

## Sky High Anxiety and ESL Stress Busters!

enthusiasm

Why is learning English so stressful?

1. For some, their ability to learn English quickly is tied to how fast they can get a job and provide for their families.
2. The years of personal trauma of getting to the United States- years of refugee camps and separation from loved ones just to arrive. And the brain can only handle so much.
3. Performance anxiety is real.
4. English is hard !

So, how do we bring the temperature of the room waaay down?

1. One professional suggests we ask all students to share their anxiety in class.
2. Not focusing on learning but on communication.
3. Creating a report with the students.
4. Group work to lessen individual pressure and build a sense of community. TPR
5. Incorporate low stakes activities like games, and role plays.
6. PRAY ! Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and He wants to show them how powerful His peace is.

## PRONUNCIATION HELPS:

- 1.) Listen & Imitate : Encourage students to regularly listen to native speakers on podcasts, movies, the radio, and TV, especially PBS children's programming with closed captioning turned on. Try to imitate their pronunciation, intonation and rhythm.  
(I've heard of students going to the mall, grocery store, library or restaurant and just listening to the flow of conversation around them- sentence intonations and which syllables are stressed in natural speech patterns.)
- 2.) Practice <sup>(sounds)</sup> phonemes : Focus on individual sounds that are difficult. Students can create a top 10 list of the hardest sounds for them and pinpoint their practice on those sounds.
- 3.) Record yourself or others : Students can record their speech and compare it with native speakers. They can ask a native speaker to record certain trouble sounds, phrases or sentences for the student. This allows the student to listen to it over and over and improve those sounds.
- 4.) Makeup mirror mouth movements : Students can get a makeup mirror and watch themselves speak/make sounds. They could ask a native speaking friend to do a close up video of mouth positions/movements for troublesome sounds, words or phrases so they can mimic these movements.
- 5.) Make us of pronunciation apps & videos : Some language apps give instant feedback as well as practice exercises, and there are hundreds of YouTubes that could give them practice.
- 6.) Practice w/ tongue twisters : These can help with articulation and improve language fluency (and maybe some comedic relief!).
- 7.) Break <sup>words</sup> into syllables : Pronounce each syllable clearly before blending them together. Or, go backwards to forwards. Make the word ending sound(s) before adding the beginning sound(s).
- 8.) Get feedback & be persistent : It's humbling to ask for help and correction, but persistence pays off in language learning. If the student can find a native speaking neighbor or friend to be a listening ear and give encouraging, constructive feedback, they will advance far more quickly than one who is timid and unwilling to ask for help.

## PLACE OF ARTICULATION

This refers to the place in the vocal tract where the two articulators come together. There are eight places.

- 1) **Bilabial:** 2 lips come together.
- 2) **Labio-dental:** lip & teeth come together.
- 3) **Dental**: tongue contacts teeth.
- 4) **Alveolar ridge:** tongue tip moves towards the gum ridge just behind the upper incisors.
- 5) **Post alveolar:** tongue tip is close to the position just behind the alveolar ridge, towards the back of the mouth.
- 6) **Palatal**: tongue moves towards the roof of the mouth (palate).
- 7) **Velar:** the back of the tongue moves towards the soft palate (velum).
- 8) **Glottal:** the only glottal consonant in English is /h/ as in how. Strictly speaking, this does not involve two articulators coming together. The sound is simply the friction caused by air being expelled through the gap between the vocal cords (glottis).

## EXAMPLES OF ARTICULATION

- 1) boy, bad, bed, paper
- 2) very, vowel, fog, five, fifteen
- 3) this, three, thanks
- 4) to, ten, do, don't
- 5) shut, measure, church, jump
- 6) you, yes, yellow
- 7) got, give, thing, bring
- 8) how, him, his

## Tips For Correcting Students Sensitively

We're going to be as supportive and encouraging as we possibly can, focusing on progress rather than perfection.

1. Encourage and support Tell them, "Your English is improving so much! I just want to help with this small detail..." Or, "I noticed you used X instead of Y. It can be tricky, but I thought I'd mention it in case it helps."
2. Focus on the most important error If the student is just butchering the sentence, try to identify the most important error they're making. Can we get the verb tense corrected, or the sentence order right?
3. Use "I" statements Give feedback from your own perspective. For example, "I find it helpful to remember \_\_\_\_\_."
4. Cultivate a culture of safety If the student feels safe to make mistakes, then constructive feedback won't crush them.
5. Offer examples provide clear examples to illustrate the correct usage or structure. This can help clarify your point.
6. Try the word or phrase in their language This is great fun and levels the playing field faster than a bulldozer. They get to reverse roles for a minute and show you how it feels to be the student learner.
7. Allow time for students to respond.
8. Allow time for students to correct themselves.
9. Never interrupt and correct a student when he/she is expressing a thought. If you do, they will be reluctant to try again.
10. Avoid negative expressions such as no, that's not right, you made a mistake, or wrong.

Alert the teacher if your table all seems to be struggling with the same issue(s). It's possible another lesson needs to be taught, or a review of material needs to happen for better understanding.

For more helpful hints, see page 38 of the ESL handbook.