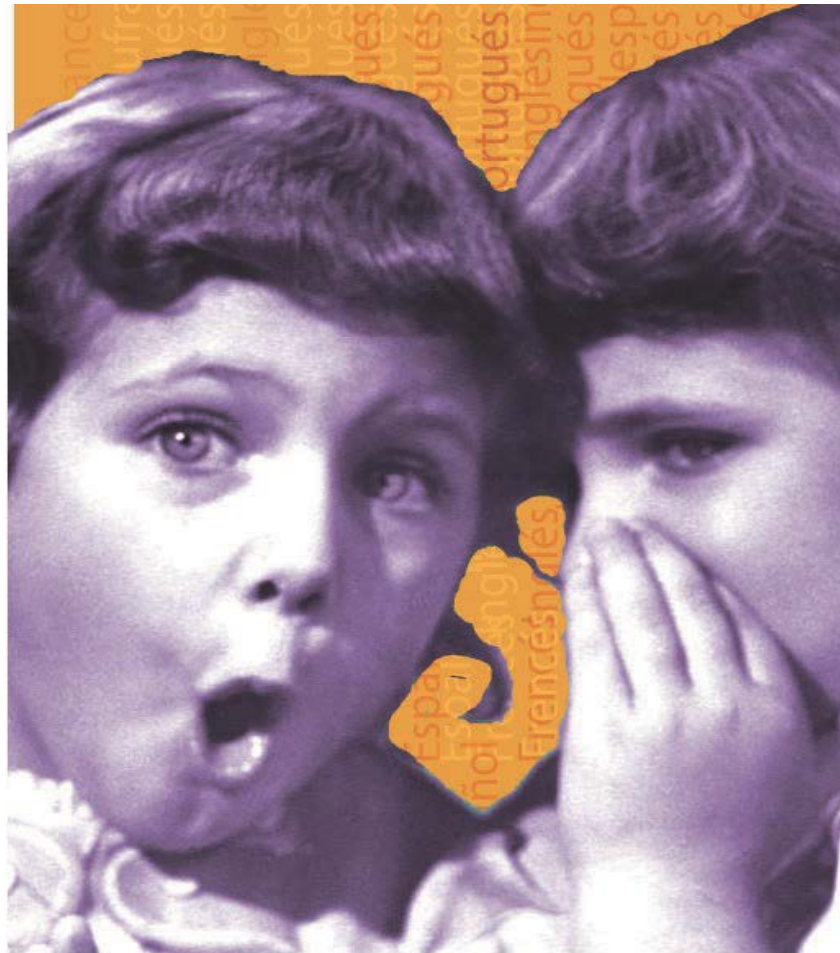


III Jornadas Internacionales



Didáctica de la Fonética de las Lenguas Extranjeras

Editora Gabriela Leiton



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‘FUNOLOGY’: ENGAGING ACTIVITIES FOR THE PHONOLOGY CLASS.

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Abstract

In recent years, the idea of approaching pronunciation teaching from different modalities (i.e. auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, tactile) has become very popular within the field of foreign language teaching. Also, different studies have shown that a relaxed frame of mind and a degree of confidence pave the way for a correct production of target sounds, hence, the need of establishing a non-threatening student-friendly environment. Moreover, humour studies applied to teaching have shown that dullness in the classroom may reduce students’ intellectual interest in the subject. The use of humour, on the other hand, can help create a more positive learning context and build rapport between students and teacher. In this presentation I will show a range of sample fun activities which can be introduced into the Phonology I classroom and used for presenting, practising, revising or reflecting upon sounds and theory. These activities motivate students and encourage their participation, either by allowing them to discover different segmental features, or by letting students put the theory into practice in a relaxed setting. On the whole, students prove more alert in connection with perception and respond positively to the different stimuli, thus enhancing the production time during the lesson.

Key words: segmental features, fun, participation, learning styles, sample activities.

‘FUNOLOGY’: ENGAGING ACTIVITIES FOR THE PHONOLOGY CLASS.

Introduction

Pronunciation is very sensitive to emotional factors and ‘its nature is strongly related to students’ ego, identity and the level of self-confidence.’ (Hismanoglu 2006: 105). Back in the early 80s, Krashen emphasised three affective or attitudinal variables related to SLA: high motivation, self-confidence and low levels of anxiety. Krashen (in Richards & Rogers 1994) mentioned the importance of having a low affective filter to allow for the reception of input. Since then, different studies have shown that a relaxed frame of mind and a degree of confidence pave the way for a correct production of target language sounds, hence, the need of establishing a non-threatening student-friendly setting.

In this respect, the use of humour in the classroom can help create a more positive learning environment and build rapport between students and teacher, thus making students less intimidated and less inhibited about asking questions or participating in class. Moreover, the physiological effects of humour, such as muscle relaxation, stimulated circulation, improved respiration and exercise of the lungs and chest muscles (Deiter 2000), are beneficial for the Phonology lesson.

On the other hand, in recent years, the idea of approaching pronunciation teaching from different modalities (i.e. auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, tactile) has become very popular within the field of foreign language teaching. Wrembel (2007) posits that

Recently, a holistic approach to learning has found a number of proponents also amongst pronunciation educators, who claim that L2 pronunciation training should involve the whole learner not just the speech apparatus or learners' cognitive faculties (cf. Acton 1997). This approach manifests itself, among others, in the use of multisensory modes of presentation and practice. The process of teaching and learning practical phonetics is thus expected to be enhanced by appealing to a combination of modalities involving different senses through auditory, visual, tactile, kinaesthetic reinforcements.

These types of modalities can be applied to different stages of phonetic instruction, either during the initial exposure, including both perception and production or during the reinforcement stages. Below, I present a range of sample fun activities with their aim,

procedure and result. They serve to exemplify how, long established techniques used in the SLA classroom can be introduced into the Phonology lesson in order to appeal to different learning styles, catch students' attention and hold their interest, thus creating a context that facilitates the acquisition of the new sound system.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

- *STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHWA*

AIM: To focus on the high frequency of English vowel number 11 in content words; to remember a phonological rule and be aware of possible exceptions.

Step 1: Who has the schwa? (Adapted from Kelly 2003)

Students are given cards with a vowel sound on them (which they have to keep secret). Make cards with schwa for two or three students. Teacher reads polysyllabic words containing schwas and the students who have the sounds contained in the words stand up. The class has to discover which students have the schwa cards.

Step 2: Elicit information about the schwa, such as: 1° it is a very common sound; 2° it never appears in a stressed syllable. Then, in order to help students remember the rule, use visual humour: (see Google images) Show a picture with the caption, 'I wanna be a schwa ... It's never stressed.' However, remind students that native speakers may not always come up with the expected form: show them a video clip from *The Big Bang Theory* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8UEDPkg10Y>) 'It's not *a* present, it's *the* present', where a schwa *is* stressed. You can then show one more picture of a very cute little kitten (<https://i.chzbgr.com/maxW500/6890368768/h035295D1/>) with the caption, 'Phonological rules don't always apply? ... You lied to me?' Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise the usual pronunciation of the articles in isolation and what we expect students to produce.

To conclude, in order to remark the importance of the schwa, resort to visual humour again: (<http://linguisteducatorexchange.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/moon.jpg>) this is a drawing of a schwa shaped moon with the caption 'After the first linguists landed on the moon'.

Extension: Students can read the article *9 fun facts about the schwa* (Okrent 2014) and comment on the fact that called their attention most. There is also a very interesting publication by Pronunciation Studio London called 'Mr Schwa'. Students can download the IPA comic book and audio from this site: <http://www.anenglishaccent.com/index.html> and practise listening and imitating at home or visit their site for more online practice.

RESULT: The first activity may result a bit chaotic at the beginning if students are not aware that more than one can stand up at the same time. Then, there may also be those who doubt whether the sound they hear is present in the word they hear. In connection with the video, students did not realize the character was pronouncing a stressed schwa unless they were guided. They enjoyed the visual humour and in connection with the last picture, one student ventured to say, 'It's an <e> ... it's an <a> ... No! It's a superschwa!'

- *CLASSIFICATION OF CONSONANTS* (Irazábal 2013)

AIM: To revise the classification of consonants according to voice, place and manner of articulation.

Option 1- Flashcards: Preparation: A set of cards with the I.P.A phonetic alphabet, another set with the classification of consonants (e.g. voiced alveolar plosive) and another one with simple sagittal diagrams of consonants.

The following matching activity can be carried out in different ways: a. a whole-class activity, where each student in the classroom has a card and has to find their matching partner; b. in smaller groups: Teacher reads the classification of the consonant and the student who can pick up the flashcard faster, keeps it until the end of the game; the one with more cards is the winner. The matching options are as follows: I.P.A symbol with classification of the phoneme or with the corresponding sagittal diagram; sagittal diagram with the card containing the classification of the phoneme; voiced - voiceless counterpart.

Option 2- Domino cards with a phonetic symbol on one end and the classification of a consonant on the other end. Students play in pairs or groups of three or four and, as with the usual domino, match one end of one card with one end of another card. (See appendix)

RESULT: The whole-class activity with flashcards is difficult to carry out if there is not enough room in the classroom. The group activity with flashcards is fun but may get too competitive and rewards the fast thinkers only, as opposed to the domino activity. As students were playing the domino, it could be seen that they were not applying the theory by heart but trying to feel their organs of speech in order to see if the cards they were holding could be linked to the one on the table.

- **ASSIMILATION.** (Irazábal 2012)

AIM: To help students discover the process of assimilation and work out the rules in a deductive way, through the examples provided in the song.

a- Give students some minutes to go through stanzas 1 and 2 and see if they can identify the song. They will only have the transcribed version:

/aɪ ju:st tə ru:l ðə wɜ:l d /	/nevər ən ɒnɪst wɜ:d /
/si:z wəd raɪz wen aɪ gɜv ðə wɜ:d /	/ænd _____ wəz wen aɪ ru:ld ðə wɜ:l d /
/nəʊ ɪn ðə mɔ:nɪŋ aɪ sli:p ələʊn /	/_____ wəz ðə wɪkɪd ænd waɪld wɪnd /
/swi:p ðə stri:ts aɪ ju:st tu əʊn /	/blu: daʊn ðə dɔ:z tə _____ mi ɪn /
/aɪ ju:st tə rəʊl ðə daɪs /	/ʃætəd wɪndəʊz ænd ðə saʊnd əv dɾʌmz /
/fɪ:l ðə fɪər ɪn maɪ enəmɪz aɪz /	/pi:pl _____ bɪli:v wɒt _____ bɪkʌm/
/lɪsn əz ðə kraʊd wɒd sɪŋ /	/revəlu:ʃənəɪz weɪt /
/nəʊ ðɪ əʊld kɪŋ ɪz ded / lɒŋ lɪv ðə kɪŋ /	/fə maɪ hed ɒn ə sɪlvə plɛt /
/_____ mɪnɪt aɪ held ðə ki:/	/dʒəst ə ɾʌpɪt ɒn ə ləʊnli strɪŋ /
/nekst ðə wɔ:lz wə kləʊzd ɒn mi /	/əʊ hu: wɒd evə wɒnt tə bi kɪŋ /
/ænd aɪ dɪskʌvəd _____ maɪ kæslz stænd/	/aɪ hɪə dʒəru:sələm belz ə rɪŋŋ /
/_____ pɪləz əv sɔ:lt _____ pɪləz əv sænd /	/_____ kævəlri kwa:əz ə sɪŋŋ /
/aɪ hɪə dʒəru:sələm belz ə rɪŋŋ /	/bi maɪ mɪrə maɪ sɔ:d ænd fɪ:ld /
/_____ kævəlri kwa:əz ə sɪŋŋ /	/maɪ mɪʃənɪz ɪn ə fɔrɪn fɪ:ld /
/bi maɪ mɪrə maɪ sɔ:d ænd fɪ:ld /	/fɔ: sʌm rɪ:zən aɪ kænt ɪkspleɪn /
/maɪ mɪʃənɪz ɪn ə fɔrɪn fɪ:ld /	/aɪ nəʊ _____ pi:tə _____ kɔ:l maɪ neɪm/
/fɔ: sʌm rɪ:zən aɪ kænt ɪkspleɪn /	/nevər ən ɒnɪst wɜ:d /
/wʌns ju gəʊ ðeə wəz nevə /	/bət _____ wəz wen aɪ ru:ld ðə wɜ:l d /

b- Listening: Students fill in the blanks with the transcription of the missing words. Ask them to transcribe the words exactly as they hear them. Then, they check their versions in pairs.

c- Correction activity: volunteers come to the bb and write the missing words in phonetics script: / _____ mɪnɪt / / _____ maɪ /, etc. T could copy the phrases on the board while students do the listening activity. If nobody suggests a version with assimilation, play that part again and ask if they actually hear, for example, ‘one’ with /n/ or some other sound.

d- Sistematization: Consider the different examples where the same sound changes. Begin with /n/ to /m/ in ‘one minute’, ‘upon pillars’, ‘couldn’t believe. Elicit the rule: /n/ changes to /m/ when followed /m/, /p/ or /b/. Follow the same procedure for the other examples and sounds. Later, elicit the rule with more technical terms, as in ‘voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ changes to voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ under the influence of bilabials /m/ /b/ /p/ or /w/.’ Elicit what aspect of articulation this form of assimilation affects (place) and what sounds are affected (alveolar sounds). You can then move on to discuss other forms of assimilation.

e- Extension: Provide students with different song extracts for them to decide where assimilation is possible. Then listen and check whether the singer uses assimilation or not.

RESULT: Most students could detect the assimilated phoneme. It was interesting to see how, after seeing how /n/ assimilated into /m/ after bilabials, they started to realize and anticipate the rule of how and when the different alveolar sounds changed. The extension activity helped them discover that assimilation is an optional process that depends on the speaker.

- ALLOPHONES:

AIM: To revise theory on allophonic variation.

a- Warm up: Watch the video *The English and their <t>*, "British Accent vs American Accent, Funny" (http://veehd.com/video/4748931_British-Accent-vs-American-Accent-Funny-flv) and ask students to identify different allophones of /t/. In his speech, American humourist uses the flap, typical of GA. He then talks about how the English ‘over-pronounce’ the letter (with affrication) or ‘ignore the letter completely’ (using the glottal stop).

b- Board Game (Irazábal 2013): Allophonic variation is an area that teachers cover to different extents. For this reason, the following board game can be adapted by teachers

according to the theory they have dealt with. The aim of the activity is to have students practise in a pressure free environment by answering the questions they are more sure of, while at the same time profiting from other students' answers. They are also asked to judge their partners' answers and decide if they are correct or not. During the game, T will go around the class checking the answers given or helping students when in doubt. See appendix for instructions and sample board.

RESULT: The board game has not been tested yet. As regards the video, students were able to detect the flap and the glottal stop. They did not pay attention to the affrication of /t/ since this allophone had never been discussed in class. They also wondered if the speaker used the glottal stop in his everyday speech (which he seemed to articulate naturally in 'whatever' and 'where did the letters go?') or if it was part of his imitation of the British accent.

- *MISCELLANEOUS*

In the appendix below, you will find more fun ideas organized into categories, which can be used as part of a lesson or combined and developed into a whole class. The videos deal with aspiration, pre-fortis clipping, place of articulation and alliteration with the sound /v/. There are two suggested songs, one for working with diphthongs (and smoothing) and one for strong and weak forms. There is also a board game for practising vowels. Finally, the category of humour exemplifies how puns and jokes can be put to use in different ways.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of bringing fun into the phonology classroom is manifold: on the one hand, it offers the possibility of introducing motivating activities that challenge students in a non-threatening way; also, a student-friendly setting accompanied with low levels of anxiety facilitates the reception of input. On the other hand, by combining fun with multisensory activities, we help to create different pathways through which information can be accessed. Moreover, memorable activities can help fix information which can be retrieved more readily later on. On the whole, introducing fun into the phonology lesson

proves that studying a complex subject does not necessarily have to be tedious and that it is possible to actually enjoy learning it.

Deiter (2000:20) says that 'teaching effectively requires imagination and creativity to turn students on by turning negative perceptions (e.g. the subject is boring, difficult, stressful) off'.

In this presentation I have shown some sample fun activities which can be introduced into the Phonology I classroom and used for presenting, practising, revising or reflecting upon sounds and theory. I have described the aim, procedure and result of the activities which have already been tested and I have also included some ideas which can be used as part of lessons or developed into a whole class.

By presenting the material in a variety of modalities (videos, flashcards, songs, visual humour) I seek to favour different learning styles. Also, these activities encourage students' motivation and participation, either by allowing them to discover different aspects of phonology by themselves, or by letting them put the theory into practice in a relaxed context.

From my own experience of working with the activities suggested, I could see students were more alert in connection with perception, were really engaged in the activities and responded positively to the different stimuli, thus enhancing the production time during the lesson.

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APPENDIX

a- Domino cards

<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> alveolar nasal</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiceless</u> velar plosive</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> alveolar fricative</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> palatoalveolar affricate</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> dental fricative</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> palatoalveolar fricative</p>
<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> bilabial plosive</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiceless</u> labiodental fricative</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> alveolar lateral</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiceless</u> dental fricative</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiceless</u> palatoalveolar fricative</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> labiodental fricative</p>
<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiceless</u> palatoalveolar affricate</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiceless</u> glottal fricative</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p>voiced post alveolar approximant</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p>voiced labiovelar approximant</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p>voiced palatal approximant</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiceless</u> alveolar fricative</p>
<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> bilabial nasal</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> velar nasal</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> alveolar plosive</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiced</u> velar plosive</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiceless</u> alveolar plosive</p>	<p>--- * ---</p> <p><u>voiceless</u> bilabial plosive</p>

b- Allophones game

<p>What is the phonemic status of [ʔ] in English?</p>	<p>Which of the following pairs are contrastive in English? Explain why. /rein / vein / /veri / veri / /puʔ / puʔ /</p>	<p>Which phonemes are dentalized and in what context?</p>	<p>Which phonemes can be devoiced and in what context?</p>	<p>Describe the various lateral articulations in the phrase <i>Lil climbed the little tree.</i></p>	<p>Is [ŋ] a member of the English /n/ phoneme? Give reasons for your answer</p>
<p>Give an example of allophones in complementary distribution.</p>	<p>Explain the different releases of /t/ in the following words: <i>top, stop, pot, eighth, button, bottle</i></p>	<p>Give an example of allophones in free variation.</p>	<p>Which set of plosives are aspirated and in what context?</p>	<p>What do the final consonant sounds of the following words have in common? /wɪsl/, /hæpm/, /brɪn/</p>	<p>In what contexts are you going to produce nasalized vowels?</p>
<p>In what context are /l / /j / w / and / r / fully devoiced?</p>	<p>In what contexts do you articulate plosives with non audible release?</p>	<p>Explain the different releases of /p/ in the following words: <i>spot, top, people, happen, stopped</i></p>	<p>Discuss neutralization of phonemes and provide an example</p>	<p>Provide an alternative name for <i>broad</i> and <i>narrow</i> transcription</p>	<p>Classify [ʔ]</p>
<p>Explain the difference between <i>phoneme</i> and <i>allophone</i></p>	<p>Describe the retroflex [ɟ] In which accent is it typically used?</p>	<p>What is the type of release of the highlighted plosives in the following words? <i>robbed, cupcake, act</i></p>	<p>Give examples of labiodentalization</p>	<p>When are plosives, affricates and fricatives fully voiced?</p>	<p>In what context is the allophone [ɬ] produced?</p>
<p>Which phonemes are weakly aspirated and in what context?</p>	<p>Discuss glottal reinforcement</p>	<p>What do the vowel sounds have in common in the following words? /nu:n / mɑ:ŋk / nɜ:m /</p>	<p>Explain the different releases of /k/ in the following words: <i>cotton, school, bacon, actual, uncle</i></p>	<p>Which of the following pairs are contrastive in English? Explain why: /ʃɒp / ʃɒʔ / /berken / berkg / /ntʃ / ntʃ /</p>	<p>Is assimilation a case of phonemic or allophonic variation?</p>

Instructions: The aim of the game is to be able to answer 5 questions correctly. Throw the dice and decide if you want to move about the board vertically, horizontally or diagonally (only changing direction when you reach a corner) according to the number indicated by the dice. When you answer a question correctly, 'take possession of the square' by writing your name on it. You cannot choose to answer a question another student has already answered correctly.

c- More funs ideas for the Phonology class

1- VIDEOS:

➤ *Friends*: "Enunciate by spitting." Focus on aspiration of plosives.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ISJS4gSBh0&feature=kp>

➤ *The Big Bang Theory*: "Get back on the whores." In this extract, Raj, who is not a native, fails to see the difference between horse/whores. This material is useful to discuss /s/z/ contrast and pre-fortis clipping. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jobvVaekOKA>

➤ *The McGurk Effect*: What we see overrides what we hear! Very interest material to present the concept of place of articulation. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-IN8vWm3m0>

➤ *V for Vendetta*: Introductory Speech: The main character makes use of alliteration of the phoneme /v/. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26h-H6CFO-A>

2- SONGS

a- **Rhyming sounds**: Students group the words according to the vowel sounds that rhyme, write them in the corresponding place in the song and listen and check. One possible popular song for this type of activity is 'Radio Ga ga' by Queen. It contains lots of rhymes with diphthongs and interestingly enough, makes the words 'stars' rhyme with 'hours' thus offering the possibility to discuss the process of smoothing or levelling.

b- **Strong and weak forms**: One very clear song to work with this is 'Underneath' by Adam Lambert. Students are given the lyrics in ordinary spelling (optional) except for the strong and weak forms of the target words (e.g. Strip away /ðə/ /ði:/ flesh /ænd/ /ən/ bone/ Look beyond /ðə/ /ði:/ lies you've known/ Everybody wants /tu:/ /tu/ /tə/ talk about /ə/ /eɪ/ freak/ No one wants /tu:/ /tu/ /tə/ dig /ðæt/ /ðət/ deep...) then listen and circle the option their hear. Later, they categorize the selected words and explain why the strong/weak form is used in each case. (Irazábal 2013)

3- VOWEL CHART BOARD GAME (adapted from Taylor and Thompson, *Vowel Discovery Activity*). Students work with Underhill's vowel chart as board (Underhill 2005). They have to place word cards on the corresponding vowel, for example <class> will be placed on the vowel /ɑ:/. Specific spelling combinations can be exploited, for example, the focus could be the different pronunciations of the spelling <ough> or the possible spelling for different vowel sounds (such as <ee, ea, i, etc >) plus exceptions (e.g. <quay>). Students can work in pairs or in groups, cooperatively or as a competition game to see who gets more correct answers.

4- PUNS AND JOKES

a- **Jokes** can help students reflect upon how mispronunciation can lead to communication problems. Here are a few examples:

1- A French guest is staying at a fancy hotel in New York City. He calls room service and asks for some "pepper". On the other end of the line the concierge asks, 'Black pepper or white pepper, sir?' 'No,' says the Frenchman, 'toilet pepper.'

2- A friend of mine (from Argentina) wanted to confirm her reservation at a hotel in England for her holidays. She phoned the hotel and this exchange followed:

Friend: Good morning, I have a reservation for July (pronounced /juli/)

Receptionist: Julie what?

Friend, confused, hangs up

3- A boss impressed with an employee's skills asks:

'Where did you learn to do that?'

'In Yale'

'And what's your name again?'

'Yohn Yackson'

b- **Puns** are useful for focusing on homophones or contrasting sounds. Visual puns can be obtained typing 'linguistic / pronunciation /phonological puns' on google images.

The aim of the activity below is to work on sound-symbol correspondence and help students become familiar with decoding I.P.A symbols in a stream of language. T asks students to write the words that disambiguate the following jokes in ordinary spelling. The key is in brackets here.

1. /wɒts ðə simələriti bitwi:n ə prins ənd ə bɔ:l //
/ðə prins ɪz eə tə ðə θrəʊn ənd ðə bɔ:l z θrəʊn tə
ði eə // (heir / throne) (thown / air)

2. /waɪ dəʊnt pipl̩ daɪ əv stɑ:veɪʃn̩ m̩ ðə dezət //
/bɪkɒz əv ðə sænd wɪtʃ ɪz ðeə //
(sandwiches / sand which is)

3. /weɪtə //
/jes / sɜ: //
/ wɒts ðɪs su:p //
/ɪts bi:n su:p /sɜ: // (bean)
/nəʊ mætə wɒt ɪts bi:n / wɒts ɪt nəʊ // (been)

Halloween jokes:

4. /wɒts ə mʌmɪz feɪvərɪt taɪp əv mju:zɪk //
/ə ræp // (rap / wrap)

5. /wɒt də ju kɔ:l ə wɪtʃ hu lɪvz ɒn ðə bi:tʃ //
/ə sændwɪtʃ // (sand witch / sandwich)

6. /waɪ dɪdnt ðə skelɪŋ dɑ:ns ət ðə pɑ:ti //
/ hi hæd nəʊ bɒdi tə dɑ:ns wɪð //
(nobody / no body)

7. /wɒt də ju gɪv ə skelɪŋ fə væləntaɪnz deɪ //
/bəʊn bəʊnz m̩ ə hɑ:t feɪpt bɒks //
(bone bones / bombons)

8. /hu wəz ðə məʊst feɪməs frentʃ skelɪŋ //
/nəpəʊliən bəʊnəpɑ:t // (Bonaparte/bone apart)

9. /haʊ kən ju tel ə væmpaɪə laɪks beɪsbɔ:l //
/evri naɪt hi tɜ:nz ɪntu ə bæʔ //
(homophones & homographs)

10. /wɒts ə mɒnstəz feɪvərɪt dɪzɜ:t //
/ aɪ skri:m // (I scream / ice-cream)