



# FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR ACCENT-FRIENDLY PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

An **IATEFL** webinar  
Dec 7 2024  
3pm UK time



Mark Hancock

SLIDES:  
[https://pronpack.com/  
webinar-on-accent-  
friendly-pronunciation-  
teaching/](https://pronpack.com/webinar-on-accent-friendly-pronunciation-teaching/)

# WITH PRONUNCIATION, SOME THINGS DON'T MATTER...

**Knowledge** is knowing not to pronounce the T in 'often';  
**wisdom** is realising it doesn't matter if you *do*.



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... BUT OTHER THINGS *DO* MATTER!



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# MINIMAL PAIRS: MAKE THE DIFFERENCE YOU NEED

'Pair Squares' =  
minimal pairs<sup>2</sup>

**A**



**Seat on a sheep**

**B**



**Sit on a sheep**

**C**



**Seat on a ship**

**D**



**Sit on a ship**



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# WHAT MATTERS ARE THINGS THAT CHANGE THE MEANING

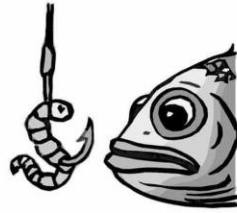
## THE E GROUP



1

**BEAT**

**i:**



2

**BAIT**

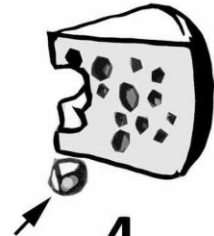
**eɪ**



3

**BITE**

**aɪ**



4

**BIT**

**ɪ**



5

**BET**

**e**



6

**BAT**

**æ**



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# BAIT or BET?

/eɪ/

/e/



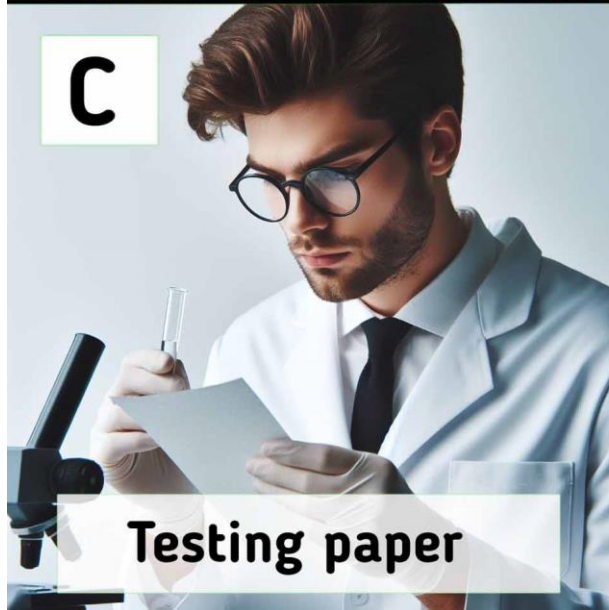
Phoneme Cover symbol	Accent variants
/eɪ/	[eɪ] [eə] [eɪ] [ɛɪ] [ɛɪ] [æɪ]

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# SUCCESS (OR NOT) IS A GREAT FORM OF FEEDBACK



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# TRY AUTOMATIC SPEECH RECOGNITION

But beware: it might not be your fault!



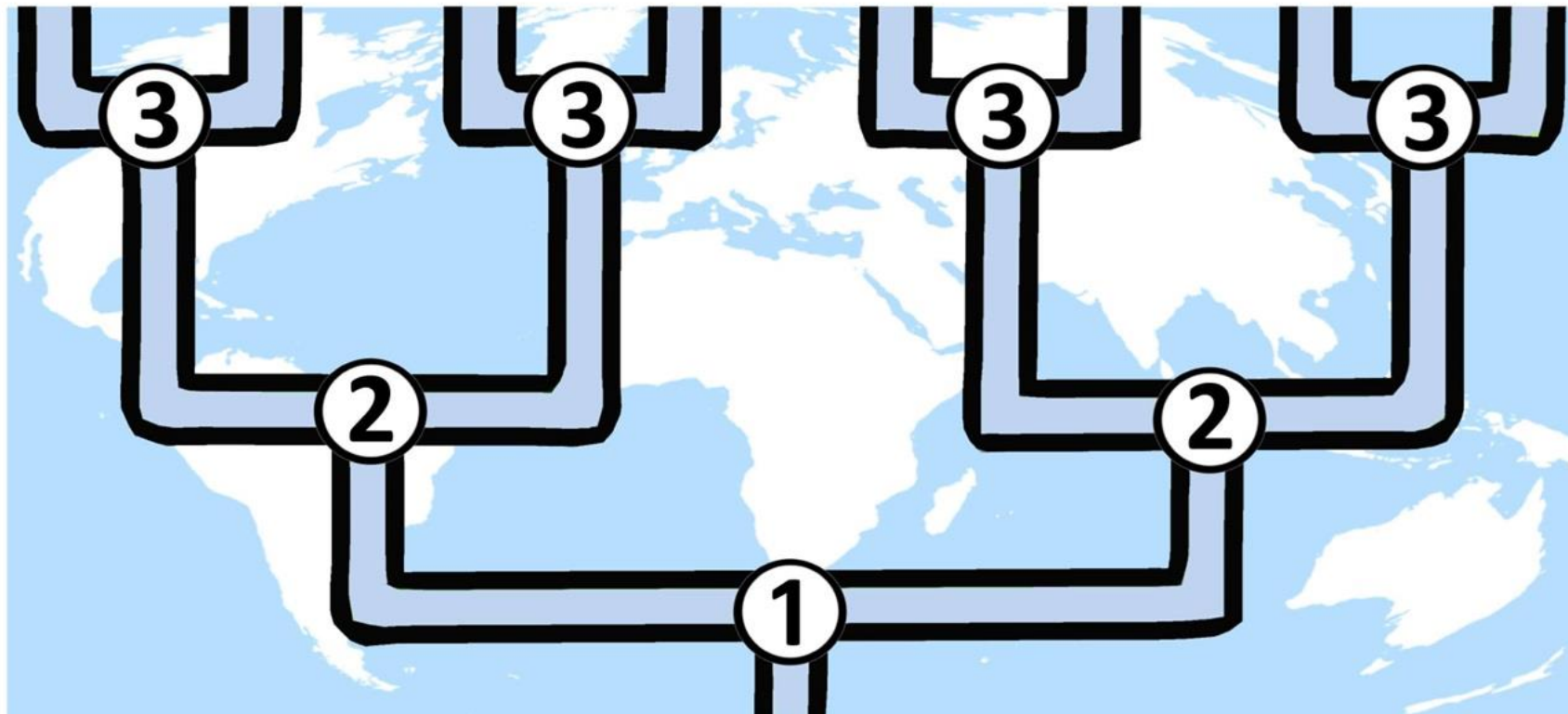
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The screenshot shows the Google Translate interface. The search bar contains "google translate". Below the search bar are navigation tabs: All, Images, Videos, Web, News, Maps, Books, More, and Tools. The language selection area shows "English - detected" on the left and "English" on the right. The input text is "Testing paper". The output text is also "Testing paper". At the bottom, there are links for "Open in Google Translate" and "Feedback".



# FEEDBACK: 'EFFECTIVE' BEATS 'CORRECT'

RIO BOSTON PARIS OSLO CAIRO DELHI BEIJING SYDNEY



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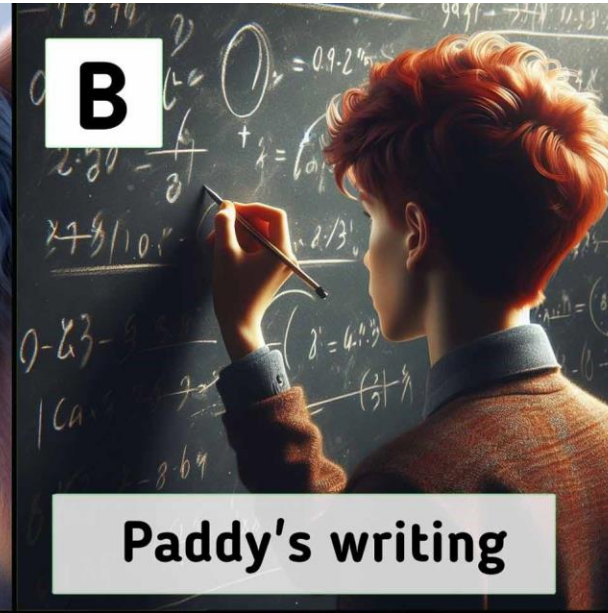


- 1 She wants to [a. sail, b. sell] her boat.
- 2 The drivers [a. raced, b. rest] on Sundays.
- 3 Pass the [a. paper, b. pepper], please.

# TRICK MINIMAL PAIRS: FOR LISTENING, NOT SPEAKING

Beware: it might not be your fault!

Speaking or listening?

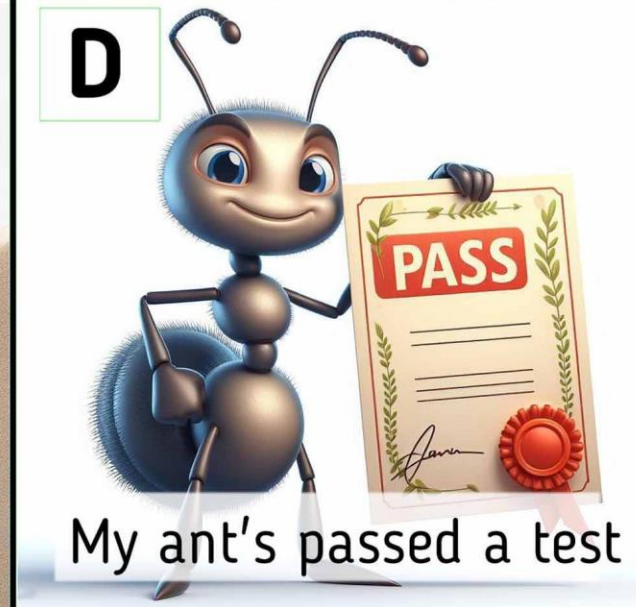
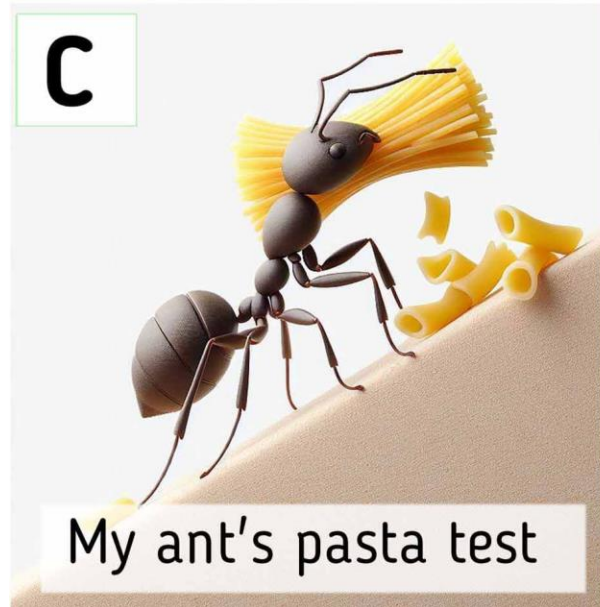
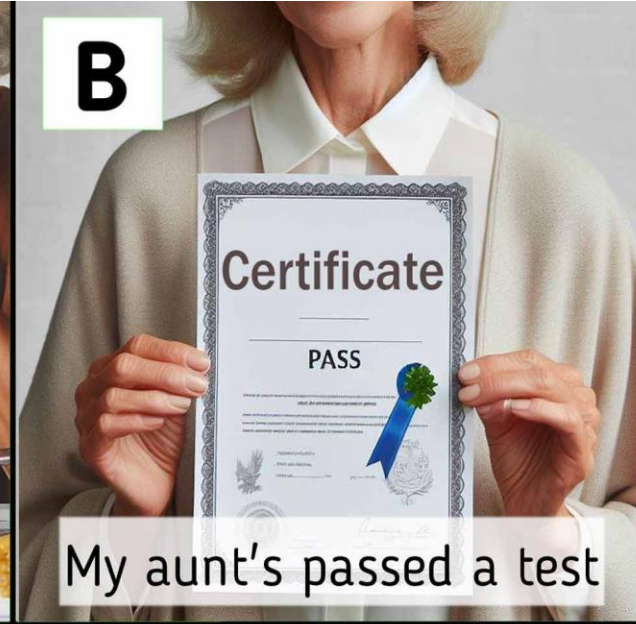


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# TRICK MINIMAL PAIRS (HOMOPHONES IN SOME ACCENTS)



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# TRY TEXT-TO-SPEECH SOFTWARE

But beware: it isn't a 'definitive' model!

Pasta test text.docx - Word

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File Home Insert Draw Design Layout References Mailings Review View Help Acrobat Tell me

Proofing Read Aloud Check Accessibility Language Comments Markup Tracking Compare Protect Hide Ink

A  
My aunt's pasta test

B  
My aunt's passed a test

C  
My ant's pasta test

D  
My ant's passed a test

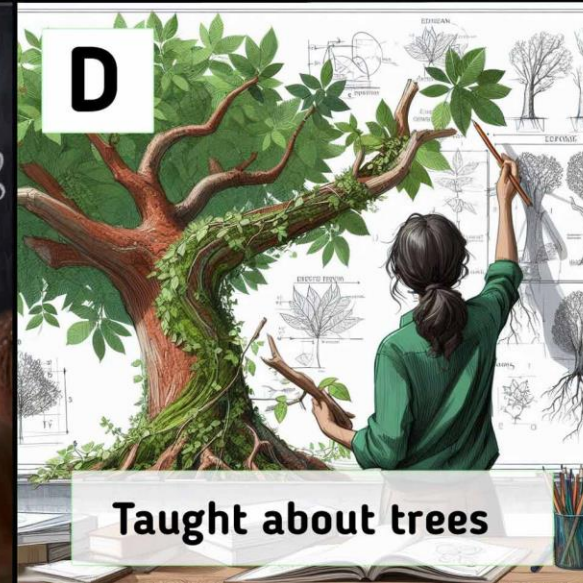
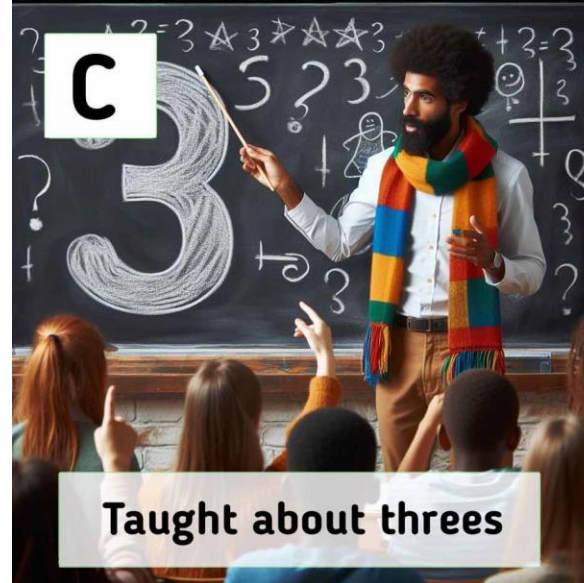
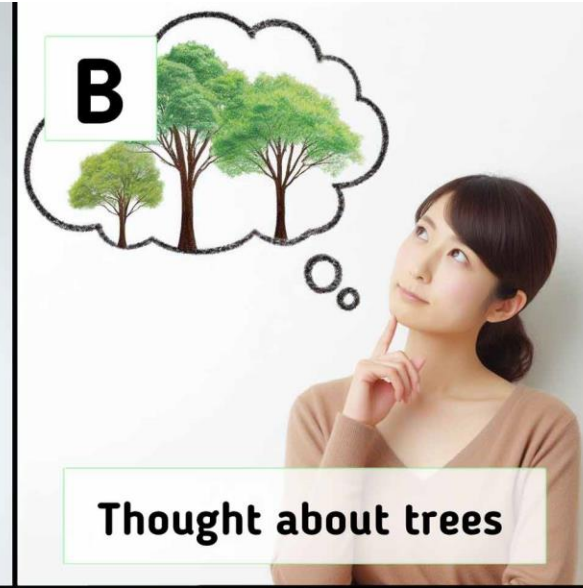
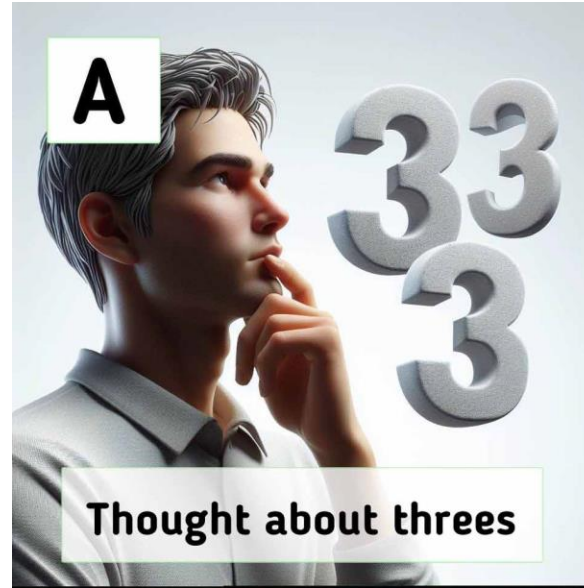
Page 1 of 1 22 words English (Ireland) Accessibility: Good to go 100%

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# IS THIS A TRICK MINIMAL PAIR? USE YOUR JUDGEMENT!

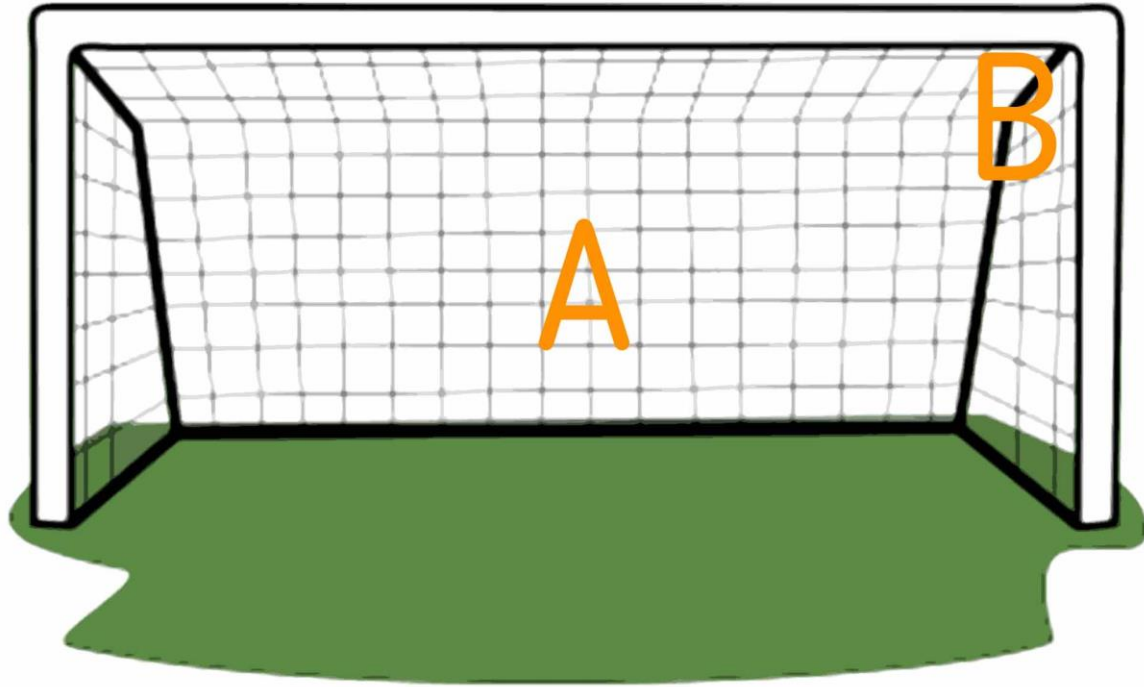
Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language* Oxford: Oxford University Press



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# COMPROMISE: AIM FOR **A** BUT SETTLE FOR **B**



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# SPEAK LOCALLY, HEAR GLOBALLY

STANDARD  
PRONUNCIATION



STANDARD  
UNDERSTANDING



LOCAL  
PRONUNCIATION



GLOBAL  
UNDERSTANDING



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# THE ACCENT-FRIENDLY TEACHER



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**Knowledge** is knowing something is 'non-standard';  
**wisdom** is realising it doesn't necessarily matter!

# 4 PRINCIPLES FOR ACCENT-FRIENDLY PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

**1 Make the difference you need:** focus less on sounds and more on the differences between them.

**2 ‘Effective’ beats ‘correct’:** with pronunciation, it’s not about what sounds native-like, it’s about what works.

**3 If it isn’t broken, don’t fix it:** before correcting a learner’s pronunciation, ask yourself, ‘Is this really a problem?’

**4 Speak locally, hear globally:** distinguish productive pronunciation (speaking) and receptive pronunciation (listening).

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Hancock, M. (2024). *PronPack: The Minimal Pair Collection* Hancock McDonald ELT







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**Webinars**      **Conferences**      **Journals**      **Blogs**      **Networks**

A collage of various prbn SIG content including webinar slides, conference posters, journal covers (one titled 'SPEAK OUT!'), blog posts, and network photos.

**ONLINE & IN-PERSON Pre-Conference Event**

**7 April 2025**

**[pronsig.iatefl.org/pce2025](https://pronsig.iatefl.org/pce2025)**

