

Glossary

Here's some terminology for English language teachers.

Pronoun

A word which is used instead of a noun perhaps because you have already talked about the person or thing, eg I, they, which.

Verb

A word which describes an action or a state of being, eg eat, like, know.

Adverb

A word which describes or gives more information about a verb or an adjective, eg he walked quickly, she danced well.

Adjective

A word which describes something or someone, eg beautiful, happy, long.

Preposition

A word which is used with a noun or pronoun to show time, place or direction, eg at, on, in.

Conjunction

A word which connects words and phrases in a sentence, eg but, and, although.

Determiner

A word which is used before a noun to show which particular example of the noun you are referring to, eg this pencil, your shoes.

Interjection

An interjection is a word that is used to express emotion, eg Oh no! Gosh! Ow!

Part of speech

Learners need to know what type of word (noun, verb, adjective) they are learning so that they know how to put it into a sentence.

Meaning

What idea the word shows and what contexts the word applies to.

Pronunciation

Learners need to know how to say the word, how many syllables there are and which is stressed, eg ed-u-CA-tion.

Spelling

Learners need to know how to write the word.

Connotation

Learners need to know if the word has a positive or a negative sense to it. For example, the words 'slim' and 'skinny' both mean thin but one has a positive connotation (slim) and the other (skinny) doesn't.

Collocation

Learners need to know which words go with the word they are learning. For example, we make beds but do housework.

Word families

Learners need to know other words that are formed from the same word, for example, kind, unkind, kindness, kindly.

Register

Learners need to know if the word should be used in formal or informal situations. For example, assist and help have the same meaning but assist is more formal than help.

Syllable

A part of a word that usually contains a vowel sound, eg pen = one syllable; teacher = two syllables – teach/er; umbrella = three syllables – um/brell/a.

Connected speech

Spoken language in which the words join to form a connected stream of sounds. In connected speech some sounds in words may be left out or some sounds may be pronounced in a weak way or some words might join together, eg Is he busy? /ɪzɪbɪzi/.

Phoneme

The smallest sound unit which can make a difference to meaning eg /p/ in pan, /b/ in ban. Phonemes have their own symbols (phonemic symbols), each of which represents one sound.

Phonemic symbols

The characters we use which represent the different sounds or phonemes, eg /ɜ:/, /tʃ/, /θ/. Words can be written in phonemic script (usually the International Phonetic Alphabet or IPA), eg /dɒktə/ = doctor.

Consonant

1. A sound in which the air is partly blocked by the lips, tongue, teeth etc., eg /θ/ in 'thing', /b/ in 'boy'.
2. Any letter of the English alphabet which represents consonant sounds, eg d = /d/, c = /k/.

Diphthong

Diphthongs are vowel sounds. They are a combination of two single vowel sounds said one after the other to produce a new sound; eg /aɪ/ as in 'my' is pronounced by saying /æ/ and /ɪ/ together. There are eight diphthongs in English: /iə/ (eg ear), /eɪ/ (eg play), /ʊə/ (eg tourist), /ɔɪ/ (eg boy), /əʊ/ (eg go), /eə/ (eg air), /aɪ/ (eg life), /aʊ/ (eg now).

Vowels

1. A sound in which the air is not blocked by the tongue, lips, teeth etc., eg /i:/ (eat), /ə/ (about), /e/ (egg), /ʌ/ (fun). Movement or vibration is felt in the throat because the voice is used.
2. In the alphabet, the letters a, e, i, o, u are vowels.

Intonation

The way the level of a speaker's voice changes to show meaning such as how they feel about something; eg the level of your voice when you are angry is different from the level of your voice when you are pleased. Intonation can be rising or falling or both.

Stress

Pronouncing part of a word (syllable) or part of a sentence louder and longer than other parts, eg VEGetable, I LOVE baNAnas. Some parts of words and sentences are stressed (those in capital letters in these examples) and some are unstressed.

Sentence stress

Sentence stress is about the way some words in a sentence are stressed and some are unstressed. The stressed words are usually the information-carrying words or content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. For example, It was a LOVely EVEning, and the TEMperature was PERfect (the parts of the words in capitals are stressed).

Word stress

Word stress is about which syllable of a word is pronounced louder and longer – eg umbRELLa /ʌm'brelə/.

Phonemic chart

A poster or diagram of the phonemic symbols arranged in a particular order. Below is an example of the International Phonetic Alphabet or IPA.

i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:		iə	eɪ		
leave	sit	put	pool		ear	play		
e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:		ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	
bed	about	bird	door		tourist	boy	go	
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ		eə	aɪ	aʊ	
cat	fun	far	dog		air	life	now	
p	b	t	d		tʃ	dʒ	k	g
pen	bill	two	do		cheese	joke	car	got
f	v	θ	ð		s	z	ʃ	ʒ
for	voice	think	then		sun	zoo	shoe	usual
m	n	ŋ	h		l	r	w	j
man	no	sing	hat		leg	read	watch	yes