

Conclusion

A discussion of English pronunciation improvement methodology would be incomplete without stressing the importance of positive student/instructor interaction. ESL students are proud of their cultural heritage and must be assured that reducing their "accents" or bettering their English pronunciation abilities is not the losing of one's culture, but the improving of a skill. At the same time, ESL students are often self-conscious and frustrated about their accented speech and require continual encouragement. We must provide a supporting, reinforcing environment and exhibit a strong sense of humor. Students will delight in laughing "with" rather than "at" each other when mistakes are made. We will be rewarded with their enthusiasm and appreciation for our efforts and interest in their progress.

References

- Dale, P., and Poms, L. (1985). English Pronunciation for Spanish Speakers. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Regents.
- Dale, P. and Poms L. (1994). English Pronunciation for Japanese Speakers. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Dale, P. and Poms, L. (1994). English Pronunciation for International Students. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall Regents.

"Money-Money-Money!" (Seven Simulations Scripts)

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Simulations and role plays have long been known as excellent means to create motivating, enjoyable and relatively stress-free environments for communication in a foreign language. A set of seven simulation scripts is presented here that may be used as oral communication exercises in intermediate and advanced level English classes. The simulation scripts were written for EFL classes in a Latin American context, but may be used elsewhere as well. The texts and activities can easily be integrated in classes that treat the topics/functions listed below.

Topics/Functions: Money, buying, selling, financial problems, crime, poverty
Student Level: Intermediate/advanced
Student Age: Secondary school, college level, adult education
Number of Players: 21 maximum, if all simulations are played

Preparation

- Distribute the written scripts to corresponding groups or pairs of students. Set a time limit for the preparation period (5-10 minutes depending on students' proficiency level).
- Assist students in resolving language problems, but let them find their own solutions to the content problems outlined in the scripts.

Simulation

- Introduce the situation, problem and participants of the simulation, or let a student do it.
- Let the group present/act out the simulation.

Debriefing / Post Simulation Activities

- After the simulation, ask the observing students for their opinion. Did the participants present the situation and problem appropriately? Did they find a realistic and workable solution? Are there possible alternatives?
- After the final simulation, ask the students to compare the problems and solutions presented in the simulations with possible analogies in real life. Do the simulations resemble real episodes in the students' social/cultural environment?
- Discuss and clarify linguistic problems that you took note of during the students' presentations. If possible, assign a writing assignment on the topic as homework.

Instructions for Students

Read the following text/script with your partner or group. Try to understand the problem of the characters in the specific situation. Choose one character, slip into his/her mind and role. Express how the person is feeling, what he or she is thinking and how he or she is searching for

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a realistic solution of the problem. Discuss the problem in your group and prepare a simulation of the situation. After the preparation, you will act out the simulation in front of the class.

Simulation Scripts

The Lottery Reward

Marco and his wife, Virginia, won US \$250,000 in the lottery. They are very happy about this fortune. They suddenly became rich! However, now they have to think about what to do and how to distribute the money. Both come from big, rather poor families, and of course, they want to help their relatives (parents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.). Nevertheless, they would like to make some of their dreams come true (buy a house with a garden, a new car, etc.). They are also thinking about investing part of the money, but don't know where. Alex, their 12-year old son has certain ideas and claims about what to do with the money. Quickly the three realize that \$250,000 is not really that much money.

3 participants: Marco, Virginia and Alex

Selling or Renting the House?

Rosa is a 60-year old U.S. American retiree who owns a beautiful house in Guadalajara. Her mother, now 80 years old and living in the U.S., does not feel well and needs help (She would never live in a foreign country and speak another language!). Rosa decides to leave Mexico to take care of her mother, but what is she going to do with her house? Rosa thinks that she is going to sell it. In fact, she has to sell it. She owes money on several credit cards and has no job. Three university students (Juan, Max and Claudia) fell in love with the house that is close to the university. They would like to rent (not buy) it. Now they are trying to convince Rosa to rent the house to them. It would be difficult to sell the house in these difficult economic times, they argue, but Rosa is skeptical: Should she rent her house to three wild students, while she is going to be so far away?

4 participants: Rosa, Juan, Max and Claudia

Selling the Body?

Ronaldo and Patricia have been married for three years. They have been unemployed for almost two years. There are not many chances of finding a job soon in the country they live in. Their financial situation is close to catastrophic. There is not enough money for food and clothing for the couple and their two-year old daughter. They also are far behind in paying the rent on their small apartment. The owner has threatened to evict them if the family cannot pay by the end of this month. Tonight Patricia suggests selling her body and working as a prostitute in order to make the family survive. She loves Ronaldo and argues that her love to him would not change. Ronaldo is shocked and desperate. He loves his wife and would hate to see her to do this kind of work. On the other hand, there are no realistic alternatives.

2 participants: Ronaldo and Patricia

Street Children

Pablo, Maria, Ernesto and Nina are young children who do not have a family. They are living on the streets of the historic city center. In order to survive, they have been begging or selling chewing gum, candies and cigarettes at the city center's plaza. However, it has become more and more difficult to earn money. The adults who are having a good time in the bars and

cafes around the plaza do not buy much from the children. Often they feel irritated or disturbed by the kids. The police started to act against the children after several foreign tourists had complained about the children working on the streets. Teenage gangs are another problem. These robbed the four children several times of the little money they had earned. Now the four friends discuss and analyze the situation, and they think about old and new ways to secure their basic income for survival.

4 participants: Pablo, Maria, Ernesto and Nina

Bank Machine Robbery and Kidnapping

It is Friday night around 11:00 p.m. and Gilberto is getting some money from a bank machine downtown. Suddenly a young man (Paulo), armed with a handgun, runs towards Gilberto, points the gun to his head and demands to be given the money. Gilberto follows Paulo's order (He had been robbed before.). However, Paulo wants more. With the gun hidden under his jacket, he leads Gilberto to a small car that is parking near by on the street. A woman (Lisa) is waiting in the car. Paulo forces Gilberto into the car. Lisa is embarrassed. She participated in the robbery, helping Gilberto, her partner, but kidnapping was not part of the plan. "Let him go, stupid!" she demands, but Paulo is not listening. He tells Lisa to shut up, starts the car, and a very frightening journey begins.

3 participants: Gilberto, Paulo and Lisa

Planning a Robbery

After spending four years in prison for participating in a bank robbery, Alfredo is released today. His good old friend Pedro (who also took part in the robbery but was not caught) is waiting for him outside the prison. The two friends are very happy to see each other again. The four years in prison were difficult for Alfredo. Pedro was not doing very well either. He does not have a job, his wife ran away two years ago, and his parents died. Now the two friends are having a beer in a bar. They are talking about the four past years and the future. Alfredo and Pedro are determined to live a better life. They want to have a house on the beach, women, travel etc. Therefore, they need money, of course, a lot of money! So they are planning a new robbery.

2 participants: Alfredo and Pedro

Selling/Buying a Used Car

John has worked in Queretaro for the last 3 years as an English teacher. Now he has to go back home to California where he wants to go to graduate school. Studying at a university, however, is going to be expensive. John needs some capital for a start. However, he has no savings, no cash. He cannot even pay for the trip home. The teacher's pay was just enough to live on. John has only one valuable object: a four-year old beautiful red convertible that he recently advertised for sale in a newspaper. The car is in good condition, with one exception: The driver's door can only be opened from the inside. This means that John has to enter through the passenger's door in order to drive. Carlos and his girlfriend Regina have seen the advertisement and have come to examine the car. They have dreamed of having a car like this for a long time. This afternoon they examine the car and negotiate its price. However, when they notice the problem with the door, they become uncertain of whether to buy the car or not.

3 participants: John, Carlos and Regina

Teachers who are interested in the rationale of using simulations in foreign language classes, factors that make up a good simulation, and recommendations for selecting and creating one's own simulations are referred to the following readings:

- Archibald, A. (1997). Using simulation activities in advanced level English classes. Der Fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch, 2, 34-38.
- Crookall, D., & Oxford, R. (1990). Simulations, gaming, and language learning. New York: Newbury House.
- Ecke, P. (1998). Simulation-games in foreign language classrooms. MEXTESOL Journal, 21(3), 23-36.
- Jones, K. (1982). Simulations - a handbook for teachers. London. Kogan Page.

Book Review

Implementing the Lexical Approach: Putting Theory Into Practice. Michael Lewis. (1997). Hove England: Language Teaching Publications. 296 pp.

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Vocabulary learning will not take care of itself is the underlying message of *Implementing The Lexical Approach: Putting Theory Into Practice* by Michael Lewis. However, vocabulary or lexis (chunks of coherent language) is not the only concern of this book which also questions current approaches to teaching methodology and classroom practice. This does not mean Implementing The Lexical Approach is about rejecting previous or current approaches or methods: it actually builds on established insights e.g., the Natural Approach, Total Physical Response and the need for consciousness-raising and noticing in language learning.

Making an important distinction often forgotten by other authors, Lewis says 'describing a language and teaching it are two very different things' (p.44). This book is about developing a principled approach not only to teaching and learning lexis but also to English language teaching in general, to the position of grammar and to classroom procedures and activities. Focusing especially on the problem of vocabulary learning, Lewis outlines the problem within the EFL context:

A mature adult L1 lexicon is simply too large to have been acquired by formal vocabulary teaching. In both L1 and L2 a mature lexicon is acquired in very similar ways -- firstly by large quantities of listening which is largely comprehensible, and later by similar quantities of comprehensible reading. (p. 86)

However, exposure is not enough to develop lexis; learners still need to be taught. What and how do they need to be taught? This book gives some possible answers.

Implementing the Lexical Approach sees the key to learners' developing a wide and relevant lexicon as focusing learning and language use on multi-word items (including collocations, fixed expressions and semi-fixed expressions). Further key areas Lewis identifies include: contractions, polywords (a word-like item often composed of several words e.g. "by the way", "on the other hand"), information content level of individual words, common words and de-lexicalised words (words such as "thing", "point" and "have" which convey little meaning when used out of context)

On one level, Implementing The Lexical Approach can be seen as the 'practical' extension of Lewis' early book, *The Lexical Approach* (1993 Language Teaching Publications). However, it is not necessary to have read the first book unless, of course, you want to be challenged over basic teaching concepts and long-held attitudes towards teaching and learning.

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