Curs propedèutic. Setembre 2014

ORAL SKILLS AND PRONUNCIATION – Profs. Juli Cebrian & Angelica Carlet

1. Objective of learning oral skills
   - Confidence and fluency in L2 English --> Effective communication
   - Accuracy and intelligibility --> Comfortable intelligibility

2. Learning oral skills in the degree of English Studies at UAB
   - Oral presentations
   - Oral exams in instrumental English and in phonetics
   - Pronunciation and oral skills practice

3. Importance of learning English pronunciation
   - to improve our own performance in perception and production
   - to allow intelligible communication
   - to be able to teach it

4. Why learn about phonetics and pronunciation?
   - to learn about one component of the English language: the sound system
     - characterizing speech, accents, learning about dialectal differences
   - to learn about linguistics (articulatory phonetics)
   - to improve one’s pronunciation
   - Identifying differences between our mother lang. and English and potential sources of pron. difficulty
   - Recognizing English varieties, registers

5. Is English pronunciation difficult?
   a) Indicate between one and three aspects of English pronunciation you find difficult.

6. Sources of difficulty
   - learning a new language after puberty
   - differences in inventory
   b) how many vowels are there in English? in Catalan? in Spanish?
7. Sources of difficulty
   - English orthography. Example: through, though, thought, tough, thorough
     a) how many different spellings do you associate with the sound [ʃ] (as in Catalan peix)?
     b) how many different English sounds do you associate with letter “a”?

8. Orthographic inconsistencies
   - Homophones
     d) Can you find another word that has the same pronunciation as -by
     -see
     -right
   - Homographs
     e) Can you find alternative pronunciations for the following words?
     -read
     -live
     -tear
     f) According to Bernard Shaw, “fish” could be spelled “ghoti”. Can you guess why?

9. Consequence: pronunciation errors. Types of errors
   - Language-specific or universal difficulty
     - Non-L1 sound: work, velvet, cut-cut
     - Uncommon sound or sequence: the, bathe, heard, asked
   - Mispronunciations due to spelling
     - talk, society, friend, great, high school, write
     - Morphological endings: cats, dogs, roses; killed, kissed, wanted
     g) Practice with plural and past tense endings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural = /s/</th>
<th>Plural = /z/</th>
<th>Plural = /ts, oz/</th>
<th>Past = /t/</th>
<th>Past = /d/</th>
<th>Past = /id/</th>
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Exercise. Check the pronunciation of the following words (use dictionaries and online resources: e.g., Cambridge online dictionary, howjsay.com): hotel, society, comfortable, half, key, country, talk, Cambridge, high school, heart, island, famous, August, breathe, vegetable, law, weight, cousin, accurate

Reading practice:

• The witches ate twelve peaches.
• There are bits of cake on the floor.
• Judges always wear black in court.
• The slices of pizza got cold.
• We are big fans of that type of music.
• How many weeks until your trip?

• The foreigners attracted a lot of attention.
• He popped a balloon.
• I visited the Empire State Building and I loved it.
• They talked a lot.
• She edited the research paper.
• We raised her expectations.

10. But there is a system to English orthography, at least originally

Example: English vowels

Letter E
Examples: been, beep, better, feed, fed, feel, fell, green, meet, met, leg, letter, neck, pet, Peter, seen, send

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<tr>
<th>Sound /i:/ as in bee</th>
<th>Sound /e/ as in bet</th>
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Letter A
Examples: age, ape, bat, back, bake, cap, fat, hat, hate, mad, made, late, later, latter, Sam, same

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<tr>
<th>Sound /æt/ as in cake</th>
<th>Sound /æ/ as in cat</th>
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Letter I
Examples: bit, bite, bin, dinner, five, lick, like, nice, rich, sitting, Tim, time, win, wine, write, writing, written

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<tr>
<th>Sound /æt/ as in life</th>
<th>Sound /i/ as in sit</th>
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11. Another characteristic of English spelling is the presence of silent letters.

k) What letters are silent in the following words? Can you think of more examples?

• answer, build, climb, column, doubt, friend, hour, island, light, thought, vogue, write
12. Elements of pronunciation difficulty for Spanish/Catalan speakers learning English

- **Vowels**
  - comparatively large vowel system
  - vowel contrasts: tin-teen, bag-beg, fan-fun, born-burn-barn
  - vowel reduction: nation, support, famous, circus, reason, certificate,

**Ear training exercises:**

A) Look at the sheep / ship.
B) Is this your cap / cup?

(Baker, A. 2006. *Tree or Three. CUP.*

These are beans / bins?
Is this a meal / mill?
She likes high heels / hills.

Look at that little hat / hut.
That’s a very bad cat / cut.

- **Consonants**
  - /v/-/b/: van-ban, dove-dub
  - aspiration of /p, t, k/: pain vs. Spain
  - intervocalic /b, d, g/: baby, lady
  - no regressive voicing: this apple /sl/, not /zl/
  - sound /h/
  - English /h/
  - the consonants in church, judge, treasure, nature, culture; gem vs. yellow
  - the consonants in sue, zoo, shoe
  - initial [w] west, white, wood, wool

- **Silent letters**

- **Suprasegmental Structure**
  - Syllable structure and sound combinations
    - word initial s+Consonant: sky, speech, stay
    - word final consonant clusters, word endings: pact, mist, belch, packed, missed, scientists, disks, acts, opts, risked, changed
    - syllabic consonants, weak syllables: sudden, table, temperature, chocolate
  - Stress
    - interesting: available, vegetable; present-to present
  - Rhythm: Why don’t you ask her to give you your Money back?
  - Intonation and phrasing: I’d like bread with butter and cheese.

**Communicative skills**

- Mispronunciation of words: e.g. hotel, society, comfortable, half, key, country, talk, Cambridge, high school, heart, island, famous, August, breathe, vegetable, law, weight, cousin, accurate
- General fluency
- Intelligibility
- Choice of register (formal vs. colloquial)

**Reading short text**

‘The star shone out briefly and faded again. Then silently a great doorway was outlined, though not a crack or joint had been visible before. Slowly it divided in the middle and swung outwards inch by inch, until both doors lay back against the wall. Through the opening a shadowy stair could be seen climbing steeply up; but beyond the lower steps the darkness was deeper than the night. The Company stared in wonder.’

Excerpt from J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*