

ESL Teaching Guide for Public Speaking

This Guide was written primarily for speech instructors who have little or no background in teaching ESL students. The Guide's aim is twofold: (1) to provide greater understanding and appreciation of English as a second language, and (2) to offer suggestions on how to teach ESL students within the context of the traditional public speaking course.

While some activities are suggested for ESL students in the Guide, most exercises, activities, and ideas for speaking assignments may be found in the annotations at points in the text where it is most likely that they would be introduced. For instructors who want to continue to enlarge their knowledge of how to work effectively with ESL students, a bibliography has been supplied at the end of the Guide.

PROFILE OF THE ESL STUDENT

The term "ESL (English as a Second Language) student" is used to refer to students whose first language is one other than English. While ESL students are not yet proficient in English, this does not mean that they cannot do well in a traditional public speaking course. Frequently, an introductory speech course is recommended as a means of moving them into mainstream college work while they are still enrolled in ESL English courses.

The public speaking class offers ESL students an ideal opportunity to interact with native English speakers and to improve their fluency in English and listening comprehension while learning about spoken discourse. ESL students enrich the traditional public speaking class by challenging other students and instructors to think about public speaking within the broader context of the many diverse voices that are increasingly a part of the American "chorus." Speech instructors should be aware that the ESL population will continue to grow into the twenty-first century. To meet the diverse needs of these students, instructors must be willing to adapt their teaching methods. This Guide provides ideas and suggestions on how to teach ESL students in the public speaking classroom.

TYPES OF ESL STUDENTS

The ESL students in the public speaking classroom may be a homogeneous group who have the same native language in common and are at similar levels in their English proficiency. However, it is more likely that they will be from a variety of cultures and present varying degrees of competence in spoken and written English, and thus present an array of problems that cannot be tackled with any single catchall approach. The following are some of the features that distinguish ESL students from one another.

Levels of Education

ESL students differ from one another in the levels of education they already have and how long they have studied English. Variations in educational level and the manner in which students learned English can manifest themselves in differing levels of proficiency in the four skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Some students are bi- and tri-lingual and may exhibit nearly native-like spoken English because they were born in the U.S. or came to this country when very young and learned English in American public school systems. These students are fluent in spoken English but often weak in writing and reading.

Other ESL students are adults who finished secondary school and/or college in their native countries and either learned English as a foreign language or picked up some English while living in the U.S. These ESL students may be graduate students who plan to return to their native countries after college. The written skills of these ESL students may be better than their listening comprehension and speaking skills. Adult ESL students often have entrenched pronunciation problems which are difficult to correct. Still other ESL students may have been educated in their native countries but did not learn English before coming to the U.S. These students have great difficulty with both written and spoken English.

The most problematic ESL students are those who are semi-illiterate in their first language because they came to the U.S. as children or were unable to obtain schooling in their native countries. Lacking knowledge of the linguistic structures of their native languages, they generally have the most difficult time learning English.

TIP

Find out the types of ESL students that you have by having each of them fill out a card on which is indicated: country of origin, number of years in the U.S., highest grade completed in country of origin, highest grade completed in U.S., number of years studying English, and language spoken in the home.

Figure 1 Types of ESL Students

Bilingual; educated in U.S.	Bilingual; educated abroad/college	No knowledge of English; educated abroad	Bilingual; semi-literate in native language and in English
Native-like fluency in English	English as a foreign language	Political refugees who did not learn English before coming to U.S.	Little education
Weak skills in writing and reading	Problem with listening comprehension and fluency; fossilized	Poor written and spoken English skills.	Poor skills, most difficult time learning English

	pronunciation errors.		
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Different Learning Styles

ESL students may differ in terms of their learning styles. They may be either analytical or global learners.

Analytical learners are more interested in detail and rule learning and often shy away from unstructured activities. They like listening to lectures and taking notes.

Global learners prefer more loosely structured communicative activities. They are more interested in communicating their main ideas than in grammar and structure.

ESL students also vary in learning styles regarding their sensory preferences. Asian students tend to be more visually oriented, whereas Latinos tend to be more auditorily oriented. Visual learners who are more oriented to reading than speaking often have weaker oral/communication skills. Many ESL students are hands-on learners.

ESL students also have different listening styles. For example, there are differences in listening styles between global and analytical learners. In listening, global learners tend to focus on the main idea and the rhythm and music of the language, whereas analytical learners focus on the structure and logic of the message. Global listeners may have difficulty focusing on the details of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. These differing listening styles suggest that instructors should try to include both auditory and visual input in their presentations.

TIP

Find out what type of learners you have in the classroom by conducting a Learning Styles Inventory. [See Reid (1987) and Oxford, et al. (1991) for examples of Learning Styles Inventories.] Such an inventory helps create an appreciation of diversity. The results of a Learning Styles Inventory can be used by instructors as well as other students to adapt their communication to fit the needs of their audience.

ACCULTURATION VERSUS ASSIMILATION

The ESL students in your speech classroom are in the process of acculturating, or learning about and adapting to U.S. culture. Acculturation is an additive process in which the learner takes on a new culture and cultural persona while maintaining the old self. In the past, many non-native U.S. citizens sought assimilation rather than acculturation. Assimilation is a process in which the learner cuts off all ties with his old culture in order to become totally identified and absorbed into the new culture. Today, ESL students are more likely to seek acculturation rather than assimilation.

Many acculturating students want to adopt the values and lifestyles of the dominant U.S. culture; however, they also take pride in their native countries. It is important for instructors to value and

give voice to the various cultures in the classroom, while reaffirming the practical value of adapting to the mainstream U.S. culture.

Some ESL students are poorly acculturated and remain tightly enclosed in their native cultures, socializing exclusively with people from their group, speaking their native language at home and in their communities, reading their native language newspapers and watching native language TV channels. Such social and psychological distance from the mainstream American culture limits an ESL student's ability to gain in English fluency. Concerned instructors should try to help such students with acculturation by encouraging communication and social contact outside the classroom with native English speakers.

DIFFERING MOTIVATIONS OF ESL STUDENTS

Motivation for learning English is a key factor in whether students will make strides in improving fluency and comprehension in a traditional public speaking course. If speech is a required course, their motivation may be lower than if the course is elective. Most ESL students who elect a speech course are motivated by extrinsic factors—such as getting a job or furthering a career. ESL students will also have widely different expectations of what will be offered in a public speaking course because speech courses may not be offered in their native countries. Speech instructors should try to discover the motivations and expectations of ESL students.

One of the best ways to motivate ESL students is to make instruction relevant to their levels of education, learning-style preferences, and cultural backgrounds. Because few classes are homogeneous, instructors will need to provide a wide range of stimulating and relevant activities to reach all segments of the student population. The most highly motivating approach is to create an interactive multicultural classroom.

CULTURE SHOCK AND ANXIETY

If speaking in front of an audience produces anxiety for native speakers, it is doubly so for ESL students who lack essential skills in English. ESL students who are visual learners are especially troubled by formal speaking assignments. In its acute form, this anxiety may be a manifestation of the culture shock that occurs when individuals fear they are losing themselves in the mainstream American culture. It may be characterized by extreme anxiety, panic, emotional withdrawal, and depression. While instructors should be on the lookout for students suffering from culture shock, the majority of ESL students will be experiencing simple performance anxiety.

Communication anxiety manifests itself differently depending on the individual and his or her culture. Just as with mainstream students, the symptoms of anxiety for ESL students can include poor class participation, lateness, absence, talking in class, puzzled or angry expressions, acting silly, and the inability or unwillingness to respond to questions. In general, anxiety results in lowered student motivation, inhibition, and unwillingness to take any kind of risk.

Instructors can use a variety of techniques to help students work through communication anxiety:

- breathing and relaxation exercises,
- humor,

- positive feedback and encouragement,
- holding criticism for written comments or private conferences,
- creating small groups in which students can share their anxiety,
- having students make presentations in small groups before speaking in front of the class,
- encouraging students to share their concerns and fears with the instructor,
- creating an appreciation of diversity in the classroom,
- setting clear goals and expectations for students so that they know what is expected of them,
- having students keep a journal in which they record something that they did well or improved upon.

BALANCE OF ESL WITH NON-ESL STUDENTS

Speech instructors should also take into account the balance of ESL with non-ESL students when considering how to approach teaching the class. If there is only a handful of ESL students in the classroom, instructors can teach the class as they usually would and provide special extra-class conferences and group work for ESL students. However, if more than one-third of the class is ESL, then instructors must find ways to address the special needs of these students without sacrificing course content.

TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING ESL STUDENTS

Speech instructors will need to adapt their teaching methods to deal effectively with the challenges brought to the classroom by ESL students. Faced with growing numbers of ESL students, instructors will need to use alternative teaching methods. Fortunately, many of the instructional methods that are used in teaching English as a Second Language can be used with mixed-ESL and non-ESL student populations in the traditional speech classroom. This manual involves practical advice as well as explanations about how some of these instructional methods can be successfully used by speech instructors.

Before we move to a discussion of alternative teaching methods, there are several important techniques that should already be a part of the instructor's repertoire: praise, patience, and clarity.

BE GENEROUS WITH PRAISE

ESL students may be new to this country and suffering from culture shock. They may also feel embarrassed or ill at ease because of their speech errors. Instructors should take extra pains to make ESL students feel welcome through positive feedback and praise. All too often, ESL students, because of bad experiences with instructors who have no background in teaching ESL

students, believe that instructors are prejudiced and do not care about their welfare. Instructors should show ESL students that they care about their development by speaking with them after class and during office hours. Personal concern from the instructor is one of the biggest motivating factors in working with ESL students.

BE PATIENT

Instructors need to reach out to ESL students to get them to participate in class. ESL students may never volunteer comments or ask questions unless the instructor calls on them. The instructor needs a lot of patience and skill in dealing with the verbal responses of ESL students and should avoid jumping to another student for a quicker answer. Instead, instructors might ask their students to help each other phrase or paraphrase their questions or responses. Instructors should compliment students when they make an effort to participate in class.

BE CLEAR

Instructors need to ensure that ESL students understand them. Often ESL students will sit politely in class, feigning interest and understanding, when they do not understand what the instructor or fellow students are saying. To assist the listening comprehension of ESL students, instructors should

- preview and summarize material.
- use clear transitions when speaking.
- use gestures, facial expressions, posture, and body motions to clarify meaning.
- vary their volume and intonation, speak more slowly and clearly, and use pauses to help ESL students process information.
- put homework assignments in writing on paper or on the board.
- rephrase complex ideas and restate key words and concepts.
- avoid idiomatic or colloquial language.
- use analogies and examples ESL students will be familiar with.
- check to see that ESL students understand by asking questions or giving short quizzes.

Many ESL students believe that they have to comprehend every word that they hear. Native speakers do not; they are familiar with filling in gaps in meaning. The best way to help ESL students with this problem is to reduce listening-related anxiety in the classroom.

ALTERNATIVE TEACHING METHODS

Creating a Multicultural Classroom

Instructors should view the presence of ESL students in the classroom as an opportunity to create a truly multicultural learning environment. ESL students may have frames of reference,

rhetorical traditions, and language usage that are different from one another and from the mainstream U.S. culture. Students should try to understand and appreciate the differences within their classes rather than ignoring them. Students born in the U.S. need to know more about the ESL members of their audience to successfully adapt their speeches. Similarly, ESL students need to learn as much as they can about mainstream U.S. culture and the other cultures represented in their classes.

The welter of terms—native, nonnative, ethnicity, race, cultural, sociocultural, multicultural, diversity, demographic groups, etc.—can be very confusing. Simplify the discussion of demographics by adopting one term, such as "culture," to refer to groups distinguishable from one another by such factors as race, gender, or ethnicity. Make it clear that all students are part of the mainstream U.S. culture but that many have affiliations with one or more other cultures within it.

Sharing experiences, beliefs, traditions, practices, and features of the various classroom cultures enhances appreciation for diversity. Consider assignments on multicultural topics and some which involve visits to cultural events, museums, lectures, or places of interest in the nearby community. In addition to speeches and group exercises in which students share aspects of their cultures, instructors might want to encourage multicultural discussions of representative speeches from among the cultures represented in the class.

Issues of cultural diversity can leave ESL students feeling confused and lost in their new culture, and mainstream U.S. students feeling threatened. It is important to keep class discussions focused on the commonalities between the mainstream U.S. culture and the cultures represented in the classroom. Instructors should accentuate the positive elements of multiculturalism and focus class discussions on the role that communication can play in creating smooth relationships among cultures.

Suggested Multicultural Activities and Assignments:

1. Invite to the class speakers from the campus and nearby community who represent the students' various cultures.
2. Assign a speech of explanation about an object that is indigenous to a given culture.
3. Assign compare-and-contrast speeches in which students use a picture or object from their culture and compare it to a similar one in the mainstream American culture.
4. Have students conduct Learning Styles Inventories of their classmates. (These inventories can be found in Reid (1987), and Oxford et al. (1991).)
5. Lead cultural discussions sparked by videotaped speeches or Learning Style Inventories.
6. Have students act as "cultural ambassadors" who deliver speeches designed to increase appreciation and understanding of other cultures.

7. Have panel presentations by students, grouped according to their cultures, on a topic relating to their culture, e.g., "The Music of the Caribbean," "Chinese Festivals," etc.
8. Assign informative speeches that are based on a trip to a natural history or ethnographic museum in which each speaker is responsible for reporting on the exhibits of a particular culture.
9. Assign a speech in which students discuss folk tales or stories that are part of their culture.
10. Assign a speech of demonstration on some aspect of the student's culture, such as food, dance, music, art, drama, or crafts.
11. Assign a speech of description on one's hometown.
12. Assign persuasive speeches that describe serious issues facing the people of cultures represented in the class.
13. Assign a speech of tribute to a famous person, living or dead, chosen from the student's culture.

CREATING A STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOM

The instructor's most effective method of addressing the challenges presented by ESL students is to create a student-centered classroom. The traditional role of the instructor as authority figure and source of all learning stifles communication. ESL students need as much opportunity as possible to speak in class in order to develop communication skills and fluency. The role of the instructor should be that of a facilitator who orchestrates the many activities in the classroom. The instructor should also be a diagnostician, helper, advisor, and coordinator.

Self-Monitoring

Instructors should encourage students to take more responsibility for their learning by teaching them how to monitor their own speech production. Instructors have limited time and cannot be responsible for all the learning that takes place in the classroom, but they should provide ESL students with the tools to identify and correct speech errors that interfere with listener comprehension.

Dialogue Tapes

Instructors might consider having the students keep dialogue audiotapes as the speech counterpart of the written response journal. The tapes allow students an additional opportunity to express themselves orally in English; provide a means of communicating privately with the instructor; and offer students an auditory mirror for monitoring their speech production. They are especially useful for recording practices of class presentations.

Dialogue tapes are kept throughout the semester to provide a cumulative record of the student's progress. The instructor should collect the tapes periodically and make recorded and written comments to the student. Because dialogue tapes require a lot of the instructor's time, they are

most useful when there are only a few ESL students in the classroom. They can also be used on a voluntary basis for students who really want additional help with their speeches.

Language Logs or Class Journals

Students should use language logs or class journals for writing down new vocabulary words, word pronunciations, and examples of grammatical usage that they hear inside and outside of the class. Students can periodically share material from the logs with their peers and write in them their personal speech goals and periodic assessments of their progress.

Small Groups

The best way to manage a public speaking classroom in which more than one-third of the students are ESL at varying levels of proficiency is to engage the class in small group exercises. Participation in small groups assists ESL students in gaining fluency through frequent practice. Interactive small-group work often lessens student anxiety about presentations. It is sometimes more interesting and more motivating for students. Moreover, communication apprehensive students are more likely to speak up in small groups than they are in front of the whole class. Within the group, students can monitor, correct, supply words, encourage, make suggestions, review, and critique each other.

TIP

A group of from two to eight works best. Groups should be put together based on the purpose of the assignment. For assignments such as pronunciation practice or panel presentations, instructors might want to group students by culture with ESL students grouped according to country of origin. There are, however, several problems with this type of grouping. First, students may decide to speak their native language. This can be avoided by appointing a gatekeeper who reminds students that they are to speak English or incur infractions for not doing so. Second, students with the same first language, who are at the same level of proficiency, may have difficulty hearing and correcting each other's speech errors. Third, ESL students should be encouraged to socialize with mainstream U.S. American students, which the cultural groupings would not allow.

For most assignments you will want to consider mixed groups of ESL and non-ESL students. The benefit of such groupings is that the more proficient students can assist the instructor. Carefully consider putting together groups so that there is a balance between the various cultures and levels of language fluency. Also, consider putting different students in the groups each time so that everyone gets to know one another.

Setting Up Assignments for Small Groups

The following guidelines will help in forming groups:

- Announce the assignment before students form groups. After groups are formed, their attention is focused on each other rather than the instructor.
- Make sure there is a clear task for each assignment.

- Have the groups assign roles, e.g., timekeeper, note-taker, chairperson, reporter, etc.

Peer Monitoring

The use of small groups facilitates the practice of peer monitoring and peer review. Group work can be used for peer monitoring of pronunciation errors and peer review for outlining speeches. Many students complete their formal outlines without reviewing them for mistakes. Peer reviewers should troubleshoot each other's outlines for mistakes in grammar, spelling, language appropriateness, and vocabulary. Instructors might consider providing a checklist of the most common grammatical errors made by ESL students. In addition, students might be encouraged to write short analyses of their own or others' formal speech outlines according to a series of questions provided by the instructor.

PROMOTING ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Speech instructors have a responsibility for assisting ESL students in developing listening skills. They might consider having students alternate written critiques of their listening with written critiques of student speeches. Listener critiques help students to appreciate the important role played by listening in the communication process and assist them in recognizing problems in their listening behavior. Listening is not just attending to spoken verbal meaning, it also involves attention to paralinguistics. The instructor might consider playing videotaped examples of speeches in order to show how facial expression, gesture, posture, and action modify the meaning of verbal discourse. Instructors might also wish to turn off the picture so that students can hear how stress, intonation, rhythm, etc., are used to create meaning.

Because listening behaviors are culture specific, ESL students need to learn listening feedback cues which convey attention and interest. Instructors may wish to have ESL students identify specific behaviors (i.e., eye contact, facial expression) that characterize listening behavior in their cultures and contrast these with listening behavior in the United States. Instructors might also assign an exercise in modeling listening behavior in which two U.S. American students engage in a conversation in front of the class. One student tells a story and the other expresses interest or lack of interest through eye contact, body posture, gestures, and facial expressions.

ESL students also need listening practice outside the classroom. A good listening exercise for ESL as well as non-ESL students is to have them watch the evening news for thirty minutes each night and keep records of their listening in their journals. For example, they might be asked to be attentive to the nonverbal aspects of the newscaster's speech. You might also assign a speech built around a newscast format.

ESL students need help with listening comprehension because they often do not have the language skills to process all of the information they receive. Students may need to be taught how to facilitate discussions by asking for information, clarification, verification, opinion, and correction.

Asking for Information

Often ESL students need to be taught how to obtain information by asking Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. Many have a problem with the correct use of the helping verb "do" when

asking questions in the present tense:

How do you say . . . in English?

Where do I buy the book?

Where does she work?

Asking for Clarification

Questions for clarification are used when an ESL student asks someone to slow down, rephrase, repeat, or explain information that has not been understood:

Would you please speak more slowly.

Would you please repeat that.

I'm sorry, I didn't understand you.

Did you say . . . ?

What does . . . mean?

I'm not sure whether . . .

I heard that . . .

Asking for Verification

Questions for verification are used when a listener wants to check on whether something is correct:

Did I hear you say . . . ?

I heard that . . .

The information I read said that . . .

Is the article in Time magazine?

Asking for an Opinion

Questions seeking an opinion are used when a student wants to get someone's views or position on a topic:

In your opinion . . .

What do you think . . . ?

What is your position on . . . ?

Don't you think . . . ?

Asking for Correction

ESL students should be encouraged to ask more proficient students to correct severe speech errors with questions such as the following:

Would you please tell me how to say . . .

Would you please help me with my pronunciation of . . .

Did I say that correctly?

Using Modeling

Modeling is a teaching method based on learning through imitation. Hearing appropriate speech provides ESL students with a type of understanding that explanations only can approximate. Be sure ESL students have a wide range of speech acts to model. Ask them to listen to weather reports or the news to learn new vocabulary and pronunciation. Play tapes of speeches for ESL students to model.

PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation is a term that refers to how words are spoken in context. It includes the articulation of the individual sounds of a language as well as how those sounds are connected, accented, and varied in pitch. It also includes the rhythm characteristic of a language. The accents of ESL students usually follow the patterns of pronunciation of their first language. Accents may be a unique and valued feature of an individual's speech. However, if they interfere with communication, the student's goal should be to soften the accent.

SHOULD PRONUNCIATION BE TAUGHT?

A lack of intelligible pronunciation sometimes makes the speech of ESL students difficult for others to comprehend. While some ESL students may have an opportunity to take a voice and diction course, for others the public speaking course may be the only place where they will get help in this area. In recent years the focus of public speaking courses has been more on the content of speeches than their delivery. As the number of ESL students with pronunciation problems grows, one of the central concerns of ESL speech instructors should be: "What can I do to help ESL students with pronunciation?" In answering this question, instructors should consider (1) their willingness and ability to devote time inside and out of classes to pronunciation work; (2) the number of ESL students in the class; (3) the severity of pronunciation problems; and (4) the availability of language tapes and other materials.

For instructors who decide to take on the added task of addressing the pronunciation problems of their ESL students there are a variety of approaches and strategies that can be used.

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

The first step in working with pronunciation problems is to identify the major mispronunciations of each ESL student in the class. This may be done through diagnostic testing. Have students record initial speech samples on individual tapes and establish goals for improvement with each student. As the term progresses monitor the student's progress. The diagnostic should be kept

until the end of the term so that progress can be measured by the instructor and observed by the student. Diagnostic testing enables instructors to personalize their instruction with each ESL student.

TIP

Have students record a uniform speech sample from a pronunciation textbook or a passage from the text used in the class. Having each ESL student record the same passage makes it easier for the instructor to diagnose the sample. However, because a reading sample does not capture spontaneous speech, you should also have ESL students record their answers to a series of questions about their education, amount of English study, and motivation for learning English. You should also have them record an impromptu sample in which they speak briefly on a topic that interests them.

In analyzing the sample, the instructor should write down the student's strengths and weaknesses, problems they have with specific sounds, and problems with rate, volume, intonation, stress, and rhythm. This diagnosis should be kept throughout the term to update and monitor student progress.

Setting Goals

When diagnostic testing is completed, the instructor should schedule conferences with each student to identify problems and set goals for improvement. Instructors should find out what the students believe needs immediate improvement and work on these problems first. In selecting which problems to monitor and correct, instructors should consider whether the problem impedes communication, is recurring or isolated, affects the student's ethos, or can easily be corrected. In the diagnostic conference, the instructor should play the tape, stopping after each sentence, and ask the student to identify errors. If the student doesn't hear an important error, the instructor should point it out. The instructor and student should target specific pronunciation problems and not try to correct everything at once. Periodic monitoring and resetting of goals should be done by the student and the instructor throughout the term.

Targeting Problems

The most common method used by instructors to address the pronunciation errors of ESL students is to target six to eight problem sounds. In selecting the sounds to target, the instructor should consider the frequency of occurrence of the problem sound in spoken English. For example, *t* is a frequently used English consonant and should be targeted if the student has difficulty with its pronunciation.

The instructor with limited time will find that it is better to focus on the articulation of consonants than vowels. Consonants are easier to correct and are where the greatest problems with intelligibility occur.

Most ESL students will experience some level of interference with the following consonants: voiced *th*, unvoiced *th*, *r*, *ch*, soft *g*, *p*, *t*, *d*, and *k*.

USING AUDIOTAPE FOR PRACTICE

Students can be taught to monitor their production of target sounds using audiotapes. Ideally

students should be able to listen to and discriminate target sounds on tapes. In sessions with the instructor, students can learn to model the production of target sounds by watching the mouth movements in a mirror and feeling the movements of the sounds. Students can tape these sessions. During practice, students should be encouraged to exaggerate the correct production of target sounds.

The mechanicalness of such drill work lacks the authenticity of spontaneous speech and is not very motivating. Reading speeches and passages from literature or poetry creates more interest than repeating sentences out of context. Drills should be used as only one part of an overall approach to pronunciation correction for individuals who want and need such work. Ideally, pronunciation work is best done as a part of actual speaking tasks.

SPEECH PATTERNS

While proper articulation of sounds is important, instructors must also address problems of stress, rhythm, and intonation. The meanings of speech are context-dependent, that is, the individual sounds are altered according to their position within the flow of words as manifested by stress, rhythm, and intonation.

Stress

Improper stressing of syllables is one of the major reasons why the speech of ESL students is often difficult to understand. A key to successfully speaking English is the student's ability to identify what syllables should be stressed.

Stress indicates the important word in a phrase or sentence, as in:

I went to the party, **YESTERDAY**.

WHOSE party?

My friend **SALLY'S** party.

The stressed words identify the important information. In spoken discourse stress is indicated by pitch changes, vowel lengthening, and volume. Unstressed words are spoken at a more rapid rate, with less volume and elided vowels.

Rhythm

Spoken English consists of regularly recurring patterns of stressed syllables. Improper rhythm is a major reason why some ESL students are difficult for U.S. American listeners to understand.

TIP

ESL students may have difficulty hearing the stress patterns of English and understanding how its speakers create meaning. Have ESL students listen to examples of recorded speech for stress patterns and model these patterns on their dialogue tapes. They should also look up in a dictionary the stress on syllables in words that they are unsure of.

Intonation

Intonation is the musical pattern of pitch changes within speech. Most ESL students transfer the

pitch patterns and rhythm of their mother tongue to English. They may need to learn to hear and reproduce the intonation patterns of U.S. English to be more intelligible. English intonation patterns are used to contrast new and old information and show the beginnings and ends of thought units.

Instructors should concentrate on the most frequent intonation patterns:

Rising/falling intonation at the end of sentences: "It's six o'clock,"

imperatives: "Sit down!"

and

in questions: "Where is she?"

Thought Units

ESL students may need to be taught how to divide speech into thought units and should understand how these units contribute to the meaning of speech. Many ESL students pause in the middle of thought units instead of at the end of them, speaking in a "halting style." They need to learn how to link words within thought units so that their speech flows smoothly to U.S. American ears.

It is best to work on pronunciation as part of speaking assignments. When students rehearse and record speeches on their tapes, they should monitor their articulation, rate, stress and rhythm, and intonation, along with selected sounds.

FORMAL VERSUS INFORMAL LANGUAGE

Vocabulary and word choice are an essential aspect of correct speaking. ESL students may have difficulty with the appropriate language style for specific contexts, for example, differentiating formal and informal language. Some cultures, such as Chinese and Russian, place a high value on formal language, while others, such as Hispanic cultures, use language more informally. ESL students may not know that the informal expressions they pick up in conversations with U.S. friends may not be appropriate to public speaking. ESL students should be made aware that public speaking generally requires a somewhat more formal use of language than conversation. Chinese and Russian students, however, may need to work on using less formal language so they do not sound stilted. Instructors should temper their use of slang, idioms, and colloquialisms in class presentations because these may be confusing to ESL students.

LISTENING AND PRONUNCIATION

Many students lack the ability to hear errors in their pronunciation. ESL students need to develop a clear sense of target sound, stress patterns, rhythms, and intonation. They should then learn to hear how their speech differs from the target. Instructors can help students discriminate sounds through modeling and taped practice. Tapes provide an opportunity for students to listen for targeted pronunciation in their speech samples. In conferences the instructor can play back the tape and pause after each thought unit, asking, "Was that correct?" "How should it sound?" At the end of the session, the instructor should summarize the student's progress and set future goals.

PRONUNCIATION TEACHING METHODS BASED ON NUMBER OF ESL STUDENTS IN THE CLASS

Small Number of ESL Students in the Class

If there are only a few ESL students in the class, the instructor might do the diagnostic taping in class, then meet with the ESL students during office hours to identify major speech problems and set goals for improvement. Students themselves should be responsible for monitoring their progress on tapes.

Large Number of ESL Students in the Class

For a class with a large number of ESL students the instructor might do diagnostic taping to identify speech problems. Introduce the ESL students to the equipment and the basics of pronunciation in group conferences, then set up peer groups in the classroom to work on improvement.

PEER GROUPS

Peer groups can facilitate the teaching of pronunciation in a mixed class of ESL and non-ESL students. Peer groups recreate the small schoolhouse model of teaching in which students of varying ability levels are grouped together, with more proficient students handling some teaching. Peer group work should involve about twenty to thirty minutes of class time every other week for work on speech problems.

A peer group might include two or three students whose spoken comprehensibility is poor, five or six students with some severe speech problems, twelve students with enunciation problems, and five or six U.S. American speakers who need work on delivery. The instructor should distribute exercises to each group with simple instructions, then facilitate and monitor the work of the group.

The instructor should meet with ESL students individually or in small groups to discuss problems, monitor progress, and reset goals. To assess progress, the instructor should have students record a midterm and a final passage on their tapes.

OUTLINING

Structuring is not a linear process for all cultures. Speech outlining is difficult for many ESL students if they come from cultures with nonlinear discourse patterns. Worried about their inability to organize their ideas, many ESL students will want to write out their speeches.

Outlining provides a procedure that approaches how people really organize their ideas. The key ingredient in successful outlining is providing ESL students with a way to organize, analyze, and revise their outlines. Outlining practice helps the ESL student develop ideas through collaborative, group work and peer review.

SKILLS NEEDED

There are five skills ESL students may need special help with: (1) topic selection, (2) research,

(3) outlining, (4) peer review, and (5) revision. Outlining provides:

Topic Selection

Generating topic ideas can be carried out by the whole class, in pairs, in small groups, or by the student working alone. Topic generation methods include charting interests, brainstorming, or idea mapping.

Once ideas for topics have been generated, students can select specific topics and analyze them using the guidelines set forth in Chapter 5 of the text. After topics have been analyzed, students should select one topic based on criteria questions such as: Am I really interested in the topic? Do I know anything about the topic? What do I need to learn? Does the topic satisfy the assignment? Why do I want to speak on the topic? Will my classmates be interested in the topic? What do they already know about it?

At the end of the class session, students should share their selected topics with the class to further refine and clarify them.

Topic generation, analysis, and selection as a collaborative group effort provides input which helps ESL students to understand what is required of them and to assess potential interest in suggested topics.

Research

Using the materials in the text and IRM, have students list their experiences with and knowledge of the topic. Interviewing is a good way for ESL students to gather information for their speeches. It also encourages ESL students to explore the world outside the classroom and improve their English fluency. Consider assigning an interview of a classmate, an authority, or a family member to gather supporting material for a speech.

All students should be encouraged to use the library for research.

Outlining

Students should outline their speeches as a series of drafts, developing from the early stages of working outlines to the final formal outline. Along the way they should be given guidelines for revising their outlines and feedback on their work.

Peer Review

Peer reviews involve having students listen to or read each other's outlines and prepare oral or written responses based on a set of specific questions. Peer reviews help students with the difficult tasks of organizing their speeches, developing their listening and critiquing skills, and developing audience awareness.

Peer review involves the following process:

1. Students listen to or read outlines of speeches to which they respond orally or in writing based on a set of questions that focus on specific aspects of the student's work. For example, the students assist each other with things like

phrasing the specific purpose or thesis statement and designating the main points.

2. Students then respond to the peer reviews of their outlines and revise them accordingly.
3. The instructor checks revised student outlines in relation to the focus questions and makes written or oral comments to the student.

Revision

Students review each other's final outlines. The revision stage should also involve a grammar check and considerations of the outline format as well as questions on content.

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