

**Pick Your Battles: Best
Practices for Helping
Students with**

Pronunciation

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Agenda

1. The Basics

- When to correct
- When NOT to correct

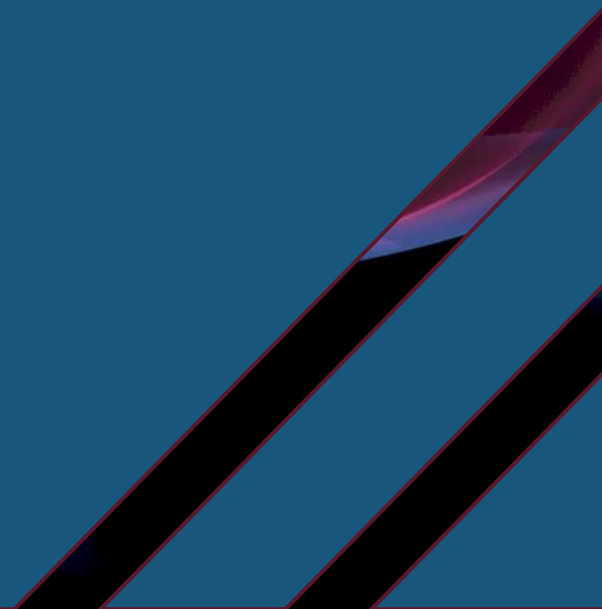
2. What to look for

- Mouth positions
- Vowels
- Consonants
- Stress Pattern

3. General Advice

- Tips
- Tools

The Basics



What you need to understand

- Perfection will not happen overnight
- Practice thoughtfully
- Work at least a little bit every lesson
- Repetition

- When the error drastically affects communication
- When the error creates a different word, particularly if that could create an embarrassing situation for the student
- When first learning new vocabulary
- When the focus of the lesson is on pronunciation

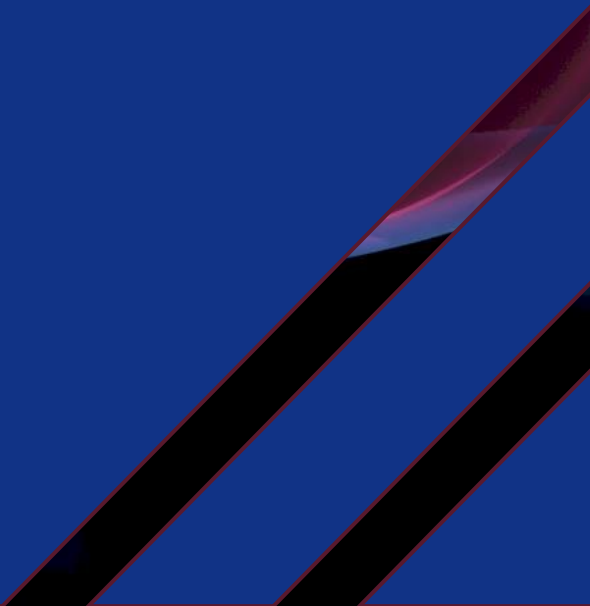
When to Correct

When NOT to correct

- When correcting would interrupt the flow of conversation
- When the error is significantly beyond the student's current level
- When the error is engrained
- When correcting the student would harm confidence

What to Look For

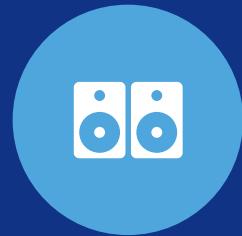
What to look for:

- Mouth position
 - Vowel pronunciation and placement
 - Consonant pronunciation
 - Stress patterns
- 

Mouth Placement



WHERE IS THE
SOUND
VIBRATING?



HOW MUCH IS
THE SOUND
VIBRATING?



WHAT ARE YOUR
LIPS DOING?



WHAT IS YOUR
TONGUE DOING?



WHAT ARE YOUR
TEETH DOING?

Vowels

- What is a vowel?
 - That's easy: a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y
- Yes, but what IS it?

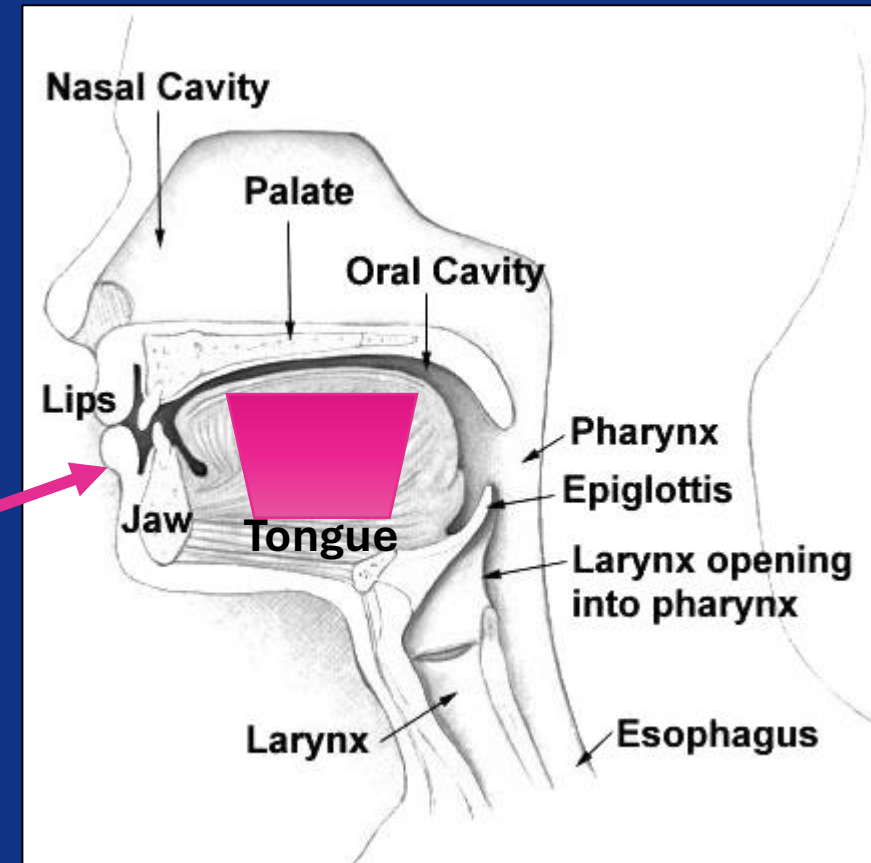
Vowels

- A vowel is a speech sound that is made without significant constriction of the flow of air from the lungs.
- The tongue can be at various heights in the mouth (e.g., high, mid, or low) and at various positions (front, central, or back).
- The lips can be variously rounded (cf. a long O and E).

Vowel Placement

Lip Placement

	Front	Middle	Back
Closed	Heat /i:/		Hoot /u:/
	Hit /ɪ/		Hook /ʊ/
Half-Closed	Hate /eɪ/	Hum /ʌ/	Home /oʊ/
	Head /ɛ/		Haunt /ɔ:/
Open	Hat /æ/	The /ə/	Hot /ɒ/



Caveat for the next few slides

- Regional dialects influence pronunciation
- “caramel” has three Standard American Pronunciations
 - /'kar-məl/, /'kær-ə-məl/, and /'kær-ə-məl/
- Teach it the way your students will hear it.

Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol ¹	Examples	Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol	Example
/æ/	/ă/	can, hat	/ɔ:/	/ô/	caught
/eɪ/	/ā/	cane, bait	/ɔr/	/ôr/	north
/ɛər/	/âr/	air, hare	/ɔɪ/	/oi/	joy, noise
/ɑ:/	/ä/	father	/ʊ/	/oö/	took
/ɑr/	/är/	arm	/ʊər/	/oör/	tour
/ɛ/	/ě/	bet, head	/u:/	/oō/	soon
/i:/	/ē/	meet, beat	/aʊ/	/ou/	out
/ɪər/	/îr/	here	/ʌ/	/ǔ/	cut
/ɪ/	/ï/	pit	/ɜr/	/ûr/	word
/aɪ/	/ī/	my, light	/ə/	/ə/	about, the
/ɒ/	/ö/	hot	/ər/	/ər/	butter
/oʊ/	/ō/	no, know	/ju:/	/yoō/	view

¹American Heritage Dictionary

Diphthongs

- Diphthongs (also called “Sliding” or “Gliding” vowels) are two vowel sounds connected together and created by sliding one mouth position to another.

/aʊ/ as in
“brown”

/oʊ/ as in
“know”

/aɪ/ as in
“might”

/eɪ/ as in
“they”

/ɔɪ/ as in
“toy”

/eə/ as in
“pair”

/ɪə/ as in
“meal”

/ʊə/ as in
“sure”

R-colored Vowels

These are the vowels that are followed by the letter [r], which changes the pronunciation of that vowel.

/əɹ/ as in
“her”

/ɑɹ/ as in
“cart”

/ɪɹ/ as in
“ear”

/jʊəɹ/ as
in “fury”

/aɪɹ/ as in
“fire”

/ɔɹ/ as in
“store”

/ɛəɹ/ as in
“air”

/jʊr/ as in
“cure”

Consonants



- What is a consonant?
 - Easy: everything that's not a vowel.
- What IS a consonant?

Consonants



A speech sound produced by:

- stopping, with or without release (p, b; t, d; k, g),
- diverting (m, n, ng),
- or hindering (f, v; s, z, etc.),

the flow of air from the lungs.

Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol ¹	Examples	Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol	Example
/b/	/b/	boy, cabin	/p/	/p/	pink, hip
/tʃ/	/ch/	cheer, itch, cello	/r/	/r/	rest, far
/d/	/d/	dog, bed	/s/	/s/	sink, mess
/f/	/f/	fill, phone, life	/ʃ/	/sh/	she, special
/g/	/g/	go, log	/t/	/t/	tiny, little
/h/	/h/	his, cohort	/ð/	/th/	the, bathe
/dʒ/	/j/	joy, giant, budge	/θ/	/th/	thin, bath
/k/	/k/	cat, king, lack	/v/	/v/	view, weave
/l/	/l/	long, ill	/w/	/w/	win, when
/m/	/m/	my, team	/j/	/y/	you, mayor
/n/	/n/	no, knife	/z/	/z/	zoo, rise
/ŋ/	/ng/	sing, thing	/ʒ/	/zh/	leisure, beige

¹American Heritage Dictionary

Digraphs

- Ch

- Sh

- Th

- Wh

- Ph

- Kn

- Wr

- ck

- ss

- tch

Blends

- Bl
- Br
- Cl
- Cr
- Dr
- Fr
- Fl
- Gl
- Gr
- Pl
- Pr
- Sl
- Sm
- Sp
- St
- Tr
- Scr
- Spl
- Spr
- Str

Stress Patterns

- Stress the first syllable of:
 - Most two-syllable nouns (examples: CLimate, TAbble)
 - Most two-syllable adjectives (examples: CLEver, SPAcious)

Exceptions: • hoTEL • exTREME

Stress Patterns

- Stress the last syllable of:
 - Most two-syllable verbs (examples: reQUIRE, deCIDE)

Stress Patterns

- Follow these rules when the word is both a noun and a verb
 - PROgress and proGRESS
 - RECord and reCORD

Stress Patterns

- Stress the second-to-last syllable of:
 - Words that end in -ic (examples: ecSTATIC, geoGRAPHic)
 - Words ending in -sion and -tion (examples: exTENsion, retriBUtion)

Stress Patterns

- Stress the third-from-last syllable of:
 - Words that end in -cy, -ty, -phy and -gy (examples: deMOCracy, unCERtainty, geOGraphy, radiOLogy)
 - Words that end in -al (examples: exCEPtional, CRItical)

Stress Patterns

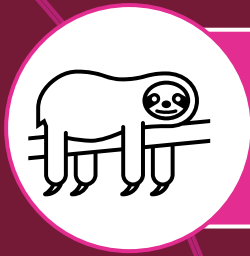
- Stress the first syllable in three syllable words ending in –er or –ly
 - HAP-pi-ly • MA-na-ger

General Advice



Quick Trick!

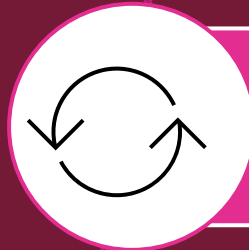
- Ask any trained actor or singer what will be the quickest thing to make you more easily understood on stage, and they will tell you:
- Focus on the final consonant sound.
 - Clean up final consonants, and it will make someone almost instantly more understandable.



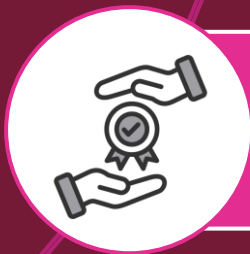
Slow down



Listen Carefully



Repeat what you hear



Practice, practice, practice

Ways to Practice

- Minimal pairs
 - Bat/bet
 - Sit/set
 - Major/mayor
- Record and listen

- Odd one out
 - With vowels:
heat/seat/hit
 - With consonants:
plays/place/space
- Tongue twisters



Questions?