**“Angelitos y diabilitos”: pronunciation of voiced stops and approximants**

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In this lesson, students will learn and practice the pronunciation of Spanish voiced stops, including their allophonic realization as approximants. The lesson is designed for a conversation class, and not a linguistics class. As such, it does not make the assumption that students know how to describe the articulatory characteristics of sounds or have a previous linguistics background. For this reason, explanations of the pronunciation targets for /bdɡ/ are presented in lay terms.

Objectives:

* Learn the allophones of /bdɡ/ and their distribution.
* Learn about common difficulties with pronouncing these segments for native speakers of English.
* Gain awareness of the production of voiced stops and approximants and practice their pronunciation.

Tasks

*Part 1 –* We start by presenting /bdɡ/, the relationship between sounds and orthography, and example words with these sounds. We then present the allophones and discuss their pronunciation. The goal in this part of the lesson is to (a) draw students’ attention to the fact that some sounds (i.e. /b/) will be represented by two graphemes (<b> and >v>), (b) reflect on some pronunciation differences with English (e.g. flapping of /d/ in English), and (c) understand pronunciation targets. The latter are presented in lay terms: hard (for stop realizations) and soft (for approximants). We end this part by brainstorming more words that exemplify some of the patterns we have discussed.

*Part 2 –* We then continue the lesson with a practice targeted at the “soft” (i.e. approximant) variants. We project a slide that shows words, as well as images that represent them. The selected stimuli include intervocalic /bdɡ/. We give students a handout of the slide and ask them to match the words with the image that represents. If need be, address vocabulary difficulties. Students then pair up. Student A receives cards with the images they just saw, and the Student B with the orthographic representation of the words. They shuffle the cards and Student A picks one and says out loud the word represented by the image, paying attention to the pronunciation of the target segment. Student B presents the card with the word and provides feedback of the pronunciation if necessary. If difficulties arise, encourage students to discuss them with their partner. They then change roles and continue until they went through all of the cards in the stack. This activity is meant as a more interactive alternative to reading a list of words.

*Part 3 –* We play a new game: *ángeles y diablos*. To prepare for the game, the instructor first projects a list of verbs and asks students if they know them (e.g. *dividir, vender, ganar*; all verbs with /bdɡ/ in their command forms). Then, the instructor reviews the affirmative and negative (informal) commands for each verb in the slide. We now move on to the game. Students are asked to find a new partner. Then, the instructor starts by asking students if they know what the expression “*la voz de la consciencia*” means; the class briefly discusses the meaning. The instructor then mentions that we all have an internal voice that pushes us to do good deeds and another voice that encourages us to be mischievous, and that we are always balancing them. S/he announces that today, students will have the opportunity to be á*ngeles* and *diablitos*. For each situation they receive, one student is the angel and the other student is the devil, and they have to provide advice using one of the verbs in the slide: one will be an affirmative command (e.g. “*¡Ve!*”) and the other one, a negative command (e.g. “*¡No vayas!*”). Note that negative commands will prompt students to produce the approximant variant (i.e. it is between vowels), while the affirmative command, the stop variant (i.e. it is utterance initial). The slide with the verbs should be projected while students work in pairs. The goal of this game is to ground the pronunciation practice in a communicative activity and to allow students to monitor their pronunciation in a less controlled environment.

*Follow up –* We come together as a class and students share how they did with pronunciation. The last slide is then projected, where students are asked to record themselves at home producing voiced stops and approximants.