



Building Voice Quality Setting Awareness

The first step of helping learners become familiar with voice quality settings in English is to identify how the settings from their native language differs from the settings in English. Once learners are aware of how the mouth movements differ, they can consciously imitate American English movements. The best tool for developing this awareness is to allow learners to watch their mouths while they are speaking. This activity should be done when first working with learners on voice quality settings, but does not need to be repeated very often.

OBJECTIVE: To build awareness of how voice quality settings impact speech production

MATERIALS: A set of small mirrors, one per learner

DESCRIPTION:

1. Ask the group to watch your mouth, and think about what they see happening when you talk. Alternatively, you can show them a video of a native English speaker.
2. Have the group demonstrate with their own mouth movements how your mouth looks when you are speaking English. Ask them some questions about what they saw: "Is my jaw open or closed?" "Did you see my teeth?" "Did you see my tongue?" "Did my lips move a lot or a little bit?"
3. Pass out a mirror to each learner in the group. Direct them to look at their own mouths.
4. Have the learners speak in their native language while watching their own mouths in the mirror (this may take some encouragement for learners who tend to be more reserved).
5. Ask the learners to explain what they saw their mouths doing while they were speaking their native language. Ask them some questions about what they saw: "Was your jaw open or closed?" "Was it open a little bit, or a lot?" "Did you see your teeth?" "Did you see your tongue?" "Did your lips move a lot or a little bit?" "Did your mouth look the same or different from my mouth?"
6. Explain that the learners are going to practice speaking English using mouth movements that are the same as American English speakers.



Imitating Mouth Movements for Voice Quality Settings

Once learners understand that different languages utilize different movements of the mouth, they need a chance to practice imitating American English speakers with the immediate feedback that mirrors provide.

OBJECTIVE: To practice using American voice quality settings

MATERIALS: A small set of mirrors

DESCRIPTION:

1. Pass out a mirror to each learner in the group. Instruct the learners to watch your mouth.
2. Say a vocabulary word from the weekly unit, exaggerating your mouth movements. Repeat the word several times while the learners watch your mouth.
3. Ask the learners to repeat the word while looking at their own mouths in the mirrors.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until the learners are able to approximate your mouth movements.
5. Repeat steps 2-4 with the vocabulary words from the unit, then review all of the words while the learners watch their mouths in the mirrors.
6. Have the learners practice saying some sentences that include the vocabulary words. Give them feedback on their mouth movements when they say the vocabulary words.



Lip Reading for Voice Quality Settings

Lip reading is an excellent way for learners to practice their American English mouth movements and gives them the opportunity to receive immediate feedback from one another. This activity is designed to immediately follow the activity: Imitating Mouth Movements for Voice Quality Settings.

OBJECTIVE: To demonstrate control over voice quality settings

MATERIALS: Copies of the list of weekly vocabulary words

DESCRIPTION:

1. Give the learners a copy of the list of weekly vocabulary words.
2. Direct the learners to watch your mouth. Mouth a word from the list, and have the learners tell you what word they saw.
3. Go through all of the words on the list, mouthing the words and having the learners read your lips. This works best if you go through the words in random order.
4. Give the learners a few minutes to practice mouthing the words to themselves (if they have mirrors, they can watch themselves in the mirrors).
5. Put the learners in to partners. Explain that one partner will mouth the words from the list, and the other partner will “read their lips” and tell them what word they see. Remind the learners mouthing the words to choose words randomly.
6. Have the learners go through the list of words. When they are finished, they will switch roles and repeat the activity.