

Tongue Cats



TEACHING FOCUS

To raise awareness of the role of tongue, jaw and lips in vowel sounds

MINIMUM LEVEL

Pre-intermediate

ACTIVITY

Articulation workout; lip reading

WORKSHEETS

PronPack Worksheet 1.3
Print one copy for each student

AUDIO FILES

Background

Vowel sounds are produced by changing the shape of the space inside the mouth. This is done in three ways:

- moving the body of the tongue up and down, and from front to back;
- moving the position of the bottom jaw from nearly closed to wide open;
- moving the lips, from a wide smile to a small round shape.

A cross section of the mouth space is often represented by a square – see **DIAGRAM 1.3A** on the following page. Along the dimension from left to right is the tongue position, from front to back. Along the dimension from top to bottom is jaw position, from closed to open. So, for example, the /ee/ sound in the top left is made with the body of the tongue pushed to the front of the mouth and the jaw nearly closed.

In this activity, we focus on the four vowel sounds closest to the corners in the diagram – in other words, the vowels with the most extreme tongue and jaw positions. We do this in order to make the tongue and jaw movements most noticeable to students and so raise awareness of their importance in creating vowel sounds.

Flexi: If your students are familiar with phonemic symbols, you can write /i:/, /u:/, /æ/ and /ɒ/ into the four corners of the Tongue Cats diagram on the worksheet (or the American symbols /iy/, /uw/, /æ/ and /ɑ/).

Presentation

- Write the spellings /ee/ and /oo/ on the board, and point out that the slashes show that these refer to sounds. Point to each one and mouth the vowel silently. Get students to say the sounds as you point at the spellings. Move your finger back and forth between them so that the students are saying eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee.
- Repeat the activity above, but this time ask students to pay attention to how their tongue is moving. Elicit that the tongue moves back for the /oo/. To demonstrate this, ask students to touch the end of their tongue with a finger or a pencil while they say the two sounds, and notice how it goes further in when they say /oo/.

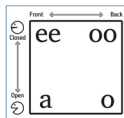


DIAGRAM 1.3A



DIAGRAM 1.3B

- Write the spelling /a/ below the /ee/ on the board. Point at these two in turn and get students to say the sounds. Now ask them to do this again, but this time with the finger of one hand on their nose and the thumb on the chin – see **DIAGRAM 1.3B**. Ask students what they notice, and elicit that the finger and thumb move apart when they move from /ee/ to /a/. Point out that the same thing happens when they move from /oo/ to /o/.

Activity

- Give out **Worksheet 1.3** and ask students to look at the *Tongue Cats diagram* in the upper half of the page. Explain that the cat represents the tongue. In the top left, it is pushing its body up and forward. In the bottom left, it is pushing down and forward. In the top right, it is pushing up and back. In the bottom right, it is pushing down and back. Get the students to say the sounds in the four boxes, and try to feel how their tongue is moving like the cat in the pictures.
- Point out that the jaw is more closed for the sounds in the top two boxes, and more open for the sounds in the bottom two boxes. Remind them of the *finger and thumb test* from the presentation.
- Point out the lip drawings in each box. Get students to say the sounds and watch their own mouths in a mirror – or in the camera of their phones – to make sure they look like the drawings. Point out that the tongue is visible for the sounds **ee**, **a** and **o**, but not **oo**.
- Ask students to look at the **word quads** in the bottom half of the worksheet. Point out that they contain the same four vowel sounds, in the same position as in the diagram. Say each group of words rhythmically, getting students to repeat after you, or use **Audio 1.3-1**. Ask them to pay attention to how their mouths are moving as they do this.

You: beat... bat... boot... pot

Students: beat... bat... boot... pot

- Now ask students to look at **word quad 1**. Explain that you are going to mouth one of the words silently and they have to watch your mouth and lip-read which word you said. Demonstrate this several times.
- Put students in pairs or small groups. They take it in turns to point to one of the word quads and mouth one of the words silently for the others to lip-read.

1.3 Goes well with ...

... **PronPack 1.1** and **1.2** for a lesson on the vowel system.