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英文學生叢書

Some Practical Helps to Pronunciation

英語讀音一助

✓ 謝大任編著

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Some Practical Helps to Pronunciation

BY

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To

MR. CHAO-HSU KWEI (桂紹盱先生),

My most sincere and faithful friend,

Through whose help and encouragement

The publication of this book has been made possible.

序

謝先生大任近出其所著英語讀音一助示予，且乞序焉。予綜觀書中載文若干篇，蓋均曾先後登載於中華書局出版之英文高級週報及江蘇省教育廳出版之江蘇學生者。當諸文揭載時，備受讀者之歡迎，先後函促謝君刊印單行本者，不下數十百起。良以諸文討論語音，注重實際之考訂，不尚浮泛之論議。讀者苟能循是以求，則於英語正確讀音之實地運用，思過半矣。吾知是書一出，國中之有志研究英語讀音者，當必有先覩爲快之感。人手一編，可預卜焉。予故自忘其譾陋，而樂爲之序。

胡適人識於省立蘇州中學

民國二十五年雙十節

PREFACE

Of all the foreign languages in the world, the English language, so far as ^{发音法} pronunciation is concerned, is the most difficult or rather the most puzzling one. As we know only too well, the same letter more often than not may have more sounds than one; for instance, the vowel "a" has as many as eight sounds or so. The difficulty that first comes in the way of a beginner is no doubt—the pronunciation. And what seems to me the most important thing for the student is—the pronunciation (of course I mean *correct* pronunciation). However, it is indeed a deplorable fact that correct pronunciation is something conspicuous by its absence in most Chinese schools. Even the "best" students in school, when they come to read something in English, would, first of all, give one the impression of incorrect pronunciation. Of course the teachers are somewhat responsible and to blame; for without fearing of bringing hornets' nest about my ears I dare say that most Chinese teachers of English neglect correct pronunciation themselves (but saving your reverence, sir)!

On the other hand, the lack of a suitable book on English pronunciation in China is also responsible for the bad pronunciation of the average Chinese student. Now Mr Zia has ingeniously supplied the need and

produced this wonderful book, which is among the few books on English pronunciation that I would strongly recommend to every student of the English language. Of all the good features in the book, "Stressed and Unstressed Syllables in English" is the most prominent. But "One Thousand Common Words Often Mispronounced by Chinese Students" is worth a world of books on English pronunciation and a study of it will do not only students but teachers good. It, therefore, claims the full attention of both.

C. S. Chosen Tsou (鄒朝濬)

National Holiday, 1936.

本書韋氏注音符號依據 Webster's
New International Dictionary 國際注音符
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Pronouncing Dictionary

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SOME PRACTICAL HELPS TO PRONUNCIATION

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCURATE PRONUNCIATION

“For two entirely contrary reasons,” says Harold E. Palmer, one of the foremost phoneticians of today, “perhaps the majority of language students (and alas, also their teachers!) tend to belittle the importance of pronunciation. The first reason is that it is considered to be too difficult, and the second is that it is considered to be too easy!”

No matter how easy or difficult accurate pronunciation may be, its importance within the last forty years has been gradually recognized by all educators. In order to have accurate pronunciation students of English or of any language should have a thorough and accurate knowledge of the fundamental sounds of the language. They must be taught to listen, to analyze, and to reproduce; they must learn to control their speaking mechanics, in such a manner that they may become able to make their organs of speech assume and retain certain definite positions at will. The sounds must be practised vigorously and

energetically; there must be no slurring allowed, and no apathetic attempts to get somewhere near the sounds.

Accurate pronunciation, I think, gives us at least four advantages. Let me enumerate them as follows:

1. *Accurate pronunciation makes us understand each other fully and readily.* The Chinese proverb says, "The discrepancy of a single hair will lead to an error of one thousand *li*." If we say "bald" for "bold," "lice" for "rice," "pepper" for "paper," "light" for "right," "load" for "road" and so on, then how can we make others understand what we mean or make ourselves understand what others say? To understand easily and instantly is more desirable than to understand with delay and difficulty.

2. *Accurate pronunciation makes us bold to read and bold to speak.* Many students are shy when they are spoken to, or when they speak or read something before others, because they are not sure whether their pronunciation is correct or not. They will be bold to speak and read when they have formed good pronunciation habits. Good pronunciation habits will quicken our learning and cultivate our memory.

3. *Accurate pronunciation will enhance our literary and aesthetic appreciation of what we read.*

A secure grasp of the sounds of a language is a great strengthening of the mastery of its forms and meanings. A minute discrimination of similar sounds is the surest safeguard against inevitable confusions. Only through accurate pronunciation can we appreciate the beauty of poetry, the emotion of an oration, the feeling of a dialogue, and so on.

4. *Accurate pronunciation is one of the qualifications of a good teacher of English.* Palmer says, "The teacher of a foreign language is the doctor of his pupil's pronunciation system; it is for him to diagnose, to treat and (with good technique and good luck) to effect a cure." We cannot expect students to attain even a fifty per cent accuracy when their teacher's pronunciation is of less than fifty per cent accuracy. The teacher is responsible for their future pronunciation habits. To my mind, a teacher of a language is of necessity a teacher of phonetics. I mean that teachers need to specialize in phonetics, though not in the sense nor to the extent of specialists. In a word, a teacher of English who does not understand phonetics and does not pronounce correctly is not qualified to be a teacher of the language he is teaching.

CAUSES OF MISPRONUNCIATION

“By ignorance we mistake; by mistake we learn.” To learn English is not an exception to this proverb. Now let us find some causes of mispronunciation from which, I hope, we may learn to improve our pronunciation.

1. *Pronunciation of words that we have never heard correctly pronounced.* We always pronounce a word in a certain way because all pronounce it so. For instance, we seldom hear the following words pronounced correctly:—housewife (hŭz'if),* comfort (kŭm'fĕrt), compass (kŭm'pās), forehead (fŏr'ĕd), stomach (stŭm'ŭk), question (kwĕs'chŭn), etc.

2. *Pronunciation of new words by guess.* For instance, from “pin” (pĭn) we pronounce p-i-n-t as pĭnt; from “break” (brāk) and “fast” (fāst) we pronounce b-r-e-a-k-f-a-s-t as brāk'fāst'; from “vine” (vīn) and “yard” (yārd) we pronounce v-i-n-e-y-a-r-d as vīn'yārd'; from “south” (south) we pronounce s-o-u-t-h-e-r-n as south'ĕrn; and so on. The correct pronunciations of the above-mentioned words are pĭnt, brĕk'fāst, vīn'yārd and sŭth'ĕrn.

3. *Words wrongly pronounced under the influence of local dialect.* Some natives of Shanghai pronounce “wine” as “vine” or vice versa; many

* housewife (hzŭ'if) 針箱; (hous'wif) 主婦.

Cantonese pronounce "China" as tsīn'ā; many natives of Ihing (宜興) pronounce the letter c as sh; and so forth.

4. *Wrong accent or syllabification.* Students often put the accent on the wrong accents in the following words:—character, excellent, admirable, terrible, comparable, permanent, etc. All these are accented on the first syllable. To illustrate the irregularities of accents let me give the following examples:—

Words of two syllables

Accent on the first syllable—answer (àn'sēr)

Accent on the second syllable—reply (rě-plī')

Words of three syllables

Accent on the first syllable—character (kār'āk-tēr)

Accent on the second syllable—abdomen (āb-dō'mě'n)

Accent on the third syllable—employee (ěm-ploi-ē')

Words of four syllables

Accent on the first syllable—melancholy (měl'ăn-kōl-ī)

Accent on the second syllable—telegraphy (tē-lěg'rā-fī)

Accent on the third syllable—mausoleum (mô-sō-lē'ŭm)

Accent on the fourth syllable—avoirdupois (āv'-ěr-dŭ-poiz')

Words of five syllables

Accent on the first syllable—circulatory (sâr'kû-lâ-tö-rĭ)

Accent on the second syllable—preparatory (prĕ-pär'â-tö-rĭ)

Accent on the third syllable—spontaneity (spŏn-tâ-nĕ'ĭ-tĭ)

Accent on the fourth syllable—apotheosis (â-pŏth'-ĕ-ō'sĭs)

5. *Confusion arising from the defects of spelling.* The spelling of English words is unscientific and untrustworthy as a guide to pronunciation; and so it is an obstacle to students of English. Not every letter stands for one sound nor every sound is represented by one letter. The same letter may have different sounds, for example:

ough—enough (ĕ-nŭf'), bough (bou), thought (thôt), cough (kŏf), lough (lŏk), through (thrŏō), hiccough (hĭk'ŭp), thorough (thŭr'ŏ)

Different letters may have the same sound. For example: ai—aisle (ĭl); ay(e)—(ĭ); ei—height (hĭt); ey—eyas (ĭ'ās); eye—eye (ĭ); i—bind (bĭnd); ie—lie (lĭ); io—pious (pĭ'ŭs); oi—choir (kwĭr); ui—guide (gĭd); uy—buy (bĭ); y—fly (flĭ); ye—bye (bĭ).

There is another confusion arising from the silent letters. For instance, b, c, ch, d, h, l, m, w,

ue are silent in the following respective words:—climb (klīm), muscle (mŭs' l), drachm (drăm), handkerchief (hăŋ'kēr-chīf), shepherd (shĕp'ĕrd), chalk (chôk), autumn (ô'tŭm), who (hōō), catalogue (kăt'â-lŏg).

So we must banish from our minds any idea that pronunciation follows spelling.

6. *Lack of precision in tone quality.* The causes are two in number. The first cause is the inability to adjust certain muscles of the vocal organs in such a way as to produce accurately a given sound or group of sounds. Take ng, th, th, r, and zh for instance. These are the sounds which most Chinese students of English neglect. The second cause is the lack of proper training. These defects make one's pronunciation slovenly, vulgar, and indistinct.

7. *Superfluous or needless sounds.* We sometimes pronounce "little" as lit'ŭl'; "eagle," ĕg'ŭl'; "couldn't," cōld'ĕnt; "page," pā'jĕ; "should," shōld; and so on. The r, being but an obscure vowel-murmur, should not be pronounced with a strong trilled "throat r" when we pronounce "first," "arm," "form," etc.

8. *Lack of willingness.* Sometimes we are too proud or too afraid or too shy to pronounce those words we have studied. We do not lack knowledge or skill, but we mispronounce them.

It is not that we cannot pronounce correctly but only that we do not try.

9. *Lack of practice.* When we have learned the correct pronunciation of some words, we are apt to forget it soon, because we have not yet practised them often enough. Practice makes perfect.

10. *Lack of a guide.* It is often hard to find a teacher or a friend who has correct pronunciation to teach us. We may not know where to find models for us to imitate. In a word, we can hardly get a trust-worthy guide to lead us on the way to correct pronunciation.

SOME METHODS OF STUDYING ENGLISH PHONETICS

Phonetics is the science of speech-sounds, the art of pronunciation. It deals with the gymnastics of the organs of speech, both in theory and in practice. It is to language what mathematics is to physical sciences.

English, like all the other living languages, changes from generation to generation. The vulgar pronunciation in one century may become fashionable in the next. New distinctions may be made and new sounds may arise. There is no better way to have good pronunciation than to study phonetics. How to study it? To answer this question let us discuss some practical methods of studying it.

First, we should know the actions of the organs of speech by which sounds are produced and describe and classify them according to their likeness to the ear. For instance, to pronounce *r* we may notice that the tongue is slightly drawn back from the teeth and lies loosely in the middle of the mouth and in this position the tip of the tongue interferes with the current of sound. As for classification we may notice that *p, b; t, d; k,* *g* are explosive, *m, n, ng* nasal, and so on.