "helicopter parent?" What do you think about that concept?
- What do you think about the phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child?"

Service

- What is considered "service" in the academic world?
- What are some common types of service positions?
- Should these positions be paid?

Being Concise and Impactful

In academic and professional settings, delivering a clear and compelling message in a short amount of time is a valuable skill. Whether introducing yourself, summarizing research, or making a strong first impression, brevity and precision matter. This section explores how to further improve your fluency by communicating key ideas effectively with limited time, focusing on techniques for crafting concise and impactful elevator pitches.

♔ Elevator Pitches

An **elevator pitch** is a concise introduction, ideally under a minute, that explains who you are, your expertise, and what you're working on. It should be clear, engaging, and tailored to your listeners. Practicing your elevator pitch can help you become a more concise, clear, fluent, and confident communicator. Ideally, your elevator pitch answers the following questions:[2]

- Who are you? Make it personal—tell a story.

- Why is this research/project important? What problem are you trying to solve? Providing this insight at the beginning of an elevator pitch is often referred to as a "hook." Think about connecting your message to what they care about. Often you can do this by posing a question or stating a problem.

- What makes your research/project/approach unique? Avoid acronyms or jargon your listener may not know or understand. Keep it high-level.

- What are the short-term or long-term benefits of this research? What happens if you succeed? Think of the "so what?" rather than focusing exclusively on the "what" of your research."

If you are struggling to present your speech in 1 minute, using the 2-3 Successive Speaking (4/3/2) activity approach can help you become more fluent and concise.

For more details and examples of Elevator Speech videos, visit the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine's [Stem Cell Elevator Pitch Challenge](#)

♔ 2-8 Elevator pitch activity

Instructions: Imagine you're in an elevator with someone you've never met before. You have 1 minute to passionately explain one of the following:

- A captivating topic that interests you

- A recent article or news story

---

2. Created based on materials from https://www.pdhub.org/

- A compelling concept from your field

- A common job interview question

> Write down an **outline** for your speech and **practice** with a partner. Your goal is to be concise, spark your conversation partner's curiosity, and leave a lasting impression.

Improving Accuracy

Practicing Pronunciation

Speaking accurately involves using correct pronunciation, grammar, and phrasing to ensure clear communication. For learners who struggle with pronunciation, focusing on sound clarity, thought groups, stress, prominence, and intonation can make a significant difference. If pronunciation is a key challenge, refer to the **Pronunciation** chapter of this book for detailed explanations of each concept and practice exercises to improve accuracy and clarity in spoken English. Below, we provide one example of a general pronunciation-focused activity that can be adapted to focus on different areas of pronunciation.

👥 2-9 Pronunciation feedback circles

Instructions: In this activity, you will practice speaking in small groups and receive targeted feedback on different aspects of pronunciation, as directed by your instructor. The steps for this activity are outlined below:

1. **Form Small Groups** – Work in groups of 3–4.
2. **Choose a Focus** – Each round, focus on one aspect of pronunciation (e.g., sounds, word stress, prominence, intonation), as explained by your instructor.
3. **Take Turns Speaking** – Read a short passage or say a prepared sentence.
4. **Give and Receive Feedback** – Group members provide one piece of constructive feedback based on the chosen focus.
5. **Try Again** – Apply the feedback and repeat the sentence.
6. **Rotate** – Rotate roles so each person gets a chance to focus on different aspects of pronunciation.

🧠 Additional Pronunciation Activities

- For additional ideas, games, and discussions on the topic of pronunciation, check out Marsha Chan's [Professional Development blog,](#) which covers tons of speaking & pronunciation activities.

Improving Grammar/Phrasing

In terms of grammar and phrasing, learners should focus on structuring sentences correctly, using appropriate verb tenses, and avoiding common errors like subject-verb agreement mistakes, expressing plural, omitting, or overusing articles. Students are often unaware of some mistakes that are impacting their accuracy. Practicing self-monitoring, analyzing your own speech to notice errors, and engaging in activities that reinforce accurate language use can help. The activity below describes an activity for awareness raising that can help with this issue.

👤 2-10 Analyze2Imitate – Grammar

Instructions: The first step in improving your spoken English grammar is to increase your ability to hear errors as errors. One way you can develop this ability is the following:

1. **Select** a short [TED talk](#) or podcast from Scientific American's "Science, Quickly" that you find interesting.
2. Under the TED talk video, click the "Read Transcript" button, then **copy** and **paste** into a Microsoft Word the part of the **transcript** text you find interesting.
3. **Record yourself** reading the transcript aloud (perhaps using your phone, or a tool like the [Online Voice Recorder from VirtualSpeech](#)) as naturally as possible, pretending you really are giving the talk.
4. **Highlight** in different colors all potential locations of the **grammar** error types you find difficult. (e.g., Highlight all verbs in your transcript in green if you know you have trouble with verb tenses and/or subject/verb agreement. Highlight all plural nouns in your transcript in yellow if you tend to say things like "two factor_." Highlight all articles—"a" and "an" and "the"—in orange if you know you tend to make article mistakes.)
   Example:
   "Unless we do something to prevent it, over the next 40 years we're facing an epidemic of neurologic diseases on a global scale. A cheery thought. On this map, every country that's colored blue has more than 20 percent of its population over the age of 65. This is the world we live in." (Gregory Petsko: "The coming neurological epidemic," TED)
5. For each highlighter color you used, **listen carefully** to your recording one time, paying close

attention to **what you actually said** for the words highlighted in that color vs. what the transcript indicates you ought to have said. **Mark in bold** any highlighted words on your transcript **for which you made an error.**

6. **Rerecord yourself** giving the talk one more time, paying particular attention to any words marked in bold on your transcript (but don't worry about listening to/checking this second recording again unless you want to).

👤 2-11 Analyze2Imitate – Phrasing

Instructions: Similar to the grammar activity above, this activity will help you improve your spoken English phrasing (a.k.a. collocation). The first step to improving is to increase your ability to hear errors as errors. One way you can develop this ability is the following:

1. **Select** a short [TED talk](#) or podcast from Scientific American's "Science, Quickly" that you find interesting.
2. Under the TED talk video, click the "Read Transcript" button, then **copy** and **paste** into a Microsoft Word the part of the **transcript** text you find interesting.
3. **Record yourself** reading the transcript aloud (perhaps using your phone, or a tool like the [Online Voice Recorder from VirtualSpeech](#)) as naturally as possible, pretending you really are giving the talk.
4. **Highlight** in different colors all potential locations of the types of **phrasing/ collocations** you find difficult. (e.g., Highlight all verb + noun objects in your transcript in green if you often don't know what verb to use with particular nouns. On a second copy of your transcript, highlight all noun-preposition-noun or just preposition-noun combinations in your transcript in yellow if you often don't know what preposition to use with particular nouns.)
   Examples:

   verb + noun collocations: "Unless we do something to prevent it, over the next 40 years we're facing an epidemic of neurologic diseases on a global scale. A cheery thought. On this map, every country that's colored blue has more than 20 percent of its population over the age of 65. This is the world we live in."

   (noun-)preposition-noun collocations: "Unless we do something to prevent it, over the next 40 years we're facing an epidemic of neurologic diseases on a global scale. A cheery thought. On this map, every country that's colored blue has more than 20 percent of its population over the age of 65. This is the world we live in."

5. For each highlighter color you used, **listen carefully** to your recording one time, paying close attention to **what you actually said** for the phrases highlighted in that color vs. what

the transcript indicates you ought to have said. **Mark in bold** any highlighted words on your transcript **for which you made an error.**

6. **Rerecord yourself** giving the talk one more time, paying particular attention to any phrases marked in bold on your transcript (but don't worry about listening to/checking this second recording again unless you want to).

👥 2-12 Role Play

Instructions: Imagine yourself in a specific daily life situation that involves communication. The prompt describes the situation and what you are expected to do in that situation. Assign roles with your classmates, initiate the conversation, and explain the situation. Practice your speaking, paying particular attention to any grammar issues that you identified in the previous activity.

Role Play Scenarios

Situation	Task
You are at a school board meeting and the board members are discussing the problems with hunger for students.	Express your concerns about student hunger and what might be causing it. Propose ideas to deal with this issue.
You and your classmate are planning a trip for spring break. They want to go to the mountains, but you want to go to the beach.	Try to convince your classmate that going to the beach is a better idea.
You missed an important exam and have made an appointment with the teacher/professor.	Explain what happened and try to arrange for a make-up exam.
You borrowed a friend's car and had a slight accident.	Call your friend, explain what happened, describe the damage, and offer a solution.
You want to go to an online conference, but your PI partner wants to attend an in-person conference.	Try to convince your classmate to attend the online conference.
You and your friend are discussing the benefits and drawbacks of living in New York. They believe that it's better to move to California.	Try to convince your friend that living in New York is a better option.
You are in Chicago. You missed your plane to Washington, D.C.	Ask the person behind the counter three or four questions to find out what you need to do to get to Washington, D.C. quickly.

Situation	Task
Your friend asks you about your favorite meals from your country and your favorite meal in the USA.	Tell them what your favorite dish is, how it is prepared, and when it is served.
You bought new clothes from Kohl's 6 months ago, but you just tried them on, and they wouldn't fit. You want to return the clothes and have the receipt, but you are not sure about the policy regarding the date of purchase.	Talk to the store manager, explain the situation and ask for a refund.
You are looking for a new apartment and you need to ask for details about the contract.	Call the landlord and ask them about the amount of rent, what is included in the lease, apartment location, etc.
You are interested in enrolling in a grant-writing course, but you are not sure whether it will be too time-consuming, and it would best fit your needs as a researcher.	Talk to the professor who teaches this course. Ask them to provide you with details about the course syllabus, time-commitment and benefits.

2-13 Language Practice with General Topics

Instructions:

1. Go to https://www.esl-lab.com/ and look under Listening Activities.

2. Select from any of the levels, Easy, Intermediate, Difficult, Academic Listening, English Culture.

3. Within each level, choose a topic, e.g. Intermediate: College Roommates

4. Go through the pre-listening exercise and idioms as a chat and address any other vocabulary items that might be unknown.

5. Then, role-play a speaking prompt for the Post-Listening Exercise.

6. After that, you can extend to the prompt from the Online Investigation.

7. You can use the same technique as homework. Self-record the answers, listen back to your recordings, and notice potential mistakes or room for improvement.

Language Complexity

Developing Varied Language Structures

This section explores how to progressively develop language functions, from describing and comparing to hypothesizing and analyzing, with a focus on structuring information effectively for academic and professional contexts.

Language Functions

It is important to recognize the language functions and how each of those functions differs. For example, describing requires a detailed response and the ability to use words that paint a picture, and elaborations that give a comprehensive overview of the topic. On the other hand, to compare and contrast requires a response that shows understanding of both sides while a hypothesis requires some imagination.

For more details about language functions, we recommend the following articles:

Cotos, E., & Chung, Y. R. (2019). Functional language in curriculum genres: Implications for testing international teaching assistants. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 41,* 100766. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2019.06.009

Cotos, E., & Chung, Y. R. (2018). Domain description: Validating the interpretation of the TOEFL iBT® speaking scores for international teaching assistant screening and certification purposes. *ETS Research Report Series,* (1), 1-24. doi:10.1002/ets2.12233

Signal Words & Vocabulary

With each function, there are words that you would use, e.g. signal words or specific types of vocabulary. For example, compare and contrast would need words like: On one hand, on the other hand, a list or sequence would require: First, Next, Then, and a hypothesis would include: If I were, could… You can go back to the prompt example above and illustrate by building up the level of difficulty in questions: same topic, different language functions, different approaches to response.

Sample signal words and grammatical functions

Functions	Sample signal words and grammatical functions
List	• First, second, third • First, next, finally • To begin/start with, afterward, eventually
Narrate	• Adjectives and adverbs • Tenses • Expressions: Now, in the future, in the past, meanwhile, prior to, before, after, next
Describe	• Adjectives and adverbs • Prepositions • Expressions: appears to be, defined as, identifies as, to illustrate, for example, for instance, because, as a result, in summary, accordingly
Compare and contrast	• Similarities: Also, In addition, as well as, likewise, at the same time, • Contrast: On the other hand, on the contrary, the flip side, although, however, in contrast, unlike, nevertheless
Explain	• Combination of the above, e.g. • List: First, next, then • Compare and contrast: Also, and vs but, on the other hand
Hypothesize	• Combination of the above, e.g. • Expression: If I were, perhaps if, modals (could, would, should), imagine that, • Explain: Also, furthermore, however, therefore, etc.

2-14 Progressive development of language functions

Instructions: Read the prompts below and practice with a partner.

Functions	Sample prompt
List	• Tell me three qualities you would look for in a roommate.

Functions	Sample prompt
Narrate	• Do you have a roommate? What has been your experience living in a new country with a roommate?
Describe	• What are three qualities that you would look for in a roommate, and why are they important?
Compare and contrast	• How do people find roommates in your country? How is it similar or different from finding roommates in the US?
Explain	• Which would you prefer? A roommate with the same culture or a roommate with a different culture? Why?
Hypothesize	• If you could find a perfect roommate, what would that person be like?

Presentation Sequence for Charts and Graphs

When presenting information in the form of charts and graphs, generally a specific sequence should be followed to facilitate understanding. This sequence is as follows:

- introduction,
- orientation,
- details to notice, and
- interpretation.

The table below provides a closer description of these sequences, as well as, phrases that can be used at each presentation stage.

Sequence	Definition
Introduction	At the beginning of each slide, the presenter introduces what is about to be presented. *Language examples:*

Sequence	Definition
	• Moving on to the results… • As discussed in the results sections, this bar illustrates the… • Let's take a look at this chart, which illustrates • This graph provides a visual representation of… • As you can see in this figure, we're examining • I'd like to draw your attention to this graph, which compares. • Here, we have a chart depicting
Orientation	The presenter familiarizes the audience with the chart or graph by drawing attention to each part such as the X/Y axes, bars, wedges, etc. and defining what they represent. *Language examples:* • At the bottom • …while the left side shows • The different colors/patterns on the bars represent… • The x-axis represents [variable], while the y-axis shows [variable]. • The size of each bubble indicates… • The data points on the scatter plot represent…
Details to notice	The presenter points out important data illustrated by the chart or graph. This might be high or low points, trends, etc. *Language examples:* • It should be noted that… • However, while…, it's important to acknowledge • As you can see on the slide… • It's worth mentioning that… • As you can see, the highest value is… • Notice the sharp rise/fall in… • The data peaks/reaches a plateau at. • There's a noticeable trend of… • From this, we can observe… • There's a clear difference between… • In contrast to [category A], [category B] shows. • While [category A] increased, [category B] decreased • Interestingly, … • Now, let's turn our attention to…
Interpretation	The presenter explains their interpretation of the data. This could include what the data means in a broader sense, actions that should be taken, etc.

Sequence	Definition
	Language examples: • Given the findings… • X is greater than Y • X correlates with Y • C has greater cost than D • C generates more income than D • Y makes D generate more income • X has no effect on C or D • These results indicate that… • The findings suggest that • It can be assumed that… • This might be due to… • Based on these findings, we can infer… • Therefore, we can see that… • In summary…

Example

Below is a sample bar chart followed by examples of the sequence in action.

Product Profitability

- **Introduction**: "Here we can see a bar graph illustrating the profitability of our three most popular product types in 2018."
- **Orientation**: "At the bottom, we have our three product types, laptops, monitors, and tablets, while the left shows prices in Canadian dollars. The blue bars represent revenues, the gray bars expenses, and the red bars profit."
- **Details to notice**: "It should be noted that laptop sales generated the most revenue. However, while monitors generated the least overall revenue, they generated the most profit due to their low production costs."
- **Interpretation**: "If we can find a way to decrease the cost of producing laptops or increase monitor sales, we stand to reap even higher profits."

👥 2-15 Practicing data presentation

Instructions: Use the bar graph and pie chart below and practice the sequence of presenting charts and graphs. If you have your own chart/table to interpret, share it with your partner and practice with your own slides.

Average hours per day spent in selected activities by age, 2023 annual averages

■ 15 to 24 years ■ 25 to 44 years ■ 45 to 64 years ■ 65 years and over
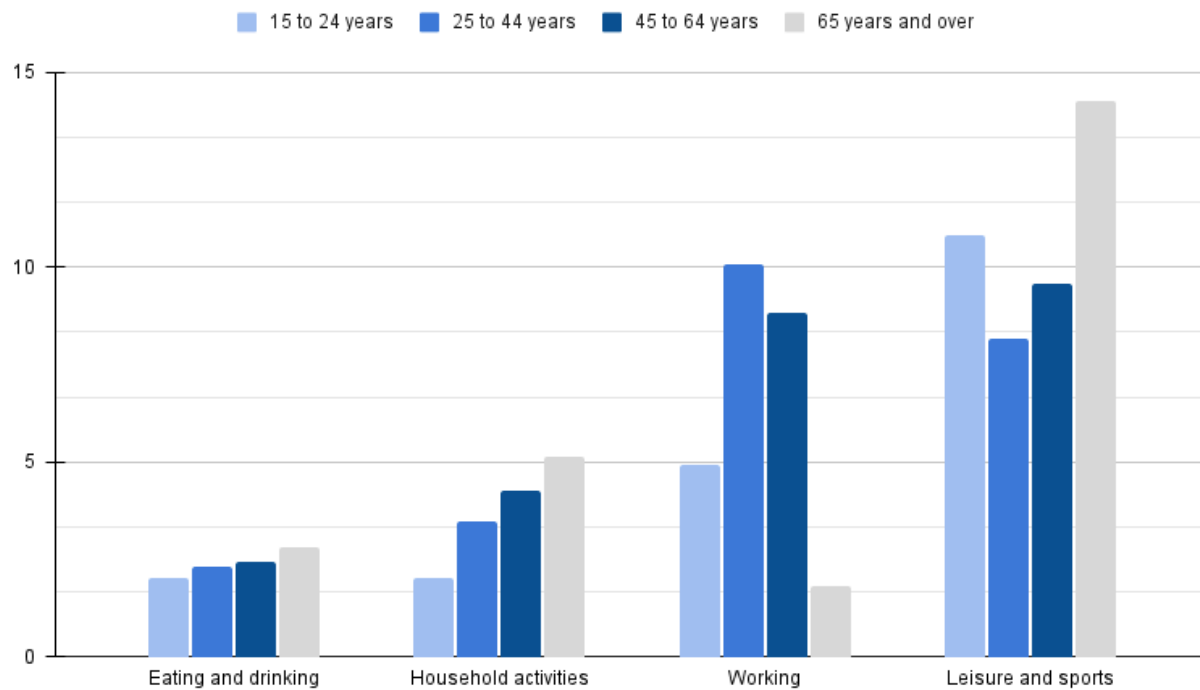
Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Average hours per day spent in selected activities by age"

M&M Color by Frequency, n=712

Brown
13.5%

Green
19.5%

Yellow
14.5%

Orange
18.7%

Red
15.2%

Blue
18.7%
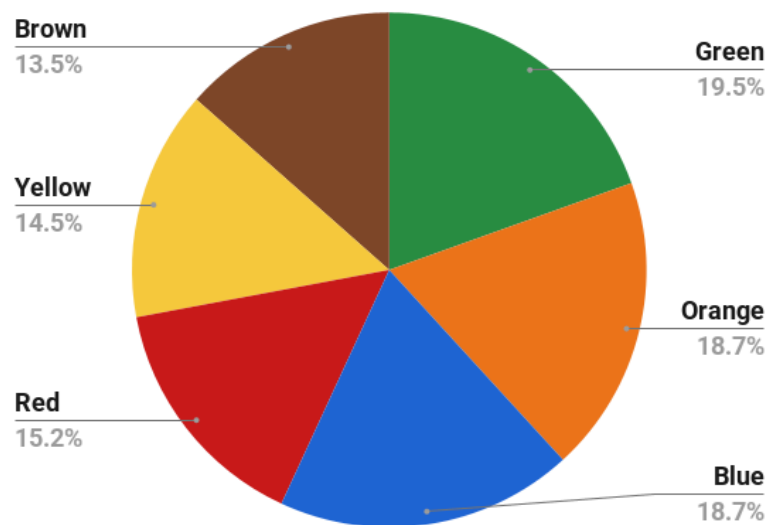
Source: Data taken from "Fun with M&Ms" by Chuck Powell, licensed CC BY SA 4.0.

Tailoring Your Language to Different Listeners

The language we use in everyday life changes based on our relationship with the people we communicate with, the context (formal/informal), cultural backgrounds, and familiarity with the topic. In this section, we will understand and practice how our language changes based on our listeners.

Strategies to understand & connect with your listeners

To ensure that people can understand your message effectively, you can use the following strategies:

Listener (Audience) analysis:

- Understand your speaking goal and consider your listeners' general background characteristics, such as age, educational background, work experience, and nationality.
- Assess their motivational background and assess their knowledge and interest levels in the topic.
- Consider their attitudes, beliefs, and values to make sure you are using cultural-appropriate language.

Make it engaging and relatable:

- Tell a story that would matter to your target listeners, capture interest, and clarify the purpose of your speech.
- Use a problem-solution-importance structure to highlight why the topic matters and why people should care.

The exercises below will help you understand and practice adjusting language complexity appropriately to different listeners.

2-16 Discussion

Instructions: Read the questions and discuss them with your classmates. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal.

1. How much do you consider your listeners during different contexts, such as teaching your classes, giving presentations in your graduate classes, presenting at a professional conference, or having an everyday conversation with a colleague?

2. How do you help your listeners:
   a. Want to listen
   b. Feel personally involved
   c. Process content
   d. View your speech as relevant?
3. How does your language change when talking to different listeners/audiences?

👥 2-17 One concept in 5 levels of difficulty

Instructions: In pairs or small groups, listen to one of the videos from the website below, where the speakers explain the same concept in 5 different levels of difficulty.

1. **Listen:** Take notes regarding the various ways in which the language is different at each level.
2. **Discuss:** Discuss your observations with your partner/group members.
3. **Practice**: Choose 2-3 different audience "levels" you might share your content with and then practice presenting one concept from your field.

Website: https://www.wired.com/video/series/5-levels

👥 2-18 Recognizing your listeners

Instructions: Choose two of the listeners below and your scenario. In pairs, talk about your scenario, tailoring your language to the first group of listeners, for example, children, and then talk about the same topic with the second group of listeners in mind, for example, parents.

Listeners:

- Children (age 6-10)
- Teenagers (age 13-18)
- College students
- Seniors (age 65+)
- Scientists or researchers
- Parents
- Farmers
- Postdocs

Scenarios:

- Talking about healthy food
- Giving a motivational speech
- Explaining what you do
- Explaining your research
- Convincing them to join a fitness class
- Presenting a book review
- Explaining what you do
- Explaining your research

Additional Activities

Scenario D: Li's challenge

🎬 Scenario Spotlight

This is Li's second month in an English-speaking country. He is a master's student in the Computer Science department, and while he is enjoying his academic conversations, he struggles to have a casual conversation with his colleagues. He feels like his English is not good enough, although his participation in the classroom is remarkable.

👥 🧑‍💼 2-18 Discussion

Instructions: Read Scenario D carefully. Think about the situation and discuss it with your classmates following the discussion prompts. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal.

- What issues has Li had?
- Why do you think this is happening?
- What are some possible explanations about their behavior?

(Hint) Think about:

- Informal speech
- Phrasal verbs
- Slang
- Cultural references
- Using **effective speaking strategies**

Scenario Resolution

In Scenario D, Li seems to be struggling with the differences found in academic and casual speech registers. This is likely due to Li's primary use of English being in academic settings up to this point. To improve, Li should increase his exposure to conversational English. This could be done by first observing casual conversations whether in person or through media and noting how it differs from academic discussions. Li could then start attending events where casual conversation is likely to occur and participate in said conversations. If available, Li could also participate in speaking groups and/or schedule speaking consultations through his university to practice conversation in a supportive, low-stakes environment.

Developing Small Talk Skills

Small talk is a casual conversation that helps make connections when meeting new people and fills awkward silences with friends, acquaintances, and colleagues, often involving light, non-controversial topics.

🧠 Small talk strategies

Small Talk Strategies

- Use Open-Ended Questions: Ask questions that encourage detailed responses (e.g., "What made you decide to become X?").
- Practice Active Listening: Pay attention, maintain eye contact, and use nonverbal cues.
- Minimize Distractions: Put away your phone to avoid disruptions.
- Show Sincere Interest: Embrace the experience and show enthusiasm.
- Ask for Information/Recommendations: Locals often enjoy sharing insider tips such as restaurants.

Topics

- Your location
- Shows, movies, plays
- Art
- Food, restaurants, cooking
- Hobbies

- Professional interests
- Sports
- Travel
- Weather
- Local favorites

Tips

- Follow up on responses to keep the conversation flowing.

Small Talk Scenario Examples

🎬 Scenario Spotlight: The coworkers

Greg and Hoon are coworkers in a business office. It is Monday morning, and Greg has come to Hoon's cubicle to initiate small talk.

Conversation 1 (What NOT to do!):

- Greg: How are you?
- Hoon: Fine, thanks.
- Greg: What did you do over the weekend?
- Hoon: Not much.
- Greg: What are your plans for this week?
- Hoon: Just work.

- Greg: Oh, okay. Well, talk to you later.
- Hoon: Yep. Bye!

Why is this a problem?

Hoon may not realize it, but his short answers are signaling to Greg that he does not want to talk. Furthermore, his answers give nothing for Greg to use to further the conversation. But what if Hoon wants to talk but just doesn't have much to say? Let's look at the next conversation to see what could be done instead.

Conversation 2 (Do THIS instead!):

- Greg: How are you?
- Hoon: I've been busy with work, but it's going well. How are you?
- Greg: I'm doing great! I had a nice Sunday at the park with my family. What did you do over the weekend?
- Hoon: I didn't do much, just watched TV.
- Greg: Oh? What shows did you watch?
- Hoon: It's called Midnight Mystery. Are you familiar with it?
- Greg: I can't say that I am. What's it about?
- Hoon: Well, it's about…

Why is this better?

While not giving substantially more detail than the previous conversation, Hoon is giving enough to avoid signaling that he does not want to talk and to enable Greg to further the conversation with follow-up questions. Naturally, giving more details would be even better.

🎬 Scenario Spotlight: Student-Teacher Interaction

Professor O'brien is Yisheng's major professor, and the two are having one of their regular meetings. Yisheng has noticed that other students seem to have a closer relationship with Professor O'brien, and he would like to develop such a relationship too.

Conversation 1 (Less effective):

- Professor O'brien: How are you?
- Yisheng: Fine, thanks.
- Professor O'brien: Did you have a good break?
- Yisheng: Yeah, I did some traveling with friends.
- Professor O'brien: Oh? Where did you go?
- Yisheng: We went to Chicago.
- Professor O'brien: I happen to be from Chicago. Did you have fun?
- Yisheng: Yeah. It was a good trip.
- Professor O'brien: Sounds good. Well, let's get to our agenda for today's meeting.
- Yisheng: Okay.

Why is this less effective?

While Yisheng is giving some information, it is just enough to keep the conversation going but not enough to make a connection with his major professor. But what if Yisheng is worried about asking something too personal? Well, let's look at the next conversation for some ideas.

Conversation 2 (Do THIS instead!):

- Professor O'brien: How are you?
- Yisheng: I'm doing well. How are you?
- Professor O'brien: Still recovering from the holidays! Did you have a good break?
- Yisheng: Yeah! I went to Chicago with some friends. What do you think of Chicago-style pizza?
- Professor O'brien: I love it! I'm originally from Chicago and periodically find myself missing it.
- Yisheng: Oh, I didn't know that. My friends and I went to Mario's for pizza. Are you familiar with it?
- Professor O'brien: Ah, good choice! I would also recommend Luigi's. Did you happen to notice if it's still around?
- Yisheng: Yeah! That was one of the other pizzerias my friends and I considered. If we go to Chicago again, we'll be sure to go there. What would you recommend we order?
- Professor O'brien: Well, Luigi's signature pizza is the Mushroom Supreme, so I always recommend that for first-time patrons.
- Yisheng: Thank you. I will keep that in mind!
- Professor O'brien: Excellent. Well, let's get to our agenda for today's meeting.

Why is this better?

The added detail and especially the several questions directed to Professor O'brien allow Yisheng a window into Professor O'brien's personality and background. This is important for building a closer relationship. Additionally, the topics of travel and restaurants are safe ones to explore.

👥 2-19 Small talk

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=434#h5p-32

Teacher's Corner

Important Considerations for Skill Development

Language Functions

If you are preparing students for an ESL/EFL exam, it's important to remember that we don't want to just "teach to the test". Instead, it is important to help the students **recognize the language functions and how each of those functions differ**. For example, *describing* requires a detailed response and the ability to use words that paint a picture, and elaborations that give a comprehensive overview of the topic. On the other hand, *to compare and contrast* requires a response that shows understanding of both sides while a *hypothesis* requires some imagination. The table below shows the sample prompts using the same topic with different language functions.

Functions	Sample prompt
List	• Tell me three qualities you would look for in a roommate.
Narrate	• Do you have a roommate? What has been your experience living in the US with a roommate?
Describe	• What are three qualities that you would look for in a roommate, and why are they important?
Compare and contrast	• How do people find roommates in your country? How is it similar or different from finding roommates in the US?

Functions	Sample prompt
Explain	• Which would you prefer? A roommate with the same culture or a roommate with a different culture? Why?
Hypothesize	• If you could find a perfect roommate, what would that person be like?

English for Teaching Purposes

If you are preparing **International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)** for an ESL exam focusing on the test takers' ability to use English for Teaching Purposes, it's important to show them how these functions connect to **their teaching strategies**.

One possible way to structure a lesson plan or one-on-one session (if you are a speaking consultant) is to focus on one type of language function. Using the same language function, work on the different components and move from general conversation topics to teaching skills to illustrate how those functions need to be the underlying principles.

The table below shows an example of how to move from general to specific for the "compare and contrast" function.

Steps and sample activities to move from general to specific contexts

Steps	Sample Activities
Define concepts	• Explain the difference between compare and contrast and what it means. For example, compare the similarities and contrast the differences. • Illustrate: Similarities between cats and dogs vs differences between cats and dogs
Focus on language functions	• Compare and contrast is a higher-level skill, so it will require a combination of different language functions, e.g. define, classify, explain, illustrate. • Illustrate by showing sample steps: • **Similarity statement**: There are similarities between cats and dogs. • **Explain**: They are both mammals and have four paws. Also, they are commonly domesticated as pets. • **Differences statement**: However, there are differences as well.

Steps	Sample Activities
	• **Classify**: Cats are considered to be part of the felidae family while dogs are from the canidae family.
Identify grammar and signal words	• Draw attention to the use of signal words commonly used in compare and contrast, e.g. *Also* vs *However*, *On one hand* & *on the other hand*, etc.
Practice in general context	• Use one sample prompt from the figure above to practice a conversation topic that requires a compare and contrast. For example: • How is studying in the USA similar or different from studying in your country?
Connect to teaching (assumes some other language functions have been covered; if not, be sure to review them)	• Ask students to think about how compare and contrast is used in their discipline. • Ask students how they could apply the previous steps into their teaching. • For example, teaching a concept about Chemical Reaction may include the following language functions: • Describe or Define followed by an Explain and/or Illustrate – What is a Chemical Reaction? Example: Cake-batter rising • Classify: What are the types of chemical reactions? • Compare and Contrast illustration about the characteristic changes, e.g. Endothermic and Exothermic reaction. • More Explain: why there are endo and exothermic reactions.
Practice in specific context	• Ask students to practice with a teaching topic from their discipline using an outline that fits the "compare and contrast" function. • During the initial role-play, practice the types of language functions. During the second role-play, put attention on signal words and expressions surrounding the topic and language functions.
Homework	• Assign homework: • Use the https://www.esl-lab.com/ or https://www.procon.org/ and identify one or two topics for self-practice. (See the two options in the next section.) • Ask students to prepare a TEACH outline from their recitation or undergraduate textbooks and practice the presentation.

🔓 Key Points

- Speaking proficiency encompasses fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Fluency is about smooth delivery, accuracy is about correct language use, and complexity involves using varied language.
- Effective speaking requires adapting language to the audience. Strategies include analyzing the audience and using storytelling techniques.

PART II. PRONUNCIATION ESSENTIALS

Clear pronunciation is fundamental to effective communication. When we speak, the way we produce the speech can be just as important as the words we choose.

Part II of this book focuses on pronunciation, covering several chapters exploring key elements of pronunciation, including segmentals (individual speech sounds), thought groups, word stress, prominence, and intonation. These essential components have been organized to help you understand how each contributes to natural, comprehensible speech.

Chapter 3. Segmentals

Segmentals: Overview

In this part, we will explore the learning process of English sounds for ESL/EFL learners. This chapter starts with a scenario illustrating common struggles that learners face to help you think and reflect on your own experiences. We will examine the importance of sounds – consonants and vowels – and explore activities to help you improve your perception and production of English sounds.

Scenario E: It Doesn't Sound "Light"

🎬 Scenario Spotlight

Mau Na has issues communicating with her colleagues. They often ask her to repeat and struggle to understand her speech. Her colleagues often misunderstand her when she uses words like "light" and "right," "lice" and "rice," or "late" and "rate." She's tried to be more conscious of these sounds, but the sound very similar to her and she is mixing them up. Mau Na is frustrated by her pronunciation difficulties, and she's unsure how to improve.

👥 3-1 Discussion

Instructions: Read Scenario E think, and discuss with your classmates.

- What issues have Mau Na had?
- Why do you think this is happening?
- What are some strategies for overcoming these pronunciation challenges?

The Importance of Speech Sounds

Undoubtedly, **vowels** and **consonants** (collectively known as **segmentals**) are at the heart of pronunciation teaching – they are the unavoidable building blocks of oral communication. In an intelligibility-based approach to pronunciation, this truth does not change. Being able to accurately pronounce the sounds of a language largely determines the degree of clarity a person will be able to communicate. However, this does not entail 100% accuracy. In fact, native listeners are quite adept at being able to piece together the meaning of words, phrases, and even sentences which contain a mispronunciation. In other words, the more a speaker's pronunciation parallels that of the listener's, the more the listener's mind is able to process these features automatically, instead of consciously. As a listener devotes more effort towards deciphering the form (in this case, the individual sounds), the less brainpower they have to invest in understanding the speaker's content, which is what we want to avoid!

The most important thing to remember when teaching or learning segmental features – in fact, with all pronunciation features – is that a great deal of it has to do with habit-building. It is quite easy to produce a segmental sound in isolation when it's the primary focus; it's another story to produce it consistently while devoting mental power towards developing content.

Thankfully, problems in mispronunciations are not random or chaotic. In fact, they can be highly predicted depending on the learner's L1. There are three common, over-arching problems that language learners can run into when learning the sounds (or **phones**) of a second language:

1. Learners frequently hear L2 phonemes as allophonic

   ◦ Japanese speakers can have difficulties hearing the difference between /ɹ/ and /l/ and Korean speakers can have difficulties with /f/ and /p/ because these languages categorize the sounds as allophones

2. L2 learners struggle to identify phonetically different L2 allophones as belonging to the same phoneme

   ◦ Many L2 English learners struggle to identify the General American **flap** [ɾ] found in words like "water" as an allophone of /t/ because its voicing renders it much more like /d/

3. Learners' pronunciation is strongly impact by repeated listening to a word's phonemic structure

Scenario Resolution

Mau Lin's difficulty with the "l" and "r" sounds is likely due to a lack of exposure to these sounds in her native language. Many languages do not distinguish between these sounds, or they pronounce them differently. As a result, English language learners may find it challenging to produce these sounds accurately. To improve, Mau Lin needs to work on her perception of these sounds, that is, hearing the difference between "l" and "r". She needs to understand how the sounds are pronounced, where the tongue is positioned in the mouth, and what distinguishes these sounds from the sounds in her native language.

Consonants

When learning the distinct consonant phonemes of North American English (NAE), there are three main dimensions for which they can be distinguished: **Voicing, Place of Articulation,** and **Manner of Articulation.**

Places and Manners of Articulation

Place of Articulation refers to *where* the sound is made in the mouth. In NAE, there are seven places of articulation:

- *Bilabial*
- *Labiodental*
- *Dental*
- *Alveolar*
- *Palatal*
- *Velar*
- *Glottal*

Manner of Articulation refers to *how* the sound is made. In NAE, there are six manners of articulation:

- *Stop*, or *plosive*
- *Fricative*
- *Affricate*
- *Nasal*
- *Approximants* (glide/liquid)

Table 4.1 Consonants classification

Manner	Voicing	Bilabial	Labiodental	Interdental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glotal
Stop	Voiceless	p	–	–	t	–	k	ʔ
Stop	Voiced	b	–	–	d	–	g	–
Fricative	Voiceless	–	f	θ	s	ʃ	–	h
Fricative	Voiced	–	v	ð	z	ʒ	–	–
Affricate	Voiceless	–	–	–	–	t ʃ	–	–
Affricate	Voiced	–	–	–	–	dʒ	–	–
Nasal	Voiced	m	–	–	n	–	ŋ	–
Lateral (Liquid)	Voiced	–	–	–	l	–	–	–
Rhotic (Liquid)	Voiced	–	–	–	–	r (ɹ]	–	–
Glide	Voiced	w	–	–	–	j	(w)	–

Activities

👥 3-2 Discussion

Instructions: Read the questions and discuss them with your classmates. If working alone, answer the questions in the form of an audio/video journal.

- How does your pronunciation affect your ability to communicate effectively?
- Can you share specific examples of how your pronunciation has helped or hindered your communication?
- Discuss the challenges you encounter when producing English sounds accurately. Are there particular sounds that are more difficult for you to produce? Why?
- What strategies do you use to improve your pronunciation? Have these strategies been effective? What other strategies are you interested in?

👥 🧑‍🦰 3-3 Listening Discrimination: Same or Different

Instructions: Listen to the words and guess whether they are the same or different.

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
>
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=31#h5p-34*

👥 🧑‍🦰 3-4 Listening Discrimination: Odd one Out

Instructions: Say the following words out loud. Highlight the word that does not belong based on its initial sound.

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
>
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=31#h5p-1*

🧑‍🦰 3-5 Practice Your Pronunciation

Instructions: Say the following words to receive feedback on your pronunciation.

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
>
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=31#h5p-2*

🧑‍🦰 3-6 Define the Manner of Articulation

Instructions: Drag the different manners of articulation to their correct place.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=31#h5p-3

Consonant Clusters

This next group of sounds can be quite challenging for certain L1 backgrounds. The simple explanation is that not every language "allows" consonant clusters like English does. Take, for example, the word *strengths*. The syllable structure for this word looks like CCCVCCCC (/str ɛ ŋkθs/). Now take a Japanese learner of English, who comes from a language that only allows syllables to be either V or CV. You can immediately notice the trouble this learner is going to have. The learner, unaccustomed to producing such syllables, is undoubtedly going to either add or delete certain sounds from the word *strengths* so that it fits with the rules of their L1.

Four Types of Segmental Pronunciation Errors

- **Addition** or Epenthesis
- **Deletion**
- **Distortion**
- **Substitution**

There are some who have tried to pin which of these errors causes the most problems to intelligibility, though it is highly understudied and the results are inconclusive. Preliminary findings suggest that segmental errors in stressed syllables cause more damage to intelligibility than those in unstressed, and that word-initial errors can also cause more damage, as it leads the listener on a wild goose chase for a word that was not intended.

Don't fret! There are plenty of common rules to these consonant clusters.

Rules for Consonant Clusters

Syllable-initial clusters can come in clusters of two or three, and there are certain conditions that must be met for them to occur.

Clusters of Two

One of two conditions must be met:

- Either the first sound is /s/, or,
- The second sound is an **approximant** (/l, r, w, y/)

Sometimes, however, both conditions can hold true, like in the word "swift" /swɪft/.

Clusters of Three

While more challenging than its counterpart, the conditions are much more strict:

- The first sound must be /s/
- The second sound must be a voiceless stop (/p, t, k/)
- The third sound must be an approximant (/l, r, w, y/)

Syllable-final clusters are a bit tougher to categorize. However, many clusters of two or three, and pretty much all clusters of four, are formed by adding a plural (/s, z/) or past tense (/t, d/) inflection to a word.
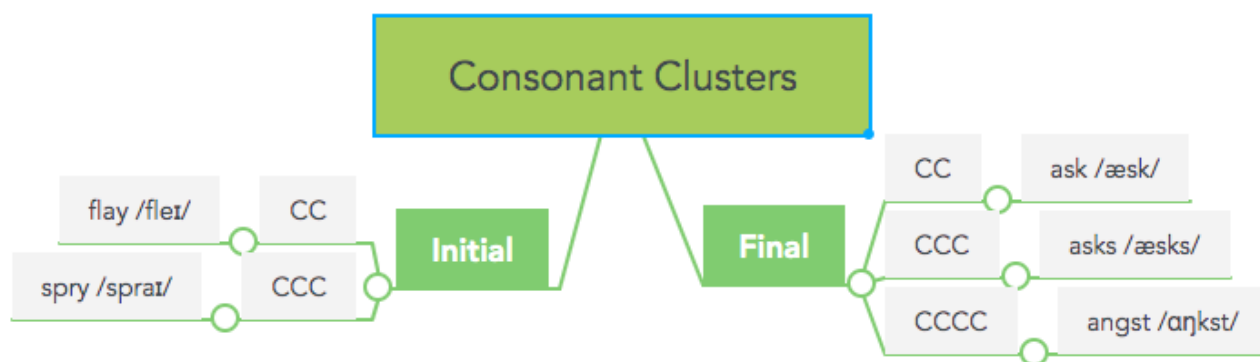
Initial and Final Consonant Clusters

Activities

3-7 Listening Discrimination: Same or Different

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=34#h5p-4

3-8 Identify the Consonant Clusters

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

*https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=34#h5p-5*

3-9 Find the Syllable Structure

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

*https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=34#h5p-6*

Vowels

It can be argued that, while consonants can provide difficulties, it is the vowels that can be the most damaging to a person's intelligibility. It is important to note, however, that **there are a few English *monophthong* (single vowel) distinctions which should *not* be a major concern, namely / ɑ /-/ ɔ /-/ɒ/**. While some North American and British dialects still distinguish the / ɑ / in "cot" from / ɔ / in "caught," other North American and British dialects use only one low-back vowel whose phonetic quality can vary widely, with some regions and individuals pronouncing it more like / ɑ /and some more like / ɔ /.
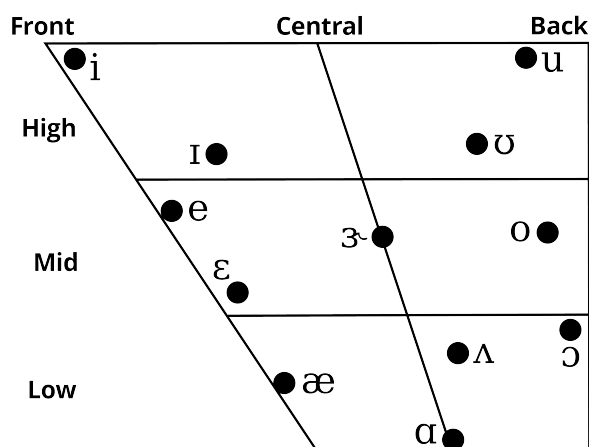
Vowel chart for American English (Source: "General American monophthong chart" by Mr Kebab via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA 4.0, adapted by Abbey Elder to add labels).
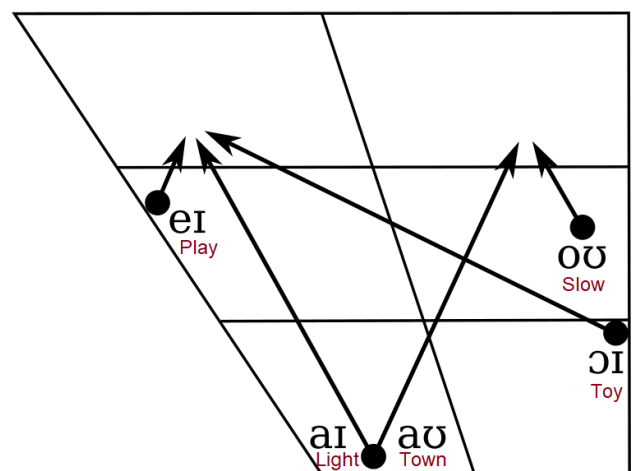
Diphthongs chart (Source: "General American diphthong chart" by "Mr Kebab via Wikimedia Commons" is used under CC BY SA 4.0 (Image adapted to add labels)

/ ɑ / − / ɔ / Distinction

- / ɑ / in "cot"

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
>
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=36#h5p-7*

- / ɔ / in "caught"

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> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=36#h5p-8*

Besides monophthongs, all L1 English dialects also include ***diphthongs*** (two adjacent vowels within a single syllable that are processed by listeners as a single vowel). However, only a few of these diphthongs are present across dialects, namely /aɪ/ in words like "tide," /aʊ/ in words like "doubt" and /ɔɪ/ in words like "toy." Therefore **L2 English speakers must acquire only these phonemic diphthongs to avoid compromised intelligibility.**

🧠 Major Diphthongs

- /aɪ/ in words like "tide"

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- /aʊ/ in words like "doubt"

> 📄° *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
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- /ɔɪ/ in words like "toy"

> 📄° *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=36#h5p-11*

Additional English diphthongs mark regional accent but are not phonemic, that is, reduced intelligibility is not likely to result if speakers use the pure vowel /o/ instead of the diphthong /oʊ/ when pronouncing words such as "toe" or the pure vowel /e/ instead of the diphthong /eɪ/ when pronouncing words like "day" (or vice versa). However, L2 speakers of English, particularly if their L1 includes only monophthongs, a.k.a. **pure vowels** (e.g., Spanish), frequently struggle to glide from the initial to final vowel of even the phonemic diphthongs of English.

Activities

👥 🎧 3-10 Listening Discrimination: Same or Different

Instructions: Listen carefully to the two words. Determine if the words are the same or different. Then write the word "same" or "different". Do not use capital letters or punctuation!

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=36#h5p-14*

👥 🎧 3-11 Listening Discrimination: Identify the Sound

Instructions: Please listen carefully and write the word you hear. Do not use capital letters or punctuation!

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=36#h5p-12*

🎧 3-12 Practice Your Pronunciation

Instructions: Say the following words to receive feedback on your pronunciation.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=36#h5p-13*

👥 3-13 Timed Rhyme Chain

Instructions: Divide students into pair, or teams. Set a timer and see how many rhyming words players can come up with in a given amount of time. The words below can be your starting point.

1. Bed
2. Cat
3. Sing
4. Green
5. More
6. Apple Pie

Additional Activities

Perception Training

Perception training is essential for effective pronunciation teaching. By developing the ability to distinguish sounds, learners can improve their production of words, too. In other words, "if you can't hear it, you cannot produce it."

An interactive online game developed by Dr. Ron Thomson titled "English Accent Coach" can help you improve the sounds perception. The game can be found on the following website: www.englishaccentcoach.com

Concentrated Practice Activity

Do you find it hard to learn the pronunciation of academic vocabulary you encounter in reading, but basically never hear pronounced?

This is because your mind naturally discards (forgets) the pronunciation of words you almost never hear, assuming this information is not important.

How can you avoid this?

The secret is to **artificially increase how often you hear these [problem] rarely pronounced words**, so your mind realizes "This word is important – I need to remember it!"

Step 1

Read aloud to your instructor/partner the glossary of an introductory undergraduate textbook in your field (or from Michigan State University's technical term lists).

For each technical term:

1. Pronounce it
2. Use it in a sentence you think you might actually need someday to say
3. Pronounce it again

Your instructor/partner will take notes on any terms you struggle to pronounce or pronounce incorrectly.

OR

Read aloud by yourself through the glossary of an introductory undergraduate textbook in your field (or from Michigan State University's technical term lists), making a list of all technical terms you do not know how to pronounce or struggle to pronounce fluently.

Alternatively, identify both general/technical vocabulary you struggle to pronounce confidently by reading aloud through conference or seminar presentation slides/posters (your own or someone else's).

Step 2

Search in YouGlish and/or Forvo for all terms you don't know how to pronounce.

Step 3 (Optional)

For any term that is three syllables or longer, do a Google search for "most common words ending with _____" and choose the result from "More Words" (e.g., Words ending in "ogical").

Read aloud through the resulting word list and notice how this word you didn't know how to pronounce is pronounced following the same word stress pattern as several other words you may know how to pronounce.

Step 4

Repeat the most common pronunciation in YouGlish and/or Forvo for each of your problem terms 5 times, carefully following the speaker's word stress, individual sound pronunciation, etc.

If you make a mistake, listen to the speaker's pronunciation again and then start over at 1 to count

your 5 repetitions. If the term is available in [YouGlish](), it is also likely greatly to benefit you to practice with 5 different videos repeating the entire thought group that includes the problem term, i.e., from pause to pause.

Practice Activity 5

Practice fluently giving a talk that logically includes as many of your problem terms as possible.

Backwards Building Activity

In situations in which a student struggles with multisyllable words, it can often be helpful to break the word into its constituent parts and have the student work backwards. Initially, this can be a bit counter-intuitive for the student, so it works best if the teacher builds each part for the student as a model. For example:

Word: Enthusiastic

Parts: En – thu – si – as – tic

Building backwards:

- Teacher: Say "tic"   Student: "tic"
- Teacher: Say, "astic"   Student: "astic"
- Teacher: Say, "siastic"   Student: "siastic"
- Teacher: Say, "thusiastic"   Student: "thusiastic"
- Teacher: Say, "enthusiastic"   Student: "enthusiastic"

If a student struggles with pronunciation at any point during the chain, the teacher can pause and focus on that portion. For example, if a student is fine up until "siastic" the teacher can focus on that section. It can even be broken down further if necessary, so if the student is struggling with "siastic" and the "sia" combination seems to be causing an issue, the teacher could have the student say, "iastic" and then move to "siastic". This can be especially helpful for consonant clusters such as "str" "spl" etc.

Teacher's Corner

A useful website for letting students hear the **glide** required for intelligible diphthong pronunciation is [Eric Armstrong's voice & speech source](#). A useful tool for letting students *see* the glide required for diphthongs is the [University of Iowa's "American English Sounds."](#)

Students may nevertheless get stuck on one or more minimal pairs they cannot seem to make any progress in perceiving. It can be helpful at this point to train them in physically articulating the difference between the two problem sounds – e.g., via [Nilsen & Nilsen's (2010) *Pronunciation Contrasts*](#) for monophthongs and the [University of Iowa's "American English Sources"](#) tool for diphthongs – so they get a sense of what exactly the difference is that they are listening for (e.g., When I pronounce /æ/, does my mouth look more open in a mirror as well as sound more open to my ears than my pronunciation of / ɛ /?)

Encouraging students to pronounce the problem vowel for as long a time as they need in order to check that they really *have* produced its distinguishing features can be useful.

It can also be beneficial to encourage students to temporarily exaggerate other articulatory differences between problem phonemes. For example, making tense vowels as tense as physically possible to most clearly distinguish them from lax vowels or opening the mouth as widely as possible for low vowels to most clearly distinguish them from mid vowels, etc., since their necessarily unstable pronunciation of new phonemes will naturally gravitate back toward standard norms over time.

Finally, for long-term change in students' L2 pronunciation to occur, teachers must follow segmental training giving students conscious awareness of *how* a particular clear vowel is physically articulated with homework activities aimed at developing students' new L2 pronunciation *habits*, as described in the subsection above on "Understanding segmental pronunciation as a habit." After all, it is unreasonable to expect students to have the mental resources necessary to be able both to *consciously* apply their new knowledge of how the various clear vowels of English are pronounced while simultaneously needing to engage in the higher-level cognitive processes of:

1. Comprehending what others are saying;

2. Identifying connections between what others are saying and what they already know;

3. Figuring out semantically what they want to say next; and

4. Figuring out *how* to say it (in terms of information structure, politeness, grammar, etc.)

Chapter 4. Thought Groups

Thought Groups: Overview

Scenario F: Too Fluent

🎬 Scenario Spotlight

Rami is a PhD student in Computer Science. His English is pretty good and he is proud of his language ability. While his grammar and vocabulary are advanced, he talks so fast that sometimes it is difficult to understand his speech. Most people try to become more fluent, so Rami is confused while this may be an issue.

👥 4-1 Discussion

Instructions: Read Scenario F, think, and discuss with your classmates.

- What issues have Rami had?
- Why do you think this is happening?
- What are some strategies for overcoming these pronunciation challenges?

Scenario Resolution

Rami, the ambitious PhD student, was aware of his fast-paced speech, but he had always assumed it was a sign of fluency. However, he began to realize that his rapid delivery was hindering his communication. To address this issue, Rami decided to slow down his speech and focus on clarity. He started by recording himself speaking and listening carefully to identify where he was speaking too quickly. He learned about the meaning of thought groups and the importance of pauses in speech. These were the first steps towards his improvement.

Regardless of topic, one of the pronunciation features most influential for enabling an audience to understand what one says is the ***suprasegmental*** feature of thought grouping. ***Thought groups*** are so vital because they are the foundation upon which so many other suprasegmental features are built. Thought groups, in general, refer to any discrete stretch of speech that forms a coherent message, and typically…

1. are grammatically and semantically sound;
2. are set off by pauses before and after;
3. include one prominent element (prominence, see Part 4); and
4. have an intonation contour built around that focused element.

It's important to note, though, that there is no one rule-governed method for dividing an utterance into thought groups. A fast speaker may only pause once during an utterance, while a slow speaker could pause up to four times in the same utterance. Listen to the following examples:

The boy saw the MAN / with a TELEscope

> 🎵 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=49#audio-49-1*

The boy SAW / the man with a TELEscope

Notice the difference? Both recordings have two thought groups, but they are not the same. In fact, the meaning of the sentence will probably be interpreted differently by listeners. The first sentence suggests that the boy, *using a telescope*, saw a man; the second suggests that the boy saw *a man who was carrying a telescope*. As noted, thought groups affect the positioning of other suprasegmental features, such as prominence, intonation, and rhythm. Notice which words are prominent in both examples, and how the intonation curve shifts as the prominence shifts.

However, when learning thought groups, there are a handful of grammatical structures which are typically used to express a single thought group:

Common Grammatical Structures Expressed in Thought Groups (Smith, Meyers, & Burkhalter, 1992, p. 62)

1. *Article + adjective + noun* (…the large molecule…)
2. *Subordinating conjunction + noun + verb* (…because the experiment failed…)
3. *Preposition + article + noun* (…in the graph…)
4. *Verb + object* (…use a dictionary…)
5. *Relative pronoun + noun + verb* (…which she solved…)
6. *Verb + adverb* (…rotated quickly…)
7. *Article + noun + verb* (…the student agreed…)
8. *Verb + direct object + preposition + indirect object* (…hand it to him…)

If you consider the role thought groups play on the positioning and use of other suprasegmentals, you can see how vitally important they are for producing intelligible speech. Using logical thought groups can help a speaker sound more fluent, and it reduces the cognitive load of the listener, which will allow them to better understand your intended message.

Activities

👥 👤 4-2 Listen and Practice

Instructions: Below is a recording device along with six audio recordings. First, listen to an audio recording while following along with the transcript provided above each recording. Then, when you feel ready, use the recording device to record yourself saying the line. Compare your recording with the audio recording. Reflect on how thought groups affect the way which you speak.

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> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=49#h5p-16*

"The three largest cities in the United States are New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago."

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> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=49#h5p-17*

"People are said to think, play, and work at their best when the 24-hour temperatures average between 63 and 73 degrees Fahrenheit."

> 📄 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=49#h5p-18*

"Three American holidays in the summer are Memorial Day, The 4th of July, and Labor Day."

> 📄 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=49#h5p-19*

"On Groundhog Day, in February, if the groundhog sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter."

> 📄 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=49#h5p-20*

"If you break a mirror, then you will have seven years of bad luck, unless you throw the broken pieces into a moving stream."

> 📄 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=49#h5p-21*

"Halloween, which in Europe honors the dead, but in the United States celebrates childhood, points to the adoration of youth in America."

> 📄 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=49#h5p-22*

👤 4-3 Thought Group Practice

Instructions: Identify the most likely thought group boundaries and the focus word in each thought group.

- The meeting is about the new project.
- Could you please pass the salt?
- I'm going to the store after work.
- Can you help me with this assignment?
- We should eat dinner at seven o'clock.

4-4 Shadowing

Instructions: Learn about the powerful shadowing technique through this video:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=49#oembed-1*

Find a TED Talk that interests you.

Shadow the speaker in terms of **one or two of the following** that are hardest for you (only one or two because you can't focus on everything at one time!)

Pausing (a.k.a., "thought grouping")

The specific words the speaker stresses via pronouncing their stressed vowel longer than the average stressed vowel (FYI: By default, English speakers add focus to the last content word of a phrase, i.e., the part of the phrase where new information is usually located. However, this can change if speakers add emphasis focus somewhere else in the phrase.)

Words the speaker connect together (e.g., "want to" → "wanna")

Additional Activities

4-5 Analyze to Immitate

Step 1

Find a [TED Talk](#) you find interesting.

Step 2

Copy and paste the transcript text into a text editor (e.g., Microsoft Word).

Step 3

Watch the TED talk at least twice, inserting a single slash "/" where the speaker makes a short pause and inserting a double slash "//" where the speaker makes a long pause.

Step 4

Highlight the last "important word" of each pause unit (usually a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb), since this is the default position for focus in English.

Step 5

Listen to the talk one more time to check whether the speaker *actually* stresses in each thought group the word(s) you highlighted. Change your highlighting as necessary to match the speaker's *actual* focus.

Step 6

If the speaker puts focus on a word in order to contrast it with another word, highlight in a different color the specific *syllable* he/she actually stresses.It's important to highlight the exact *syllable* the speaker puts focus on and not just the word since contrast focus can not only change which *word* the speaker puts focus on, but also which *syllable* in that word gets focus. For example, Eric Berlow in his TED talk, "Simplifying Complexity," consistently shifts his focus in the word "*com*plicated," altering its word stress, in order to contrast it with the word "com*plex*":

"So / I hope to convince you that complex / doesn't always equal compli**cat**ed. // So for me / a well-crafted baguette, fresh out of the oven / is complex / but a / curry / onion / green olive / poppy cheese bread is compli**cat**ed" (Eric Berlow: "Simplifying Complexity," TED).

Step 7

Read the transcript again, underlining each pause unit you think the speaker will mark with a rising tone, the default falling tone, or other tones sometimes used in English.

Step 8

Listen to the talk again to check and correct your predictions.

Step 9

Read the transcript again, marking in bold any words you think the speaker will connect together rather than pronouncing separately, e.g., "want to" → "wanna." Listen again to the talk to check/ correct your predictions.

Step 10

Record yourself giving the talk (use a free tool like online-voice-recorder.com. Pay attention to pausing only where you marked either "/" or "//", to lengthening the stressed vowels in each of your highlighted words, and to using rising intonation with every thought group you underlined.

Step 11

Check your recording. Did you pause only where you marked "/" or "//"? Did you lengthen the stressed vowels of all your highlighted words? Did you use rising intonation for all of your underlined thought groups? Mark in **bold** any thought groups in which you made a pausing, focus, or intonation mistake.

Step 12

Rerecord the talk, paying particular attention to the stress and intonation of the words and phrases you marked in **bold.**

👤 4-6 Identifying Thought Groups

Instructions: Read each paragraph (punctuation has been removed) and mark the beginning and end of each thought group using a / or // depending on how long you think the pause would be.

Paragraph 1

How was my weekend oh it was fun I went to my friend's house where we had a really nice dinner my friend was worried about his place being a mess but I told him not to worry my house is also a mess right now when I got to his place I really didn't think it was messy at all just some papers on his desk and of course he had several books on a coffee table I wonder if he cleaned up before I arrived even though I told him he didn't need to to be honest I probably would have done the same haha

Paragraph 1 Answer Key

// How was my weekend? // Oh, it was fun! // I went to my friend's house / where we had a really nice dinner. // My friend was worried about his place being a mess, / but I told him not to worry, / my house is also a mess right now. // When I got to his place, / I really didn't think it was messy at all. // Just some papers on his desk, / and of course / he had several books on a coffee table. // I wonder if he cleaned up before I arrived / even though I told him he didn't need to. // To be honest, / I probably would have done the same! Haha! //

Paragraph 2

Hello class today we are going to discuss thought groups what are thought groups generally any discrete stretch of speech that forms a coherent message they typically are grammatically and semantically sound are set off by pauses before and after include one prominent element and have an intonation contour built around that prominent element why do they matter they affect other language features such as pausing prominence/stress intonation and linking they affect meaning by signaling important information and can change the listener's interpretation of information

Paragraph 2 Answer Key

// Hello class. // Today we are going to discuss thought groups. // What are thought groups? // Generally, any discrete stretch of speech that forms a coherent message. // They typically are grammatically and semantically sound, / are set off by pauses before and after, / include one prominent element, / and have an intonation contour built around that prominent element. // Why do they matter? // They affect other language features such as pausing, prominence/stress, intonation, and linking. // They affect meaning by signaling important information / and can change the listener's interpretation of information. /

🧠 Thought Group Activities

The website **Tools for Clear Speech** provides additional activities for practicing Thought Groups. The website provides an answer key so these activities can be used autonomously by the learners or assigned as homework

Teacher's Corner

> ### Common Problems with Thought Groups
> Students commonly have two problems with thought grouping when speaking an L2:
>
> 1. Pausing too often or at inappropriate times, or,
> 2. Not pausing often enough.

When students pause too often, it's usually a result of needing extra time to think of how to say whatever it is they want to say next. Unfortunately, overly-frequent pausing can quickly become a serious problem because it breaks apart speech into illogical groups. This will increase the cognitive load of the listener, which will distract them from understanding the content of the speaker's message. Even though listeners can adjust to these disfluencies rather well, it can become a tiring process after a while. More troubling is that the extra burden placed on the listener can be re-focused back to the speaker in the form of negative assessments of their politeness or intelligence. Therefore, lack of fluency due to poor pausing is a pronunciation issue important to address as soon as possible.

When student do not pause often enough, it's typically a response to the first trouble. That is, students know that pausing too often can break apart their speech in unwanted ways, and so will only pause when absolutely necessary to take a breath. What students needed to understand is that pausing is also a powerful tool for helping listeners distinguish ideas. When speakers rarely pause, listeners must figure out for themselves which ideas connect. This can result not only in listeners struggling to understand what a speaker is trying to say, but also in integrating new information with existing knowledge.

To help, teachers can use written punctuation as a reflection of intonational patterns, which often make finding thoughts groups easier. For example, the period found at the end of a sentence

typically signals a falling intonation. While there are certainly exceptions to the rule, it is far more useful to follow the **90/10 rule**.

Chapter 5. Word Stress

Word Stress: Overview

Word stress, also called *lexical stress,* is an important *suprasegmental* feature in English because it determines so many other aspects of pronunciation.

🧠 Word Stress

- First, word stress determines which vowels in a word will be pronounced with a *clear vowel* vs. *schwa*.
- Second, word stress impacts the pronunciation of consonants: the unvoiced stop consonants /t/, /p/ and /k/ are pronounced in English with **aspiration** either initially or in stressed syllables, but without aspiration in non-initial unstressed syllables.
- Third, word stress determines which vowel(s) in a word will be pronounced longer vs. shorter, including which vowel gets the primary stress and can therefore be marked with even greater length via focus.
- Fourth, word stress determines which syllable is marked with the highest pitch, lowest pitch or some other distinct pitch change.
- Finally, word stress also determines which syllable, if any, will be marked via increased volume.

e·co·no·my

e·co·no·mics
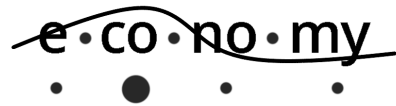
How word stress controls a word's intonation contour. Note: Primary stress is marked via the big bubble, secondary stress via the medium bubble, and unstressed via the small bubble.

Word stress errors which do not change **vowel quality** are only minimally damaging – i.e., when a word's primary stressed vowel is instead pronounced with *secondary stress* and vice versa. However, English strongly prefers alternating stressed vs. unstressed syllables. That is, it's very rare for English words to contain two stressed syllables in a row, though exceptions include **compound words** such as "housekeeper" and certain prefixed words like "triangle" and "nonlinear".

As a result, word stress errors that reduce a word's ordinarily stressed clear vowels to schwa almost always exchange the quality of a word's ordinarily unstressed vowel(s) from schwa to clear. In other words, a word stress error can easily alter the pronunciation of every vowel in a word, a major problem since listeners rely heavily on a word's **vowel template**.

Common Word Stress Errors

- Most word stress errors are made because of modeling a word's pronunciation on one of its more frequent **cognates**.
- Some students' word stress errors are due to modeling their pronunciation on similarly spelled words that are pronounced differently.

    ◦ Students' basic strategy of using the known to figure out the unknown is not the problem. English word stress is highly patterned, as can be seen by searching all words whose spelling matches a student's problem word from its stressed vowel to the end of the word

- For examples, see:

    ◦ [Most Common Words Ending with -alysis](#)
    ◦ [Most Common Words Ending with -entally](#)

Additionally, where ordinarily stressed syllables beginning with /t/, /p/, or /k/ are instead pronounced unstressed, L1 English listeners are likely to hear the those sounds as /d/, /b/, or /g/, respectively. This would negatively impact the listener's ability to find the spoken word in their mental dictionary, which relies heavily on the sounds of consonants, particularly for high **functional load** consonants.

As a result, word stress errors can easily cause listeners to be unable to identify the word the speaker is saying and therefore perhaps unable to identify the boundary between words. Additionally, when speakers put **prominence**, or focus, on a nonstandard vowel within a word because of failing to follow the word's standard word stress pattern, listeners' attention will still be drawn to that word – but what listeners are likely to notice is the word's nonstandard pronunciation, *not* the idea to which the speaker aimed to draw listeners' attention. For example, when a student puts prominence on the word "economics" but pronounces it following the word stress pattern for "economy".

In sum, word stress errors in English are frequently very damaging because of the disastrous domino effect they put into motion.

Where to Place Stress

Unfortunately, there is no simple rule for determining where the stress falls in a word. However, there are some common features which affect the stress in a word, such as words with prefixes or

suffixes, the origin of a word, or the grammatical function. Below is a short list of more common stress patterns found in English.

Words with an affix—a prefix or a suffix—will typically alter the stress pattern of a word. With prefixes, this is a bit easier to determine. If a word contains a prefix, such as pre-, dis-, ex-, re-, over-, under-, etc., a good rule to follow is that the stress will fall on the first syllable of the root word.

For example:

- undo → un-**DO**
- overcome → over-**COME**
- extend → ex-**TEND**
- understand → un-der-**STAND**

One exception to this pattern, as we've mentioned before, are compound words. That is, when a prefix is attached to a noun in such a way that the resulting word is a noun compound. Notice the above examples—they are all verbs with prefixes attached. When the resulting word is a noun, the stress will be placed on the prefix.

For example:

- overcoat → **O**-ver-coat
- underwear → **UN**-der-wear
- output → **OUT**-put

Understanding the grammatical function of a word is very important when trying to figure out where the stress falls in a word, especially those that have a prefix.

Suffixes are not quite as nice and neat as prefixes. Suffixes often results in one of three stress patterns:

1. They are stress-neutral — that is, they do not affect the placement of stress
2. They cause stress to move to the penult — that is, the stress moves to the second-to-last syllable
3. They cause stress to move to the antepenult — that is, the stress moves to the third-to-last syllable

Stress-neutral suffixes		Penult-shifting suffixes		Antepenult-shifting suffixes	
-dom **KING**-dom	-er **KEEP**-er	-cent com-**PLA**-cent	-cial or -tial ar-ti-**FIC**-ial	-al in-ter-**NA**-tio-nal	-cracy de-**MOC**-ra-cy
-ful **BEAU**-ti-ful	-hood **NEIGH**-bor-hood	-cious de-**LIC**-ious	-ic cli-**MAT**-ic	-iety so-**CI**-e-ty	-ify di-**VERS**-i-fy
-ize **U**-ti-lize	-less **END**-less	-tion ed-u-**CA**-tion	-ctive re-pro-**DUC**-tive	-ity ac-**TIV**-i-ty	-icide in-**SECT**-i-cide

The above table is not a complete list, but should provide a good starting place.

There are also borrowed suffixes from French which demand stress in a word, but these are a bit more rare. One common suffixes borrowed from French which demands stress in a word is NEER, like eng-i-**NEER.**

Other common suffixes borrowed from French that "steal" the stress from a word include:

- -ee (trust-EE)
- -esque (pic-tur-ESQUE)
- -ese (di-o-CESE)
- -ette (kitch-e-NETTE)
- -ique (cri-TIQUE)

Activities

👤 5-1 Perception

Instructions: Listen to the words below.

- *Kindness*

> 🎵 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=57#audio-57-1*

- *Technique*

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- *Feverish*

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- *Judicious*

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=57#audio-57-4*

- *Aggressive*

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- *Photography*

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- *Anxiety*

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- *Pedagogical*

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- *Harmonious*

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- *Masculinity*

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👤 5-2 Primary Stress

Instructions: You can listen to the word in the previous activity. Now, highlight the syllable within each word that receives the primary stress.

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>
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=57#h5p-25*

🎧 5-3 Find the Stressed Syllables

Instructions: Each word has been split into its syllabic structure. Listen to the recording and then repeat what you hear. Try to determine which syllable gets the stress. The correct syllable which receives the stress is bolded and italicized.

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
>
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=57#h5p-24*

Additional Activities

5-4 Pronunciation Automaticity via Morewords

Step 1

Go to www.morewords.com

Step 2

Type in the Search for word endings, e.g. "ically" or "ical".

Step 3

Then, click on the link that says "words ending with …" that you had searched for.

Step 4

Additional Sort: You can then sort the words by *length* or by *how common the words are*.

- Use the list sorted by *length* to practice word stress in different number of syllables, e.g. "words that end with ical by length"
- Use the list sorted by *how common words are* to practice word stress in words that are more common, e.g. "words that end with ical by frequency used"

Step 5

Practice using these steps:

- saying the word individually,

- embedding it in a sentence they can imagine really saying to someone and
- pronouncing the word individually again.

👥 🧑‍💻 5-5 Pronunciation Automaticity via YouGlish

Step 1

Search in YouGlish a word or phrase for which you want to learn standard English pronunciation (including thought grouping, word stress, focus syllable, intonation, individual sound/ cluster pronunciation, etc)

Step 2

Listen to the word/phrase within its complete thought group (i.e., from pause to pause).

Step 3

Repeat the thought group 5 times, carefully following the speaker's pronunciation. If you make a mistake, listen to the speaker say the thought group again and then start over at 1 to count your 5 repetitions, e.g.,

What you hear: "When you see / a diagram like this,. . . .

Eric Berlow: "Simplifying Complexity" (TED)

- What you say: "When. . . .you see. . . ."
- *What you think: 'Oh, no! I paused. I need to start over. . .'*
- What you say: "When you see. . . , When you see. . ., When you see. . ., When you see. . ., When you see. . . ."
- *What you think: 'Okay, I can go to the next YouGlish video. . . .'*

Step 4 (Optional)

Before moving to the next video, think about what phrasing you would have used if you had been the speaker. How confident are you that your proposed phrasing is also standard English and appropriate for the speaker's context? (If you're not sure, compare your proposed phrasing to what the speaker *actually* said via YouGlish, COCA or Google Scholar.)

Step 5

Until you feel confident you can pronounce the word/phrase accurately on your own, complete steps 2–4 every day with 5 new YouGlish videos.

👥 🧑‍💻 5-6 Word Stress Practice

Based on the rules of suffixes given earlier, practice each of the words below first individually and then used in a sentence. Tip: You can google the word by typing: How to pronounce e.g. statuesque. You can hear the way the word is pronounced and, for most words, you can see the option "Practice". Once you start practicing, Google's ASR will give you feedback on your pronunciation.

Note the option to toggle the "slow" button to listen to the word pronounced slowly.

Words: *Statuesque, Convoluted, Commissioner, Suffragette, Finagling, Obese, Introductory, Hypothermia, Boutique, Germanium, Acceleration, Terminal, Radiology, Paleontologist, Desiccant, Metamorphosis, Buoyancy, Incandescent, Amputee, Malicious, Mystique, Anticlimactic, Herbicide, Superlative, Ministerial, Veneer, Carbohydrates, Pedagogy, Baguette, Formulaic, Erroneous, Opaque, Forensics, Temperature, Stalactite, Vacuole*

Teacher's Corner

One good way to identify word stress patterns students have not yet mastered is to take notes on any nonstandard pronunciations while students talk through a 10–20 minute presentation or read through several pages from a textbook in their field. Where students' mispronunciations are nonstandard because of word stress, students can be prompted to figure out the word stress error themselves by Googling "most common words ending with [stressed vowel to the end of their problem word]" and then reading aloud the More Words word list that results, e.g., [Most Common Words Ending with -anism](#).

Although students generally mis-stress only some words following a given word stress pattern, this technique helps identify other common words following the same word stress pattern to which the student is *not* applying the pattern. This technique allows students' problem with a specific word stress pattern to be addressed all at once, rather than just in terms of a single word in isolation.

- Additionally, for any problem words identified following a particular word stress pattern, exposing students to a sample of 10–15 YouGlish examples of the word being pronounced in context (e.g., [Youglish Search](#)) can be very helpful for demonstrative purposes.
- Once students know the relevant word stress pattern, it is important to automate their production of it by building their habit of pronouncing the word in accord with the standard pattern. Three homework assignments are helpful for accomplishing this task (see [Additional Activities](#)).

🧠 Using Rubber Bands to Teach Vowel Length

Teachers can use ordinary rubber bands as a creative tool to show students how stress patterns work in words. They can be used to visualize stress patterns, following these steps:

- **Stretch and Release:** As you pronounce a word, stretch the rubber band for stressed syllables and release it for unstressed ones. This visually represents the difference in length and prominence of syllables.
- **Exaggerate the Movement**: For clearer demonstration, initially exaggerate the stretching and releasing actions to emphasize the contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables.

For more details on how to use rubber bands, explore the following website from Literacy MN: Rubber bands for Pronunciation Practice

OR Watch Marcha Chen's YouTube video on this topic.

Chapter 6. Prominence

Prominence: Overview

Prominence, also referred to as "*focus*," "*phrase stress,*" and "*primary phrase stress*", describes the pronunciation adjustments English speakers make to focus listeners' attention on whichever word(s) most contributes to communicating what they are trying to say. For example, when a parent asks a teenager "You did **WHAT**???"

Prominence refers to how English speakers:

1. Lengthen the primary stressed vowel in the key words of their message, and,
2. Pronounce these key words at a higher or lower pitch than other less meaningful words.

In spoken English, prominence has the same function as a highlighter does in written English. You would not highlight an entire page of information, but rather key terms or ideas. Prominence plays this same role, but is done so a bit more often. Typically, prominence will find its way into almost every spoken thought group — which word is the most important or adds new information?

Three Key Roles Prominence Play in Spoken English

1. Highlight new or important information
2. To show special or extreme emphasis
3. Contrastive stress

The first category is perhaps the most common use of prominence. This prominence is always used on a content word, and it's used to highlight the most important word(s) in your utterance.

Our earlier example, "You did **WHAT**???", falls under the second category. It is not necessarily that the listener did not hear what the speaker said, but rather they could not *believe* what they heard.

The final category is perhaps the trickiest. Depending on the word which receives prominence in an utterance, the meaning of the utterance can change quite drastically. Take the following for example:

1. **I** am watching.
2. I **am** watching.
3. I am **watching.**

Can you think of when you might use each of these prominence locations?

Number 1 might be used if someone wants to know what you're doing. For example, if the question is *Who's watching?*, you may respond with the prominence of Number 1.

Number 2 might be used to correct someone. If someone asked you *Why aren't you watching?*, you may respond with Number 2 to correct the speaker. Contrary to the speaker's opinion, you *are* watching.

Number 3 is perhaps the most common of the three, in that it is simply informing someone of what you are doing. For the question *What are you doing?*, you may respond with Number 3.

Typical Prominence

Prominence typically falls on the last word of a sentence or phrase if it is a **noun**, **adjective**, or **verb** (except "BE").

Nouns:

- Where are you from?
- I'm from **Spain.**

- Is she the teacher?
- No, she's a **student**.

Adjectives:

- He is **nice.**
- She is very **pretty**.

Verbs:

- Where is he going?
- I don't **know.**

- What are you doing?
- I'm **swimming**.

Activities

6-1 Find the Prominent Word

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=64#h5p-27

6-2 Mark the Prominent Word

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=64#h5p-28

6-3 Contrasting and Clarifying

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=64#h5p-33

1. I'm interested in the blue one, not the red one.

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2. Should we order pizza or Chinese food tonight?

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3. Is that her car or her sister's?

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4. The apartment is spacious, but the kitchen is too small.

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5. The first two chapters are easy, but the third one is challenging.

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6. It's not a mistake; it's intentional.

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7. You said it was a comedy, but it's actually a drama.

Additional Activities

You can use the **Shadowing activity** explained in the previous part to practice Prominence, too. Explore the adapted activity below.

👤 6-4 Shadowing

Step 1

Learn about the powerful shadowing technique through this video:

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Step 2

Find a TED Talk or Newsy report you find interesting.

Step 3

Shadow the speaker in terms of *one or two* of the following that are hardest for you *(only one or two because you can't focus on everything at one time!):*

- **Pausing** *(a.k.a., "thought grouping")*

- **The specific words the speaker stresses** via pronouncing their stressed vowel longer than the

average stressed vowel *(FYI: By default, English speakers add focus to the last content word of a phrase, i.e., the part of the phrase where new information is usually located. However, this can change if speakers add emphasis focus somewhere else in the phrase.)*

- **Intonation** *(rising, falling or fall-rise)*

- Words the speaker **connects** together *(e.g., "want to" → "wanna")*

👤 6-5 Delayed Shadowing

Step 1

Find a [TED Talk](#) or [Newsy](#) report you find interesting.

Step 2

Listen again to how the speaker says a phrase or two and then pause the video.

Step 3

Say the first phrase 5 times, without any pauses and following the speaker's phrase stress, intonation, etc. If you *do* make a mistake when saying the phrase, start over at 1 again when counting your 5 times, for example:

- What you say: "When. . . .you see. . . ."
- *What you think: 'Oh, no! I paused. I need to start over. . .'*
- What you say: "When you see. . . , When you see. . ., When you see. . ., When you see. . ., When you see. . . ."
- *What you think: 'Okay, I can go to the next phrase. . . .'*

Step 4

Do the same thing with the second phrase 5 times.

Step 5

Now say the first and second phrase together 3 times, pausing only between the phrases:

What you say: "When you see / a diagram like this,. . . .When you see / a diagram like this,. . . . When you see / a diagram like this,. . . ." – [Eric Berlow: "Simplifying Complexity"](#) (TED)

Step 6

Say the third phrase 5 times, as above.

Step 7

Now say the first, second, and third phrase together 3 times.

Step 8

Continuing adding one phrase at a time, listening to the video when needed a few sentences at a time, until you can say an entire paragraph fluently, pausing only where the speaker paused.

Step 9

Start over with the next paragraph at step 3 above. Once you've finished practicing the second paragraph, practice saying both the first and second paragraphs 3 times, allowing yourself to pause only where the speaker did.

Step 10

Continue this process until you can give the speaker's entire speech fluently.

🧠 Importance of Prominence

Each sentence below has the prominent word written in all caps. Practice saying each sentence and then state what you think is the meaning conveyed by the word in all caps being prominent. Check below the sentence to find the answer.

- **Sentence**: The teacher DID not grade his students' science papers.

  Meaning:
  The papers were not graded.

- **Sentence**: The teacher did NOT grade his students' science papers.

  Meaning:
  Emphasizing that the papers were not graded.

- **Sentence**: The teacher did not GRADE his students' science papers.

  Meaning:
  Something else (filed, discarded, etc.) was done with the papers.

- **Sentence**: The teacher did not grade his STUDENTS' science papers.

  Meaning:
  Someone else's (ex: children's) papers were graded.

- **Sentence**: The teacher did not grade his students' SCIENCE papers.

  Meaning:
  Papers for another subject (English, History, etc.) were graded.

- **Sentence**: The teacher did not grade his students' science PAPERS.

  Meaning:
  Something else (exams, presentations, etc.) was graded.

- **Sentence**: The teacher did not grade HIS students' science papers.

  Meaning:
  The teacher graded papers for a colleague.

- **Sentence**: The TEACHER did not grade his students' science papers.

  Meaning:
  Someone else graded the papers.

Teacher's Corner

By default, English puts focus on the last word of a phrase. If focus is placed anywhere else, listeners will understand it as expressing emphasis. Therefore, when speakers put non-default emphasis on words they do not mean to emphasize, listeners may not successfully identify the speaker's key points.

Particularly if speakers are giving an extended presentation of complex content that is unfamiliar to their audience, this can lead to listeners lacking the processing time necessary for storing these key points. Without standard prominence, listeners quickly tire trying to identify the speaker's main points. If they are unable to process a speaker's message at the speed they hear it, they understandably complain the speaker is "talking too fast."

Prominence is impacted by several things, including:

1. in the case of ***emphasis/contrast focus***, the specific words a speaker particularly wants listeners to notice,
2. **thought grouping** (in that thought groups usually contain one focus element) and
3. **word stress** (as determinant of which syllable in a focused word will be most strongly marked with additional vowel length; with the thought group's highest pitch, lowest pitch or point of pitch change; and possibly with an increase in volume.

There are a number of methods for indicting prominence in a sentence or phrase. For example, the question *How do you do?*:

- HOW do you **DO**?
- <u>How</u> do you <u>do?</u>

- Hòw do you dó?

All of these different methods are showing the same thing — *How* receives secondary prominence, the first *do* and *you* receive weak prominence, and the second *do* receives the primary prominence.

Some teachers find it beneficial to use the same method they employ in teaching word stress, so that there's an element of consistency in their teaching. Others like to employ two separate methods to highlight the differences between the two suprasegmentals. This is a conversation that you need to have with your learners.

Chapter 7. Intonation

Intonation: Overview

Intonation is used by L1 English speakers to produce meaning at the phrasal level. While consonants, vowels, and word stress errors can cause a loss of intelligibility at the word level, errors in intonation rarely cause a loss of intelligibility at this level — that is, listeners can understand the words being spoken, but the meaning of the words can be mistaken depending on intonation (especially if there is no intonation pattern at all). When we talk about intonation, we are talking about communicated meaning, which can be either **categorical** or **gradient**.

Speakers of many languages around the world do not indicate grammatical meaning or attitude through intonation, but rather some other language feature (e.g., the grammatical and attitude-marking "suffixes" of Mandarin Chinese).

Therefore, many L2 English speakers may have a perception about how much emotion they can appropriately express. Furthermore, since many L2 English speakers' pitch range is narrower than what L1 American English listeners may expect, these listeners could potentially interpret students' relatively monotone L2 English as expressing boredom, coldness or even hostility. L1 listeners may also become irritated with certain L2 speakers' "sing-song" intonation, which would fail to communicate meaning to an L1 listener.
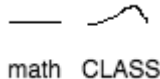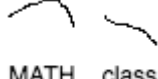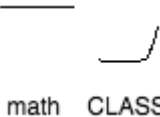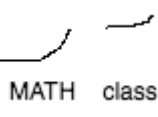
On the other hand, students might interpret the broader pitch range of L1 English speakers as excessively emotional or melodramatic when compared with their L1. This leads to some students being delighted with how changes in their intonational patterns can lead them to sound more like a native speaker, while others find it difficult to break past the norms of their L1.

Pitch	Range	Usage
4	extra high	used to express emphasis/contrast focus and strong emotions, e.g., surprise or enthusiasm
3	high	used to express default focus and/or the end of a thought group
2	middle	used as the baseline or "neutral" pitch from which the intonation contour rises

Pitch	Range	Usage
		and falls
1	low	used by default to express the end of a thought group

Note: It can be helpful pedagogically to present the intonation range of English as characterized by 4 levels of pitch – though musical pitch differs from phonetic pitch in that 1) speakers each have their own baseline or "neutral" phonetic pitch, 2) a certain degree of variation is acceptable in how wide or narrow one's intonation range is, and 3) speakers *glide* from one phonetic pitch to another instead of jumping from one distinct note to the next, as in music.

When we think about intonation, there are three aspects which are important for intelligibility: range, tune, and relative prominence. Range refers to the musical chart above, which has four different levels ranging from 1 (low) to 4 (very high). Tune refers to the direction of the intonation pattern, and is typically said as falling, level, rising, or fall-rise. Finally, relative prominence refers to the word which is receiving the focus, and is typically either weak-strong or strong-weak.

Tune	Relative Prominence (Weak-strong)	Relative Prominence (Strong-weak)
Falling	math CLASS	MATH class
Rising	math CLASS	MATH class

Activities

7-1 Mark the Intonation

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/oralcommunication2e/?p=71#h5p-30

The Importance of Intonation

Intonation plays a crucial role in conveying meaning and attitude in spoken English. Short dialogues provide a clear context for practicing and understanding different intonation patterns.

7-2 Short Sentence Dialogue

Instructions: In pairs, read one of the dialogues. Decide how the intonation should rise or fall in each line to convey the intended meaning and attitude. Practice reading the dialogue with appropriate intonation. Then, perform the dialogue for the class.

Situation 1: Coworkers discussing a project deadline

- A: The project is due Friday.
- B: Friday? That's soon!

- A: I know. We need to hurry.
- B: Let's work late tonight.

- A: Okay, but we need help.
- B: I'll ask Chris.

Situation 1 Answer Key:

- A: The project is due Friday. (Falling intonation)
- B: Friday? (Rising intonation, expressing surprise) That's soon! (Falling intonation)

- A: I know. (Falling intonation) We need to hurry. (Rising intonation, indicating urgency)
- B: Let's work late tonight.

- A: Okay, (Falling intonation, agreeing) but we need help. (Rising intonation, expressing a need)
- B: I'll ask Chris. (Falling intonation, stating a plan)

Situation 2: Friends making plans for the weekend

- A: Want to go to the beach?
- B: Sounds great! When?

- A: Saturday.
- B: Perfect. Can we meet at noon?

- A: Sure. Bring a cooler.
- B: No problem.

Situation 2 Answer Key:

- A: Want to go to the beach? (Rising intonation, inviting)
- B: Sounds great! (Falling intonation, expression enthusiasm) When? (Rising intonation, asking for details)

- A: Saturday. (Falling intonation, providing information)
- B: Perfect. (Falling intonation, agreeing) Can we meet at noon? (Rising intonation, suggesting a time)

- A: Sure. (Falling intonation, agreeing) Bring a cooler. (Rising intonation, giving instructions)
- B: No problem. (Falling intonation, confirming)

Additional Activities

7-3 Using Kazoos to Teach Pronunciation Intronation

Kazoos can be a fun and engaging tool to help students understand and practice intonation. Here are some ways to incorporate them into your lessons:

1. **Intonation Mimicry:**

   Model different intonation patterns on the kazoo, such as rising, falling, and sustained tones.

   Have students imitate the sounds you produce, focusing on matching the pitch and contour.

2. **Sentence Intonation Practice:**

   Provide students with sentences and ask them to hum the intonation pattern on the kazoo without speaking.

   Focus on different sentence types (declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory) and how intonation changes.

For more ideas on how to use kazoos, explore Marcha Chen's YouTube videos:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/ oralcommunication2e/?p=73#oembed-1*

Teacher's Corner

It is important to first address students' nonstandard intonation in terms of how the student vs. the student's target audience is likely to *interpret* that intonation. For example, for an L1 English listener, a consistently rising intonation could easily lead them to question a speaker's competence.

- First discuss the students' nonstandard intonation in terms of who their 1) immediate, 2) primary, and 3) long-term target audience(s) are and how those target audience(s) are likely to interpret students' current intonational norms.
- When students plan to work long-term in **ELF** contexts where calibration toward L1 English intonational norms appears more likely to hurt than to help communication, student resistance to activities targeted at fostering more standard intonation should certainly be respected.
- Also ensure students clearly understand the potential ramifications their L2 English intonational preferences are likely to have on their success in L1-English-context job interviews, professional relationships, etc., which they may decide to pursue in the future.

On the other hand, students may find help via an introduction to how one successfully navigates being able to "flip the switch" from their "native language self" to a slightly different "English self." Students may also break free of L1-induced interpretations of English intonation as excessively melodramatic and emotional by imagining they are acting in a movie, where a broader intonation range is expected.

Common Intonational Patterns Based on Written Punctuation

1. Period at the end of a sentence = falling intonation

2. Comma at the end of a clause or phrase = steady intonation (or slight rise)

    a. This indicates the speaker is not finished speaking

3. Exclamation points often signal strong emotion = extreme pitch changes

Teaching intonation can make use of lines, as seen in the [Overview](#) section, or sometimes it can help students to see the difference in syllable form. For example, if we use the line "The union's indivisible, not divisible," it may look like this:

The ^{un}ion's ^{IN}divi$_{sib}$le / not di^{VI}si$_{ble}$

This method allows the students to see which sounds are involved in particular falls or rises.

Authors & Contributors

Authors

Agata Guskaroska

Dr. Agata Guskaroska holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and Technology from Iowa State University (ISU). She has taught EFL/ESL, composition, and online courses, including a MOOC on technology in language teaching. She is the author of the book Teaching Pronunciation with Confidence, the assistant editor of Exploring AI in Applied Linguistics, and co-editor of the 12th PSLLT Proceedings. Currently, Agata is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at ISU, working on the development and institutional implementation of a new English Language Proficiency Advisory Program. Her research focuses on computer-assisted language learning, pronunciation teaching, and technology acceptance.

Erik Goodale

Dr. Erik Goodale has his Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and Technology from Iowa State University. He has worked as an English Speaking Consultant and Interpersonal Communication Consultant at the Center for Communication Excellence for over five years, holding individual consultations, facilitating peer speaking practice groups, and developing and presenting workshops on presentations and professional communication. He has also taught English speaking courses for international teaching assistants for two years. His research interests include pronunciation, speaking consultations, and oral communication.

Timothy Kochem

Dr. Tim Kochem received his Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and Technology from Iowa State University, and now he works as a Lecturer in the English Department there. He has presented his work at applied linguistics, general education, and distance education conferences, such as CALICO, AAAL,

AILA, the Asian Conference on Education (ACE), and the World Conference on e-Learning (e-Learn). He has published his work in journals such as the TESOL Quarterly, Language Assessment Quarterly, and CALICO, and co-authored the open-access book, Oral Communication for Non-Native Speakers of English. He was also a recipient of The International Research Foundation (TIRF) Dissertation Grant, which he used to develop a massive open online course, English Pronunciation Pedagogy. Today, the course has enrolled over 2,200 language professionals from 67 countries.

Monica Ghosh

Dr. Monica G. Ghosh, formerly Monica Richards, received her Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and Technology from Iowa State University, where her research focused on predicting the differential intelligibility and comprehensibility effects of L2 English word stress errors for L1 and L2 listeners. As postdoc, she helped set up the English Speaking Consultation program of Iowa State University's Center for Communication Excellence and authored its "English Speaking Consultant Training Manual." She currently serves as lecturer for the ESL Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she has taught multiple international teaching assistant (ITA) courses, leads the program's "ITA/Pronunciation Rubrics & Objectives Committee," and regularly contributes to the ITA curriculum.

Lily Compton

Dr. Lily Compton is the Assistant Director for Programming at the Iowa State University's Center for Communication Excellence, Graduate College. She developed and taught oral communication courses focusing on English for Teaching Purposes. Additionally, she oversees the institutional test, the Oral English Certification Test (OECT), and language support for international teaching assistants (ITAs). She supervises the instructors of the English for Teaching Purposes courses. She also develops programming for other oral communicative skills for all graduate students and postdoctoral scholars including interpersonal, academic, and professional communication, and training curriculum for English Speaking and Interpersonal Communication consultants.

Elena Cotos

Dr. Elena Cotos is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of English at Iowa State University. She also holds appointments as the Director of the Center for Communication Excellence and the Associate Dean for Professional Development in the Graduate College. Her research in the field of Language for Specific Purposes bridges corpus-based analysis of academic discourse, genre-based automated evaluation of scientific writing, and computer-assisted language learning. She has led design, research, and evaluation projects focused on intelligent writing technology. Her most recent projects include the design and worldwide delivery of massive open online courses related to writing pedagogy, which are sponsored by the US Department of State.

Authorship Contribution

Agata Guskaroska led this project, wrote Chapters 1 and 2, updated Chapter 3 from the first edition with new activities and an improved layout, and managed the revision process based on peer review feedback. **Erik Goodale** contributed to writing and developing content and activities throughout all three chapters. He was involved in reviewing and editing content both in the early stages and during peer review. **Tim Kochem**, who led the first edition of this book, wrote most of Chapter 3's content and created many of its activities. His foundational work and project leadership in the first edition were instrumental to the project's development. **Monica Ghosh** provided a comprehensive peer review for Chapters 1 and 2, providing valuable feedback and suggesting new activities that were added to Chapter 2. She also contributed significant content that shaped the first edition of this book. **Lily Compton** provided valuable guidance from the project's initial conceptualization and grant proposal development, through its completion, while overseeing project management and resources to ensure the book's successful development. **Elena Cotos** provided valuable guidance from the project's initial planning and grant proposal development, through its completion, while overseeing project management and resources to ensure the book's successful development. All authors actively offered feedback and collectively supported the development of the entire book. Their collaborative efforts were essential to the book's development and refinement.

Contributors

Denise Vrchota

Dr. Denise Vrchota is a Teaching Professor Emerita in the Communication Studies Program at Iowa State University. Over her 45-year career as a faculty member, she taught classes in communication theory, relationship building, nonverbal communication, and public speaking, among others. Her research examined disciplinary communication traditions. In her retirement, she enjoys working with graduate students, delivering seminars in interpersonal communication and public speaking topics.

Kimberly Becker

Dr. Kimberly Becker is the Co-Founder and COO of Moxie AI for Researchers and is the Doctoral Writing Consultant at Midland University. She received her Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and Technology from Iowa State University (2022) and an M.A. in TESOL from Northern Arizona University (2004). Her most recent research focuses on disciplinary academic writing and the use of ethical AI. It has been published in the following journals: Register Studies, The International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education, and The Qualitative Report.

Idée Edalatishams

Dr. Idée Edalatishams is the Faculty ESOL Specialist at George Mason University Writing Center and earned her PhD in Applied Linguistics and Technology from Iowa State University. Her research interests include spoken corpus linguistics, pronunciation, and multilingual speakers' academic communication. She has presented her work at conferences such as AACL, PSLLT, IWCA, and TSLL. During her time at Iowa State, she worked as a communication consultant at the Writing Center, an English Writing and Speaking Consultant at the Center for Communication Excellence, and an instructor for ISUComm Foundation and ESL courses for graduate and undergraduate students.

Liberato Silva dos Santos

Liberato Silva dos Santos is a language assessment specialist and an English and Portuguese lecturer at Instituto Federal de Goiás – IFG, Brazil. He is a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics and Technology at Iowa State University, USA, where he investigates rater judgements of non-native speaker English pronunciation in a paired-discussion task. His research interests include language assessment and testing, pronunciation assessment, oral and written academic communication, language assessment literacy, and teacher education. He has presented his work in conferences such as LTRC, LARC, TSLL, CALICO, TESOL International Convention, BRAZ-TESOL International Conference, New Directions, and SEMAPLE.

Kristin Terrill

Dr. Kristin Terrill is a Senior Specialist for Graduate Scholarly Activities at Iowa State University who worked as a one-on-one English speaking consultant for three years. She is interested in English for Academic Purposes and L2 socialization in academic disciplinary culture. She has presented her work in conferences, such as AAAL, BALEAP, AACL, TSLL, USETDA, OWCA, and TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo. Her research interests include communication as a performance of linguistic and technical knowledge that both reveals social past and impacts social present and future.

Key Terms

90/10 rule

When teaching pronunciation, it is often more beneficial to teach a rule which 90% of spoken language follows, then to focus on a rule that only governs 10% of spoken language use.

Accommodating

Giving in to the demands of the other party; not standing up for one's own interests

Accuracy

The ability to use correct and appropriate language, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse, to convey meaning.

Active listeners

learners who go beyond simply hearing the speaker. They focus, engage, and try to understand the meaning by asking questions and showing they are following along.

Addition

The addition of extra sounds; likely results from an L1-L2 conflict.

Affix

The overarching group which contains prefixes, suffixes, interfixes, and circumfixes. English only has prefixes and suffixes, however.

Affricate

These sounds are made through the combination of a stop and a fricative. First, air pressure is

built up, like in a stop, but rather than exploding out, the air flows through a narrow passage, like a fricative.

Alveolar

With the tongue tip on or near the top teeth, in sounds like /t/ (Top) or /z/ (Zap)

Approximant

The group which contains all of the liquid and glide sounds -- /r/, /l/, /w/, and /y/

Approximants

The airflow moves relatively freely around the tongue

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools

Software programs designed to accomplish specific tasks using AI technology. AI tools can analyze data, identify patterns, and automate processes.

Aspiration

Aspiration, or an aspirated consonant, is the strong burst of breath that accompanies the release of some consonant sounds, such as /p/, /t/, and /k/.

Avoidance

Avoiding the conflict at all costs; pretending it isn't there.

Bilabial

Between the lips, in sounds like /m/ (Mom) or /p/ (Pop)

Categorical (meaning)

Native speakers largely agree upon the meaning of the intonation pattern, such as a question or a statement.

Clearinghouse Questions

Used to conclude a discussion of a topic, these questions often allow a party to emphasize a point already made or to provide any additional information that was not covered already.

Cognates

Words having the same linguistic derivation as another word. That is, sharing the same original word or root. For example, the English word "cold" is a cognate of the German word "kalt."

An example of how cognates can change word stress would be the English word *orGAnism* and the Spanish word *orgaNIsmo*.

Collaborating

Using problem solving skills to provide positive outcome for both parties.

Competing

Prioritize one's own goals at the expense of the other party's goals.

Complexity

The ability to use sophisticated and varied language structures, including advanced grammar, diverse vocabulary, and intricate sentence constructions, to convey nuanced and detailed meaning.

Compound words

Compound words are formed when two or more words are joined together to create a new word that has an entirely new meaning.

Compromising

Both parties give up and get a part of their goal.

Consonants

There are approximately 25 distinct consonant phonemes in NAE, and they can be distinguished along three dimensions: voicing, place of articulation, and manner of articulation.

Deletion

The deletion of sounds; likely a result of an L1-L2 conflict.

Dental

Between the teeth, in sounds like /θ/ (Thick) or /ð/ (Then)

Disposition

Inherent qualities of mind and character; attitudes or beliefs.

Distortion

When a produced sound cannot be identified by the L1 or L2; likely the use of a sound which is unknown to the listener, though this type of error is understudied.

Domino effect

A domino effect (idiom) is when you make a change to one behavior and it activates a chain reaction, causing a shift in related behaviors as well.

ELF

English as a Lingua Franca (or sometimes referred to as English as an International Language).

Empowering

Make someone stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights.

Fluency

The ability to speak smoothly and continuously, without excessive pauses, hesitations, or repetitions.

Fricative

Air is restricted by a narrow passage formed by various parts of the mouth and tongue, but is not completely stopped.

Fruitful

Producing good or helpful results; productive.

Functional load

Functional load is a measure of the number of minimal pairs which can be found for a given opposition. For example, /f/-/p/ and /l/-/r/ are very common minimal pairs with high functional loads in English. Sounds with high functional load, if pronounced incorrectly, are more likely to be confused with a different word, complicating a listener's comprehension or understanding.

Glide

The airflow moves relatively freely around the tongue

Glottal

Produced not so much in the mouth, but by air passing from the windpipe through the vocal cords, in the sound /h/ (Hi)

Gradient (meaning)

Refers to much more subjective meanings, such as emotions or attitudes. This can vary greatly from listener to listener.

Interdependent parties

The parties involved are dependent on each other within their relationship.

Interlocutors

Participants in a discussion, both sending and receiving messages.

Interpreting

the task of decoding the message that requires the listener to give meaning to the verbal and nonverbal symbols used by the speaker.

Labiodental

When the top teeth connect with the bottom lip, in sounds like /f/ (Fit) and /v/ (Vine)

Liquid

The airflow moves relatively freely around the tongue

Manner of Articulation

refers to how the sound is made. In NAE, there are six manners of articulation: Stop, Fricative, Affricate, Nasal, Liquid, and Glide.

Monologue

A long, tedious speech by one person.

Nasal

These sounds occur when the oral passage is closed and the air flows through the nasal cavity instead

Palatal

With the tongue blade (the part right behind the tip) or body near the roof of the mouth (or the hard palate), in sounds like / ʃ / (Shop) or /dʒ/ (Gym)

Paying attention

the decision to focus on one source of sound.

Place of Articulation

Refers to where the sound is made in the mouth. In NAE, there are seven places of articulation: Bilabial, Labiodental, Dental, Alveolar, Palatal, Velar, and Glottal.

Primary Questions

Used to introduce a topic for discussion and to acquire a sense of the other party's perceptions regarding the topic.

Prominence

Prominence--also call focus, phrase stress, or primary phrase stress--describes the pronunciation adjustments English speakers make to focus listeners' attention on whichever words contribute the most to their message.

Provocative

Deliberately causing annoyance, anger, or another strong reaction.

Receiving

the process of acquiring information the speaker is disclosing to you including nonverbal action.

Responding

the listener's reaction to the speaker's message.

Secondary Questions

Used as follow-up questions to primary questions; typically phrased in such a way to limit the number of possible responses.

Segmentals

The individual sounds of a language, typically divided into vowels and consonant sounds.

Seventh most desirable

Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers, Job Outlook, 2015, www.naceweb.org.

STEM

Acronym; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

Stop

When the airflow is stopped or blocked completely before being released

Subordinate

A person or thing under the authority or control of another.

Substitution

When one sound is quite literally substituted for another sound; likely the result of the new sound not existing in the speaker's native language.

Therapeutic

Relating to the healing of disease; curing or restorative.

Velar

With the tongue body on or near the back of the mouth's roof (or the soft palate), in sounds like /g/ (Gap) or /ŋ/ (Sing)

Voicing

Simply refers to whether the vocal cords are vibrating and can be easily determined by gently placing the thumb and index finger around the throat (just about where the Adam's apple is). If a sound is voiced, you will feel the vibration on your fingertips; if not, then it is not a voiced consonant sound.

Vowel quality

Vowel quality is the property that makes one vowel sound different from another. The vowel quality is determined by the position of the lips, tongue, and lower jaw, and the resulting size and shape of the mouth.

Vowel template

A vowel template, much like any other template, is the pattern of stressed and unstressed vowels within a given word.

Vowels

They are the core of the syllable are produced with a relatively open vocal tract. In NAE, there are approximately 15 vowel sounds.