



PRONUNCIATION AND DRAMA BECOMING MORE EXPRESSIVE IN ENGLISH

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IN THIS WEBINAR,
WE WILL...

- discuss some **challenges** we may face when teaching pronunciation
- explain **why drama can help us**
- propose **an approach based on doing drama exercises** in pronunciation classes

SOME CHALLENGES



Because of their lack of pronunciation awareness, students find it challenging to accept **corrections**.



Because of **stress factors**, students cannot deliver intelligible messages.



We hardly ever approach pronunciation instruction as a **physical activity**.



We struggle to find **motivating and useful approaches to teaching pronunciation**.

WRITE “YES” OR “NO” IN THE CHAT BOX



WHAT IS THIS PROPOSAL ABOUT?

Exploring essential tools to actor training which can be taken or adapted to help ELLs improve their intelligibility and expressiveness in English.

WHY CAN DRAMA HELP US TACKLE THESE ISSUES, AMONG OTHERS?



Accepting corrections and dealing with stress

- Efficient methods of reducing stress connected with pronunciation practice and **dealing more efficiently with learners' emotions rely on the use of drama techniques**. Thanks to them learners become **more expressive** and are more **willing to experiment** with sounds or intonation patterns. (Wrembel, 2001, p. 65)
- (...) **Tension in the body will produce tension in the voice** and no real improvement in the vocal production can be realized unless the problem of tension is addressed. (Gates, 2011, p. 21)

WHY CAN DRAMA HELP US TACKLE THESE ISSUES, AMONG OTHERS?

Pronunciation is a physical activity



- Pronunciation is the physical side of language, involving **the body, the breath, the muscles, acoustic vibration and harmonics.** (Underhill, 2005, p. XII)
- [Students embark on a physical exploration of their voice and muscles, and they] **free themselves from the muscle memory that pulls them back into their own accents.** (...) They are, in other words, starting to free themselves from phonetic interference. (Dudley Knight, 2005, p. 3, based on Skinner's "Speak with Distinction", 1990)

WHY CAN DRAMA HELP US TACKLE THESE ISSUES, AMONG OTHERS?

Finding motivating approaches to teaching pronunciation: “creating characters”



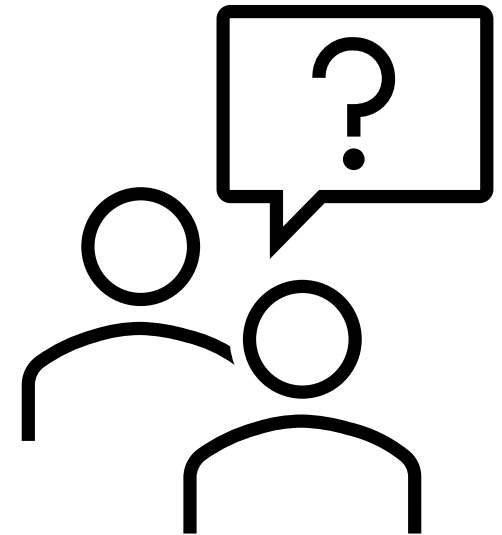
- Second language learning (...) involves the acquisition of a **second identity**. This creation of a new identity is at the heart of culture learning, or what some might call acculturation* (...). A reorientation of thinking and feeling, not to mention communication, is necessary. (Brown, 2000, p. 182)

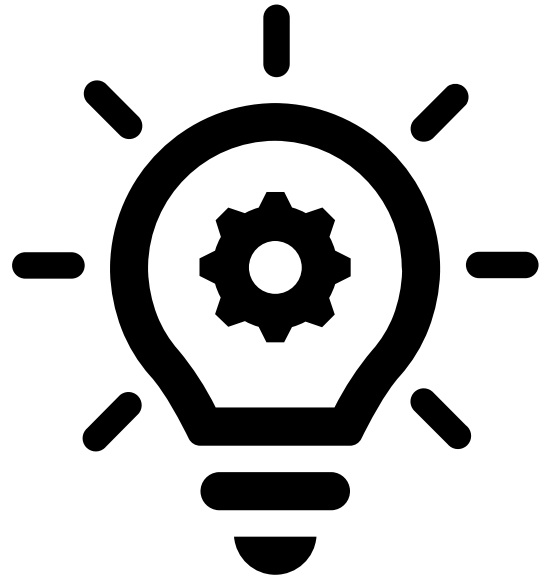
*cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting or borrowing traits from another culture

- Specific dialects reveal to actors **physical impulses** for their characters that would never have arisen if they hadn't committed to specific **dialect work** because, again, how we speak affects our entire behavior. (Moss, 2005, p. 215)

So far, we have...

- discussed some **challenges** we may face when teaching pronunciation
- explained **why drama can help us**





MY IDEA

An approach influenced by...

- My experience and research as a pronunciation teacher
- The American Academy of Dramatic Arts
- The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts
- My training as an actress and further research in the field of Drama

HOW CAN WE USE DRAMA EXERCISES IN OUR CLASSES?

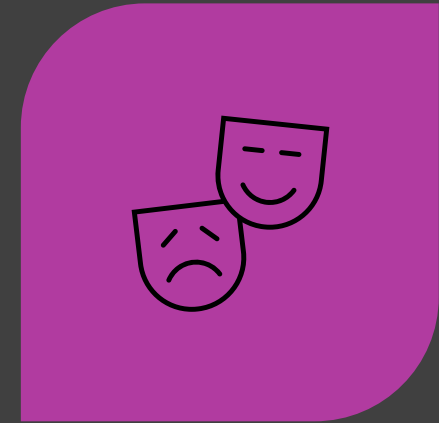
THIS HOLISTIC APPROACH COMPRISES 3 LEARNING LEVELS



LEVEL 1:
VOCAL PRODUCTION



LEVEL 2:
VOICE & SPEECH



LEVEL 3:
BUILDING-A-CHARACTER
TRAINING

LEVEL I:
VOCAL
PRODUCTION

Aim: to train your voice

Required level: no specific level of English*

Exercises: **relaxation, breathing, resonance and voice projection exercises, vocal warm-ups**



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evJHBLIdMsE>



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBoOyCLICcU>

EXAMPLE: A TEN-MINUTE ROUTINE

1. Ask students to find a comfortable place in the classroom to sit down. Encourage them to be silent and close their eyes.
2. Play the video on mindfulness meditation: [Relaxation & Breathing](#)
3. Ask them to stand up and breathe 5 times, and, as they let out the air, encourage them to do so on different long vowels, and /m/ and /n/.
4. Play the following video and encourage them to follow the teacher and students: [Resonance](#)
5. “Divide the class into two groups. Half of it is given the initiations of different dialogues and the other half will have the responses. The groups are placed at a considerable distance and they should start reading aloud [one by one] and clearly for the other group to follow and answer.” (Wessels)

LEVEL II: VOICE & SPEECH

Aim: to improve intelligibility and expressiveness in L2

Required level: basic knowledge of English phonemes and weak and strong forms of function words*

Exercises: **script analysis and transcription, subtext analysis, reader's theatre, radio drama (podcasts), improvisations**

Example:



A FIVE-CLASS PROJECT

Play: *Overtones* (adapted version)

[Harriet's fashionable living-room. Harriet, a cultured woman, and Hetty, her primitive self. Harriet never sees Hetty, but rather thinks aloud. Hetty looks at Harriet and talks intently and shadows her continually. Harriet is seated at a tea table, busying herself with the tea things.]

HETTY: Harriet. *[There is no answer.]* Harriet, my other self. *[There is no answer.]* My trained self.

HARRIET: *[listens intently]* Yes?

[From behind HARRIET'S chair HETTY rises slowly.]

HETTY: I want to talk to you.

HARRIET: Well?

HETTY: *[looking at HARRIET admiringly]* Oh, Harriet, you are beautiful today.

HARRIET: Am I presentable, Hetty?

HETTY: Suits me.

HARRIET: I've tried to make the best of the good points. **aɪv traɪd tə meɪk ðə best əv ðə ɡʊd pɔɪnts |**

HETTY: My passions are deeper than yours. I can't keep on the mask as you do. I'm crude and real, you are my appearance in the world.

HARRIET: I am what you wish the world to believe you are.

HETTY: You are the part of me that has been trained. **[jʊə ðə pɑːt əv mi ðæt əz biːn tɹeɪnd]**

HARRIET: I am your educated self.

HETTY: I am the rushing river; you are the ice over the current.

HARRIET: I am your subtle overtones.

HETTY: But together we are one woman, the wife of Charles Goodrich.

Class I

1. Choose a play which is being worked on in the Literature class, or one suggested by students.
2. Select one or two scenes according to the number of students.
3. Discuss in class each character's traits and assign the roles.

Assignment: each student should analyse his/her character, stating his/her superobjective in the play (what the character wants and needs in the play) and objective in this scene (what the character wants and needs in this scene).

Class 2

1. Discuss students' analysis of their characters.
2. Explain to them the concept of “**subtext**”: **the thoughts and motivations which are not expressed openly.**
3. Ask them to transcribe their character's lines (if they can) and analyse the subtext, paying attention to **stage directions**, as they also provide us with key information about the character.

Class 3

Check the transcriptions (if any) and subtext analysis and do oral practice.

Class 4

Do oral practice and encourage students to be as expressive as possible when reading their lines.

Class 5

Option A - Radio Drama Project: students will read the scenes aloud being as expressive and intelligible as possible while their voices are being recorded. Sound effects can then be added. This digital audio (a podcast) can be shared and listened to in class, aiming at raising metacognitive awareness.

Option B - Reader's Theatre Project: students will read the scenes aloud being as expressive and intelligible as possible. In this form of theatre, neither costumes nor props or special lightning will be needed.

SO FAR, WE'VE ANALYSED



Level 1: vocal production: relaxation, breathing, resonance and voice projection exercises, vocal warm-ups



Level 2: voice & speech: script analysis and transcription, subtext analysis, reader's theatre, radio drama (podcasts), improvisations



Level 3

LEVEL III:
**BUILDING-A-
CHARACTER
TRAINING**

Aim: to avoid L1 interference and
develop your idiolect in English

Required level: segments and
suprasegmental features

Exercises: **observation, imagination
and physical embodiment
exercises**

EXAMPLE: A ONE-MONTH PROJECT

1. Ask each student to choose a speaker of English and **observe** him/her by listening to and/or watching material in which she/he interacts with others.
2. Every time that material is analysed, they should write down **key information about his/her sounds, allophonic variations, prosody, silences, body language (facial and hand gestures as well as postures), fillers and interjections.**
3. Every time students are asked to read in class, you should encourage them to **imagine** first the context in which they will be expressing themselves in English.
4. Suggest they should **develop their own idiolect** getting inspired by such a speaker.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cklr9KMzPyg>

Some relevant features

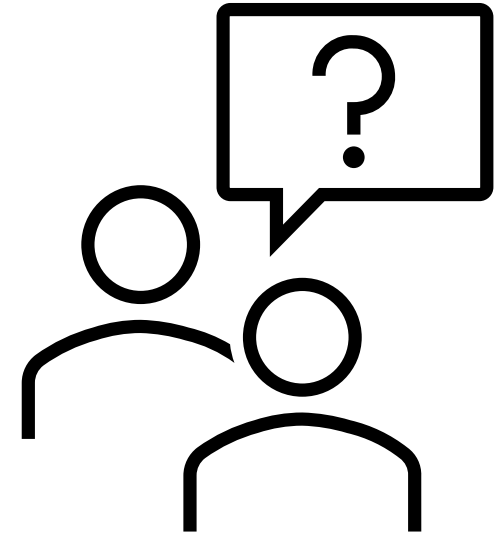
Examples:

- Consonants: very /v/, trans /z/
- Long vowels: girl /ɜ:/, saw /ɔ:/
- Dark /l/: girl, health /t/
- Weak forms of function words: there has been /ðəz (h)əz bi:n/
- Hand gestures
- Silences
- The use of the fall-rise
- LLI rule and exceptions

In this part, we have dealt with...

- a holistic approach divided into **3 learning levels**
- **exercises**

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?



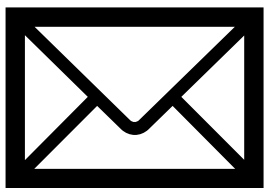
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"Words have incredible power.

They can make people's hearts soar, or they can make people's hearts sore."



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Thank you!