



北京市高等教育精品教材立项项目

*English Teacher Education Series*

英语教师教育丛书

# English Learning Strategies: Road to Success

## 英语学习策略 ——成功之路

□ 潘淑敏 主编



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## 丛书前言

为了指导高等师范院校英语专业学生及具有一定基础的广大英语学习者有效地学习英语,为了向社会输送大批优秀的英语师资及英语人才,为了参与并鼓励全国更多的大中小学教师投身教师教育改革,提升自身专业素质及英语水平,首都师范大学外语学院英语教育系部分教师在多年教学科研的基础上编写了《教师教育系列丛书》。此套丛书的出版填补了高师院校学法教法类系列教材的空白,具有一定的理论意义和较强的实用价值。

此套丛书从内容到编排上有几个值得关注的特色。

### 1. 贯穿大学四年,各有侧重

此套丛书由四本分册组成,每一分册针对某一年级学生特点,侧重一个主题。目前图书市场上这种一条龙式贯穿高校四年的学法教法教材并不多见。丛书各本侧重如下:

- 1) 一年级新生刚入学绝大多数学生对中学到大学的转变准备不足。为了帮助学生尽快顺利完成这一过渡,尽早步入高校自主学习、能力培养的学习轨道,我们为一年级学生撰写了《英语学习策略:成功之路》,从语音语调到听说读写,从篇章结构到考试技巧,从课堂笔记到记忆改善,以及如何使用图书馆资源等都提供了详尽的指导与范例。
- 2) 学生升入二年级后,面临着夯实专业基础、通过专业四级考试、拓宽视野、提高能力的一系列任务。经过一年的大学学习生活后,许多学生少了刚入学的兴奋与热情,多了一些冷静与思索。这一阶段学生的心理及情绪会因种种压力波动起伏,也有的学生会因处理不当退步落后。因此,我们有所侧重地向二年级学生推出《英语学习心理:实用教程》,从心理学起源、理论基础知识、学生学习心态实例分析及解决问题的建议和途径等各个层面折射大学生的心理特点,提供如何调控心理的策略及指导。
- 3) 大三意味着学生四年本科学习高级阶段的开始。教学应从语言技能教学转向内容教学。除专业必修课外,学生应根据自己的兴趣及能力加大专业选修课的学习力度,并在专业上向纵深发展,学习相关的理论知识,加强专业素养。针对这一阶段的学生,我们编写了《第二语言习得:理论与实践》,主要内容是第二语言习得研究的基本介绍,包括语言学习的外部因素、内部因素、学习者因素等等,并结合中国学生语言学习的实际举出实例。本册主要是从学的角度帮助学生认识语言学习规律,全面认识语言教学。
- 4) 四年级的学生要经过教育实习、论文撰写及毕业分配等几个主要关口,其中教

育实习对其他几个环节起着至关重要的作用。许多学生对教育实习这个从学到教的转变没有底,无所适从。为了帮助学生为教育实习及今后的工作提前做好理论、技能、心理等各项准备,我们推出系列丛书之四《英语教学法:课堂教学技能与技巧》,对听说读写及教案设计、课堂管理等诸项教学技能与技巧进行了深入浅出的阐述。本册主要从教的角度入手,其编写不仅渗透了先进的教学理念,而且提供了大量的范例供学生参考。学生通过本书的阅读及自身的思索实践不仅能学到教的技巧方法,而且能在了解运用这些技巧的同时大大提高自身听说读写及语言综合运用能力。

## 2. 理论联系实际, 针对性强

此套丛书的编写教师均为高校一线教师,在多年的教书育人及教学科研实践中与大学生朝夕相处,对不同年级学生的学习习惯、心理特点、年龄特征、情绪变化、专业弱项、问题症结等了解得比较透彻,因而编出的教材理论联系实际,符合大学生的年龄特点及接受能力,针对性强和指导性强,有助于学生在学习思考的基础上取得事半功倍的效果。

## 3. 语言简明精练, 通俗易懂

由于本套丛书的编写对象主要定位在师范院校英语专业本科生及具有相当能力和基础的广大读者,因此语言应该通俗易懂、简明精练。在编写中,尤其是涉及理论知识、专业术语的阐述时我们都力争做到深入浅出,多举实例、图文并茂、适于学生理解吸纳,并在实践中演练运用。

## 4. 体例设计新颖, 特色鲜明

作为贯穿高校四年的系列丛书,四册教材的体例设计既有共性又有个性。共性在于每一分册的体例都有共同的形式,比如每本的各个章节都会有综述或背景介绍,理解、思考或讨论等练习题以及本章总结等。个性体现在各册均有不同于其他的内容和特色,比如名句名言、重点词汇、自测列表、强化练习、提示建议、推荐书目等。

总之,此套丛书的出版是集体智慧的结晶,是教师们多年来理论研究及教学成果的总结与升华。但由于编写教师教学科研任务繁重,时间精力受到制约,加之理论水平、专业素质的提高永无止境,编写中难免有疏漏。不当之处恳请广大读者批评指正。

杨 阳

2007年1月

# Preface

During the past years of teaching, we were constantly confronted with the same question “How should we learn English in the university?” Students, particularly those freshmen, find it difficult to cope with their English. For many years we have been having the desire to write a book about learning skills to guide them. This comes true today. The book **English Learning Skills: Road to Success** is a handy, easy-to-use guide that directs students to university success in their English learning.

There are eleven chapters in this book which includes English phonetic skills, improving vocabulary skills, listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, writing skills, note-taking skills, ways of improving memory, preparing for and taking exams, using library and writing a term paper. Each chapter has the same layout that shows chapter objectives, which are also the outcomes of the chapter, and a self-help checklist that helps students find his or her problems. The main body tells what students need to work on in the chapter. It spells out the in-depth step-by-step explanation. After the main body is the summary of the chapter. It helps students summarize the key concepts covered in a simple and clear way; “Tip” is another special feature of this book describing some of the dos and don’ts students should follow or shouldn’t. Finally each chapter ends with exercises which are intended to help students to apply these skills immediately. Teachers can also use them to evaluate how students apply the skills learned in the class.

Learning skills are applicable not only in the classroom but also in the students’ future life. Once acquired, the skills remain with them to enable them to think clearly and critically, to master new information, and to communicate the information in an appropriate way in listening, speaking, reading and writing. In essence, school as a preparation for life should teach students the effective ways of learning.

The book is designed for university freshmen in English and those who just want to improve their learning skills. It is our sincere hope that the book be of value to English language learners and that students at large will find English learning an enjoyment.

Shumin Pan

January 2007

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# English Phonetic Skills

## Chapter Objectives

In this chapter we will deal with:

1. the speech mechanism;
2. word stress and sentence stress;
3. intonation.

Acquiring good pronunciation is one of the most difficult parts of learning a new language. As you improve your pronunciation, you have to listen and imitate all over again. Not only do you have to learn to use your voice in a different way, but also you have to learn to make new movements with your tongue, lips, jaw and other speech organs in order to make the new sounds and even old ones in a new way. You are developing a new skill.

Good pronunciation is not “perfect American or British accent”. By good pronunciation, we mean that people understand you, and your English is pleasant to listen to. You don’t have to sound like the Queen of England or the President of the United States of America. Why not? Because there are many kinds of regional English. In England, people from Newcastle speak English differently from people in London. In America, people from New York City, California, and Texas each have their own pronunciation. So it is no problem if you have your own accent.

But your accent must be close to the standards (American or British English).



What does it mean? Turn on your TV and watch channels like CNN International, NBC, EuroNews, BBC, or Sky News. You will hear many different people (news anchors, reporters, etc.) from Germany, France, and other non-English-speaking countries. They all have good accents — easy to understand and pleasant.

Remember, if you are close to the standard, you can always communicate, and your English will be pleasant. If you are far from the standard, sometimes you won't communicate successfully. So what we are aiming at is pleasant, intelligible, and understandable conversational speech.

How do we achieve this? A concert pianist may practice a piece of music for two years, eight hours a day and an opera singer may work just as long on an operatic role. The same holds true for a person learning to speak a new language. As with any activity, you have to practice, practice, practice and then practice some more.

Now, before you begin to practice, go over the following checklist to see whether you are hitting the correct notes.



## SETTING THE STAGE — CHECKING YOUR PRESENT SKILLS

The following checklist will help you get started on understanding your present phonetic skills. The checklist consists of 10 statements. Read each statement carefully and then mark your answer. Circle the letter “T” if the statement is TRUE for you, and circle the letter “F” if the statement is FALSE for you. BE honest with yourself. The checklist isn't a test, and there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Be sure to respond to all ten statements.

## Self-help Checklist

- ☐ ☐ 1. I can remember the spelling of a word but have trouble hearing and saying the correct sounds.
- ☐ ☐ 2. I can't tell the difference between English vowels and consonants.
- ☐ ☐ 3. I find certain sounds in English extremely difficult to pronounce.
- ☐ ☐ 4. I can't identify speech organs that produce different sounds.
- ☐ ☐ 5. I have trouble telling the differences between minimal pairs, like sheep/ship, bag/beg, pull/bull, etc.
- ☐ ☐ 6. I have trouble pronouncing words with correct stresses.
- ☐ ☐ 7. I usually emphasize every word when I read English sentences.
- ☐ ☐ 8. I don't know how to move smoothly from one word to the next without making any sudden stops.
- ☐ ☐ 9. I don't know where to pause when I read long sentences.
- ☐ ☐ 10. I feel very uncomfortable when I have to use the rising intonation.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO WORK ON

After finishing the above checklist, you might have already found your own problems in learning English pronunciation, but you still don't know how to improve it. Don't worry. It is just like learning any other skills, say, playing piano. When you begin to learn to play the piano, you first learn the names of the notes and which ones correspond to which keys. You are also learning to listen to the melody. As you begin to play, you look at the music and then at the keyboard to make sure your fingers are "hitting" the correct keys. You are now attempting to get the rhythm and the melody of the music. You judge whether or not you're on your target. The same can be compared to speaking a new language. You first must know the organs of the speech and their functions. Then you learn to produce, classify and combine speech sounds. You also have to deal with the laws of their changes, the rules of stresses, the correct rhythm and the intonation patterns (melody).

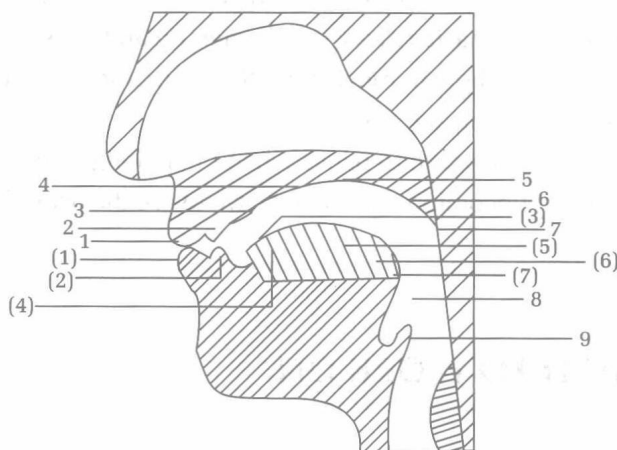
Now, let's get started to play our phonetic piano.

## The Speech Mechanism

### 1. Speech Organs

Speech sounds are made with organs of speech. Therefore, to correctly pronounce English sounds, we must have a clear idea of the vocal organs and their functions. The following is a diagram (Adapted from Wang Guizhen, 1995:3) showing a side view of the organs of speech.

Diagram 1.1



- |                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. upper lip                    | (1) lower lip            |
| 2. upper teeth                  | (2) lower teeth          |
| 3. teeth-ridge                  | (3) blade of the tongue  |
| 4. hard palate                  | (4) front of the tongue  |
| 5. bordering part between 4 & 6 | (5) middle of the tongue |
| 6. soft palate                  | (6) back of the tongue   |
| 7. uvula                        | (7) root of the tongue   |
| 8. pharynx                      |                          |
| 9. epiglottis                   |                          |

Note: It's not necessary to command all the organs of speech. We should learn how to use the movable articulators — the lips, the tongue, the soft palate and the vocal cords.

## 2. Speech Sounds

The phonemes in English are divided into vowels and consonants. Vowels are sounds produced without obstruction of the air passage in the mouth but with the vibration of the vocal cords. There are 20 vowels in English, among which 12 are pure vowels and 8 are diphthongs. Consonants are sounds produced with a complete or partial obstruction which prevents the air from going freely through the mouth. They are either voiced or voiceless. There are 24 consonants in English.

Try the following methods to make your speech sounds accurate and pleasant.

- **Reading minimal pairs.** The first step to master good English pronunciation is to pronounce the 44 phonemes correctly. To achieve this, an effective way is to practice the reading of minimal pairs. A minimal pair refers to a pair of words with only one sound different, for example, eat/it, men/man, feed/feet are minimal pairs.
- **Make a list of frequently used words that are difficult for you to pronounce and ask a native speaker to pronounce them for you.** Record these words, listen to them and practice saying them.
- **Practice pronouncing the ending of each word.** Pay special attention to “s” and “ed” endings.
- **Buy books on tapes.** Listen and read at the same time. Record yourself reading some sections of the book. Compare the sound of your English with that of the speaker from the book on the tape.
- **Use your dictionary.** Become familiar with the phonetic symbols of your dictionary and look up the correct pronunciation of words that are hard for you to pronounce.

## Word Stress and Sentence Stress

Not all languages have **word stress**. Some languages do and some don't. Word stress is very important in English. If you have a word stress problem, you will have problems understanding native speakers and the native speakers will find it hard to understand you. In the English language we can classify English words into three types according to the syllable(s) a word may contain. They

are: monosyllables, disyllables and polysyllables. In every English word of two or more syllables at least one syllable should be articulated with more force or loudness than the rest, we call this word stress. Every English word has a definite place for the stress and we are not allowed to change it. If we stress the wrong syllable, it spoils the shape of the word for an English hearer, and he/she may have difficulty in recognizing the word.

In natural connected speech, for various reasons, some words are stressed while others are not. The stress in a sentence is called **sentence stress**. Sentence stress is the music of spoken English. Like word stress, sentence stress can help you to understand spoken English when spoken fast. Many Chinese EFL learners transfer their way of speaking Chinese into English and always try to pronounce every English word separately. Pronouncing every word separately, however, leads to poor and unnatural pronunciation.

Now try this short exercise. Say this sentence aloud and count how many seconds it takes.

*The beautiful Mountain appeared transfixed in the distance.*

Time required? Probably about 5 seconds. Now, try speaking this sentence aloud.

*He can come on Sundays as long as he doesn't have to do any homework in the evening.*

Time required? Probably about 5 seconds.

But you might argue that the first sentence is much shorter than the second one. Even though the second sentence is approximately 30% longer than the first, the sentences take the same time to speak. This is because there are 5 stressed words in each sentence. From this example, you can see that you needn't worry about pronouncing every word clearly to be understood (native speakers certainly don't). You should however, concentrate on pronouncing the stressed words clearly.

In normal speech, we put stress on words that are important in meaning. These words are called **content words**, such as nouns, adjectives, adverbs, demonstrative and emphatic pronouns, interrogative words and interjections. **Structural words** are small simple words that make the sentence correct grammatically. They give the sentence its correct form or structure. These are articles, monosyllabic propositions, monosyllabic conjunctions, personal

pronouns, possessive pronouns, reciprocal pronouns, reflective and relative pronouns, auxiliary and modal verbs and verb “be”. It is important to note that structural words are usually unstressed.

You can gradually learn to hit the right note if you keep on

- **Listening for stressed words.** Do some listening comprehension or speak to your native English speaking friends and listen to how we concentrate on the stressed words rather than giving importance to each syllable. You will soon find that you can understand and communicate a lot better because you begin to listen for (and use in speaking) stressed words. All those words that you thought you didn't understand are really not crucial for understanding the sense or making yourself understood. Stressed words are key to excellent pronunciation and understanding of English.
- **Correcting yourself.** You must try to practice English rhythm and intonation. You can do this by learning to “listen” all over again. Are you hitting the correct syllable stress in words? Are you getting the right rhythm? You compare what you are saying to a model (your instructor or taped voice). You judge whether or not you are on target. If not, you adjust and try again. You can correct yourself.

## Intonation

---

Intonation creates the melody of the language we speak. Our voices rise and fall in tones like notes in a musical scale, from high to low or low to high. Rising and falling tones are the two basic intonation patterns in English. Sometimes, they go together and make rise-fall tones or fall-rise tones. The different notes we produce are called pitches. This upward and downward movement of the voice produces the melody. Different pitches may indicate different meanings for the same utterance. Different pitches help us express our feelings: happiness, sadness, curiosity, surprise, annoyance, anger and so on. Intonation makes speech meaningful.

Chinese students often find learning English intonation challenging. Part of the reason is that Chinese is a syllabic language, while English is a stressed one, and Chinese learners of English often transfer the rhythm of their mother tongue into English. If you do not learn the stress and intonation patterns of English, no

matter how well you articulate the individual sounds of the language, you will still not be easily understood. Neither will you easily understand what is said.

Here are three tips on acquiring better intonation:

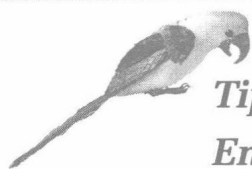
- **Observe the mouth movements of native speakers and try to imitate them.** When you are watching English TV programmes, look at the mouth movements of the speakers. Repeat what they are saying, imitating the intonation and rhythm of their speech.
- **Slow down your speech until you learn the correct intonation and rhythm of English.** If you speak too quickly with the wrong intonation and rhythm, native speakers will have a hard time understanding you. Don't worry about your listener getting impatient with your slow speech—it is more important that everything you say be understood.
- **Listen to the “music” of English.** Don't use the music of your native language when you are speaking English. Each language has its own way of “singing”.

## Summary

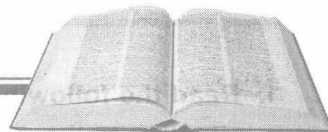
For second language learners it is very important to pronounce in a way that can make him or her understood to the others because the purpose of language is for communication. Don't be intimidated by your problems in pronunciation and intonation. Poor pronunciation and intonation can be improved. If you practice more and listen to authentic listening material often, it is quite likely that you can get the stress and rhythm right. The efficient ways to develop good pronunciation are careful imitation and frequent practice.

You can change the way you speak but it won't happen overnight. People often expect instant results and give up too soon. You can change the way you sound if you are willing to put some effort into it.





## *Tips for Learning Good English Pronunciation*



- Learn to perceive the differences between the sounds in English and concentrate on some of the difficult sounds.
- Pay special attention to the training of rhythmic patterns and proper intonation.
- Do not be reluctant to speak because of your “foreign accent”.
- In the beginning, you might find it helpful to place the palms of your hands over your ears and then listen to yourself.
- Listen carefully and attentively to native talk via tapes, radios and televisions, etc. Try to catch the stresses, stress patterns, tones and phonemes.
- Make every effort to imitate. Imitation is the best and soundest way in learning pronunciation. You can read aloud something that you’ve just heard, record it, and then compare your reading with the original one. Listen to the recording, and see if you are getting very close. If not, go on with your practice until you are quite satisfied with your imitation.
- Acquire adequate knowledge of phonetic theory. Theory and practice should always go hand in hand.
- Read tongue twisters to improve fluency and read poems to practice rhythmic patterns.
- Practice reading aloud every day. This will help you strengthen the mouth muscles that you use when you speak English. Research has shown that it takes about three months of daily practice to develop strong mouth muscles for speaking a new language.

## SKILL BUILDER EXERCISES

### I. Read the following words with correct pronunciation, paying special attention to the pronunciation of the vowels.

feel	cat	pier
fill	cot	pear
fell	cut	poor
fall	curt	banana
full	cart	
fool		
fail		
foal		
file		
foul		
foil		

### II. Read the following words with correct pronunciation, paying special attention to the pronunciation of the consonants.

pier	leer	base
beer	rear	baize
tier	mere	bathe
deer	near	beige
gear	weir	bake
fear	year	wrath
veer	cheer	wrong
sheer	jeer	
hear		

### III. Read aloud the following groups of words.

1. bead	bid	bed	bade
2. holes	those	does	foes
3. breathe	breeze	breath	brief
4. lice	nice	rice	lies
5. cart	cot	caught	cut