

# PRONUNCIATION



**BRITISH COUNCIL SPAIN – MOTIVATING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES  
& TIPS FOR PRONUNCIATION**



# MESSAGE FROM...

## Director, Barcelona

Welcome to this year's British Council Spain mini-publication - prepared, as usual, in advance of our annual September teachers' conferences in Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, and Valencia.

I'm writing as a newcomer to Spain, having arrived early in 2014, and it's been an interesting period, as I've learned much about the English teaching going on here. I must say that overall the picture is a very positive one: almost everybody has told me that levels of English have improved significantly. Students who would have been proud to pass First Certificate ten years ago, for example, are now taking exams at C1 or C2 level.

This is a great endorsement of the work that teachers have done over the last few years. And, of course, it has brought new challenges: as levels improve, the expectations of students (and their parents) have increased as well. Our students now have much more specific goals than in the past, and they expect us, as their teachers, to help them get there.

In this context, pronunciation is very relevant to our theme of 'Creative ELT'. We know that the ability to speak clearly and confidently in English is one of the things our students value most, and also one of the things they feel most insecure about. Whether you see yourself talking to foreign clients in a future career, studying in the UK, or simply chatting with friends on the internet, you want to be understood and you want to make a good impression. For teachers, on the other hand, pronunciation can be one of the hardest areas of language to integrate into a course.

So I hope this booklet will enable you to share fresh ideas on pronunciation teaching, and you will take home a range of useful (and practical) approaches that you can build into your classes. If, during the coming academic year, these things help your students to express themselves with greater confidence, it will truly be a success.

**RICHARD ROOZE**



## BANANA!

**Contributed by:** Graham Bickell

**What happens:** This basic warm-up activity helps with intonation and stress. The students role-play a dialogue but replace all words with 'banana'. They have to convey feeling or emotion (for example, anger, frustration, love) and function (for example, suggesting, requesting) by using appropriate stress and rhythm. Use a YouTube, or similar, clip of dialogue, and then model the 'banana' version.

## THE FOUR CORNERS GAME

**Contributed by:** Cheryl Kirkland

**What happens:** Choose four words or sounds that you have been practising,

that are going to come up in the lesson, or that students are having problems with. Before the class you need to compile a list of words which include the four sounds. Designate each sound to a corner of the room. Get the students to stand in the middle of the room and make sure they know which sound is in each corner. Call out your list and the students have to run to the corresponding corner. You can also ask older students to compile the list

## STAND UP, SIT DOWN! STRESS SENTENCES

**Contributed by:** Hannah Norwood (with thanks to Joe Wellwood)

**What happens:** Choose a useful sentence,

for example, “I went to the shop to buy a book”. Choose (in this case) nine students to represent each word in the sentence. Instruct students to sit down if their word contains a weak form. Students then try to say the sentence, including the stress. Students try again but this time faster and with exaggerated pronunciation leading up to a ‘final performance’.

Students can also generate their own sentences for other groups to practise.

#### HERE IS THE NEWS!

**Contributed by:** Jan Byrne

**What happens:** Perhaps after working on some grammar/lexis, watch BBC Newsround ([www.bbc.co.uk/newsround](http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround)) and do some listening skills work. Then get students to make their own news programme, writing the script and highlighting aspects of connected speech. After practising, film the programme. When the students watch it, get them to listen and comment on their pronunciation and choose areas they would like to work on in the future.



#### STRIPS

**Contributed by:** Natalia Khan

**What happens:** This works especially well with Primary aged learners. First, give the students a strip of paper with a word that they have learnt and been drilled with previously. Place various phonemes that are being studied around the classroom. Students have to go and stand next to the phoneme which corresponds to their word. As a class, listen to the word and decide if each sound is where it should be.

#### POEMS

**Contributed by:** Jenny Dale

**What happens:** Students make up short poems in groups and then practise reading the other poems. Get them to write a check list for things to listen for, such as rising or falling intonation. You may want to give them such a list the first time, and then train them to make their own, so as to highlight areas to focus on.

#### TONGUE TWISTERS

**Contributed by:** Peter Jeffrie

**What happens:** Young learners love tongue twisters and there are plenty of examples on YouTube or similar video sites. Students

can compare their production with native speaker production using the video clips. You could even get them to record their own, using digital voice recorders or devices, and compare them with the videos they saw. It can be a lot of fun!

#### PRONUNCIATION TENNIS

**Contributed by:** Brian Milligan

**What happens:** Students sit in teams or pairs and have to ‘hit’ words containing the same sounds backwards and forwards - the rules are the same as tennis, so there is a competitive aspect. If a player says a word which does not have the same sound, or if they hesitate for too long, the other player or team gets the point.

This game can be used as reinforcement or practice after presentation of a specific sound, or for working on minimal pairs such as ‘ship’ and ‘sheep’. Alternatively, it can be used as a revision warmer. This activity can also be adapted to be used with lexical fields, irregular verbs, and so on.

#### MAKING WORD STRESS PHYSICAL

**Contributed by:** Sheona Smith

**What happens:** For this activity, you need a box of colourful elastic bands, some target



vocabulary (like extreme adjectives, such as infuriating, excruciating), and a good dose of humour!

After having highlighted the form and meaning of your target lexis, it is important to focus on the pronunciation of the lexis in both connected speech and of the item itself. You can do this in the following way:

1. Put up the individual words on the board and mark the main stress.
2. Encourage your students to work in pairs to pronounce the individual words, stressing the main syllable and evaluating their own and their partner's pronunciation.
3. Next, you demonstrate the 'physical'

aspect by stretching your elastic band across both thumbs, pronouncing the word on the stressed syllable and at the same time stretch the elastic band: e.g. 'aMAzing', with the stretching on the 'MA'.

4. Now hand out elastic bands to each of the students, and have them pronounce the target vocabulary again while stretching the elastic band on the stressed syllable. This usually gets students laughing, but encourage them to keep trying to stress the correct syllable in the target vocabulary.
5. For fun, students can repeat the activity but mime the words using the elastic band to help their partners guess the target

vocabulary.

Although students may 'over-exaggerate' the stressed syllable at first, this activity really makes the task memorable and should help towards making them more aware of the importance of marking stress in the correct place.

This simple but very effective activity adds a bit of fun to practising pronunciation, and raises awareness of how important it is to make students 'feel' the language. It can be used in class for all levels and group types; from YL classes to Advanced ESP courses.

#### PRONUNCIATION BASKETBALL

**Contributed by:** Cordelia Birkbeck

**What happens:** The whole class sit in a semi-circle with a space in the middle. Teams are divided into three groups and given A4 paper of different colours - say blue, red and yellow. The paper is scrunched into balls. Buckets or watepaper bins at the front of the classroom or in the middle are assigned a phoneme, for example, one bucket/bin is /l/ while another is /i:/. The teacher says a word, e.g 'sheep', then says "GO!" and the students throw their balls into the corresponding bucket/bin. Students get a point for their team if their ball is in the correct bucket/bin

and then a firther point by saying another word with the same phonemic sound.

#### ONE MINUTE DRAMA

**Contributed by:** Alastair Roy

**What happens:** This is a useful activity for practising intonation with upper-intermediate learners and beyond.

Prepare two sets of cards: one should have a list of conversation topics, the other a list of emotional states. In pairs, the students choose one card from each set (a topic and an emotion), and then have a one minute conversation about the topic with the chosen emotion (for example, 'talking about football' while being 'sad'). A tip is to keep the topics simple, so that the focus is on how they are speaking, as opposed to what they are saying. This activity can be done in pairs or small groups, or with one pair presenting to the class. In the latter, the class could suggest the topics and emotions to be used, giving them ownership over the activity.

#### DUB IT!

**Contributed by:** Simon Harwood

**What happens:** Everyone loves comedy series, so why not use them for pronunciation? As a follow-up to some

content work, give students the script for a short scene (between one and three minutes). Have the whole class dub the scene as they watch, then again with the audio barely audible, and finally with no audio at all. If the students need more practice at each stage, fine. The teacher should use his/her judgement.

After the dubbing, the students use the script to perform the scenes with no video and you should notice that their pronunciation has improved. This activity has never failed me! I would use it with B1 classes and above, although with the right material there's no reason why Primary students couldn't do it too. Particularly popular series that I've used with adults and older teens are 'Friends' and 'The Big Bang Theory'.

### INTRODUCTION TO PHONEMIC SCRIPT

**Contributed by:** Neeraj Dhanani

**What happens:** The objective of this activity is to raise awareness of individual sounds (phonemes) in words, and how these can be represented using phonemic symbols. At the end of the activity students get to take away a useful free app which they can come back to, and they have had

some class time to familiarise themselves with phonemic symbols.

First briefly explain what phonemic symbols are, and show students dictionary entries of words with phonemic transcriptions of words. Then get students to download the British Council phonemic chart app (you can get this through the Apple Store). After giving the students some time to explore the app and hear the different sounds give students a list of words written in phonemic script and ask them to find out and write down the actual words, with the help of their mobile apps. Having finished this, students work on another list with reverse transcription

from English words to phonemic script. Finally, they write their names, the title of an English language film, the name of an English language book, and so on, in phonemic script, and show it to a partner to see if they can identify the words from the transcription.



### PHYSICAL PHONEMES

**Contributed by:** Simon Mead

**What happens:** Use the phonemic chart in class: see above for where to find our app for this; however, these days, most course books also include them - the New English File series, for example, has one with pictures

as a memory aid. Tell your students to use whichever they feel is easiest to remember, and use it to help students identify their own specific pronunciation issues with single phonemes. You can then provide a tongue twister which focuses on that particular phoneme.

You can also use a visual of the vocal organs (there are many available

in pronunciation books, like the classic 'Ship or Sheep?' and 'Tree or Three?' series, or simply do an image search on your favourite search engine), and use it to show them:

1. What they are doing right or wrong
2. What they should be doing. (e.g. position of tongue in relation to teeth for 'th')

You can also refer to the 'schwa' as the 'zombie sound' in order to avoid connections to 'aah' sound, and to aid with memory of what the sound really is (a very weak, almost 'nothing sound' in terms of production). Lastly, separate consonant clusters into two (or more) parts and encourage separate utterance of each. Where possible use L1 examples, e.g. 'crisps' – 'Cris de Cristina', then 'psss'.

### WAYS TO UNDERSTAND THAT ENGLISH SPELLING IS NOT RELIABLE FOR PRONUNCIATION

**Contributed by:** Ellie O'Carroll

**What happens:** Students will invariably struggle with the fact that words look the same, such as 'bomb', 'tomb' and 'comb', and will therefore assume they sound the same, but as we teachers all know, English spelling is not reliable for pronunciation as it can generate many different sound combinations from identical combinations of letters.

We can highlight some of these to higher level students, such as the seven sounds of 'ough' (think of 'dough', 'through', 'thorough', 'cough', 'bough', 'tough', and 'hiccough!'), and get them to look up the phonetic symbols and spellings in the dictionary and practice



identifying and memorising the sounds. It also helps to get students to think of another word that has the same sound but is spelt quite differently (e.g. 'dough' = 'go', 'bough' = 'how', 'cough' = 'off', and so on), to record it in their vocabulary dictionary beside the original word as an aid to pronunciation.

Using homophones, such as 'flower' and 'flour', will also reinforce the fact that some words which, conversely, are spelt quite differently sound the same but have totally different meanings.

### “I NEVER TOLD YOU I WANTED TO MARRY PAUL!” SENTENCE STRESS EXERCISE

**Contributed by:** Anne de Leon

**What happens:** Write on the board “I never told you I wanted to marry Paul!” Ask students to underline the one word they would stress in this sentence. Students check with their partners and explain why they chose which word from the sentence ('I', 'never', 'told', etc. - each of which changes the meaning of the sentence). Have a flipchart ready with this exact same

sentence but a different word underlined each time (there are eight possibilities). Ask students to explain the difference in meaning for each sentence. This activity is one of my students' favourites; it teaches them something new that opens up a door to understanding induced meaning. They find it useful and like that it helps with their listening as well as speaking. It works well at all levels from intermediate to proficiency.

### USING SONGS TO RAISE AWARENESS OF VOWEL SOUNDS

**Contributed by:** Andrew McMullen

**What happens:** An activity I like to do towards the beginning of a course is to choose a song that your group would find memorable - and preferably one that contains rhyming couplets.

Start out by doing some top-down comprehension exercises with the learners listening to the song, perhaps using their knowledge of the artist. Always make sure at this point to ask the learners what their personal feelings about the song are. Do they like the song? Why? Why not? Then focus in on the rhyming couplets, and identify the vowel sounds that match, preferably ones which you know learners will

have more difficulty with. Blank out words that have these sounds from the lyrics of the song, and before giving these to your learners, get them to work with these words. Using a good dictionary, a Phonemic chart, and perhaps by modelling the sound of the words yourself, ask the learners to categorise the words according to their sounds. This way, the learners will work towards grouping the words according to the rhyming couplets. Then they can complete the blanks, and, in the process of doing so, raise their awareness of the target sounds.

A limitation of this activity is that the learners don't really get a chance to produce the target sounds – as described it only raises awareness of particular sounds – but that can be a starting point for many other things!

### ENGLISH SENTENCE STRESS I: DEMONSTRATING STRESS TIMING

**Contributed by:** Lynn Gallacher and Lesley Denham

**What happens:** To explain a little about how sentence stress works in English, the language is often referred to as 'stress-timed'. This means that stress in spoken sentences occurs at regular intervals, and the length of time it takes to say something depends on



the number of stressed syllables, rather than the number of syllables itself (other languages, that give more equal time and stress to syllables are called 'syllable-timed').

If you want to show your learners how this works in practice, do the following task. First, think of four sentences of about the same length and record them naturally, so that you don't change how you say them. The following example is ideal:

1-2-3-4

1 and 2 and 3 and 4

a 1 and a 2 and a 3 and a 4

a 1 and then a 2 and then a 3 and then a 4

The four sentences should take a native speaker the same length of time to say, and you will notice the numbers in this case are the stressed words, and the unstressed words in between are said much more quickly in order to keep the rhythm of the language. In fact, 'and then a' gets very much squashed and shortened to fit in with the timing of the sentence. This shows that the time it takes to say the sentence depends on the number of stressed elements in the utterance, not the number of words: in other languages, which are not stress-timed, the stress would fall more equally on each word and

syllable, those words would be pronounced more completely (not squashed or broken), and the utterance would take longer to say. A syllable-timed language would give more or less equal time to each syllable. Demonstrating this fact can greatly increase learners' understanding of English speech streams, and so help their listening, even if they find it difficult to reproduce the speech naturally.

#### USING FILMS TO RAISE AWARENESS OF CONNECTED SPEECH

**Contributed by:** Amalia Grapa

**What happens:** This activity can be used to introduce features of connected speech at intermediate and advanced levels. You need to choose a short scene from a film and write down the dialogue/monologue, but leave all the grammar words (auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, etc.) out. The students read the text to see if they can understand the message, and then they complete the text with the missing words. Next, they watch and listen to check. The second time they listen, they need to focus on the grammar words and see how they are pronounced. Focusing on the weak forms of these words will raise your students' awareness of how words are pronounced





when connected, as compared to the way they are pronounced in isolation (their strong forms). This can be followed by marking the pauses in the text to see how this will help students understand the message better. This is an activity students can do on their own, and it will also help them with their listening skills.

#### RECORD YOURSELF

**Contributed by:** Bob Steane

**What happens:** Learners listen to good models of language, copy the intonation, structures, and accent (if possible), and then practise saying the modelled language.

When learners are ready, get them to record their utterances, or record them yourself. They can then listen back to the recordings and analyse any differences. Repeat the process until they're happy with the results, and do it as many times as you feel you need to.

#### PRONUNCIATION SNAP

**Contributed by:** Suzanne Anderson

**What happens:** I use this activity with groups of elementary level students who are having difficulty distinguishing between vowel sounds.

Give students a set of cards with the target items on them (I prefer to use pictures so that the spelling doesn't interfere with the pronunciation). Ask students to identify the stressed vowel sound and check that students know how to pronounce the words. Students should then group the cards according to the common sounds: for instance, if they were food and drink items, they would group 'meat', 'cheese', 'beans' for /i:/ - 'lemon', 'egg', 'bread' for /e/ - 'milk', 'fish', 'chicken' for /ɪ/ - 'bagel', 'cake', 'grapes' /eɪ/. Next, explain how to play snap: students have same number of cards in a pile face down; they take turns to turn over a card, and must say what is on the card when they place it on the pile; if the card matches (i.e. it has the same sound as the one on the top of the pile when they place it down), they shout 'Snap!'; the first person to shout it wins the cards in the pile; players then start over, and the game continues until one player has won all the cards). Learners must pronounce the word correctly to win the cards. If they don't, their partner can challenge them.

This activity works well with primary and low-level students. It's a low preparation activity, a fun way to practise pronunciation, and students are motivated to pronounce words correctly because they have to get it right to

win the cards.

#### FIVE MINUTE SENTENCE STRESS FILLER

**Contributed by:** Joanna Marriott

**What happens:** Take a number of sentences that have come up in the lesson (perhaps answers to an exercise or sentences from a tapescript). Ask a student to choose one and memorize it. Ask the student to say it WITHOUT reading (I always ask them to look at me while saying it). Say the sentence yourself clapping on the content/stressed words (it sometimes helps to ask students to close their eyes). Repeat the last two steps. Explore further by marking stress and pointing out features of connected speech

#### ENGLISH SENTENCE STRESS II: MORE ON DEMONSTRATING STRESS TIMING

**Contributed by:** Lynn Gallacher and Lesley Denham

**What happens:** Sentence stress is a difficult area to work on for learners and teachers alike. For this reason, it's also an area which is often neglected, but this aspect of the language can cause problems for learners in both their speaking and, perhaps more importantly, listening skills. You can further demonstrate the stress-timed nature of English in the following way.



After completing a listening comprehension task in class, give the students the tape script and play a very short extract. Students should mark on the tape script the words that are stressed. You can then discuss the kinds of words that are stressed. They will usually be the words that carry meaning or give sense to the utterance: verbs, nouns, and adjectives. You can then give the students the tape script to another extract or an alternative listening *before* they hear it, and ask them to predict which words they think will be stressed. Play the recording to check whether the predictions were correct or not.

An alternative is to play a fairly short listening extract - maybe a paragraph in length - and have students write down the important (stressed) words they hear. You can play the tape several times. Emphasise that this isn't a dictation exercise and you don't want students to try to write down every word. Ask the students in groups to try and recreate the listening extract using the words they have and their knowledge of the English language. Finally, in plenary, compare the students' versions with the original, and discuss with students how this

activity shows that native speakers listen and understand the language by taking note of the important words (usually the stressed ones), and using their knowledge of the language to build meaning. The important conclusion here is that it is not necessary to understand every word to get the gist of a stream of speech.

### EXPRESS YOURSELF!

**Contributed by:** Alastair Roy

**What happens:** This is an activity which works with any age-group and level, but is particularly successful with young learners. Give students a simple word or phrase to say, for example, "Hello. How are you?" or "I like bananas". Then, ask students to say the phrase in a variety of imagined situations, focusing on the emotions they would feel, varying the intonation of their phrases to suit the setting. Some examples of situations could be 'talking to a 6-month-old baby'; 'you're in a shop where the service is really slow'; or 'you're on a rollercoaster'. Keeping the phrases short, simple, and familiar makes students focus on intonation, as opposed to the language in each of the situations.

### DIALOGUE DRILLS

**Contributed by:** Elizabeth Beer

**What happens:** A great way to practise drilling and build up sentences that are student generated is through dialogue drills. These work best with, but are not limited to, transactional dialogues.

For example, imagine that you have been working with phrases to do with purchasing items in a clothes shop. At the top of the board on the left, write 'Sales Assistant', and at the top of the board on the right, write

'Customer'. Ask the students "Who speaks first?" and "What exactly do they say?" For example, a student might volunteer "Good morning, how may I help you?" Under the sales assistant column, draw a symbol to represent this sentence (for example, a hand waving good morning). It is important that you do not write the sentence because students may pronounce words according to how they are written, not sound; plus, it engages the brain more as they must actively recall the sentence rather than read



it passively.

Drill the sentence with the students. You can choose from whole class, pairs, male vs. female, table by table, etc. Ask the students to tell you what the next sentence would be. Draw a symbol, drill, and then ask the class to go back to the beginning and tell you the dialogue as you point to the phrases. By the end of the activity, the students will have built up a dialogue that is meaningful to them (they have generated it for you) and you have had the opportunity to listen and correct pronunciation properly, before they complete their final task.

### INTEGRATING PRONUNCIATION INTO GRAMMAR OR VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES

**Contributed by:** Stuart Anderson

**What happens:** While monitoring students doing a grammar or vocabulary exercise in pairs, choose a pronunciation issue that comes up during the activity; this could be a weak form or issues with a particular sound, etc. Draw the attention of a few different individual pairs to the issue if they produce the error, and elicit the correct form from them. Later, while correcting the exercise in plenary, every time the issue



arises, try to elicit correction of the error from the students.

This activity works well as it highlights a problem to students and enables them to produce the correct form, and then very soon afterwards recycles the problem form, but at this stage encourages self and peer correction. It works for the teacher as it is a very simple way to introduce pronunciation practice into every class by exploiting activities that learners are already likely to be doing. It works for the students as they see that the teacher is listening for more than just the correct answer to an

exercise, and they have the awareness of the importance of pronunciation raised.

### THE TONGUE TWISTER GAME

**Contributed by:** Kate Joyce and Guy Fayter

**What happens:** All levels and ages enjoy tongue twisters. They work well as warmers to get students speaking, and they help students to practise pronouncing sounds in English.

First, write some English tongue twisters on the board or on pieces of paper to distribute to students. Here are some

examples:

- She sells sea shells on the sea shore.
- A proper copper coffee pot.
- Around the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran.
- Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry.
- A big black bug bit a big black bear.
- If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

Ask the learners to read the tongue twisters aloud. Then faster. Then three times in a row.

Then ask the students if they have any tongue twisters in their L1. Have a go at saying them yourself. This usually causes a good laugh, and makes the activity more two-way and interactive.

Now ask the students to have a go at creating their own tongue twisters. This activity is a variation of the famous 'Consequences' game. Write the following on the board:

1. Write your first name
2. What did she/he do?
3. Where?
4. When?



#### 5. Why? Because...

Then tell the students to get into teams of about 5 people. They should then write, on a piece of blank paper, their answers to question 1, before passing the paper to the person on their right, who writes an answer to question 2 on the paper they've received. Their answer must begin with the first sound in the person's name (e.g. Bob - bought a bike). Students then pass the paper on again and write their answers to question 3, again using the sound at the beginning of the name (Bob - bought a bike - in Bali). They continue until all the questions have been answered. Finally, the paper is passed back to the person who started with it, and the learners read all of the tongue twisters aloud.

It might help if you give the students some examples before they begin the exercise:

- Bob bought a bike in Bali on his birthday because he was bored.
- Susan sang a song at the seaside on six September because she saw some sunshine.
- Laura laughed in the laundrette at lunchtime because she lost her laundry.

#### SORTED SYLLABLES

**Contributed by:** Alastair Roy

**What happens:** Prepare a set of cards with words of varying lengths, syllables, and stress patterns (15 to 20 words is perfect), and divide students into pairs or small groups. Each group should have a set of cards. On the board draw a series of patterns representing the syllables and stress patterns of the words in the group, for example a dot for each syllable, except for the stressed syllable which could be represented by a dash (for example, . \_ . could represent the stress pattern of 'computer'). Students then have to organise the words into groups, matching them to the correct stress pattern (i.e. 'softly' and 'jersey' would be in the same group, while 'believe' and 'seldom' would be in different groups: . \_ and \_ . respectively).

A variation of this activity in monolingual classes is to give students the words in L1 and have them translate the vocabulary before working with it. Also, try to incorporate commonly confused words, such as 'comfortable', 'vegetable', or 'chocolate'.

#### HELPING STUDENTS BEGIN TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN VOWEL SOUNDS USING THE PHONEMIC CHART

**Contributed by:** Felicity Woods

**What happens:** At the beginning of the year, to help students start to hear the difference between minimal pairs (such as /i:/ and /ɪ/), use the game 'Stop' - but instead of giving students letters, give them the phoneme, exemplifying the target sounds by playing and showing them through an online version of the Phonemic chart. Students have to find words containing, not beginning with, the sound. If they are unfamiliar with the phonemic chart this works to introduce them to whichever phonemes you think they need help with. As students become familiar with the symbols, they can be incorporated into games. For example, the teacher sticks several phonemic symbols around the room (e.g. /aɪ/ /æ/ /eɪ/) and then shows the students an image (e.g. a plane). Students then have to run to the symbol and when asked, say the word on the image. The students get one point for choosing the right symbol and one point for correct pronunciation.

Alternatively, in small groups, students



can play 'Pictionary'. One student is given a symbol and has one minute to draw images containing the sound until another member of the group identifies the sound. For example, student sees /i/ and draws a hill, lips, pig, etc. Give a point to the student who draws and a point for the guesser.

### ENGLISH SENTENCE STRESS III: DEMONSTRATING STRESS TIMING THROUGH LISTENING TO LIMERICKS

**Contributed by:** Lynn Gallacher and Lesley Denham

**What happens:** In a recent class discussion, some students explained the reasons they found listening difficult in English. Some comments were:  
- "The words come too fast!"  
- "I panic when I don't understand every word..."  
- "Some words are swallowed."

It's likely that what the students are referring to here, amongst other things, is the stress-timed aspect of English. And stress timing is most noticeable in patterned language such as poetry and limericks, so using these can be a fantastic way to highlight this aspect of English pronunciation without technical

explanations. Here are some limericks I've used with my students:

1. There was a young lady from Niger,  
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger.

After the ride  
She was inside,  
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

2. There once was a lady named Lynn  
Who was so uncommonly thin  
that when she essayed  
to drink lemonade,  
she slipped through the straw and fell in!  
Read the limericks aloud and check the students understand them. The students, in pairs or groups, then try writing one. It's fun to use the names of the students in the class to start the limerick. Next we mark the stressed syllables and the students read the limericks out, trying to keep to the rhythm.

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