

Example Classroom-Based Pronunciation Assessment Suite

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Oral Diagnostic

At the beginning of the semester, the professor pairs students and instructs them to meet for a ten-minute conversation outside of class time (see **Appendix A**). They record their unprepared conversation, first introducing themselves and then discussing a current event that interests them. The instructor listens to the recordings, identifies instances of unintelligible or difficult to comprehend speech, and provides feedback on the linguistic features that may have contributed to the difficulty. She also notes places where the speech may be difficult for other listeners (or places of reduced comprehensibility), and also where there are spoken grammar issues. After listing all of these moments with their corresponding timestamps, the teacher looks for patterns and assigns a task on the English Accent Coach website. This site hosts a game created by Ron Thomson that helps students to improve their perception of difficult English phonemic contrasts. **Appendix B** is an example of the feedback one student might receive. This particular student is a Chinese speaker of English and has a relatively large amount of intelligibility issues. After reviewing the feedback, students are instructed to listen back to all of the instances of unintelligible (to the teacher) speech and to type out what they had attempted to say.

Progress Tests and Quizzes

Throughout the course, the instructor leads lessons that are planned and explicitly focus on pronunciation. Lesson foci include lexical stress and schwa, resyllabification, and alternations (e.g., the letters “t” and “r” transform into the affricate [tʃ] + [ɹ]). A lesson of this nature will be followed by practice using Google Pronunciation and Youglish.com (see **Appendix C**). A few days later, students complete a short, at-home quiz administered via a learning management platform, such as Canvas (see **Appendix D**). The words selected for the focused pronunciation lessons are taken from legal cases that the students have read in concurrent Legal English classes.

Embedded

In law school, students will often *brief* – or summarize – a case in written outline form to aid studying for final exams. For their oral skills class, they are asked to select a case they have already read for another Legal English class and orally brief it (see **Appendix E** for the assignment handout). The oral summary must contain all of the standard elements as its written counterpart and must be recounted in two minutes. Although students are not permitted to read off of a prepared text, they can prepare bullet points or an outline. After students submit the audio recording of this at-home assignment, the instructor pairs students and sends each student their partner's recording. In class, students transcribe their partner's oral brief, leaving blanks to indicate unintelligible moments and using bold and italics for places of reduced comprehensibility or grammar issues (see **Appendix F** for the transcription and language feedback template). After 25 minutes, the pairs come together to discuss the unintelligible moments and participate in peer teaching.

Performance

Towards the end of the semester, students learn PowerPoint design tips, and they create a short three to five slide presentation that describes a law that has recently passed anywhere in the world. The presentation must include the legal context, the law itself, and any resulting social or political ramifications. In groups of three, students meet on Zoom to practice teleconferencing and virtual presentation skills. Each student has five minutes to present, and then hold a short discussion. The Zoom host records and submits the video file, and the instructor provides feedback using a rubric; students receive this rubric before preparing their presentations (see **Appendix G**). The scoring and feedback includes both presentation-specific items as well as language feedback. For pronunciation, the student receives an overall comprehensibility score, on a modified comprehensibility scale developed by Isaacs et al. (2018). They also receive a list of words and phrases that were unintelligible or difficult to understand. Similar to the follow-up assignment following the Oral Diagnostic, the instructor provides a timestamp and context for unintelligible items and students must review the recording to identify what they had intended to say in those moments.

Self Assessment

By the end of the semester, students have received feedback from their instructor over a dozen times. (In addition to the tasks described here, students submit numerous two-minute video reflections after attending campus events and having conversations with classmates about documentaries and podcasts. The instructor reacts to these videos and offers a few points of pronunciation feedback. Additionally, students have been meeting with the professor in small groups for weekly conversation practice and have hand-written feedback notes from these sessions.) Students are tasked to print all of the feedback they have received throughout the semester and bring that packet to class. In class, each student reviews their feedback packet and answers a series of questions designed to promote self reflection on their pronunciation through the semester (**Appendix H**). Students submit their individualized feedback packet and self reflection.

Achievement

Throughout the semester, students watch documentaries and listen to podcasts, and they complete a language notes document for each assignment (see **Appendix I**). The teacher combines these language notes with their feedback packets they created for the self-assessment assignment. She reviews each students' packet and selects thirty words and phrases for each student. This individualized list constitutes a cumulative snapshot of difficult words and phrases, unique to each student. The student is instructed to practice these words and phrases on Google Pronunciation and Youglish.com. When they are ready, they will record themselves saying this list, and will submit it as the final pronunciation quiz to be scored for intelligibility of individual sounds and lexical stress (**Appendix J**). This assessment aligns with course objectives and goals in the syllabus: (1) Students will work closely with the course instructor to receive extensive feedback on their skills development, and (2) By the end of the semester, students will have improved their ability to produce intelligible speech, specifically in terms of stress and individual sounds.

Appendix A: Oral Diagnostic Assignment

In order to offer you feedback on your current English oral speaking skills, you will complete a brief speaking assignment. You have been assigned a partner, and the two of you should plan to meet for a 10-minute conversation. ***Both of you are responsible for submitting your own recording***, so this means each of you should have some sort of recording device (e.g., cell phone or digital recorder). Files must be emailed to the professor by **Friday, September 6 at noon**.

Procedure:

Place the recording device on a tabletop approximately 2 feet away from your mouth with the microphone pointed at you. Start the recording. State your name. Then begin a conversation addressing the following topics. (***Do not practice or rehearse what you will say.***)

1. In the United States, professionals are encouraged to have an “elevator pitch.” The goal of this type of interaction is to quickly share with another person what you do in your current job or what you hope to do (quick enough for an elevator ride). The elevator pitch is good to have in your repertoire for networking, interviews, or business cocktail parties.

Introduce yourself to your partner and give him/her your quick 2-minute elevator pitch. Your partner can react or ask questions. Then, switch and let your partner have a turn.

2. Next, discuss a current event. Use these guiding questions to talk for approximately 5 minutes total:
 - a. What is a current event or important problem happening anywhere in the world that you are interested in?
 - b. Why are you interested in this issue?
 - c. What do you think should be done to help solve this problem?

After you have both finished discussing topics 1 and 2, end the recording. Save the file and email it as an attachment to the professor.

Recording tips:

1. Record in a quiet space (e.g., a library meeting room).
2. When you are recording, point the microphone towards your body. The recording device should be on a tabletop about 2 feet from your mouth.
3. Save your file with your first name and date (e.g., Martina 7-20-19).
4. Check the recording to make sure your voice is clear.

Appendix B: Oral Diagnostic Feedback

Name:

Date of Recording:

Intelligibility Issues

1:02 I just **thinks** that I'm not as good as a qualified lawyer

I wasn't sure what you said here until I listened to the full sentence. Because you made the [th] sound like an [s] and then you added the extra [s] at the end of the verb (when it was not needed), the resulting pronunciation sounded like [sinks]. I thought maybe you intended to say "stinks" or "since" so I had to wait till the end of the sentence to figure it out. In order to make the [th] sound, you must bite the tip of your tongue.

1:48 they need _____

What did you say here? Please listen back to the recording and let me know. Was it "this service"? The second word sounded like "surries" to me. If you did intend to say "service," it means that the [v] was deleted and the last vowel was changed. To make the [v] sound, touch your upper teeth to your lower lips. And the last vowel should be [ih], not [ee].

4:38 I _____ know that

What did you say here? It sounded like "cry" but I know that doesn't make sense with the context. Please listen back to the recording and let me know.

4:47 it's just the _____ case

Did you say "last" here? If so, what did you mean by that? If not, please listen back to the recording and let me know.

5:12 the _____ is

What did you say here? Please listen back to the recording and let me know.

6:15 tablets

I think you said "tablets" here. If so, you added an extra vowel in after the [b]. Next time try: TAE-blits. If you did not say this, please listen back to the recording and let me know.

6:19 _____ laptops

What did you say here? Please listen back and let me know.

6:27 silks

Did you say "silks" here? If so, you added an extra [uh] vowel sound right before the [dark l]. Be sure to just use the [ih] vowel and then the [dark l] sound. If you think you did not say this word, please listen back to the recording and let me know.

6:53 _____ the trade

Did you say "end" or "edit" or something else here? Please listen back and let me know.

7:22 the Chinese _____ president

Did you say "sitting king" here? Please listen back to the recording and let me know.

Comprehensibility Issues

0:15 I'm from

These words end with [m] which means that you have to close your lips to make this sound. In your pronunciation, the [m] sound in both words was almost deleted or it sounded like the [ng] sound.

0:32 three

You pronounced the [th] sound in this word like [s]. In order to make the [th], you need to bite the tip of your tongue.

0:52, 4:59, 5:46, 6:30 I think

Again, this [th] sounded like [s].

0:55 from

This word-final [m] also sounded like it was almost deleted or that it was the [ng] sound.

1:32 security

Before the [u], there is a [y] sound. Try this next time: sə-KYUR-rih-tee

1:45 mainland

The second part of this word sounded like “line,” which means you changed the vowel. Be sure to use the [æ] or [barred i] sound here. I recommend listening to this word on youglish or forvo to practice with this word.

6:33 something

The [th] in this word sounded like [s].

Spoken Grammar Issues

0:20 I'm the fresh graduation from

A more common way to say this would be → I'm newly graduated. OR I'm a fresh graduate (to be a little funny).

1:28 my interest field

A more common way to say this is “my field of interest.”

4:26 my most concentrate in...

A more common way to say this is “I am most focused on” or “I am concerned about”

4:37 I don't know other people know about it

In this type of construction, I recommend putting “if” after “know” → I don't know if other people know...

5:40 the economic may slow

In this case, you need the noun form “economy.”

6:49, 6:58 she can easily

You were talking about Donald Trump, who is a male. So you need the “he” pronoun.

Patterned Issues

- word-final nasals
- [th]
- word choice

Assignment on English Accent Coach

Work on the following sound pairs/groups until you reach at least 90% on all of the sounds. Please note that this may take a few days or even a few months of practice. This assignment is due at the end of the fall semester, and it is recommended that you practice regularly, once or twice a week, until you are able to reach at least 90%.

s - θ

Appendix C: Pronunciation Lesson

Syllable, Stress, and Schwa


Directions: Break the following words into syllables. Mark which syllable should be stressed by capitalizing and underlining it. Also be sure to include any vowels that reduce into schwa.

	Word	Syllables, Stress, and Schwa
1	allowance	ə – <u>LAU</u> – wints
2	psyche	
3	trivial	
4	admonition	
5	neurotic	
6	anguish	
7	corporation	
8	negligent	
9	infliction	
10	procedural	
11	plaintiff	
12	ordinary	

Appendix D: Progress Quiz

Question 1	1 pts
How many syllables does the following word have?	
sensibilities	
<input type="text"/>	

Question 2	1 pts
Does this word have any schwas?	
sensibilities	
<hr/>	
<input type="radio"/> Yes	
<hr/>	
<input type="radio"/> No	

Question 3	1 pts
Record yourself saying this word:	
sensibilities	
Edit View Insert Format Tools Table	
12pt ▾ Paragraph ▾ B <i>I</i> <u>U</u> <u>A</u> ▾  ▾ T ² ▾ ⋮	
<input type="text"/>	

Appendix E: Oral Case Brief Assignment

For this assignment, you will record yourself orally briefing one case. First, you must select a case that you have read this semester in any law course. Then, I recommend writing out a few notes about the case. Make sure you capture all of the main sections of a brief (i.e., the parties' names, facts, procedural history, issue, holding, reasoning, and judgment). After preparing, use a device to record yourself speaking about the case. Glance at your notes, but *do not read anything*. This recording is meant to capture real, authentic speech. Saying "um" and "uh" is ok! For each section you can say something like, "*Doe v. Manheimer* involves..." "The facts are as follows..." "The issue is whether..." and "The court held that..." to indicate to your listener which section you are discussing.

Your oral briefs should be two minutes in length. It is okay if you speak for a few seconds over that limit, but if you exceed two and a half minutes, delete the file and try again. Be sure your recording time fits within 1:50 to 2:30 (min:sec) timeframe. Consider this time limit when selecting which case to brief. I recommend choosing shorter cases over longer ones.

Procedures:

1. When you are recording, place the device on a table in front of you, with the microphone pointing at you. Keep the recording device about 12 inches away from your mouth.
2. *Record in a quiet space.*
3. Save your file with your first name and date (e.g., Jennifer 10-20-2019).
4. Check the recording to make sure your voice is clear. If it is not clear, try again.
5. Upload the audio file to Canvas by the assignment due date.

Appendix F: Transcript Template

Transcript of _____
Transcribed by _____

Type the transcript here. Remember to use _____ whenever you do not understand what your classmate is saying. These are the intelligibility issues. Use ***bold and italics*** when you can understand what they intended but you know it is incorrect or if it was difficult to understand. These are comprehensibility issues. Also, mark any incorrect spoken grammar in ***bold and italics***. [Delete this paragraph once you start typing the transcript.]

Intelligibility Issues words and phrases you could not figure out (i.e., places where you had to use ___)	Comprehensibility Issues words and phrases that you could figure out, but that you know are incorrect or difficult to understand (i.e., the <i>bold and italicized</i> places)	Spoken Grammar Issues places where the speaker has used incorrect spoken grammar

Appendix G: Performance Assessment

Zoom Presentation Feedback

Presenter:

Visuals	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were there 3-5 slides? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the slides visually appealing, modern, and professional (considering color, style, and animations)? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the speaker use images to show concepts whenever possible? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the text easy to read (considering font, color, and size)? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the slides contain too much text? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the speaker include slide numbers? 		

Speaker		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the speaker appear to be calm, confident, and competent? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the speaker talk loud enough for their classmates to hear? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the speaker manage technology well during his/her presentation? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the speaker's pronunciation intelligible and comprehensible? See the words and phrases listed on the back of this paper. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the speaker manage time well and finish in 5-8 minutes? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the classmates engage with the topic in a discussion after the presentation? 		

Content		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a clear topic? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the speaker inform the audience with sufficient information? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the speaker provide specific evidence or examples to support the points of the speech? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the speaker use an effective opener and closing? 		

What did the speaker do well? What can the speaker improve upon?

Comprehensibility Score

<p>1: Speech requires a great deal of effort to understand or is indecipherable. Aspects of speech are debilitating to the message.</p>	<p>2: Speech is effortful to understand. Aspects of speech are detrimental to the message.</p>	<p>3: Speech requires some effort to understand. Aspects of speech somewhat interfere with the message.</p>	<p>4: Speech requires little effort to understand. Aspects of speech minimally interfere with the message.</p>	<p>5: Speech is effortless to understand. Aspects of speech are rare and do not interfere with the message.</p>
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What language should the speaker practice? This section will include words, phrases, and grammar.

requirement
foreign
dramatical → dramatic
poor (p sounded like a b)
transferred to be → transformed into
millions of workers
sponsorship

35:47 Did you say “Asia” here? Please listen back to the recording and let me know.

36:01 they _____ that sponsorship law. Did you say “imposed” here? Please listen back and let me know.

got approve → approval
travel (v sounded like f)

39:30 the ministry of _____ Please listen back and let me know what you said here.

Appendix H: Self-Assessment

Instructions: Review all of the feedback you have received this semester and answer the following questions.

1. What patterns do you notice? What sounds, sound combinations, or pronunciation features tend to give you trouble?
2. Have you noticed pronunciation and other aspects of language while speaking in English outside of the classroom? Has your awareness or noticing changed throughout the semester?
3. What improvements or changes have you noticed in your own speech throughout this semester?
4. What aspects of pronunciation do you want to continue to focus in the future?
5. What speaking or pronunciation goals do you have for the spring semester?

Appendix I: Language Notes Template

Instructions: Take note of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and idioms that you hear in the documentary film.

Words and phrases that are new to me	Words and phrases that I am somewhat familiar with

Appendix J: Pronunciation Final Quiz Scoring

Student:

Word or Phrase	Individual Sounds	Stress
LL.M. at Georgetown Law		
thoughts		
women		
statutes		
thousand		
months		
victim		
alibi		
trial		
disbarred		
thwart		
reprehensible		
self-serving		
vying		
scrutinize		
disproportionately		
decriminalize		
incarcerated		
phony		
tremendous		
fend for yourself		
selflessness		
intricate		
cynicism		
unanimous		
botched		
dread		
illicit		
plausible		
pecuniary		
TOTAL CORRECT		

OVERALL SCORE: __ / 55

1. Note that X indicates a mistake. In the Individual Sounds column, students must produce all sounds in the word or phrase intelligibly in order to receive a point in this category.
2. If a word has one syllable, there is no question of lexical stress. Thus, the Stress category has been greyed out, and no points will be awarded.