

CONTRASTS

Exercise

Preparation

Work on the Behaviourism-Language unit, particularly

Fries *Lado* *contrastive analysis* *Army method*

Exercises

Try the three exercises below, using the above link for the sites cited.

Sample answers

Download the answer sheet from the above link.

Minimal pairs

A minimal pair consists of two words which differ only in one sound. They are used by linguists to identify the phonemes (meaningful units of sound) of a language: if *sheep* and *ship* mean different things in English, then the vowels /i/ and /ɪ/ must be phonemes of the language.

Contrastive analysis suggests that differences between languages will pose problems for learners; thus the *ship/sheep* contrast will prove difficult for French learners of English because only the first vowel is present in the vowel inventory of French. We might expect French EFL learners to fail to discriminate between *ship* and *sheep*, and have difficulty hearing and producing the short vowel in *ship*.

1. Ship or sheep?
2. Cliff Hanger and the sheep on a ship
3. Fourteen or forty?
4. Vowel contrast flashcards
5. Minimal pairs
6. French EFL learners

1. Ship or sheep?

<http://www.shiporsheep.com/page1.html>

Shiporsheep.com offers EFL learners the chance to 'perfect their pronunciation' by practicing minimal pairs. Look at the first page.

What tenets of structuralism and behaviorism are apparent in this activity?

2. Cliff Hanger and the Sheep on a ship

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXX87z90Q8>

Sheep and ship constitute a minimal pairs in English, differing only in the quality of the vowel sound. What other minimal pair appears in this short film?

3. Fourteen or forty?

<http://www.manythings.org/mp/m08.html>

Charles Kelly has a number of minimal pair exercises on his Manythings site for EFL learners.

Look at the instructions preceding this activity.

- a. How do they aim to enhance the learning experience?
- b. In what way can the instructions be said to conform to behaviourist principles?

4. Vowel contrast flashcards

<http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/txvowelcontrasts.html>

These materials were developed by speech therapist Caroline Bowen for work with native language developmental speech disorders in children.

Choose a vowel set and download the PDF file.

To what extent might these exercises be appropriate for second language learners?

5. Minimal pairs

<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/wordscape/wordlist/>

EFL instructor and CALL software developer John Higgins has developed extensive lists of English minimal pairs which may cause difficulty for EFL learners.

Scroll down to the section headed Why did I start? and look at the Table of Vowels and Diphthongs which follows.

a. Sheep/ship. Fill out the following table with other minimal pairs showing the sheep/ship contrast. The first one is done for you.

sheep	ship
bean	
	chick
	hill
peach	
	skim
	sick
steal	
	will

Now click on the first cell in the Vowels and Diphthongs table to see all the sheep/ship contrasts and check your answers.

b. Now look for other contrasts which cause problems for French EFL learners: *caught/coat* or *law/low*, *none/known*, *fell/fail*. Use the Keyword table at the bottom of the Higgins page if you need help with the phonetic symbols.

For each contrast list three more minimal pairs which you think might cause problems for French EFL learners.

c. Which consonant contrasts might be problematic for French EFL learners?

Explore Higgins' Consonants table for help.

6. French EFL learners

Pronunciation problems of French learners of English.

<http://www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/l1french.html>

What are the underlying methodological assumptions in this presentation?