

Over to you

Roy Boardman



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Oral/aural skills
for advanced students of English

Roy Boardman

with drawings by Peter Kneebone

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To the student

The aim of this book is to help you to become an active participant in conversation and discussion in English. At the stage you have reached, you probably feel that you have quite a sound knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary, and you are probably beginning to take part in classroom and real life conversation with a certain amount of ease. However, you might have difficulties of the following kinds.

- a) There are features of English speech, and characteristics of the kind of interaction that goes on between English speakers, which make it difficult for you to interpret what lies behind the words. The problem for you is not just one of understanding, but of how and when to participate in the conversation. Have you ever spent an evening with a group of English speakers, had a general understanding of what was said, but been left with the sensation that there was more to it and that really you were able to say little that was directly related to the real topic of conversation?
- b) Everything that is spoken in a language has a special function to fulfil: the speaker may give or request information, offer advice, prohibit, express an opinion, etc. Although you have a good knowledge of the grammatical forms of English, you may find it difficult to use a wide range of appropriate communicative functions.
- c) Foreign students of English generally have difficulty with the subtleties of stress and intonation patterns because these are more directly related to the communicative functions mentioned above than to grammatical forms; but as you have not had systematic practice in using the functions, this relationship has never been made clear to you.
- d) At this stage of language learning you are probably rapidly building up your vocabulary and reading in English on a wide range of topics. There is a danger that you will ignore the necessity to use this new knowledge orally in appropriate contexts.

This book is organised to help you overcome these difficulties. It consists of twenty units, each based on a topic providing the general *subject* content of the unit.

1 Listening

Both the subject content and the *linguistic* content of the unit are first presented in a dialogue which you will listen to several times, at first without seeing the printed text.

2 Comprehension A: Speech features

Your attention will be directed to one particular speech feature which often causes students of English listening and interpretation problems; for example, in unit 2 Comprehension A gives you practice in interpreting *incomplete sentences*.

Comprehension B: Content

Comprehension B, on the other hand, is intended to help you to achieve a global understanding of the dialogue and to remember those parts of the content that will be useful to you in working through the rest of the unit.

3 Communication drill

The next step draws your attention to another aspect of the introductory dialogue: various ways in which a particular communicative function can be realised. Unit 2, for example, shows you different ways of *expressing surprise and incredulity*. You are first asked to listen to and repeat the examples – intonation is very important here – and then to practise their use working with other students in pairs and groups. You have almost certainly worked through many drills while learning English and many of them will have been rather mechanical and divorced from real use of the language. The communication drills in this book do not pretend to involve you in ‘real’ communication situations, but they do claim to help you to more effective use of spoken English. To achieve this aim, they encourage you to *make choices as to what you say*, and to think about the *appropriateness of how you say it*.

4 Role-playing

The drills lead to oral practice in a wider context. You will be asked to pretend to be someone else, to play a role, and to imagine that you are in a situation which will give you an opportunity to try out what you have practised.

5 Talk

Finally, you will return to being yourself and be invited to talk about some aspect of the topic, first by looking at a photograph and then by exchanging personal experiences, points of view, and reactions to a printed text.

You will see that this five-part plan is intended to give you as much practice as possible in listening carefully and in *using* what you have heard in your own attempts at oral communication. You are also encouraged to think carefully about your own and other people’s use of English. Some of the techniques used might be unfamiliar to you, such as practice in pairs and groups and role-playing. These techniques have been adopted because they are the best ways of giving you as much talking time as possible. Of course, while you work with other students you will often need to ask your teacher for help; you will want to feel sure that what you say and the way you say it is appropriate to the context. This will happen during the communication drills, in which there is often a role-playing element, and during the role-playing exercises. However, don’t be held up by fear of making mistakes; if you don’t try things out you can’t possibly know what is correct or appropriate. Your teacher will give you as much feedback as possible – but usually *after* you have practised.

There is a great deal of material in the book for you to work with. It is hoped that you will find it varied, interesting and amusing. Don’t expect either the book, or your teacher, to *tell* you everything – the main thing is that it gives you many opportunities to use English. That is why it is called *Over to you*.

1 Coincidences

1 Listening

Jimmy: Hullo... Braintree 1854.

Mike: Jimmy? This is Mike.

Jimmy: Ah... hullo Mike. Did you get home all right last night? We had a few.

Mike: We certainly had. Look Jimmy... about that article you've got to write.

Jimmy: 'Coincidences'? I'm working at it now. Getting down on paper those anecdotes... you know... the ones you told me.

Mike: Good... Look... there's another I forgot to tell you about (Huh-huh) from a letter published... er... in *The Sunday Times*. (Oh?) I cut it out when... when I read it... but can't find the cutting. (Ah) Anyway... I remember it perfectly.

Jimmy: Well... can you give me the date... of the paper I mean?

Mike: Mm... 'fraid not. I didn't take a note of it.

Jimmy: Pity. Wait a bit... while I get paper and pencil. Perhaps... er... perhaps you'd tell me all about it. My publishers can check the details...

Mike: Right.

Pause

Jimmy: Right you are. Fire away.

Mike: Try to get all the details right... They're important.

Jimmy: Right you are.

Mike: The letter was from a policeman... a constable in the Metropolitan Police if I remember rightly.

Jimmy: Wait a tick. Did you say the *Metropolitan* police?

Mike: That's right. He was stationed somewhere in the suburbs and... er... well at a certain point the phone number of the police station was altered.

Jimmy: Where did you say he was stationed?

Mike: I didn't. I remember only that it was in the suburbs.

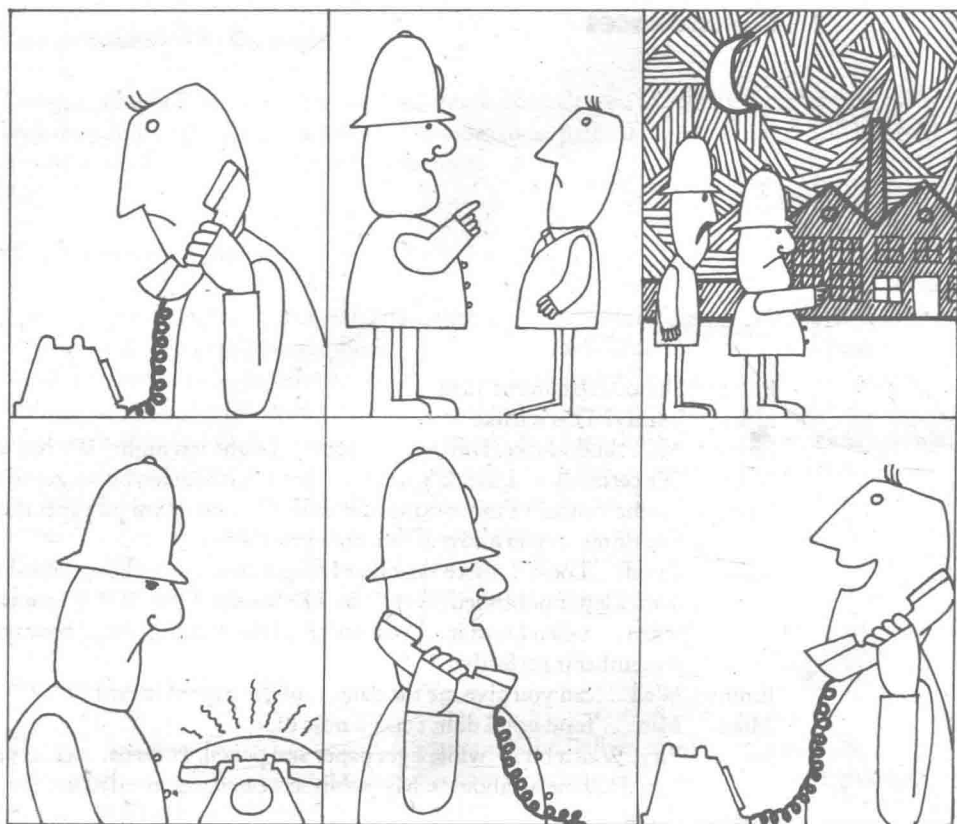
Jimmy: Right.

Mike: The day after the alteration a friend told him he'd tried to phone him at the police station that morning, but got the 'number unobtainable' sound. (Yeah) Well the constable explained why and gave him the changed number. His friend wrote it down and said he'd phone. But... erm... er... next day the constable noticed he'd given him... oh he'd given his friend the wrong number... (Yeah) The correct number was... erm... 40166... or something.

Jimmy: What was the correct number did you say?

Mike: 40166... I think.

Jimmy: What was the wrong number he gave?



Mike: Something like...er...40116.

Jimmy: I've got that...go on will you.

Mike: Well...er...erm...his friend wasn't on the phone...and he lived some distance away...so he could do nothing about it you see. (Yeah) Not long after...the constable was on...er...on night duty. He was patrolling with a colleague when they saw...they noticed that the front door of a factory was open.

Jimmy: Open?

Mike: Mm...the door was unlocked and there was a light on in the manager's office. (Huh-huh) Er...of course they were suspicious...(Yeah) and they went into the premises to see what was up. Th...That's when the incredible happened.

Jimmy: Huh-huh?

Mike: When they got into the manager's office...the phone started to ring.

Jimmy: Ah...I begin to see where the coincidence comes in.

Mike: Wait for it. The constable lifted the receiver and asked the caller what number he was calling. Believe it or not...the constable's friend...the one he met...asked to speak to *him*. He...He was pretty mystified...as you can imagine...so he looked at the dial on the set...but there was no number shown.

Jimmy: That's unusual surely. What's the explanation?

Mike: He learned from the manager that it was his private phone... with an ex-directory number.

Jimmy: I see... And the number was... er... What was it?... 401...

Mike: 40116... the same as the wrong number he'd given his friend.

Jimmy: That's incredible Mike.

Mike: Did you get it all down?

Jimmy: Yeah... I think so... yeah. Ah thanks Mike. When are you coming over for another session? You and Kathy free tonight?

Mike: You get that article finished Jimmy. When's it to go to press?

Jimmy: End of the week. What about dinner Saturday?

Mike: That's fine for us. See you then.

Jimmy: Let's say round about eight then. O.K? 'Bye. And thanks again.

Mike: All the best.

1.2 Comprehension A: Differences between spoken and written English

Spoken and written English are very different. The following sentences report some of the things that Jimmy and Mike say in their telephone conversation. As you listen to the conversation again, match each written report with its spoken equivalent.

- a) Jimmy wonders whether Mike managed to get home the night before because they were both rather drunk when Mike left.
- b) Mike says that although he cannot find a letter that he cut out of the newspaper, he remembers its contents.
- c) Jimmy asks for the date, not of the letter, but of the issue of *The Sunday Times* in which it appeared.
- d) Jimmy asks Mike to wait while he gets some paper and a pencil.
- e) Jimmy asks Mike to begin.
- f) Mike advises Jimmy to make sure the details are correct.
- g) Mike thinks the policeman who wrote the letter was a constable in the Metropolitan Police.
- h) Jimmy interrupts Mike to ask him if he used the word 'Metropolitan'.
- i) Mike points out that he did not mention exactly where the policeman was stationed, only that it was in the suburbs.
- j) Jimmy asks Mike to repeat the correct number of the police station.
- k) Mike is not sure of the wrong number that the policeman gave his friend.
- l) Jimmy says that he has taken a note of the number the policeman gave his friend.
- m) Jimmy expresses surprise about the factory door being open.
- n) Jimmy invites Mike to tell him about the unbelievable incident.
- o) Mike asks Jimmy not to be impatient.
- p) Mike makes it clear that the person the policeman's friend wished to speak to was the policeman himself.
- q) Jimmy tries to remember the wrong number that the policeman gave his friend.
- r) Jimmy expresses his appreciation of the anecdote.
- s) Jimmy asks whether Mike and his wife can go to visit them this evening.
- t) Mike accepts the invitation to dinner.
- u) Jimmy suggests they meet at about eight o'clock.
- v) Mike gives Jimmy his best wishes.

Comprehension B

Select from the three alternatives the best completion of each sentence. Then check your answers against the letter written by the policeman (appendix 1.2B).

- a) The letter was
 - 1 from a friend of Mike's
 - 2 published in a newspaper
 - 3 received by a friend of Mike's.
- b) The policeman worked
 - 1 in the centre of town
 - 2 in a suburban district
 - 3 in the country.
- c) The number of the police station was
 - 1 changed
 - 2 ex-directory
 - 3 difficult to remember.
- d) The policeman's friend got the 'number unobtainable' sound because
 - 1 he had dialled the wrong number
 - 2 the telephone was out of order
 - 3 he did not know that the number had been altered.
- e) The policeman gave his friend
 - 1 the wrong number
 - 2 the old number
 - 3 the right number.
- f) One night the policeman and his colleague noticed that
 - 1 the factory door was not locked
 - 2 the factory door was ajar
 - 3 the factory door had been forced open.
- g) They went to the manager's office because
 - 1 the telephone was ringing
 - 2 they thought they would find the manager there
 - 3 the light was on.
- h) When the constable answered the phone
 - 1 the caller asked to speak to him
 - 2 the caller asked for the correct number of the police station
 - 3 the caller asked to speak to the factory manager.
- i) The number was not shown on the set because
 - 1 it had recently been changed
 - 2 it was an ex-directory number
 - 3 numbers are not shown on English telephones.
- j) The constable's friend
 - 1 thought he was ringing the police station
 - 2 knew the constable was on night duty
 - 3 had rung the police station's old number again.

1.3 Communication drill: Requests for further information and for repetition of information

Phase 1

Listen carefully to the different intonation patterns of Jimmy's questions and repeat them. Notice that his first question is a request for *repetition of information* already given, while the second is a request for *further information*.

Mike: The correct number was 40166 or something.

Jimmy: *What* was the correct number did you say?

Mike: 40166... I think.

Jimmy: What was the *wrong* number he gave?

Mike: Something like 40116.

Phase 2

Now make this distinction in asking the WH-questions in the following dialogues. Rising intonation is shown by ↑, falling intonation by ↓. The word carrying the main stress of each question is in italics. Work in pairs with one student playing the policeman and provide appropriate answers to the questions whenever possible.

a) Constable: I'm a constable in the Metropolitan Police.

Questioner: *What* did you say your job was? ↑

Constable:

b) Constable: In 1967 I was stationed at a suburban station.

Questioner: *What* was the year you mentioned? ↑

Constable:

c) Constable: I was stationed in the suburbs.

Questioner: Where *was* it exactly? ↓

Constable:

d) Constable: The day after the alteration I met a friend.

Questioner: Who *was* he? ↓

Constable:

e) Constable: When my friend phoned me he got the 'number unobtainable' sound.

Questioner: *Why* couldn't he get through? ↑

Constable:

f) Constable: At the time I thought the station's changed number was 40166.

Questioner: Why do you say '*I thought*'? ↓

Constable:

g) Constable: I noticed I'd given my friend a wrong number.

Questioner: How did you go about putting *that* right? ↓

Constable:

- h) Constable: I was on night duty, patrolling an industrial estate.
 Questioner: Who was *with* you? ↓
 Constable:
- i) Constable: We saw a front door open and a light on, so we went in.
 Questioner: *Why* did you go in? ↑
 Constable:
- j) Constable: I learned from the manager that his telephone had an ex-directory number.
 Questioner: *How* did you find out? ↑
 Constable:

Phase 3

Work in groups of four or five, each with a group leader.

Group leader: Play the part of the policeman and tell (not read!) the story of the coincidence.

Others: Interrupt the policeman's account with WH-questions of the two types practised.

1.4 Role-playing

Work in pairs.

a) Preparation

Student A: Read the letter by George Feifer in the appendix (1.4).

Student B: Study the text of the telephone conversation between Jimmy and Mike, paying special attention to what Jimmy says.

b) Student A: Offer information about Feifer's anecdote, taking the part of Mike.

Student B: Interrupt the anecdote with requests for new information and repetitions of information, and for any other reason you wish.

1.5 Talk

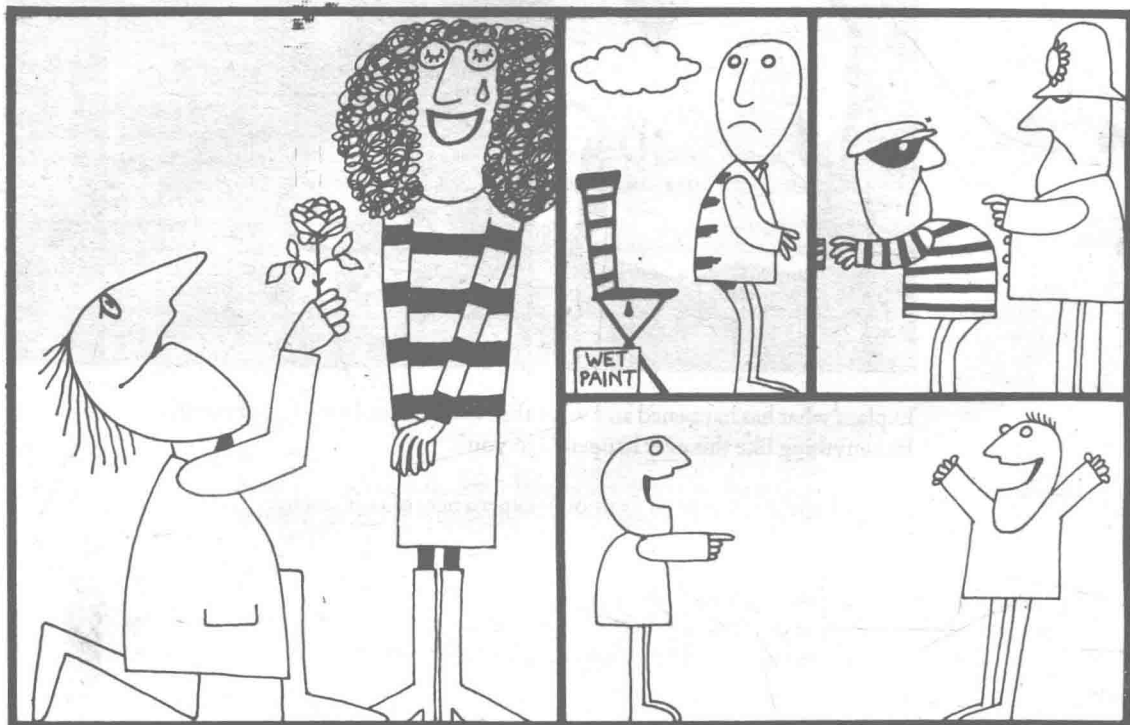
a)



Explain what has happened and what the two girls probably feel about it. Has anything like this ever happened to you?

b) Recount and comment on your own experiences of coincidence.

2 Surprises



2.1 Listening

A street in Naples.

Jack: Mi scusi.

Philip: Sì?

Jack: Mi sa dire... but... Philip! I can hardly believe it!

Philip: Jack... Jack Bradley! Well I'll be blown!

Jack: It must be all of... how many years?

Philip: Six... no... seven... Would you believe it! And here we are in Naples.
What a coincidence!

Jack: What you doing here? On holiday?

Philip: No... I work here now. Teacher... at the British Council. What about you?

Jack: Oh I'm on holiday. Staying on Capri.

Philip: So you're just over for the...

Jack: ...for the day... that's it. Came over on the boat this morning. It's an excursion. Everybody in the party came over... it's a package holiday... but... well you know these organised holidays... you know what they're like. Everybody doing everything together... all at the same time. You sometimes need to lose the others for a bit.

Philip: That *does* surprise me. *You* wanting to escape from the madding crowd. As I remember, you were always the life and soul of...

Jack: If that's how you'd care to put it. But getting away from the others at times... you know... never harmed anyone.

Philip: Look... let's have a drink. There's a bar just over there.

Jack: Right you are. Let's go.

Philip: Tell me... When you stopped me... not realising who I was... what were you going to ask?

Jack: I wanted to know... wanted to get to the National Museum.

Philip: Tell you what... we'll go together. Unless you still want to be alone.

Jack: Well to tell you the truth I'm not... No... of course not. We can have a chat about the old times.

Philip: And what's happened since.

They enter the bar.

I'll get these. What'll you have?

Jack: Mm... a cup of tea.

Philip: Only tea? Oh come on... have something stronger.

Jack: No... just tea. I'm off the hard stuff. Doctor's orders.

Philip: Really? You were never one to take notice... (To the cashier) Un tè e una birra per favore.

Jack: Times have changed... and how! And the old group have split up of course. Life always has so much... sort of... in store.

Philip: For example?

Jack: For example... Remember Sue and Joe?

Philip: How could I forget them?

Jack: Well when Joe eventually asked her to marry him... she turned him down.

Philip: Really? Fancy that!

Jack: Then... Bill Stamp...

Philip: Yeah...

Jack: He actually got that job he was hankering after... as art director.

Philip: You must be joking!

Jack: Hardly a joke... I'd applied for the same job.

Philip: And what about you Jack? What's the news with you?

Jack: Huh! No promotion... no nothing as far as money goes. Same old Jack... Life and soul of the party as you said... when there is a party. At other times... Well I don't want to depress you. Only one thing brightens up the scene...

Philip: Then there is...

Janet comes into the bar.

Jack: ...and here she is!

Philip: No... It can't be!

Jack: We were supposed to meet just where I met you. Janet'd gone off to...