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Rationale for Teaching Phonemic Symbols to Foreign Language Learners of English

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Pronunciation is a very important part of a language. 'Pronunciation plays a central role in both our personal and our social lives: as individuals, we project our identity through the way we speak, and also indicate our membership of particular communities. At the same time, and sometimes also in conflict with this identity function, our pronunciation is responsible for intelligibility: whether or not we can convey our meaning. The significance of success in L2 (second language) pronunciation learning is therefore far-reaching, complicated by the fact that many aspects of pronunciation happen subconsciously, and so are not readily accessible to conscious analysis and intervention' (Seidlhofer, B. 2001). However, Mompean, J., and Lintunen, P. (2015) maintain that pronunciation is often ignored due to many teachers' insufficient training in phonetics, phonology or pronunciation-related content.

Pronunciation consists of different sounds and these can be represented by phonemic symbols. It is a valuable tool for students of English as a foreign language. Although English has 26 letters, the British English has 44 sounds – 20 vowels and 24 consonants.

Unlike Sanskrit which is pronounced as it is written, English can't be pronounced just looking at the spellings or pronouncing as single alphabets are pronounced. In English, there are all sorts of letters – some are not pronounced at all, some have more than one sound and sometimes the same letters bear different pronunciation. For example in the word 'enough' the last two alphabets 'gh' make the sound of /f/ as /ɪ'nʌf/. Similarly, in the word 'ghost', the first two alphabet are pronounced only as /gəʊst/ -- the alphabet /h/ is not uttered. Similarly, the 'gh' in 'through' does not appear to have any place in pronunciation as it is uttered /θru:/ phonemically. At other times it is hard to find out how many syllables are there in a word. For example, 'do' has one syllable, 'happy' has two syllables, and 'important' has three syllables. However, having as many alphabets (9) as the word 'important', the word 'chocolate' has only two syllables. As we can see, the pronunciation of English words is not based on letters. English pronunciation can be unpredictable and sometimes tricky. With the ability to recognize the phonetic symbols, the learners can understand the pronunciation written in International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA) in English dictionaries and improve their pronunciation. Having good pronunciation gives learners more confident in their oral

communication and encourages more interaction in the language they are learning. It should be borne in mind that pronunciation is an important skill in learners' L2 competence (Mompean & Lintunen, 2015). Therefore, it is important for teachers of English to teach English phonemes to their students who are learning English as a second or foreign language. In this article I have planned a two-hour session to teach phonetic symbols of English vowels.

Topic : Teaching Phonetic Symbols (vowels)

Time : 2 hours

Level : Secondary

Introduction

Knowledge of phonetic symbols is very important part of language learning. However, to achieve pronunciation skill, the learner has to be familiar with phonetic symbols.

Session objectives

By the end of this session, the participants will have:

- recognized vowel sound symbols.
- pronounced vowel sounds.
- drawn vowel sound symbols.

Strategies: miming, drilling, transcribing, gaming

Contents

1. vowel symbols

Activity 1. Short Vowels Time: 25 minutes

Materials: Six short sounds e, æ, ʌ, ʊ, ɒ, ə, ɪ written in separate A4 size paper.

Procedures

The following word groups are written in rectangular 6 pieces of paper.

- In the first paper, write 'went, intend, send, letter'. In the second paper write 'cat, hand, nap, flat, have'. After that, write 'fun, love, money, one, London, come' in the third paper. Likewise, in the next paper write 'put, look, should, cook, book, look'. Next, in the next paper, write 'rob, top, watch, squat, sausage'. Further, in the next paper write 'alive, again, system'. Lastly, write 'pick, sit, fit, bit, difficult' in another paper.
- First of all, show /e/ to the class. Then ask the participants if they can

pronounce it. After that, pronounce it and ask the participants to repeat. Now show e, æ, ʌ, ʊ, ɒ, ə, ɪ individually and ask the participants to pronounce. Give six-time practice for each vowel sound. Finally, select a few participants randomly and ask them to pronounce.

- Give these six words to participants to transcribe: bend, capital, pun, shook, cob, ahead.
- Divide the participants into two groups and give them each a word. Each person has to act out while another person from another group transcribes.
- Ask them to check if the acting and the transcriptions match.

Worksheet 1

Short Vowels

IPA Symbol

Word Examples

e

went, intend, send, letter

æ

cat, hand, nap, flat, have

ʌ

fun, love, money, one, London, come

ʊ

put, look, should, cook, book, look

ɒ

rob, top, watch, squat, sausage

ə

alive, again, system

ɪ

pick, sit, fit, bit, difficult

Source of worksheet 1: <https://www.londonschool.com/blog/phonetic-alphabet/>

Note: At last there was a word ‘mother’ in the group of ‘alive, again’ which has been avoided as it does not represent that sound. Instead of that ‘system’ has been included. And also there was one short vowel /ɪ/ was missing. So that vowel has been added with other words namely pick, sit, fit, bit, difficult, that contain the concerned sound.

Activity 2: Becoming poetic

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: A sheet of paper where 34 words are written and transcribed sentence examples are given.

Procedures

- Give a sheet of paper where 34 words are written and example sentences are transcribed to each of the participants. Ask them to make a meaningful sentence using the words that are given in the list. In case they want to use new words to make a sentence, the words should bear at least one of the seven

short vowel sounds e, æ, ʌ, ʊ, ɒ, ə, ɪ.

- After they finish transcribing, ask them to share with their partners. If time allows, ask any volunteers who would like to share their composition.

Becoming a poet

Using the following words composed **just one** meaningful sentence and transcribe it phonetically. Then share it with your partner. In case you need to bring in new words, ensure that they bear one of these seven symbols:

e, æ, ʌ, ʊ, ɒ, ə, ɪ. To get an idea, you may refer to examples given below.

Example sentences.

1. A cat had a nap on a flat.
ə kæt hæd ə næp ɒn ə flæt
2. Mother loves money.
mʌðə(r) lʌvz 'mʌni
3. Come on, have a look at the book.
kʌm ɒn, hæv ə lʊk æt ðə bʊk

went, intend, send, letter
cat, had, nap, flat, have
fun, love, money, one, London, come
put, look, should, cook, book, look
rob, top, watch, squat, sausage
alive, again, system
pick, sit, fit, bit, difficult

Worksheet 2

Becoming Poetic

Activity 3. Long Vowels

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: Five long vowels **i:**, **ɜ:**, **ɔ:**, **u:**, **ɑ:** are written in separate A4 size paper. The following word groups are written in rectangular 5 pieces of paper.

Procedures

- First of all explain what it means by 'long vowels'. The definition is given as follows: Long vowels are vowel sounds that are longer than normal, or short, vowels. In RP English the long vowel sounds are those in 'seat', 'suit', 'sort', 'shirt' and 'start'. Phonemic symbols for long vowel sounds have a /:/ to indicate length.

Example

The word 'kiss' has a short /i/ sound, whilst the equivalent long sound /i:/ produces the word 'keys'. (Source: <http://teachingenglish.britishcouncil.org.cn/article/long-vowels>)

- In the first paper write, 'need, beat, team'. In the second paper write 'nurse, heard, third, turn'. After that, in the third paper write 'talk, law, bored, yawn, jaw'. Likewise, in the next paper write 'few, boot, lose, gloomy, fruit, chew'. Finally, in the next paper, write 'fast, car, hard, bath'.
- First of all, show /i:/ to the class. Then ask the participants if they can pronounce it. After that pronounce it and ask the participants to repeat. Now show **i:**, **ɜ:**, **ɔ:**, **u:**, **ɑ:** individually and ask the participants to pronounce. Give six-time practice for each long vowel. After that pronounce each of them asking participants to repeat. Finally, select a few participants randomly and ask them to pronounce.
- Give these six words to participants to transcribe: beat, heard, yawn, gloomy, hard, law.
- Divide the participants into two groups and give them each a word from the above list. Each person has to act out while another person from another group transcribes.
- Ask them to check if the acting and the transcriptions match.

Worksheet 3

Long Vowels

IPA Symbol

Word examples

i:	need, beat, team
ɜ:	nurse, heard, third, turn
ɔ:	talk, law, bored, yawn, jaw
u:	few, boot, lose, gloomy, fruit, chew
ɑ:	fast, car, hard, bath

Source of worksheet 2: <https://www.londonschool.com/blog/phonetic-alphabet/>

Activity 4. Becoming a poet

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: A sheet of paper where 22 words are written and transcribed sentence examples are given.

Procedures

- Give a sheet of paper where 22 words are written and example sentences are transcribed to each of the participants. Ask them to make a meaningful sentence using the words that are given in the list. In case they want to use new words to make a sentence, the words should bear at least one of the five long vowel sounds **i:**, **ɜ:**, **ɔ:**, **u:**, **ɑ:**

- After they finish transcribing, ask them to share with their partners. If time allows, ask any volunteers who would like to share their composition.

Worksheet 4 **Becoming a poet**

Using the following words compose just one meaningful sentence and transcribe it phonetically. Then share it with your partner. In case you need to bring in new words, ensure that they bear one of these six symbols:

i:, ɜ:, ɔ:, u:, a: To get an idea, you may refer to examples given below.

Example sentences

1. Chew your food.
tʃu: jɔ:(r) fu:d
2. Third, your turn.
θɜ:d, jɔ:(r) tɜ:n
3. Bored? Eat fruit.
bɔ:d? i:t fru:t

need, beat, team
nurse, heard, third, turn
talk, law, bored, yawn, jaw
few, boot, lose, gloomy, fruit, chew
fast, car, hard, bath

Activity 5. Diphthong Vowels

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: Eight diphthong vowels **ɪə, eə, eɪ, ɔɪ, aɪ, əʊ, aʊ, ʊə** written in separate A4 size paper.

Procedures

- First of all explain what it means by diphthong. The definition is given as follows: A diphthong is a sound made by combining two vowels, specifically when it starts as one vowel sound and goes to another, like the *oy* sound in *oil*. *Diphthong* comes from the Greek word *diphthongos* which means “having two sounds.” Notice the di- for “double.” So diphthongs are double vowel sounds in words like *late*, *ride*, or *pout*. If two vowels in a row are the same, as in *boot* or *beer*, then it’s not a diphthong.

(Source: <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/diphthong>)

- Write the following word groups in rectangular 8 pieces of paper. In the first paper write, ‘*near, ear, clear, tear* (n. from eye), *beer, fear*’. Next write ‘*hair, there, care, stairs, pear*’ in another piece of paper. In the third paper write ‘*face, space, rain, case, eight*’. Likewise, in the next paper write ‘*joy, employ, toy, coil, oyster*’. Further write ‘*my, sight, pride, kind, flight*’ in another piece of paper. Next, in the next paper write ‘*no, don’t, stones, alone, hole*’. Further, write ‘*mouth, house, brown, cow, out*’ in a piece of paper. Lastly, write ‘*pure, cure, mature, lure*’ in another paper.
- First of all, show /ɪə/ to the participants. Then ask them if they can pronounce

it. After that pronounce it and ask the participants to repeat. Now show **ɪə, eə, eɪ, ɔɪ, aɪ, əʊ, aʊ, ʊə** individually and ask the participants to pronounce. Give six-time practice for each diphthong. After that pronounce each of them asking participants to repeat. Finally, select a few participants randomly and ask them to pronounce.

- Give these eight words to participants to transcribe: *clear, care, rain, toy, pride, don't, house, lure*.
- Divide the participants into two groups and give them each a word from the above list. Each person has to act out while another person from another group transcribes.
- Ask them to check if the acting and the transcriptions match.

Worksheet 5	Diphthong Vowels
<i>IPA Symbol</i>	<i>Word examples</i>
ɪə	near, ear, clear, tear (n. from eye), beer, fear
eə	hair, there, care, stairs, pear
eɪ	face, space, rain, case, eight
ɔɪ	joy, employ, toy, coil, oyster
aɪ	my, sight, pride, kind, flight
əʊ	no, don't, stones, alone, hole
aʊ	mouth, house, brown, cow, out
ʊə	pure, cure, mature, lure

Source of worksheet 3: <https://www.londonschool.com/blog/phonetic-alphabet/>
 Note: To the fourth word in the first row more information is added in parentheses to avoid different pronunciation of 'tear'. Further there was diphthong /ʊə/ missing so it has been inserted with these words '*pure, cure, mature, lure*' that contain the related sound.

Activity 6. Becoming a poet

Time: 15 minutes

Materials: A sheet of paper where 40 words are written and transcribed sentence examples are given.

Procedures

- Give a sheet of paper where 40 words are written and example sentences are transcribed to each of the participants. Ask them to make a meaningful sentence

using the words that are given in the list. In case they want to use new words to make a sentence, the words should bear at least one of the eight diphthongs i.e. **ɪə, eə, eɪ, ɔɪ, aɪ, əʊ, aʊ, ʊə**. However, tell them they can use one of these be verbs 'am, is, are' to make a sentence, though they are not diphthongs. Tell them not to transcribe 'am, is, are' as they are not diphthongs.

- After they finish transcribing, ask them to share with their partners. If time allows, ask any volunteers who would like to share their composition.

Worksheet 6 **Becoming a poet**

Using the following words compose just one meaningful sentence and transcribe it phonetically. Then share it with your partner. In case you need to bring in new words, ensure that they bear one of these eight symbols:

ɪə, eə, eɪ, ɔɪ, aɪ, əʊ, aʊ, ʊə To get an idea, you may refer to examples given below.

Example sentences

1. I am my pride.
aɪ xx maɪ praɪd
2. There are brown cows.
ðeə(r) xx braʊn kaʊz
3. Here is my joy.
hɪə(r) xx maɪ dʒɔɪ

near, ear, clear, tear (n. from eye), beer, fear
hair, there, care, stairs, pear
face, space, rain, case, eight
joy, employ, toy, coil, oyster
my, sight, pride, kind, flight
no, don't, stones, alone, hole
mouth, house, brown, cow, out
pure, cure, mature, lure

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Contributor:

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Teaching of Integrated Language Skills: A Sample Lesson Plan

LEVEL : Upper Elementary
AGE : Teenagers
TIME NEEDED : 90 minutes + project
LANGUAGE FOCUS : Countable and uncountable nouns, understanding vocabulary in context, topic words, listening, reading

Lesson Objectives: At the end of the lesson students should be able to

- a. use topic related target words in their own sentences,
- b. read and complete the follow up exercises.

LEAD-IN

T (teacher) asks students to look at the pictures and elicits ideas from them about the topic. Write some of the ideas on the board.

Activity 1: T puts the students in pairs and ask them to match the words to the correct pictures (What is the

(photo source: Internet)



Activity 2: LISTENING

(T records the conversation below on a computer or any other device before class).

Ask students to listen to a short recording and decide which of the four letters from the Reading: Letters exercise it is most closely related to.

Transcript:

- Host : On the show today we have Dr Bina to answer all your health questions. Good afternoon, Dr Bina.
- Dr Bina : Good afternoon.
- Host : OK, here's our first caller.
- Mohan Yadav: Hello, my name is Mohan Yadav and I'm phoning about my son.
- Dr Bina : What seems to be the problem, Mohan?
- Mohan : Well, he's had asthma since he was very little but now he wants to play football with his friends.
- Dr Bina : Does he have an inhaler?
- Mohan : Yes, he does.
- Dr Amy : That's good. So, it's fine for him to play but make sure he takes his inhaler.
- Mohan : But he's never wanted to play before.
- Dr Bina : Yes, but he's growing up and probably wants to do what his friends are doing.
- Mohan : But, will he be ok?
- Dr Bina : Yes, I'm sure he will. He might be a bit out of breath, but there won't be any problems.
- Mohan : Oh, that's good news! Thank you very much.
- Host : OK, let's go to our second caller

Activity 3: READING: LETTERS

- 3.a. Read the letters sent to a doctor who provides advice in a magazine column. What are the health issues specified in each one? What advice do you think the doctor will give? [Teacher to allow 10 mins to discuss the answers of the two questions in small groups.]

A. Dear Dr Bina

I'm worried about my ten-year-old daughter. After she plays in the garden she's out of breath. She is usually very healthy and loves playing sports, so I'm very

concerned about this. Do you think it's serious and can you give us some advice?
Mrs M Dawadi

B. Dear Dr Bina,

I'm fifteen years old and I've got lots of spots! Some of my friends don't have any spots, but mine are really bad! I use creams and lotions and wash my face regularly, but the spots are just getting worse. My mum says I shouldn't worry as all teenagers get spots but it's making me feel depressed. What can I do? J. Pradhan

C. Dear Dr Bina,

In February, I broke my arm when I slipped on some ice. Last week, I had the plaster removed but now there's a very bad rash. Before I left the hospital, I was given some cream but it isn't helping and my arm is sore. Do you think I need to go back to the hospital or will it get better with the cream? P. Chaudhury.

D Dear Dr Bina,

In a few weeks I'm moving abroad with my family because my husband has got a new job. The problem is that I need lots of injections but I don't like needles - in fact, they terrify me! Is there any alternative? Mrs S. Shakya

3.b. Read the letters again and choose the correct answer for each question.

1. Who has already spoken to a doctor or nurse? A / B / C / D
2. Who doesn't know what the problem is? A / B / C / D
3. Who needs something to stop them becoming ill in the future? A / B / C / D
4. Who feels very upset because of their problem? A / B / C / D

3.c. Now read Dr Bina's replies and match each one to the correct letter. Be careful! There are four letters but only three replies.

1. Dear.....

Don't worry too much. It's usual for this to happen and if you use the cream it should clear up. Wait a few more days and, if there is no change, then go and show it to a doctor.

2. Dear

It sounds like she has asthma. Many children develop it as they get older but it's nothing to worry about. Go and see the doctor and they will give her an inhaler to use, which will make a big difference. As long as it isn't too bad, she will still be able to play sports.

3. Dear

Yes, your mother is right, but I understand it's still upsetting. There's not much more you can do other than keep your skin clean and dry. It's a good idea to ask your doctor to recommend the best cream for you.

Activity 4 Working with the language [T revises the grammar point of countable and uncountable nouns before the exercise]. Are these nouns countable (C) or uncountable (U) when they appear in the letters?

- | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| 1. advice | 2. rash | 3. ice | 4. spot | 5. injection |
| 6. sport | 7. letter | 8. doctor | 9. child | 10. needle |

Activity 5 Working with vocabulary Focus: Meaning

Find words or phrases in the text that match the definitions below.

1. worried about something
2. bad or dangerous enough to make you worried
3. a thick liquid that you put on your skin
4. lose your balance and fall
5. painful and uncomfortable, usually as a result of an injury or infection
6. to make someone very frightened
7. make a problem go away or disappear
8. to start to exist, or to start to be noticed
9. to give advice about what is good

Activity 6 SPEAKING

Put students in small groups and ask them to discuss the questions together. Afterwards, ask a few groups to report back on their discussion. You might want to open this out to the whole class.

Activity 7 WRITING Ask students to write a short reply to Mrs. S. Shakya (letter D) in the style of Dr Bina. Give them around ten minutes to do this and monitor and help if necessary. You could display the letters on the classroom walls and then vote for the best one.

Activity 8 PROJECT Encourage students to research their chosen medical condition on the internet or at their local library to complete the project for homework.

Appendix - A Theoretical aspects of integrated teaching

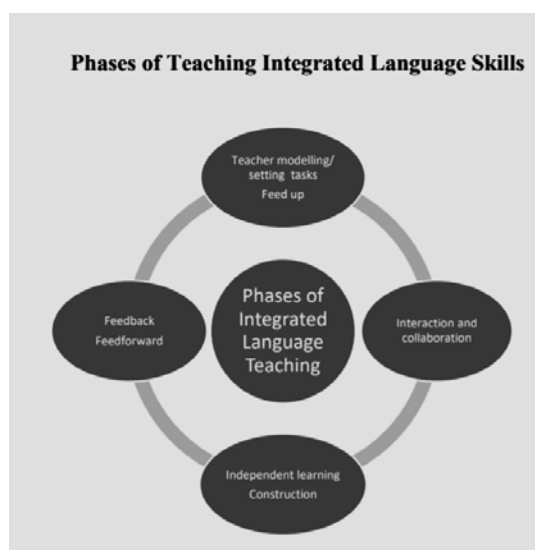
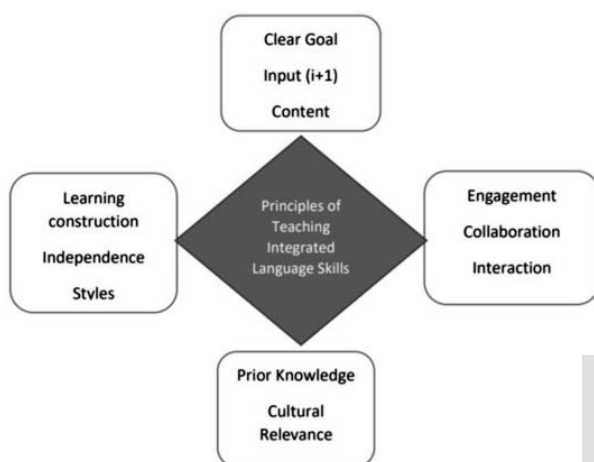
Language is not the sum of its discrete parts and is best learned when..... its skills are integrated. (-Richards & Renandya, 2011)

- English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing among students.
- Allows teachers to track students' progress in multiple skills at the same time.
- Highly motivating to students of all ages and backgrounds.

Types of Integration:

- Skills integration
- Theme integration (integrated curriculum)
- Content-skills integration
- Task-skills integration

Integrated Teaching of English Language Skills



Appendix - B Keys:

Lead-in Key 1. a doctor; 2. a thermometer; 3. pills; 4. an ill child being given medicine

Activity 1 Key 1. pills – 3; thermometer – 2; medicine – 4; stethoscope

Activity 2: [Key - letter A]

Activity 3.a

Key a

A. a breathing problem, probably asthma; B. spots;

C. a rash; D. fear of needles / needs injections

Activity 3.b

Key b

1. C; 2. A; 3. D; 4. B

Activity 3.c

Key c

1. C; 2. A; 3. B

Activity 4 Working with the language

1. U; 2. C; 3. U; 4. C; 5. C; 6. C; 7.C; 8.C; 9.C; 10.C

Activity 5 Working with vocabulary

Key

1. concerned; 2. serious; 3. lotion; 4. slip; 5. sore;

6. terrify; 7. clear up; 8. develop; 9. recommend

Contributor: *A sample compiled from the Internet sources.*