**Yellow Jello and Other Quick Pronunciation Tips**

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**General Tips**

Some students will have no trouble with these common pronunciation problems, others a great deal. Explain that some people have difficulty because the sounds in their native languages are different from ones in English. Be sensitive and keep the lesson light and quick so people don’t become frustrated or embarrassed. Focus on giving them techniques that they can use to practice at home. Follow up as you think appropriate. You can find many books and online resources on teaching pronunciation of all English sounds. These include some diagrams you and your students may find helpful too.

**/y/ and / j/**

Prop—a box of lemon (yellow) jello to engage students’ attention. Have each student say “yellow jello.” Occasionally everyone in class can do this and there’s no need to spend more time on it. Usually, however, at least a few students, especially Spanish speaking ones, need some help. (Point out to Spanish speakers that they use the /y/ sound in the Spanish word “yo.”)

The key is the position of the tongue. /J/ is made with the tongue up lightly touching the roof of the mouth a little behind the top teeth. When saying “yellow” the tongue is down touching the back of the bottom teeth.

Having trouble explaining to beginners? Use the picture dictionary or other pictures to show them what you mean by tongue and teeth.

**/v/, /b/, and /w/**

Depending on their native language, students may have trouble with one or more of these sounds. Some Spanish speakers tend to pronounce “v” (especially in the beginning of a word) like a “b.” Other students confuse “v” with “w” often saying /w/ instead of /v/.

Almost all students can produce /b/. The trick usually is to show people how to say /v/. Keep your mouth mostly closed the way you do for the /f/ sound, touch your upper teeth to your lower lip lightly and use your voice to produce the vibrating sound of /v/. (The vibration/voiced aspect is what distinguishes /v/ from /f/.)

/W/ is made with your lips round and hard and quickly relaxing the lips.

For low beginners with very little vocabulary, I simply try and help them produce the sounds, especially /v/. With higher level students, I find it helpful to first dictate some words like *vet*, *bet*, *wet*, and *vest*, *best*, *west*. This helps train the ear to the differences between the three sounds. Encourage students to practice with a mirror at home.