





Activities for developing sentence stress and intonation

1 Sentence stress and meaning: (sentence stress and intonation - receptive)

Put the possible meanings on the board:

- 1 And he did.
- 2 Not her!
- 3 Not write it down.
- 4 Not the word.
- 5 Me not you!

Put the target sentence on the board:

I wanted him to say the sentence.

Teacher says the sentence in different ways to indicate different meanings. The students listen and choose the correct meaning.

Eq:

I wanted him to say the sentence. 3 Not write it down.

I wanted him to say the **sen**tence. 4 Not the word.

I wanted him to say the sentence. 5 Me not you!

I wanted him to say the sentence. 1 And he did.

I wanted him to say the sentence. 2 Not her!

To provide productive practise the students can repeat the activity in speaker / listener pairs.

2 Sentence stress drilling: (sentence stress and intonation - productive).

Drill the sentence normally first: Would you like a cup of coffee?

Then drill backwards but starting with only the stressed words. Once all the stressed words have been repeated add in the unstressed weak forms. Clapping a rhythm can help.

For example:

T: coffee?

Ss: coffee?

T: cup coffee?

Ss: cup coffee?

T: like cup coffee?

Ss: like cup coffee?

T: like a cup of coffee??

Ss: like a cup of coffee?

T: Would you like a cup of coffee?

Ss: Would you like a cup of coffee?

You can use almost any piece of target language. The 'cows eat grass' activity is similar to this and is another approach.

3 Contrastive stress drilling: (sentence stress and intonation - productive).

Put a sentence on the board:So, Julie went to the party of Saturday night by bus.

The teacher says the sentence but gets a piece of the information wrong. The students chorally correct the teacher.

For example:

T: So, Mary went to the party of Saturday night by bus.

SS: No, MARY went to the party of Saturday night by bus.

T: So, Julie came home from the party of Saturday night by bus.

SS: No, Julie WENT to the party of Saturday night by bus.

As with any technique, you have to teach the students how to do this. Once they get the idea, they love it. You can use almost any piece of target language.







4 Singing songs: (sentence stress - productive).

Put a few lines of a sing on the board. Mark the stressed syllables. Either sing it for the students or let them listen to a CD. Chorally drill and repeat.

For example: Ticket to Ride: Lennon & McCartney

I think I'm gonna be sad I think it's today, yeah.

The girl that's driving me mad is going away, yeah.

The students can practise for homework using YouTube.

Be careful with your choice of song as many songs stress syllables that would normally be unstressed.

<u>5 Drilling songs: (sentence stress and intonation- productive).</u>

This is a silly approach to drilling but one which many younger students may enjoy as it's memorable. Chose a line or two from a song they know. Drill it as if it were target language. Be careful to avoid the rhythm of the music; you have to drill it as spoken language! Clapping a rhythm can help.

For example: I kissed a girl: Katy Perry et al

I kissed a girl and I liked it.

6 Crack the code: (sentence stress - receptive)

Write a sentence on the board in phonemic script but with the word boundaries removed. The students have to work out the sentence.

For example:

/əlmi:tʃəwəteɪlkɔ:teɪjɪŋgleɪs/

I'll meet you at El Corte Ingles.

Clearly the students need a good grasp of phonemic script for this activity. However, it's also quite a good way of teaching them the script if you start with easy utterances.

7 Phonemic hangman: (sentence stress & intonation – receptive & productive)

Write a sentence frame on the board as for hangman.

For example:

/___ _ __ /!

(wpt ə jə du:wɪŋ δɪs wi:kend)

In teams the students guess phonemes. Correct ones get written into the frame, incorrect ones add an extra line to the hangman's gibbet. When a team thinks they know the sentence they can guess. Drill the sentence at the end.

I often use this activity as a warmer and use questions. The students can then ask and answer the questions.

8 Looking at tendencies: (sentence stress & intonation – receptive & productive)

There are tendencies in the use of sentence stress and intonation and it's useful for students to know these. For example:

In neutral speech the main stress will normally be on the last lxical item (verb, noun, adjective or adverb) of an utterance.

Intonation on Wh- questions tends to fall at the end.

Intonation on Yes/No questions tends to rise at the end.

Intonation on echoic Wh- questions tends to rise at the end.

Intonation on suggestions tends to fall at the end.

You can find more of these in any good book on phonology.

9 Role play: (sentence stress & intonation – receptive & productive)

Because sentence stress and intonation combine to show attitude roleplay is very effective as a way to practice. When students are practising dialogues tell student A to be happy and student B to be depressed, for example.