

Lesson 1

Title: Reducing embarrassment in pronunciation teaching



Time frame: 1 hour

Number of participants: Ideally between 5 to 15 participants

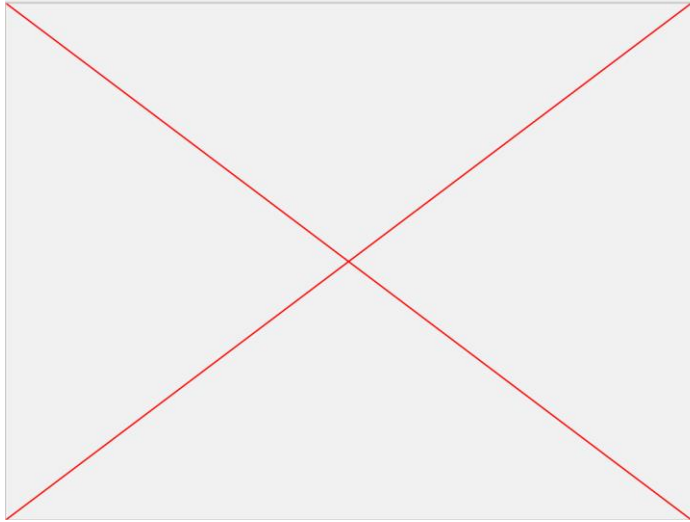
Learning outcomes:

1. To understand what role does pronunciation play in language learning
2. To understand what is the goal of teaching pronunciation
3. To identify what aspects of pronunciation do teachers need to teach
4. How teachers can help the students to practise pronunciation

Lesson structure:

Introduction
<div><p>Co-funded by the European Union</p></div> <div><p>EASE</p><p>An Emotionally-intelligent Approach to teaching Speaking in a forEign Language</p></div> <div><p>Continuing Professional Development Sessions</p></div> <div><p>The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."</p></div>
<p>INTRODUCTORY SLIDE</p> <p><i>This session's introduction is a video from "Friends" where Phoebe helps Joey prepare for an audition by teaching him how to speak. Joey does not progress well and just speaks gibberish, thinking he's doing a great job.</i></p> <p><i>This video is just a funny way to engage in the subject and reflect about how important the ability to have good pronunciation is.</i></p> <p><i>First, show the video to the participants, then engage in the discussion questions posed afterwards.</i></p> <p><i>The 3 questions invite participants to identify skills, feelings that both the learner and the teacher have or are missing and to share some personal experience or challenges in learning / teaching a language.</i></p>

Introduction



- What skills is the character missing?
- What feelings could you identify?
- In your experience, what is the biggest challenge in learning a language? What about teaching?

SLIDE 4

Content

The next slides invite us to discover which are the main aspects of pronunciation and emotional barriers while learning / speaking a foreign language. Slides 6 to 9 invite us to analyse the factors affecting pronunciation learning and understand how students feel sometimes when they are not able to have a good pronunciation of some particular sounds or words.

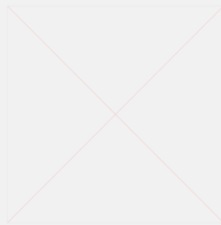
In Slide 6 there are 3 aspects of pronunciation which can influence or create difficulties in speaking in a new language, which can be translated in the aspect of "comfortable intelligibility" (Slide 7)

Aspects of Pronunciation



Phonetics

The individual sounds in a language



Word stress

The syllables in a word and where to place the stress



Intonation

The rise and fall of the voice to express tone

SLIDE 6

Aspects of Pronunciation

The key to having good pronunciation is what we call **'comfortable intelligibility'**. In other words, the person or people listening to you should be able to understand what you are saying with minimal strain.

SLIDE 7

Slides 8 and 9 present feelings and fears that adult learners might have when learning a foreign language.

Embarrassment in Pronunciation

Adult learners often feel shyness, fear, insecurity, frustration, and a range of other negative emotions surrounding pronunciation in a foreign language, causing delays or even avoidance in their learning.

SLIDE 8

Roots of Negative Feelings

- Fear of making mistakes
- Embarrassment of getting something wrong or not being understood
- Fear of standing out as an outsider or foreigner
- Being aware that the wrong sound can change the entire meaning of a sentence and worrying about miscommunication occurring as a result
- It's humiliating to say something and then say "sorry," especially if it happens more than once.
- Being aware that pronunciation can highlight that you do not 'belong' to a certain community

SLIDE 9

Slides 10 and 11 propose some strategies on how to improve students pronunciation.

Tips for Improving Students' Pronunciation

Use the IPA - Teaching your students how to read and pronounce phonetic symbols will give them a great advantage when it comes to improving their pronunciation.

Read lips, listen and imitate - check the correct position when pronouncing certain words and copying what they do can really help students' pronunciation.

Check tongue position - errors will often be due to incorrect tongue position. Tell your students to be aware of their tongue position when focusing on improving their pronunciation.

SLIDE 9

Tips for Improving Students' Pronunciation

Highlight syllable

stress – While listening, have your students take note of which syllable is stressed in a word.

Listen and repeat –

Students often find the shadowing technique or repeating after a native speaker quite useful for improving pronunciation.

Using minimal pairs and tongue twisters –

Creating sound awareness is very important to develop speech production.

SLIDE 10

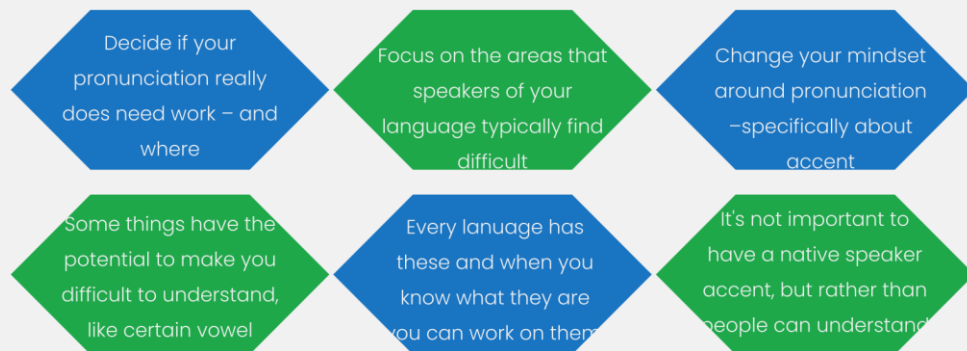
Finally slide 12 and 13 presents some factors affecting pronunciation learning and some advice that teachers can give to students in order to be more confident in their learning.

Factors Affecting Pronunciation Learning

- **Native language** – different systems of sounds, phonemes, rhythm and intonation
- **Age** – depending of the age of people they have accurate perception of the sounds of the new language
- **Exposure** – living in the right environment can help to improve our pronunciation
- **Innate phonetic ability** – some people are born with an aptitude for the skill
- **Identity and language ago** – when we like something we learn it better and we have a positive attitude towards it
- **Motivation and concern for good pronunciation** – when we are motivated we learn better than those who show no interest

SLIDE 11

Advice to Give Students about Pronunciation



SLIDE 12

Sample activities


The slides number 15,16,17 present a list of activities in order to teach better pronunciation. The 3 activities we have developed (Culture project, Shoot yourself in the foot, Debates) are used to encourage learners to focus on speaking. Slide 15, Culture project invites students to research norms, beliefs and values within a topic using the target language. The activity from Slide 16 requires first a short explanation of this idiom and invites students to share a personal experience when the student shot themselves in the foot. The activity Debates from Slide 17 invites students to express opinions and defend a point of view.

Culture Project

Working in small groups is known to reduce students' fear of speaking as there is little pressure for accuracy and fewer people to speak in front of.

- Choose a sub-topic within the culture of the target language. It can be as simple as American holiday celebrations or as complex as UK regional accents depending on the level of your students.
- Students get into groups of 2-3 and choose their own subject within the given topic. Tell them they will put together a presentation on their subject as 'experts.' The presentation will be graded on accuracy of information and oral communication skills.
- Students work for the duration of 2 or 3 classes to collaborate on creating a presentation in the target language about their subject.


SLIDE 15

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- Introduce the meaning of the idiom 'to shoot oneself in the foot.' Give an example of a time from your own life where you did something because you thought it would improve a situation, but in the end it only made things worse. Ask if anyone else has 'shot themselves in the foot' before and to share the story if they feel comfortable. You may need to give further examples if they are not grasping the meaning.
 - In groups of 2-3, students create a dialogue that demonstrates this idiom in action. Then they act it out in front of the class.

Shoot Yourself in the Foot

This activity aims to teach the idiom 'to shoot oneself in the foot' while also establishing an open and accepting classroom atmosphere where mistakes are tolerated. It is meant to be a light-hearted activity.

SLIDE 16

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- First, display a somewhat controversial statement or idea on the board. This can be something in the news, for example, or a strong opinion. Be sure to choose non-offensive topics for the debate.
 - Divide the students into 'for' and 'against' teams. Each student must first individually take notes on the reasons for being for or against.
 - Each team comes together and shares their reasons, making a collective mind map for each side. This will serve as support for students who are nervous to speak.
 - Each team takes turns debating the topic at hand, and each student must speak at least once. The teacher decides which side was more convincing.

Debates

Students feel more free to express themselves when there is no one right or wrong answer – therefore, asking opinion-based questions can spark engaging discussions where students feel free from anxiety on whether their answer is 'correct.'

SLIDE 17

Conclusion

Slide 17 invites participants to reflect on the presentation and the themes within by asking questions to encourage discussion about the activities teachers can do in order to reduce embarrassment and propose concrete activities for creating comfort in class while learning a foreign language.



Conclusion

- Which types of activities are high-pressure in terms of feeling embarrassed?
- What about low-pressure ones?
- What is one concrete action you can start doing to make students feel comfortable in your class?

SLIDE 18

Bibliography and resources for further learning



Bibliography and Resources for Further Learning

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SLIDE 19

Bibliography and Resources for Further Learning

- Tsiplakides, I., & Keramida, A. (2009). Helping students overcome foreign language speaking anxiety in the English classroom: Theoretical issues and practical recommendations. *International Education Studies*, 2(4), 39–44.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1065743.pdf>
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SLIDE 20

Notes for the facilitator:

These notes should address both online and face-to-face formats.

Note that pronunciation work has traditionally taken a secondary role in language teaching to work on grammar and more recently lexis. The teachers should do some personal research to find materials to teach pronunciation because firstly, of the lack of clear guidelines and rules available in course books, and secondly the fact that isolated exercises once a month do not seem to have much of an effect.