

## Jim Scrivener's Teaching Tips

### Teaching Intonation

Many teachers find intonation difficult to teach. As a result they may avoid it. But intonation can be fun to work with - and it can make other language areas such as grammar easier to teach. Here are some ideas.

#### One word conversations

Write a number of single words (e.g. "yes", "today", "sorry", "bread" etc) on scraps of paper. Make groups of three - and give each group one of the pieces of paper. Tell the class a situation - (e.g. "Two people think the third one is a thief" or "It's one person's birthday") The learners must now have a conversation - but the only word anyone can say is the one on their paper! To express different ideas and emotions (e.g. anger, requesting, apologising etc) they will have to vary their intonation. The resulting dialogues are usually funny, but there's also a real teaching purpose. Without the resources of vocabulary and grammar, students have to find ways to express much more with intonation. Repeat it a few times - with new words and new situations.

#### Intonation and grammar

When you teach a new grammar item (e.g. superlatives) don't just teach model sentences as "idealised" examples - try putting the grammar into realistic and memorable everyday sentences with some real feeling such as anger, excitement, amazement etc (e.g. "This café's the worst I've ever seen!"). Say each sentence yourself and get learners to repeat it, encouraging them to really "do it with feeling".

#### Poem

Choose a short extract from a poem that you like (about 4 - 8 lines). Work out the number of syllables and decide which ones are stressed. Mark the syllable pattern on the board showing unstressed syllables

as dots and stressed syllables as boxes e.g. ●●■●●■●●. Teach the poem to the class by saying it yourself and getting learners to remember and repeat it, line by line - but without writing the text on the board. Be careful with the intonation; when you read it, offer a consistent model. Learning a poem in this way is challenging - but they may come away with something they'll remember all their lives!

#### Intonation arrows

A simple, clear way to show intonation is to draw a little box over each stressed syllable. Add a small "intonation arrow" coming out from the right of each box, showing the direction of the intonation e.g. If the intonation starts high and then falls, draw the arrow from the top-right corner of the box going diagonally down e.g.



He went home

#### Marking texts

Ask learners to listen to a short dialogue while looking at the printed text. The learners must (a) decide which syllables are prominent (i.e. are strongly stressed in the sentence) - and then - (b) which direction the intonation moves after these stresses. When they are sure, they should mark the text (using the boxes mentioned above). This often produce disagreement - don't worry! The "tuning in" is valuable in itself - quite apart from any right or wrong answers.