Teacher's notes

Attitudes and tones

Special Edition
C21 ENGLISH FOR THE 21st CENTURY
B1 Pre-intermediate / B1+ Intermediate

Warm up

Ask students if they have ever been in a situation where they have misunderstood what someone has said because they understood the literal sense of a sentence but not the tone and attitude. Get students to consider the following:

- the common use of sarcasm and irony in English
- how words such as *really* can be used to express surprise, irony, disappointment, anger, happiness, etc.
- whether the use of tone to express attitude in English is very different to other language(s) they speak

Using the Factsheet

The Factsheet sets out some of the key features of listening for attitudes and tones in an academic context. It also gives practical strategies to help students develop listening skills by recognizing how the tone/attitude of spoken language is important. Get students to work through the Factsheet first before they go on to practise listening for attitudes and tones using the Worksheet.

There are two possible ways to use the Factsheet:

1 Give students the Factsheet before the lesson, so they can read it at home and come to the lesson prepared to do the Worksheet. If you use this approach, start the lesson by checking that all students have read and understood the Factsheet, and answer any questions.

2 Give students the Factsheet at the beginning of the lesson and start by working through it with the students.

Theory to practice

Suggested questions

1/2 a excited
b positive
c humorous

3 Discuss how the sentences alone can have more than one meaning; it is only the tone/attitude which clarifies this. You could ask students to say the sentences using the other tones which are listed.

Transcript

▷ 01

a The level of noise in the stadium is growing steadily. The two teams are coming out of the players' tunnel. The crowd are clapping and waving.

b I'm from the Emirates, and I lived in Australia for one year. When I wanted something, a coffee or a sandwich, I couldn't ask in Arabic, of course. So I was always speaking English, every day. I had no choice!

c A So what are you going to do now?
B Well, I'm going to sleep for a while!

Ways to get more practice

If you have time in class, you could ask students to demonstrate the dialogues they have been practising.

Using the Worksheet

Practice

1 A speaker's tone can imply many different attitudes/emotions. Check your vocabulary by matching the attitudes (a–g) to the definitions (1–7).

- You could do this exercise with the whole class as part of the Warm up. You could extend it by writing a few sentences on the board and including one of the listed attitudes next to each. To exploit the sentences, first you could drill saying them with the given attitude. Then you shout out one of the definitions from the Worksheet; students have to work out which sentence it refers to and say it with the right tone.

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Answers

a 2
b 4
c 7
d 6
e 5
f 3
g 1

2 **Emphasizing a word can change the meaning of a sentence. In these sentences, the word in bold is emphasized. Read the sentences out loud with your partner and discuss how the meaning changes. Make notes with your ideas.**

- You may need to model the emphases here. This is a potentially difficult exercise because the pronunciation of some of the words changes when they are emphasized. For example, *was* is /wəz/ unemphasized but /wɒz/ emphasized. You could scaffold the exercise with some drilling and e.g. a recognition activity: you say the sentence, and students have to identify the emphasis you have used.

Suggested meanings

a I didn't say it, but someone else could have said it.
b I definitely didn't say he was wrong.
c I didn't say it, but I could have implied it.
d I said someone else was wrong.
e I said – or meant – that he still *is* wrong.
f I said another word – perhaps mistakenly!

3 **Discuss how you can use your tone and attitude to further change the meaning of the sentence in Exercise 2. Practise saying it in different ways. Try to identify your partner's tone/attitude.**

- If the volume is loud, it could show anger; low volume could show consternation. There are many other possibilities; encourage students to experiment and see what they can come up with. Get students to demonstrate their ideas, and encourage them to analyze what they are doing physically to change the tone. You could circulate and ask some students to demonstrate their ideas to the class; the class has to identify the attitude/tone.

4 **Choose one of the situations on the following page (a–f) and express how you feel about it, using one of the attitudes from the box. Can your partner identify which attitude you chose?**

- Students can show their interpretations of the situations to the class, and you can highlight strong points and areas for improvement. This will help students further understand how to interpret attitudes and tones.

Reflect

5 **Discuss which tones/attitudes you find most difficult to recognize when you are listening to a speaker.**

- Discuss these points as a class, summing up what they have learnt. You can use the board to list any important conclusions they come to and then direct students to note down anything extra it adds to their understanding.

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