

Teacher's notes

Explain clearly with tonic stress

Warm up

This task can help students better understand the concept of stressed-timed languages and the importance of using tonic stress and weak forms in order to speak clearly. It may require a bit of practice beforehand, though! It's a repetition exercise, in which you pronounce the tonic syllables at the same pace every time, but adding unstressed words rhythmically between them as you go along.

Start with these words, at a fairly slow, even pace and stressing all the words:

1 **me** **you** **him** **her**

Then add and between the words, keeping the pace of the main words as in **1**:

2 **me** and **you** and **him** and **her**

Continue to the sentences below, always keeping to the same pace. **4** can be a bit tricky!

3 **me** and then **you** and then **him** and then **her**

4 it's **me** and then it's **you** and then it's **him** and then it's **her**

The goal is to get the students to pronounce all the sentences at the same pace, i.e. **4** shouldn't take longer than **1**. It often helps to click fingers or clap to ensure a consistent rhythm.

Using the Factsheet

There are three 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.
- 3** Focus on the Worksheet in the lesson, then give students the Factsheet at the end of the lesson, so they can take it home and keep it as a reference or revision tool.

Theory to practice

- Reassure the students that there isn't just one correct way of stressing each sentence – it depends on the context. The main stress should usually be the last tonic stress, unless students decide to use one of the other types of stress described in the Key features section.

Suggested answers

- 1** They go on **holiday** every **year**.
- 2** **When** do you **leave** the **office**?
- 3** I don't **see** her very **often** these **days**.
- 4** The **English** class starts at **nine**.
- 5** It **doesn't** **rain** much around **here**.
- 6** We **do** the **laundry** on **Sundays**.

Using the Worksheet

Practice

1 Read the conversation and underline the syllables with tonic stress.

- Ask students to read the dialogue to themselves, stressing different words to identify a way of saying each sentence which sounds natural.
- Elicit correct answers, then drill the sentences individually.

Suggested answers

- A** What do you think of this dress?
- B** It's really pretty. I like the colour. How much is it?
- A** Thirty pounds. Oh, wait: twenty with the discount.
- B** You should definitely get it, then. Is it for your mum?
- A** No, it's for me!


2 Which words in Exercise 1 received each type of stress?

- Remind students of the three forms of tonic stress (apart from the natural one, i.e. stronger at the end). Ask them to find two examples of each type of stress in the dialogue from the previous exercise.
- Elicit correct answers, explaining them as necessary.

Answers

- a *really* (intensifier)
definitely (intensifier)
- b *twenty* (not thirty)
me (not my mother)
- c *colour* (saying what they liked about the dress)
thirty (answering the question)

3 01 Read the transcript from a lecture and underline the words you think will be stressed. Compare with a partner. Then listen and check.

- Students read through the paragraph and underline the syllables with tonic stress.
- Ask students to compare their notes in pairs. Reassure them that there are different possible stress patterns. The suggested answer below gives the stress patterns from the recording.
- Play  01 so that students can listen and check. Elicit the stress patterns from the recording, along with different possible interpretations.


Suggested answer

Broadly speaking, I can say that a good learner experiments with language and she takes risks. That's the first thing. And she is realistic. By realistic, I mean she knows that learning a language is not simple or easy. It takes time and effort. She accepts that sometimes progress will seem slow. Next, she is independent, meaning she doesn't just sit in the classroom expecting to learn.

4 Now practise reading the extract out loud, stressing the same syllables as the speaker.

- Students read the paragraph to themselves, stressing the same words as the speaker.

TIP

Mirroring is a technique which is quite popular in some countries, such as Japan. After students have listened to the recording a couple of times and practised the stress on their own, play  01 one more time and ask all students to join in. Ask them to speak quietly so everyone can still hear the recording. If you prefer, you can read the text out loud yourself.

5 Prepare a mini-presentation on a topic of your choice.

- Tell students they are going to prepare a mini-presentation on a topic of their choice. Elicit some ideas from the class to help those who can't think of a topic.
- Ask students to follow the steps in the bullet points. Make sure they don't write too much: the focus here isn't on content, but rather on delivery. Monitor and assist as necessary.

6 In small groups, take turns to deliver your presentations. Were the other students clear in their presentations, stressing the important words?

- In small groups, students take turns to deliver their texts and give each other feedback. You can also encourage them to repeat the task without the script.

Reflect

7 Think about this lesson and answer the questions.

- Students answer the questions individually.
- Elicit answers, and have a class discussion about the benefits of using tonic stress and weak forms.