

ENJOYABLE PRONUNCIATION ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

T.K. Merkulova,
V.N. Karazin Kharkiv Natinal University,
senior teacher

The aim of this article is to help teachers who work with young learners to enrich their collection of pronunciation activities. The ideas for all the activities were borrowed from different sources but most of the language material in them is original. All the activities were piloted with different groups of young learners aged 7-10 and all of them proved to work.

The activities that I offer here are divided into several groups:

- work with individual sounds
- work with transcription symbols
- work with rhyming words with identical sounds

WORK WITH INDIVIDUAL SOUNDS

There are 44 sounds in English. They are:

- a) 24 consonants
 - 17 noise consonants [p, b, k, g, t, d, s, z, f, v, tʃ, ʃ, ʒ, ʒ, ʔ, ɰ, h]
 - 7 sonants [m, n, ŋ, l, r, w, j]
- b) 20 vowels
 - 10 monophthongs [i, e, ɛ, ɒ, ʊ, ɜ:, ʌ, ɹ, ɔ]
 - 8 diphthongs [ɔɪ, ɔɪ, ɛɪ, ɪə, ʊə, ɛə, ɔə, ɔɪ]
 - 2 diphthongoids [i:, u:]

There are also 5 triphthongs: flower [ʊəɪə]; lower [əʊə]; player [ɛɪə]; lawyer [ɔɪə]; fire [ɔɪə]

In teaching pronunciation to young learners not all of these sounds demand equal amount of attention. According to the practice they require, it is possible to divide them into 4 groups:

Group 1: Sounds that are very similar to their Russian/Ukrainian counterparts and do not demand any special work or extra explanation, that is mere imitation will be enough, e.g.

- consonants [m, f, v, b, j];
- vowels [ʊ, ɔɪ, ɔɪ, ɛɪ, ɔ]

Group 2: Sounds that only seem to be similar to their Russian/Ukrainian counterparts but demand some correction. Mere imitation is not enough and it means that the difference in their pronunciation should be explained, demonstrated and practised in a number of exercises, e.g.

- aspiration in the consonants [p, t, k];
- apical-alveolar position of the tongue in the consonants [s, z, t, d, n, l];
- glottal pronunciation of the consonant [h];
- back-lingual position of the tongue in the consonant [g], especially for Ukrainian learners;
- palato-alvial position of the tongue in the consonants [ʃ, ʒ]

Group 3: Sounds that may look very much alike their English or Russian /Ukrainian counterparts but because of language interference present much difficulty for learners. These sounds demand explanation, demonstration and long practice, e.g.

- [i:] # [ɪ] # Russian/Ukrainian [и] # [ы]
- [ʊ] # [u:] # Russian/Ukrainian [y]
- [e] # [ɛ] # Russian/Ukrainian [э]
- [ʌ] # [ɹ] # Russian/Ukrainian [а]
- [ɒ] # [ɔ] # Russian/Ukrainian [о]

Group 4: Sounds that do not exist in Russian/Ukrainian and require building new pronunciation

skills. They need demonstration, explanation and very long practice, e.g.

- [r] # Russian/Ukrainian [p]
- [ʔ, ɖ] # [s, z] # Russian/Ukrainian [c, ʒ]
- [v] # [w]
- [ʙ] # [n] # Russian/Ukrainian [ɲ]

Imitation activities are absolutely essential when we teach young learners because their imitation abilities are at their best up to approximately the age of 12. But besides them it is necessary to use exercises that will help learners to recognize the peculiarities of the sounds of the target language, to discriminate between native and foreign sounds, and of course, to produce English sounds correctly. Below there are some activities that can help teachers to diversify their lessons.

Activity 1: Recognize an English sound

Aim: To help Ss differentiate between the pronunciation of English and Russian/Ukrainian individual sounds.

Level: Young learners

Materials: A list of words containing the sounds that need practising

Preparation: None

Procedure: The teacher asks the students (Ss) to listen to the Russian / Ukrainian words he/she pronounces and clap their hands when they hear an English sound in these words.

Instruction: I am going to pronounce several Russian /Ukrainian words. But in some of them I will use English sounds instead of Russian /Ukrainian. Clap your hands when you hear a word with an English sound or sounds¹.

- кот, кит, [k]ом, кар, тигр, [t]орт, том, тир, [p]орт, пот, пост, пир, [st]ул, стол
- дуб, [d]ом, дача, [d]ед, Дон, Днепр, [d]нест[ɹ], дал, дол, [d]у[ʂ]
- сон, [s]ани, слон, [s]ыр, [z]ал, зонт, [z]уб, Зина

Rationale: Teachers can make up their own activities of this kind using short words for the sounds they want to practise.

Activity 2: Spot Your Teacher's Mistakes

Aim: To help Ss differentiate between the pronunciation of English and Russian/Ukrainian individual sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A list of words containing the sounds that need practising

Preparation: None

Procedure: The teacher asks the Ss to listen to a number of English words. In some of them he/she will make mistakes, that is pronounce a Russian/Ukrainian sound instead of an English one. The Ss' task is to clap their hands when they hear a mistake.

Instruction: I am going to pronounce some English words. But in some of them I will make mistakes. I will pronounce a Russian/Ukrainian sound instead of an English one. Clap your hands as soon as you hear my mistake.

¹ It is recommended that the instructions should first be given in the Ss's native language, then in English but with the native language translation, after some time – only in English

- pen;
- desk;
- [t]able (table);
- lip;
- bag;
- [k]at (cat);
- this;
- [ʒ]at (that);
- pencil;
- ba[ɪ] (bad);
- chair;
- cock;
- [d]oor (door);
- [c]ink (think);
- book;
- why;
- [w]ater (water);
- dog;
- take;
- [t]ime (time)

Rationale: Teachers can make up their own activities of this kind using short words for the sounds they want to practise.

Activity 3: The Same or Different?

Aim: To help Ss differentiate between the pronunciation of English individual sounds.

Level: Young learners

Materials: A list of pairs of words containing similar or identical sounds that need practising

Preparation: None

Procedure: The teacher asks the Ss to listen to pairs of words which may have either similar or identical sounds. The Ss's task is to clap their hands when they hear similar but not identical sounds.

Instruction: I am going to give you several pairs of words. In some of these pairs the sounds are the same. In other pairs the sounds are similar but different. Clap your hands when you hear the pairs of words in which the sounds are different.

sit – seat

meat – neat

live – leave

bag – bad

door – doll

cat - rat

Tom – tall

Pat – pet

boat – goat

met – mat

pen – ten

cap – cake

baby – lady

dog – doll

bat - but

Rationale: Teachers can make up their own activities of this kind using pairs of short words for the sounds they want to practise.

Key: The pairs of words with different sounds are underlined.

Activity 4: Count Identical Sounds

Aim: To help Ss differentiate between the pronunciation of English individual sounds.

Level: Young learners

Materials: Little rhymes containing several identical sounds. Ss' cards with numbers from 1 to 10.

Preparation: Help your Ss prepare small cards with the numbers from 1 to 10. Make sure your Ss know all the words in the rhymes.

Procedure: The teacher asks Ss to put as many ticks in their notebooks as many identical sounds they will hear in the rhyme. (It is recommended that the Ss have heard these rhymes several times or even have learn them by heart before doing this activity.)

Instruction: I am going to read to you a little rhyme. Every time you hear the sound [i], put a tick in you notebooks. I will read the rhyme three times. When I finish, show me a card with the number of times I have pronounced the sound [i]

- [i] Six little kittens lost their mittens.
It's a pity, they were so pretty. (7 times)
The same can be done for other sounds, e.g.
- [x] A black cat sat on a mat and ate² a bad fat rat. (7 times)
- [x/ei/e] My name is Ann, his name is Ben,
Her name is Nan, say it all again³.
(Key: [x] – 2 times, [zi] – 4 times; [e] – 2 times)
- [v/w] 'Very well,' said Val and quickly jumped over the well.
And Violet said, 'Val had a fall!'
And quickly climbed over the wall.
(Key: [v] – 6 times; [w] – 5 times)
- [tʃ] Charlie has a cheerful face,
He loves to chatter, chuckle, chase.
The children come to watch him too,
For Charlie Chimp is in the zoo.
(Key: 9 times)

Rationale: Teachers can make up their own activities of this kind using short rhymes for the sounds they want to practise.

Activity 5: English Parrots

Aim: To help Ss differentiate between the pronunciation of English and Russian/Ukrainian individual sounds and pronounce English sounds correctly

Level: Young learners

Materials: A list of words containing the sounds that need practising

Preparation: None

Procedure: The teacher asks the Ss to repeat after him/her the words he/she pronounces, each time replacing the Russian/Ukrainian sound with its English counterpart.

Instruction: Imagine that you are English parrots. Parrots, as you know, can repeat words after people but they cannot pronounce all the sounds correctly. Repeat after me the words and poems I pronounce but replace Russian/Ukrainian sounds with the English ones.

² The verb 'ate' has two pronunciations [eit] which is more modern and [et] which is more old-fashioned

³ The word 'again' has pronunciations [q'gɛn] which is more modern and [q'gɛɪn] which is more old-fashioned

1. Sound [d]: дуб, дом, дача, дед, Дон, Днепр, Днестр, дал, дол, душ;
 - Дед Додон в дуду дудел, Димку дед дудой задел.
 - Во дворе трава, на траве дрова.
2. Sounds [k, p, t] :
 - кот, кит, ком, кар, тигр, торт, том, тир, порт, пот, пост, пир, стул, стол;
 - Кот ловил мышей и крыс, кролик лист капустный грыз.
 - Панцирь носит черепаха, прячет голову от страха
 - Таракан живет за печкой, то-то теплое местечко.
3. Sounds [s, z] and [Т, Д]:
 - сон, сани, слон, сыр, зал, зонт, зуб, Зина;
 - Спит спокойно старый слон, стоя спать умеет он.
 - Соловей сидел на сосне
 Он заснул и свалился во сне.
 Если б он не свалился во сне,
 Он бы так и сидел на сосне.
 - Резиновую Зину купили в магазине,
 Резиновую Зину в корзине принесли.
 Она была разиней резиновая Зина
 Упала из корзины, измазалась в грязи.
 Мы вымоем в бензине резиновую Зину,
 Мы вымоем в бензине и пальцем погрозим.
 Не будь такой разиней, резиновая Зина,
 А то тебя вернем мы обратно в магазин.
4. Sound [r]:
 - рот, ром, рост, рис, Рим, речка, ручка, рама, рамка, рюмка;
 - Ехал Грека через реку
 Видит Грека в речке рак.
 Сунул Грека руку в реку,
 Рак за руку Греку – цап!

Rationale: Teachers can make up their own activities of this kind using native tongue-twisters, sayings, proverbs, rhymes and poems with the sounds they want to practise.

WORK WITH TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

Activity 6: Transcription Bingo

Aim: To help Ss discriminate and remember English transcription symbols

Level: Young learners

Materials: 11 big cards with 4 transcription symbols on each and 44 small cards with 1 transcription symbols on each

Preparation: The teacher prepares 11 big cards with 4 transcription symbols and 44 small cards with one transcription symbol on each (see Photocopiable Materials)

Procedure: The teacher gives each Ss one big card with 4 transcription symbols. Then the teacher and the class have the following dialogue:

T: Who has the sound [r]? (without showing the small card to the class)

S (who has the sound answers): I have the sound [r].

T: Show it to me, please.

S (pointing at the sound on his/her card): Here it is.

T: That is right. Here you are. (The T gives the small card to the student who covers the sound with the card.)

The student who has covered all the cards wins and cries 'Bingo!'

Instruction: We are going to play a game which is called 'Transcription Bingo'. I will give each of you a big card with 4 transcription symbols on it. I also have 44 small cards with the same symbols. I am going to pronounce a sound and will give the small card with this

sound to the student who has the symbol of this sound and can show it to me correctly. As soon as you cover all you symbols with my cards cry 'Bingo' and you will be the winner. (Then the teacher demonstrates how to play the game and pre-teaches the dialogue.)

Rationale: This activity sheets can be used for some other activities given below.

Activity 7: Transcription Apple Tree

Aim: To help Ss remember English transcription symbols and practise the pronunciation of English sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A big picture with an apple tree, 15 small apples with transcription symbols (see Photocopiable Materials)

Preparation: Put (or draw) the picture of an apple tree on the board. Stick 15 small apples with transcription symbols on the branches.

Procedure: Call one of the Ss to the board and ask him/her to point at one of the small apples and pronounce the sound given on it. If the sound is pronounced correctly, the student can pick up the apple and put it on the teacher's table. If the sound is pronounced incorrectly, another student is called out.

Instruction: We are going to pick up apples from this transcription tree. Ann, come up to the board. Point at any apple. Pronounce the sound. Yes, that is right. Pick up the apple and put it on my table.

Rationale: Teachers can write some other transcription symbols on the apples.

Activity 8: Climb the Stairs – Get the Prize!

Aim: To help Ss remember English transcription symbols and practise the pronunciation of English sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A copy of the activity sheet for each student (see Photocopiable Materials)

Preparation: None

Procedure: The teacher asks each student to pronounce all the sound given on the transcription staircase loudly and distinctly. If all the sounds are pronounced correctly, the student gets some prize (a postcard, some token, a little candy, etc.) If the S fails, the teacher can ask him/her to do it again

Instruction: Who would like to get a prize? All of you? Great! Then let's go up the transcription staircase. Read each transcription symbol correctly and loudly and get a prize.

Rationale: Teachers can write some other transcription symbols on the stairs.

Activity 9: Sounds Bingo

Aim: To help Ss remember English transcription symbols and practise the pronunciation of English sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A copy of the activity sheet for each student (see Photocopiable Materials)

Preparation: According to the sounds you want to practise, cut out transcription symbols from a copy of 'Transcription Bingo'. Make sure that your Ss know all the words on the activity sheet.

Procedure: The teacher gives each student a copy of the activity sheet. The teacher has as many small cards with transcription symbols as he wants to practise. Then the teacher names a sound and the student who has a word with this sound pronounces this word. If the sound matches the word, the teacher gives the small card to the student and he/she covers the necessary picture in his/her big card. The student who covers all the pictures first, cries out 'Bingo!' and becomes the winner.

Instruction: Look at the big cards with pictures in front of you. Pronounce the name of each thing

in the pictures to yourself. Don't speak aloud. Now, listen to the sounds I am going to pronounce. If you have a picture with the word that has this sound, put up your hand. I will give you a small card with this sound. Cover your picture with this card. When you cover all the pictures, cry out 'Bingo!'

Rationale: Teachers decide for themselves what sounds they want to practise. For example, the tree in the first picture can stand for 3 sounds: [t], [r] and [i:].

Activity 10: Matching Beginning Sounds

Aim: To help Ss remember English transcription symbols and practise the pronunciation of English sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A copy of the activity sheet for each student (see Photocopiable Materials)

Preparation: Make sure that your Ss know all the words on the activity sheet

Procedure: The teacher gives each student a copy of the activity sheet and asks the Ss to match the pictures where the words have the same first sound.

Instruction: Look at the picture in front of you. Find two things in which the first sound is the same, for example, the words 'chair' and 'cheese' begin with the sound [C].

Rationale: This activity sheet can be used for some other activities given below.

Activity 11: Odd Man Out

Aim: To help Ss remember English transcription symbols and practise the pronunciation of English sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A copy of the activity sheet for each student (see Photocopiable Materials)

Preparation: Make sure that your Ss know all the words on the activity sheet

Procedure: The teacher gives each student a copy of the activity sheet and asks the Ss to find out which word in each line is pronounced with a different vowel sound. This word is called 'odd man out' (как в детской игре «третий лишний»)

Instruction: Look at the pictures in front of you. In each line there are three words that have the same vowel sound and one word with a different sound. Find this word. For example, in the first line the words 'hen', 'pen' desk' and ten' have the same sound [e] and the word 'cat' had the sound [x], so this words is an 'odd man out'.

Rationale: This activity sheet can be used for some other activities given below.

Activity 12: Matching Rhyming words

Aim: To help Ss remember English transcription symbols and practise the pronunciation of English sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A copy of the first half of the activity sheet for each student (see Photocopiable Materials)

Preparation: Cut the activity sheet into two halves (12 +12). Cut the second half of the activity sheet into small cards. Make sure that your Ss know all the words on the activity sheet

Procedure: The teacher gives each student a copy of the activity sheet. Then the teacher pronounces the word on one of the small cards (in weak groups this card can be shown to the Ss). The student who has a word that rhymes with the one the teacher has pronounced, says this word out loud. If the word is correct, the teacher gives the card to the student who covers the necessary picture on the big card.

Instruction: Look at the pictures in front of you. Pronounce each word to yourself.

Listen to the words I pronounce. If you hear a word that rhymes with one of your pictures, put up your hand. For example I say, 'door'. What word can rhyme with it? 'Floor', very good. If you give the right word, I will give you a small card and you will put it on your picture. When you cover all the pictures, cry out 'Bingo!' You will be the

winner!

Rationale: This activity sheet can be used for some other activities given below.

Activity 13: Hidden Sounds

Aim: To help Ss remember English transcription symbols and practise the pronunciation of English sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A copy of the activity sheet for each student (see Photocopiable Materials)

Preparation: Make sure that your Ss know all the words on the activity sheet

Procedure: The teacher gives each S a copy of the activity sheet and asks the Ss to find, for example, the hidden sound [QV]. This sound may be found in the words 'house', 'mouse', 'cloud'. The sound [w] can be found in the words 'window', 'wall', 'wind', etc.

Variation: The teacher can ask the Ss to find out what vowel sounds are hidden in the house. The answer may be: [ɜ] in 'door' and 'wall'; [u:] in 'roof'; [i] and [qV] in 'window', etc.

Instruction: Look at the picture in front of you. Each thing in the picture has hidden sounds. For example, the picture of the girl hides the sounds [g], [C:] and [l]. Find where the sound [QV] is hidden, etc.

Rationale: This activity can be used many times, each time with different sounds.

Activity 14: Houses for Sounds

Aim: To help Ss remember English transcription symbols and practise the pronunciation of English sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A copy of the activity sheet for each student (see Photocopiable Materials)

Preparation: Make sure that your Ss know all the words on the activity sheet

Procedure: The teacher gives each student a copy of the activity sheet and asks the Ss to put the numbers of the pictures into the windows of houses with the corresponding vowel sounds. It is recommended to have disposable handouts so that the Ss could cross out the pictures they have already used.

Instruction: Look at the picture in front of you. You can see 6 houses where 6 vowel sounds live. Each sound has its own transcription symbol. All the pictures under the houses have the same 6 vowel sounds. Find them and put the number of the picture in the window of the right house. For example, where does the vowel sound from the word 'plate' live? Very good, in the first house!

Rationale: This activity can be used many times, each time the Ss can fill in the windows of only one house.

Key: [ɜl] - 3, 8, 22, 23; [p] - 1, 9, 16, 18, 21, 28; [u:] - 2, 7, 10, 25; [ʌ] - 6, 11, 19, 20, 29; [x] - 4, 12, 14, 24, 26; [e] - 5, 13, 15, 17, 27

Activity 15: Transcription Snake

(This activity can be done only if you teach you Ss to transcribe simple words)

Aim: To help Ss remember and write English transcription symbols, and practise the pronunciation of English sounds

Level: Young learners

Materials: A copy of the activity sheet for each student (see Photocopiable Materials)

Preparation: Make sure that your Ss know all the words on the activity sheet

Procedure: The teacher gives each student a disposable copy of the activity sheet and asks the Ss to write the transcription symbols of each word in the boxes of the snake's body. Explain to the Ss that each new word begins with the last sound of the word before.

Instruction: Look at the pictures around the snake. Pronounce each of these words to yourself.

Then write the transcription of the first word in the boxes next to the snake's head. Look at picture 2. This word begins with the last letter of the word you have written. Write its transcription too. Go on like that. After you have finished, show me your snakes.

Rationale: If you think it necessary, do the first two words together with your Ss.

Key: pənQlfɪʒɜlfɔksɔklQVnqVzibrq

I hope you will enjoy doing these activities with your students.

Acknowledgement

1. Mary E. Platts 'SPICE' Suggested Activities to Motivate the Teaching to the Primary Language Arts, published by 'Educational Service, INC, Stevensville, Michigan, 1973
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