

A puzzle with a listening and a speaking component.

Here is an idea for advanced listening and pronunciation that we have adapted from a suggestion made by Carol Heard over a decade ago. Like many of the better teaching ideas it has never gone out of date.

As you know, English has two high front vowels the /iy/ in "beat" and the /i/ in "bit", while many languages including Bahasa Malaysia have only one high front vowel. As a result, when speakers of these languages learn English, they must learn to distinguish two vowels where their first language has only one.

The value of this particular exercise is that the students have to both hear the distinction and produce the distinction: they have to hear it to get information from the tape; they have to produce it to share what they hear with others in their group. And, finally, they have to both hear and produce the distinction to participate in the whole class discussion of the answer.

Read the following tapescript into a tape recorder. You will be playing the whole tape at least four or five times so there is some advantage to having it on tape.

Tapescript for "Mr. and Mrs. Keats"

On Thursday night, four Australian tourists — Mr. and Mrs. Keats and Mr. and Mrs. Kits — ate at a hawker stall in Petaling Jaya. After they sat down, a man came to see what each person wanted to drink. One of the Kits said, "I'd like a glass of milk, please." After a few minutes, the man returned with a glass of milk, a glass of Milo, some coffee, and some tea. While they were eating, one of the women said to the other, "I didn't realise that you took cream in your coffee." Mrs. Keats said, "Bob and I don't drink Milo anymore." One of the men said, "I always drink milk."

What did each person drink?

The accompanying chart can help the students solve the puzzle. Instead of making copies of the blank chart and distributing them, put the chart on the board and have the students copy it. This way the students begin to become familiar with the chart as they copy it.

Now, divide the students up into groups of three and play the tape script of the story through once.

The first time the tape is played, some of the students will figure out what the task is and will tell the others.

In between periods of discussion in their groups, the students will want to hear the tape more than once. Play the tape as often as they seem to want it.

	milk	Milo	coffee	tea
Mr. Keats				
Mrs. Keats				
Mr. Kits				
Mrs. Kits				

What did each person drink?

The activity is not over yet. Discussing and explaining the answer is also a valuable listening and speaking opportunity. As the discussion progresses, it might be helpful to record what is known on the blank chart on the board.

However, it is necessary for us to know the answer to avoid looking foolish any more often than usual.

The key is found in two sentences about drinking milk: one of the Kits only drinks milk and one of the men only drinks milk. Thus, we know who drinks milk.

Now, we also know that neither of the Keats drinks Milo. Thus, it must be Mrs. Kits who had the Milo since Mr. Kits had the milk.

In addition, we know that one of the women had coffee; it cannot be Mrs. Kits because she had the Milo, so it must be Mrs. Keats.

Finally, we are left with Mr. Keats, who must have had the tea.