

Teaching**English** training videos



Pronunciation: individual sounds

Teaching students to form sounds

Unit 3 Pronunciation: individual sounds

Individual sounds

1 Before you watch

Think about your students. Which English sounds do they find most difficult to make?
For each sound, write a word you know they find difficult to say.

Write the sounds and an example word in the box. Work in pairs if you can.

Words with difficult sounds for my students

Now think about how you teach the pronunciation of English sounds to your students.
Write down at least three ways that you encourage students to make or practise the sounds
you identified above. An example is given.

Saying a word and asking the students to repeat it.

2 Watch

Now watch Programme 3. Do the Thai teachers mention any of the pronunciation problems you talked about?

Were there any you hadn't thought about?

3 Watch again

Match the advice to the pronunciation problem discussed in the programme.

A CONTRACTIONS

B WEAK AND STRONG SOUNDS

C FORMING SOUNDS

D DIFFICULT SOUNDS

- Drilling
- Pronunciation games
- Let students listen first and then reinforce with the written form.
- Repeat after the teacher.
- Use the cassette.
- Know your students' weak points.
- Practise the vowels and consonants and then put them in words and sentences.
- Introduce the students to a visual representation of the mouth: show the position of the tongue.
- Mime sounds (/ɪ/ and /i:/).
- Put two sounds together (schwa and u).
- Use fingers to show the contraction ('he' and 'is').

4 Analysis and reflection

Look at this comment made by the teacher trainer, John Kay:

‘Your students will be basing their production of English sounds on the sounds they already have from their language. So, it’s your job to make them more aware of the sounds that they have to produce.’

Look at these techniques you saw in the DVD:

- Ask students to repeat a word together as a class.
- Write the phonemic representation of a word on the board.
- Make a model of how a sound is made with the hands.
- Hold a hand to the throat to feel a voiced sound or unvoiced sound.
- Use hand gestures to show how two individual vowel sounds join little by little to make a diphthong.
- Use a gesture to indicate a long and short vowel.
- Indicate the sound of a contraction by joining fingers together.

Which of the techniques you saw on the DVD have you used to make your students more aware of how to make individual sounds? Which sounds do you/could you use them for? Can you add other techniques you find useful? Talk to a partner if you can.

Write down two or three sounds you think are most challenging for your students, and at least one idea for helping them improve each one. Use the space below to make notes. Plan when you are going to help them with these sounds in the next week or two.

1

2

3

When you have tried these techniques, complete the table below with your comments and observations. Have you tried the things you thought about? Did they work? Why/why not?

| Sound and technique | Comments (Did it help? Why? Why not? What else could I do?) |
|----------------------------|--|
| | |

5 Additional activity

John Kay says:

'For some languages you pronounce the letter how you see it, so if you see a letter 'e', then you have to pronounce it /e/. In English this is not the case, it can be /e/ or it can be /ə/.'

We use phonemic script to show how words sound rather than how they are spelled.

All of the words in the box have the vowel 'o'. Can you group the words by how the 'o' sounds? Use the phonemic chart on the next page to help you if aren't sure.

| | | | | | |
|-------|--------|---------|------|---------|------------|
| women | woman | orange | open | two | television |
| book | show | tractor | son | course | move |
| clock | group | morning | foot | toy | on |
| join | Monday | sound | town | clothes | how |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| /ɪ/ women _____ _____ | /əʊ/ open _____ _____ | /ə/ tractor _____ _____ | /ʌ/ son _____ _____ | /aʊ/ how _____ _____ |
| /ʊ/ woman _____ _____ | /uː/ two _____ _____ | /ɔɪ/ toy _____ _____ | /ɔː/ course _____ _____ | /ə/ orange _____ _____ |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--------|------|------|------|-----|-------|
| iː | ɪ | ʊ | uː | ɪ | ɪ | ʊ |
| eat | it | good | blue | here | say | pure |
| e | ə | ɜː | ɔː | ɔɪ | ʊ | e |
| egg | enough | work | walk | boy | so | there |
| æ | ʌ | ɑː | ɒ | aɪ | aʊ | |
| cat | cut | ask | box | my | now | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|
| p | b | t | d | ɾ | dʒ | k | g |
| f | v | θ | ð | s | z | ʃ | ʒ |
| m | n | ŋ | h | l | r | w | j |

6 Suggested classroom activity

If particular sounds are difficult for your learners you can use activities that focus on recognising individual sounds.

Silent sounds

The teacher silently mouths a sound and the learners say the sound or – with children – move to different parts of the room, depending on which sound they ‘hear’. This will help students focus on how sounds are made.

Minimal pairs

Minimal pairs are words where just one sound is different – e.g. ‘ship’ and ‘sheep’. Teachers can use these pairs to focus on sounds that are difficult for their students.

e.g.

| Turn left | Turn right |
|------------------|-------------------|
| ship | sheep |
| hit | heat |
| bin | bean |

Using the lists of words, students follow directions. They can then produce the sounds themselves to give directions to other students.

