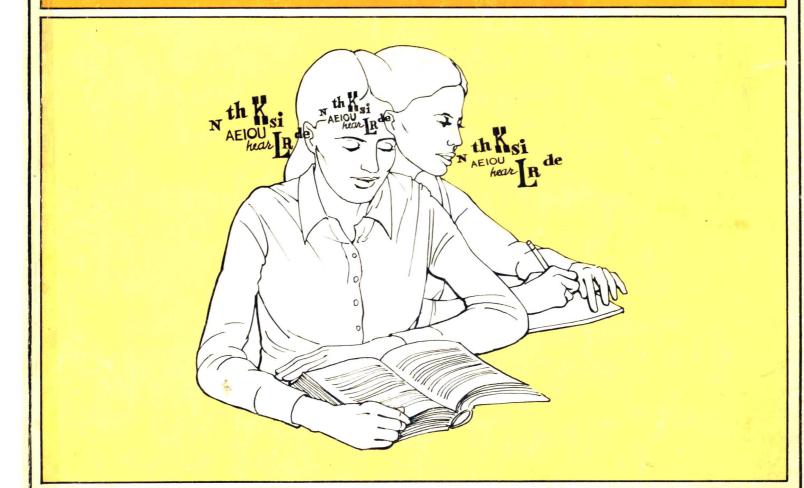
Improving Spoken English

An Intensive Personalized Program in Perception, Pronunciation, Practice in Context



Joan Morley

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Joan Morley

Preface

Improving Spoken English is a pronunciation program written for English as a second language (ESL) students and for their ESL teachers.

The Students

One of the primary concerns of *Improving Spoken English* is to involve students, consciously, in their own learning process as they work to improve their spoken English. Each part of each lesson focuses students' attention on *what* they are doing and *why* they are doing it. The intent is to help students to develop: (1) an awareness of and an interest in language learning, (2) a sense of personal responsibility for their own learning, and (3) a feeling of pride in their own accomplishments.

To meet the above goals, two kinds of material have been written—practice activities and explanations. Practice activities in listening and in speaking are directed toward the gradual development of an auditory base and a physical base for improving spoken English. The lessons present activities designed to guide students toward making use of auditory distinctions and articulatory patterns which are important for English pronunciation. Explanations are included to give students sufficient speech awareness to enable them to monitor and to control their pronunciation for increased intelligibility both during the instructional period and beyond.

Acoustic information, physiological information, and linguistic information have been expressed in straight-forward lay terminology. Explanations throughout are simplified for the sake of clarity.

The Teachers

Another primary objective of *Improving Spoken English* is to aid teachers in their role as facilitator of learning. To avoid a separate teachers' book, section notes and resource materials have been included in the students' workbook. These are directed toward assisting teachers in presenting the lessons easily and effectively.

To reach the above objective, two kinds of material have been written—methodological notes and informational notes. *Methodological notes* are included so that teachers do not have to guess at the intended use of lessons and parts of lessons. *Informational notes* provide a ready reference on points of English phonology. Resource pages provide materials for supplementary work. Footnotes include both methodological and informational material. Some of the information provided is rather detailed. The teacher can determine whether it is appropriate to discuss this material with students.

The explanatory material in *Improving Spoken English*, whether directed to students or to teachers, is intended not as an instructional end in itself, but as an aid to learning. The annotating is thorough, in order to provide ready access to additional material to aid in answering unexpected student questions or to give a student further production cues, when necessary. This has been done in the belief that it can be a convenience both to experienced teachers and to novices.

The Program

Improving Spoken English is subtitled An Intensive Personalized Program in Perception, Pronunciation, Practice in Context. Each word in the subtitle has been chosen to reflect the content of the book. The content of the book, in turn, reflects basic assumptions about: (a) language and language learning, and (b) the cognitive and affective aspects of learner processes. Seven key concepts in the title are:

- 1. Improving. The lesson material is planned for adult and high school ESL students who already speak some English; it is not a book for absolute beginners. Lesson flexibility, however, permits use by high-beginning, intermediate, and low-advanced classes.
- 2. Intensive. The lesson activities are carefully focused and concentrated.

- 3. Personalized. Presenting a positive attitude, the lessons encourage personal involvement by providing students with ways and means (a) to take responsibility for their own work and (b) to take a personal pride in their many small accomplishments along the way toward improved spoken English; and with tools and techniques with which (a) to monitor others and themselves, (b) to modify their spoken English—in bits and pieces—toward an increasingly closer match with the model, and (c) to continue to improve their spoken English when they leave the formal classroom and language laboratory.
- 4. *Program*. The workbook presents carefully arranged sequences of basic material in two units—(1) stress, rhythm, and intonation, and (2) vowels—and additional sequences of supplementary lessons which provide a variety of options to meet individual student needs.
- 5. *Perception*. The program is designed to develop students' auditory sensitivity as a perceptual base for improving spoken English.
- 6. Pronunciation. The program is designed to develop students' oral-tactile and oral-kinesthetic sensitivity as a physical base for improving spoken English.
- 7. Practice in Context. Supplements A and B contain short exercises which provide interesting and meaningful practice opportunities beyond those presented in the fundamental perception and pronunciation work of Unit 1 and Unit 2.

The Purposes and the Presentation

Some ESL students do not seem to enjoy the pronunciation class. They look upon it as a pain not as a pleasure. No other language area seems to generate more self-deprecation on the one hand, or more denial of need for improvement on the other. Some students are shy and embarrassed and appear to be threatened by attention to their spoken English. Others use the world's oldest self-protection device, professing not to care (although sometimes admitting privately that they have a bad accent or terrible pronunciation). With these concerns in mind, the goals of *Improving Spoken English* are to help students to accomplish four things:

- 1. to increase their self-confidence in speaking English and in listening to English;
- 2. to increase their level of intelligibility in speaking English and their level of aural comprehension in listening to English;
- 3. to increase their fluency in speaking English;
- 4. to increase their accuracy in speaking English.

Improving Spoken English attempts to emphasize the positive in several ways. It looks upon improvement as a gradual process, not as an overnight phenomenon. It is concerned with gradual modification of pronunciation toward a closer match with the abstract notion of model pronunciation, rather than with good or bad, correct or incorrect. It presents relatively easy selections on the self-evaluative tests, and it encourages personal pride in small accomplishments.

Above all, *Improving Spoken English* promotes *self-monitoring* and self-comparison, not student-to-student comparisons. This is an important point to emphasize, for there always will be those students for whom pronunciation improvements come rapidly and easily and those for whom pronunciation improvements come slowly and with great difficulty.

The pronunciation lessons and the recordings of *Improving Spoken English* are based on General American English. A *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English*, by John S. Kenyon and Thomas A. Knott (Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1953), was used as a reference guide.

Some of the spelling information contained in Unit 2 was compiled using material presented in "English Orthography: Its Graphical Structure and Its Relation to Sound," by Richard L. Venezky (in Reading Research Quarterly 2, no. 3 [1976]); Annotated Spelling-to-Sound Correspondence Rules, by Bruce Cronnell (Southwest Regional Laboratory Technical Report, 32 [1971]); and Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondences as Cues to Spelling Improvement, by Paul R. Hanna, Jean S. Hanna, Richard E. Hodges, and Edwin H. Rudorf, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1966).

Medical anatomy references and direct observation were used to prepare the descriptions of articulatory positions and movements in *Improving Spoken English*. Facial diagrams in the text are based on cinefluorographic frames of the author filmed by the University of Michigan Television Center in the X-ray department of the University of Michigan Medical Center. Explanations and illustrations throughout are simplified and stylized for the sake of clarity.

The phonetic notations in *Improving Spoken English* employ forms of the International Phonetic Alphabet with the following adaptations.

- 1. The symbol /a/ is used, rather than /a/, for the first vowel sound in *father*.
- 2. The symbol /y/ is used, rather than /j/, for the first sound in yes.
- 3. The following have a second component added to the symbol as an aid to the learner of English as a second language.

```
/i<sup>y</sup>/ is used for /i/, as in see
/e<sup>i</sup>/ is used for /e/, as in say
/u<sup>w</sup>/ is used for /u/, as in two
/o<sup>u</sup>/ is used for /o/, as in no
```

4. The symbols /i/ and /u/, rather than /I/ and /u/, are used for the diphthongs in /ai/, /au/, and /ai/

For Teachers

Improving Spoken English is in student workbook form. It includes six segments.

- 1. Unit 1: Stress, Rhythm, and Intonation
- 2. Unit 2: Vowels
- 3. Supplement A: Practice in Context for Unit 1
- 4. Supplement B: Practice in Context for Unit 2
- 5. Supplement C: Vowel Contrasts for Unit 2
- 6. Answer Key/Teacher Script

Teachers may wish to use the lessons in consecutive order as they occur in the text. They may wish to complete Unit 1 before going on to Unit 2, using materials from the supplements wherever appropriate.

However, in an alternative format of usage, Units 1 and 2 (and their supplementary materials) may be used together. The text is planned so that the presentation of Unit 2 may be instituted as soon as the work in Unit 1 has progressed through section C (lessons 6 and 7). At that point, work on Unit 2 may be used in either an alternating or a simultaneous program of study. A simultaneous usage plan such as the following might be appropriate for high-beginning or intermediate classes.

Unit 1	Supplement A	Unit 2	Supplement B	Supplement C
Section A				
Section B		l.		
Section C	Section B	Section A		
Section D	Section C	Section B		Contrasts
Section E	Section D	Section C	Section B	Contrasts
Section F	Section E	Section D	Section C	Contrasts
Section G	Section F	Section E	Section D	Contrasts
		_Section F	Section E	Contrasts

The entire series of *Improving Spoken English* lessons is available on tape. The tapes for each basic unit (Units 1 and 2) are intended for teacher-controlled use in a pronunciation laboratory class or in a regular pronunciation class setting. They are *not* intended for individual student self-help use *except* as a follow-up after teacher/class presentation. The tapes for the supplementary lessons in Supplements A, B, and C may be used in a pronunciation laboratory class *or* as individual student self-help use, at the discretion of the teacher.

If the taped lessons are not available, the lessons may be presented live by the teacher, using the appended Answer Key/Teacher Script (AK/TS).

Unit 1

The twenty lessons in Unit 1 have been designed to provide ESL students with a systematic and sequential introduction to selected features of English stress, rhythm, and intonation, and to include first steps toward improvement of these features in spoken English. Attention to prosodic elements is presented at the beginning of *Improving Spoken English* for one primary purpose. It is judged to be of fundamental importance to build a base of experience with some of the synthesizing aspects of the prosodic structure of spoken English at the outset, before work with individual sound segments is taken up in order to:

- 1. orient students to the dynamic nature of "pronunciation"—speech as a moving process, not a series of isolated postures; prepare them for immediate participation in contextual practice (Supplement A presents samples) and communicative speech activities (which can be provided only within the milieu of each unique classroom situation);
- 2. allow the individual sound segments (in Unit 2) to be presented and practiced within a natural prosodic environment which already is familiar to students; permit study of the changes which

- take place within the rhythmic patterns of connected speech and the ways sounds influence the sounds around them:
- 3. permit the twenty-four vowel lessons in Unit 2 to serve as additional practice opportunities for reinforcement of the features of stress, rhythm, and intonation studied in Unit 1.

It is important to note here, that students are not expected to master these features of stress, rhythm, and intonation in a few short lessons. The lessons in Unit 1 are intended to begin a gradual process of improvement with review and reinforcement throughout the remainder of the program.

The graphic notations used in the text of Unit 1 do not come from one source. They are symbols which have been adapted from a number of sources and modified over an extended period of experimental use with ESL students. They are a combination of concrete notational forms which has been found to be successful in enhancing students' understanding of some of the most abstract phenomena of spoken English.

Unit 1 has seven sections. Each section begins with section notes.

Section A presents two introductory lessons to English stress, rhythm, and intonation, and introduces chart 1, Key Sentences for Stress, Rhythm, and Intonation.

Sections B, C, D, E, and F present fourteen intensive lessons including special test sentences for self-monitoring and self-testing. (See page 8 of Unit 1 for notes on using the intensive lessons.)

Section G presents four rapid-review-and-testing lessons.

Unit 2

The twenty-four lessons in Unit 2 have been designed to provide ESL students with a systematic introduction to the fifteen vowel sounds of General American English and to include first steps toward improving these sounds in spoken English.

Unit 2 is constructed with a whole/parts orientation. The introductory lesson builds on knowledge which most ESL students have already—knowledge of a five-sound vowel system of /i, /e, /a, /o, /u. The additional ten vowels of English then are mapped onto the vowel chart relative to these five. Each vowel is assigned a *key word* as a mnemonic aid to the study of the vowel system and as a device later for self-monitoring. The fifteen key words combine into seven short phrases. Students are urged to practice these key words concentrating on memorizing each one—the "sound" of it and the "feel" of it. This is described fully on pages 123 and 125.

Working from the whole system, where each sound is an integral part of a total pattern, each vowel then is singled out from the others for its own intensive perception, pronunciation, and sound/spelling study. The five vowels /i/, /e/, /a/, /o/, and /u/ may seem too easy for students, inasmuch as students already "have" these vowels. In fact, what students "have" is a pronunciation of these sounds which is unique to their first languages, and in many cases it is more difficult for students to modify these five "old" sounds to their uniquely American English pronunciation, than it is to learn sounds which are "new" to them. Page 118 summarizes some possible sources of ESL pronunciation interference/learning problems.

The intensive work with a particular vowel sound can be followed up whenever necessary by contrastive work with two vowels of the system. Supplement C presents pronunciation and perception work with selected vowel contrasts.

As in Unit 1, it is important to note here that students are not expected to master each and every vowel in a few short lessons. The lessons in Unit 2 are intended to begin a gradual process of improvement with review and reinforcement throughout the remainder of the program.

Unit 2 has six sections. Each section begins with section notes.

Section A presents two introductory lessons on the English vowel system and introduces the Vowel Chart and the key words.

Sections B, C, D, and E present nineteen intensive lessons and tests. (See page 126 of Unit 2 for notes on using the intensive lessons.)

Section F presents three rapid-review-and-testing lessons.

For Students

The Purpose of the Lessons

The only way ESL students can improve their pronunciation of spoken English is to spend many hours listening to English and many hours speaking English. However, a directed program of speaking and listening can shorten the time. The workbook lessons, the tapes, and the explanations in *Improving Spoken English* provide the first part of such a program.

It is the purpose of this workbook to provide carefully planned speaking and listening lessons to help students to accomplish four things:

- 1. to increase self-confidence in speaking English and in listening to English;
- 2. to increase intelligibility in speaking English and in listening to English;
- 3. to increase fluency in speaking English;
- 4. to increase accuracy in speaking English.

This series of lessons in speaking and listening is intended for use by adults and teenagers who are studying English as a second language. It is not for beginners; it is for students who already speak at least a little English but who now need to *improve* their spoken English. Lesson flexibility permits high-beginning, intermediate, and low-advanced students to use this book to improve their spoken English.

Using the Lessons and Learning to Self-Monitor

The lessons in Improving Spoken English can be used in two ways.

- 1. They can be used in an ESL class and language laboratory with an ESL teacher.
- 2. Each lesson can be repeated and reviewed using the recorded tape for the lesson.

The real goal of this book is to *help students* to *help themselves* in improving their spoken English. The lessons are designed to help ESL students:

- 1. to develop speech awareness;
- 2. to learn to self-monitor and to "correct" their own pronunciation;
- 3. to continue to improve their spoken English beyond the formal instruction of the classroom and laboratory.

This takes time and practice. Each lesson is planned carefully to move toward these goals. However, the directions given in the book and those given on the tape must be followed *exactly*. There is no way to improve spoken English except to *concentrate*, to *practice*, and to *monitor* pronunciation. The most important thing in this pronunciation work is for students to learn to *monitor* their own speech.

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Unit 1 Stress, Rhythm, and Intonation

Section A-Introduction

Section Notes

Section A has two lessons.

Lesson 1 is a sentence dictation exercise with fourteen sentences. Each of these sentences is a key sentence which focuses on one feature of stress, rhythm, or intonation. The sentences to be dictated are on page 315 in the Answer Key/Teacher Script (AK/TS).

Lesson 2 presents chart 1, Key Sentences for Stress, Rhythm, and Intonation. Students are asked to practice these sentences carefully and to memorize them.

These two lessons provide an introduction and a framework within which the remaining lessons in Unit 1 will be studied. Subsequent lessons will isolate each item and give it brief but intensive perceptual and productive attention.

In particular, chart 1 is important as a graphic representation of some of the most vital features of English pronunciation which are much more abstract and difficult to isolate than the vowel and consonant sounds. The chart is a valuable classroom tool; it can serve as a reference source for teachers and students in fostering monitoring of pronunciation during classroom speaking activities.

Lesson 1

Introduction to Stress, Rhythm, and Intonation

Directions: Read and discuss with your teacher. Write the sentences as they are dictated. (AK/TS p. 315)

Part 1—Accented and Unaccented Syllables	
Three sentences will be dictated. Listen and repesentences. Notice the accented syllables.	eat. Listen and write. Listen and check. Practice the
1	(4 words)
2	(3 words)
3	(5 words)
(Lab: Stop the tape. Write the sentences on the cha	alkboard. Practice.)
Part 2—Syllables and Suffixes	
Two sentences will be dictated. Listen and repeat. tences. Notice the plural and past tense suffixes.	Listen and write. Listen and check. Practice the sen-
4	
	(9 words)
5	
	(8 words)
(Lab: Stop the tape. Write the sentences on the cha	lkboard. Practice.)
Part 3—Sentence Rhythm and Stress	
Three sentences will be dictated. Listen and repesentences. Notice the rhythm and stress of each ser	at. Listen and write. Listen and check. Practice the ntence.
6	(6 words)
7	
8	(7 words)

4

(Lab: Stop the tape. Write the sentences on the chalkboard. Practice.)