

## Using Stories in Pronunciation Practice: Improving Listening and Speaking Skills

*This information is paraphrased from the "Listening Comprehension and Oral Fluency" section of the ESL Guide, "I Speak English," by Ruth Johnson Colvin. "It is a practical way to build listening comprehension and oral fluency for ESL students who read and write English well but have difficulty understanding and pronouncing spoken English."*

### LISTENING:

1. Select a new, unread text that is at the students' LISTENING level. This will probably be well below their READING level. It can be a short story, magazine article, news story, story or letter from EasyRead News, etc.
2. DO NOT GIVE THE STUDENTS A COPY OF THE TEXT AT THIS POINT. Instruct the students to not write anything down & to not use a smartphone in this session. The point of the exercise is to listen and learn to HEAR the sounds and then to SPEAK them after hearing them spoken.
3. First, tell the students what the story is generally about. (A man who is late for work, a fire in a kitchen, etc.)
4. Read the story out loud, a paragraph at a time. After each paragraph, stop and ask if they heard any words they didn't understand. Re-read any sentence with an unknown word and ask them what they think the words might mean based on the story. Encourage them to discuss it among themselves if they want to.

### SPEAKING:

5. Read the story aloud again, one sentence at a time. Read each sentence for one student and ask the student to repeat it back to you. Repeat with the other students. (Have a different student go first in repeating each new sentence, so someone doesn't always hear the words repeated more often.)

Correct any mispronunciations or skipped words. Some students may not "hear" the pronouns (he, she they, etc.) and articles (a, an, the) or the sounds at the end of the words (er, ed, es, s). **At this point, they still have not seen the written text, just listened to it.** Continue until each student has repeated each sentence as clearly as they are able.

### READING:

6. Give each student a copy of the text (story, article, etc.) Ask them to read it silently.
7. Then have each student read the entire text out loud.
8. IDEA: If you want to try something a little different, after they have each read the story out loud, let each student take a turn at being the reader of each sentence in a new paragraph. You can use another story, a short news article or letter from the EasyRead News, etc. I tried this with a letter from the EasyRead News and think it helped the "reading" students to see all the endings and small words and then to hear their classmates miss hearing some of these endings and words. It may help them to listen harder for all the endings & words and to include them in their own speech. It was fun for them, I think, to be "in charge" of their classmates.

WRITING: (It's probably not necessary for our students, who read and write well. But you can do this if you want. There's certainly no harm in it. If the text has additional questions or homework, ask them to complete it at home and bring it to the next class.