Curs propedèutic.

**ORAL SKILLS AND PRONUNCIATION – Profs. Juli Cebrian & Núria Gavaldà**

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, cat-cut
     - Uncommon sound or sequence: the, bathe, heard, asked
   - Mispredictions 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 = /ɪz, əz/</th>
<th>Past = /t/</th>
<th>Past = /d/</th>
<th>Past = /ɪd/</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. 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

13. Reading practice:

**Sentences**

- We played a game.
- Ted stayed out late.
- My mother baked a pie.
- They looked at the pictures.
- The judge asked a question.
- The student finished early.
- Tim cashed a cheque and deposited the money.
- He listened while I showed photos and talked about my trip.
- 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.

**Short passages**

1) **Topless women in Times Square**

Times Square is one of New York’s most famous landmarks. There are any buskers there, too. For example, you can take a picture with Iron Man. However, there are some buskers who are a bit controversial – topless women. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio says that he does not like it and that enough is enough. Some people agree with him, but many visitors say that the women should be allowed to stay. One person said that it is part of the New York experience.

2) **Giant pandas in Washington**

Giant pandas live in a few mountain ranges in central China. Their population is around 1,600. Another 300 giant pandas live in zoos. At a zoo in Washington, one giant panda gave birth to a cub. About four hours later, a second cub arrived. Both of the twins looked safe, but people placed them in an incubator. People inseminated the panda with sperm from two different male pandas. One of them is from China. We do not know who the father is. The little pandas do not have names yet, and we do not know if they’re male or female.

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

‘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.’
14. 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.  
  - These are beans / bins?
  - Is this a meal / mill?
  - She likes high heels / hills.
- **B)** Is this your cap / cup?  
  - Look at that little hat / hut.
  - That’s a very bad cat / cut.
- **C)** Have you got a pin / bin?
  - There’s a pear / bear in the tree.
  - I don’t like peas / bees.
  - I want to get a cap / cab.

- **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 /s/, not /z/
  - sound /h/
  - English /r/
  - 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)