

Sound Foundations

Discovery activity 3: Horizontal tongue position (p. 5)

Say /i:/ as in *tea*, and now /u:/ as in *two*. Alternate the sounds /i: ... u: ... i: ... u: .../. Try this slowly at first and then more rapidly. What internal physical movements do you notice? What do you hear? What can you see in a mirror? It may help you to focus attention on the internal movement if you whisper rather than say the sounds aloud.

Try the same thing with /e/ as in *pen*, and /ɔ:/ as in *door*, alternating them /e ... ɔ:/ ... e ... ɔ:/ .../. With these two sounds the jaw is a little more open than before, and the tongue correspondingly a bit lower. What movement does your tongue make as you slide between these two sounds?

Finally, try the same activities with the pair /æ/ as in *cat*, and /ɒ/ as in *pot*, alternating them /æ ... ɒ ... æ ... ɒ .../. The tongue is even lower in the mouth and the lip position is more open, but you will still be able to notice the horizontal forwards and backwards movement of the tongue.

Commentary

You probably notice two distinct areas of movement: the movement of the lips from a spread position to a rounded position, and the movement of the tongue sliding backwards and forwards in the mouth. For the moment it is the tongue movement we are interested in, and it will help if you try to distinguish between the internal sensations of the tongue and the lip movement.

Classroom activity 25: Finding words with a given sound (p. 150)

This activity and its variations focus on two important fields of awareness: the similarities and differences in quality between a phoneme in isolation and the same phoneme embedded in a variety of words, and beyond that the relationship between spelling and pronunciation.

1) Point to a vowel sound in the chart and ask your learners to search their memories and write down words containing that sound. Give them a short but sufficient time. Walking round and glancing at "individuals' list" will give you insight into each person's own perceptions.

2) Suggestions may be discussed in groups and put in two columns on the board, one column thought to contain the given vowel, the other column for any rejects. (Variation: put them all in one column initially and then discuss each in turn).

3) The correct column can be practiced aloud to trace the same sound through a variety of words and spellings. The words in the other column should also be pointed out on the chart to clarify which sounds they do in fact contain and to locate the point of the original confusion.

Variations:

- When learners have developed a certain accuracy at this, you can make it more challenging by pointing out two or even three sounds, asking learners to make two or three lists simultaneously.
- Another variation is for learners themselves to come to the chart and choose the sound(s). You can ask them to select vowel sounds they are unsure of or which they confuse.

The chart helps you and your learners to clarify and defuse confusions.

l:	I	U	U:	Iθ	eɪ	ɛɪ	X
e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɪə	əʊ	ʊ
æ	ʌ	ɒ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	
P	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	s	z
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j