

**CLEAR
SPEECH
PRONUNCIATION
AND LISTENING
COMPREHENSION IN
AMERICAN ENGLISH**

JUDYB. GILBERT

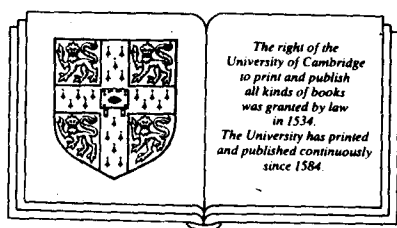
STUDENT'S BOOK

Clear Speech

Pronunciation and Listening
Comprehension in
American English

Student's Book

Judy B. Gilbert



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Judy B. Gilbert

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Foreword

The many real-life embodiments of the student from abroad who reads the *New York Times* but cannot utter an intelligible word in English are a measure of our failure to teach the paramount skill of putting words into mouths rather than on pages of print. Why has something so obviously necessary been so little concentrated upon?

In part it must be because how to speak and listen correctly is seen as too technical – a subject that involves phonetics and phonemes and phonology and all that, something too abstract and abstruse for teachers to master, and certainly far over the heads of students. Better to play it safe, serve the best you can as a model of correct English, and trust to luck that your students will get the hang of it.

Judy Gilbert's book, *Clear Speech*, proves that it is no longer necessary for pronunciation and listening comprehension to be the stepsisters of grammar and vocabulary, those other regions of English that we have always been bold enough not only to model in the classroom but to talk about in more or less technical terms. She has measured the technical needs, selected what is required to meet them from the scientific descriptions of English pronunciation, and put the explanations in nontechnical terms. To these carefully and sparingly defined principles she has added sharply delineated examples and exercises and woven the whole together with a high degree of art.

Here is a book that brings information about how English is spoken within the grasp of learners for whom it is vital to understanding and being understood in American society. It is a book that makes pronunciation teachable, and the learning of it as pleasant as any serious learning can be.

Dwight Bolinger

Palo Alto, California

Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Foreword by Dwight Bolinger	xi
To the student	1
Clear Listening Test	3

SYLLABLE UNITS

1	Syllables	7
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WORD UNITS

2	Stress: pitch	12
3	Stress: length	16
4	Stress: clarity	19
5	Review	22
6	Stress patterns	24
7	English rhythm	27
8	Review	30

THOUGHT UNITS

9	Reductions	31
10	Basic emphasis pattern	34
11	Review	36
12	Sentence focus (part 1)	37
13	The importance of focus	41
14	Sentence focus (part 2)	43
15	Questions	45
16	Thought groups	47
17	Review	50

CLARITY OF SOUNDS

18	Voicing	52
19	Voicing and syllable length	54
20	Stops and continuants	56
21	Puff of air (aspiration)	60
22	Linking words	62
23	Review	65

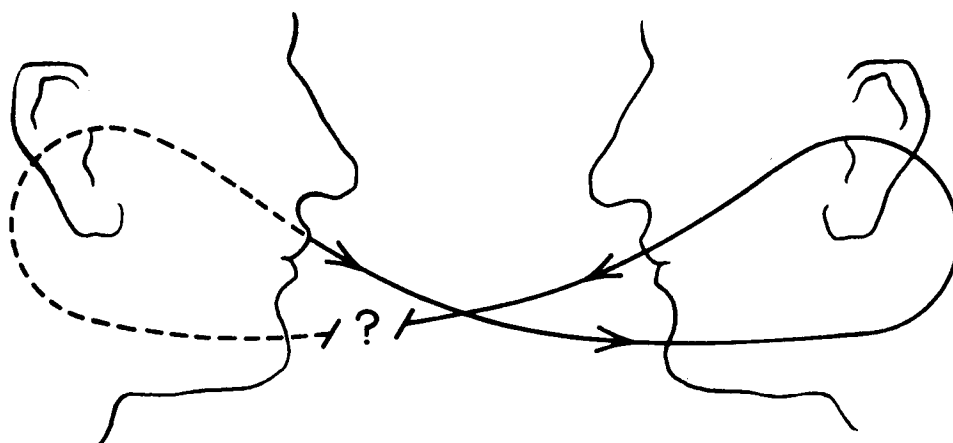
LISTENING

- 24** Listening accuracy 67
- 25** Hearing numbers 68
- 26** Getting essential information 70
- 27** Listening comprehension (taking notes) 73
- 28** Listening comprehension: Age and Language Learning 74
- 29** Listening comprehension: Guides to Universities 76
- 30** Lecture: Pronunciation Achievement Factors 77
- 31** Lecture: Thought Group Markers 78
- 32** Lecture: Techniques for Oral Presentation 79

CLEAR SPEECH

- 33** Student's own dictation 80
- 34** Student's oral report 81
- 35** Problem sound contrasts: consonants 82
- 36** Vowels 88
 - Transcripts 92

To the student



Conversation flow

When you are speaking in a new language, sometimes the other person may not understand. The other person may say "What?" or may misunderstand your ideas. Worse yet, the other person may get embarrassed and stop the conversation. Each of these instances is a *break in communication*, small or large. It is like a break in the flow (or movement) of electricity in an electrical circuit. If the flow is stopped at any place in the circuit, the whole system stops. When something blocks the flow of ideas, the conversation stops.

You need to know how to analyze these breaks in communication. If you can find the problem quickly, you can correct it quickly. Then the conversation can flow again. Some breaks in communication are caused by vocabulary or grammar mistakes. Other breaks are caused by mistakes in pronunciation. It is not necessary to pronounce each sound perfectly in order to be understood. Only a few parts of each sentence are really important, but these few parts are essential. The native speaker depends on hearing these parts clearly. Therefore, you need to know which parts of a sentence must be clear, and how to make them clear.

Foreign students planning to attend American universities see the TOEFL examination as a door to their studies: Will it be open or closed? What skills are most important for achieving a high enough score? What is the most efficient way to prepare for the examination? Even more important, what is the most effective preparation for work in an American university?

Extensive research indicates that any practice that can help you comprehend meaning in English will help you both in the test and in university work. Improvement in listening comprehension is the most important guarantee of a relatively easy and efficient experience in the university. As one student commented, after two years of graduate study in the United States, "Our difficulties are in inverse proportion to our strength in English."

This book concentrates on the ways that English pronunciation helps the listener understand the meaning. The book begins with a short test designed to help you know how clearly you can hear spoken English.

Symbols used in the text

Slashes identify reduced vowels.

Example: bána/na

Parentheses signal reduction of the letter "h."

Example: Is (h)e busy? (sounds like "Izzybizzy?")

Rising and falling lines indicate the pitch of words and sentences.

Example: eleven  Is she there? 

Bars and dots identify long and short syllables.

Example: rēcord (noun) rēcord (verb)

Capital letters indicate stress.

Example: I WANT a baNAna.

Cassette tape



marks sections that are recorded on the cassette tape.

Clear Listening Test

The purpose of this test is to find what parts of English pronunciation may interfere with the way you understand and use spoken English. How you *hear* English is closely connected with how you *speak* English.

This test is recorded on the Cassette.

Part 1: Stressed syllables (10 points)

Draw a line under the most stressed syllable. Mark only *one* syllable for each word. Examples:

- a. delay
- b. broken
- c. education

Now listen and draw a line under the most stressed syllable. You will hear each word twice.

- 1. participating 3. photography 5. university
- 2. photograph 4. alternative

Part 2: Vowel clarity (10 points)

Draw a line through the unclear (not clearly pronounced) vowels in each word. Examples:

- a. áround
- b. atóm
- c. átomíc

Now listen to the following words and draw a line through the unclear vowels. You will hear each word twice.

- 1. banana 3. woman 5. America
- 2. Nebraska 4. women

Part 3: Voicing and length of syllable (10 points)

You will hear one sentence from each of the following pairs of sentences. That sentence will be read twice. Put a check next to the sentence you hear.





- 1a. What kind of word is "use"? (noun) —
- b. What kind of word is "use"? (verb) —
- 2a. He said "prove." (verb) —
- b. He said "proof." (noun) —
- 3a. What does "loose" mean? (adjective) —
- b. What does "lose" mean? (verb) —
- 4a. What kind of cap was it? —
- b. What kind of cab was it? —

- 5a. What's the prize? —
b. What's the price? —

Part 4: Pitch patterns – words (10 points)

You will hear some American names. Draw a pitch pattern for each name.

Examples:

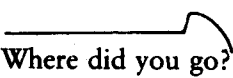
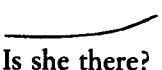
- a. John  c. Elaine 
b. Ellen  d. Amanda 

Now listen and draw the pitch patterns. You will hear each name twice.

1. Barbara 3. Jonathan 5. Victor
2. Corinne 4. Elizabeth

Part 5: Pitch patterns – sentences (10 points)

You will hear some sentences. Draw a pitch line for the sentence. Examples:

- a. Where did you go? 
b. Is she there? 

Now listen to these sentences and draw the pitch pattern. You will hear each sentence twice.

1. It was awful!
2. She left her book.
3. She left her book?
4. This is my notebook. (not my textbook)
5. This is my notebook. (not yours)

Part 6: Contractions, reductions (20 points)

You will hear some sentences. Write the missing words. Examples:

- a. She can't go.
b. He isn't going.

Now listen to the sentences and write the missing words. You will hear each sentence *once*.

1. She doesn't _____ study now.
2. Please _____ the information.
3. _____ think she'll win?
4. Where _____ go?
5. How _____ you been here?
6. _____ busy?
7. Where _____ store?
8. Did _____ to the concert?
9. What _____ done?
10. Is _____ good?

Part 7: Focus words (20 points)

You will hear a dialogue. Underline the one most emphasized word in each sentence. You will hear the dialogue only once. Example:

A: That's a great idea!

A: What's the matter?

B: I lost my hat.

A: What kind of hat?

B: It was a rain hat.

A: What color rain hat?

B: It was white. White with stripes.

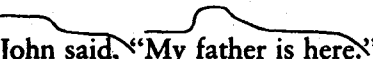
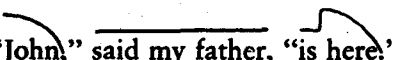
A: There was a white hat with stripes in the car.

B: Which car?

A: The one I sold.

Part 8: Thought groups (10 points)

Intonation helps the listener recognize groups of words. To test your awareness of the intonation markers for thought groups, you will hear one of a pair of sentences. Put a check (✓) next to the sentence you hear. Example:


- a.  John said, "My father is here." ✓
- b.  "John," said my father, "is here." —

Now listen to one sentence from each of the following pairs of sentences. Put a check next to the sentence you hear. You will hear each sentence twice.

- 1a. He sold his houseboat and trailer. —
b. He sold his house, boat, and trailer. —
- 2a. She likes pineapples. —
b. She likes pie and apples. —
- 3a. Would you like Super Salad? —
b. Would you like soup or salad? —
- 4a. $(A + B) \times C = X$ —
b. $A + (B \times C) = X$ —
- 5a. Alfred said, "The boss is stupid." —
b. "Alfred," said the boss, "is stupid." —

SYLLABLE UNITS

1 • Syllables

The syllable is the basic unit of English pronunciation.  Listen to the following words and notice how some of them have two or more parts.

1 syllable 2 syllables 3 syllables

ease	easy	easily
will	willing	willingly

A



As you listen to the following words, tap your hand on the desk to help count each syllable.

1	2	3	4
one	seven	eleven	identify
two	eighteen	direction	analysis
down	sentence	syllable	He wants a book.
step	working	important	We were happy.
stress	focus	emphasis	It's important.

Now read the same list aloud, tapping syllables while you speak.

B

Say your name out loud, and decide how many syllables there are in it. See if the other members of the class agree. Do not worry if the class cannot agree on every name, especially where two vowels come together. You only need to have a rough sense of the number of syllables.

C



Practice saying these words, tapping the syllables. Be careful not to add or subtract syllables. Decide how many syllables there are in the words in the third column.

1	2	3 or more
write	writer	academic
round	rounder	sentences
fish	fishy	registration
wind	windy	international
blow	below	classification
prayed	parade	economy
school	student	economical

D

Grammar mistakes are often the result of a failure to recognize the number of syllables. Examples:

- a. They have rent (rented) an apartment.
- b. There are two dish (dishes).



Listen to the following words. Which words have one syllable and which have two syllables?

painted	rented	added	caused
crowded	worked	faded	filled
walked	laughed	watched	closed

Rule: Regular past tense verbs that end in a "d" or "t" sound in the basic form will add an extra syllable in the past tense. Look over the list above and see how this rule works.

E

Answer the following questions aloud, using the verb in the past. Be careful of the final syllable. Example:

Q: Did you rent an apartment yet?

A: Yes, I rented one yesterday.

1. When did you rent your apartment?
2. Did you walk here today?
3. When did you start studying English?
4. Did you use an English dictionary this morning?
5. What did your country export last year? or import? (If you do not know, guess.)
6. Did you travel far this year?
7. Did you watch TV last night?
8. Did you request a visa to any country this year?
9. Did you listen to the radio last night?
10. What did you intend to do today?

F

Some words end in sounds called *sibilants*. A sibilant is a sound like "s."
Sibilants have a hissing noise, like a snake. Examples:

hiss, buzz, fish, church, judge, box

Rule: Nouns and verbs ending in a sibilant in their basic form have an extra syllable when an "s" is added.



Listen and then practice saying these pairs.

Noun + plural ending

Verb + 3rd person singular

rose....roses

wash.....washes

kisskisses

cause.....causes

dish....dishes

advise.....advises

watch...watches

change....changes

judge...judges

mix.....mixes

box....boxes

surprise...surprises

Listen to your teacher or another student say one word from each of the following pairs. Underline the word you hear.

1. /s/

2. /z/

3. /ch/

lace.....laces

nose....noses

bench...benches

face.....faces

quizquizzes

lunch...lunches

price....prices

praise...praises

speech...speeches

juice.....juices

cheese...cheeses

match...matches

excuse...excuses

sizesizes

beach...beaches

fence....fences

freeze...freezes

roach...roaches

4. /dg/

5. /sh/

6. /ks/

page....pages

wish...wishes

box...boxes

edge.....edges

flash...flashes

sex....sexes

bridge...bridges

blush...blushes

six.....sixes

sponge...sponges

rush...rushes

fix.....fixes

stage....stages

crash...crashes

coax...coaxes

age.....ages

7. *Mixed sounds*

bruise...bruises

blouse...blouses

house...houses

miss.....misses

teach....teaches

choose...chooses

crunch...crunches


mess.....messes

G

Practice saying the following words. Some have an extra syllable and some do not.

<i>Past tense</i>	<i>3rd person singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
completed	completes	faces
avoided	avoids	prices
smiled	smiles	mixes
caused	causes	bridges
predicted	predicts	boxes
guarded	guards	guards
mixed	mixes	quizzes
arranged	arranges	watches
washed	washes	sentences

H

Sometimes it is difficult for foreign students to hear the word "is" when it follows a sibilant sound.  Listen to the following sentences. Some are complete, but some are missing a syllable. Write "right" if the sentence you hear is complete. Write "wrong" if a syllable is missing. Example:

(If you hear) "The ice cold" wrong

- 1a. The ice is cold. _____
- b. The ice cold. _____
- 2a. Her dress is pretty. _____
- b. Her dress pretty. _____
- 3a. The bus late. _____
- b. The bus is late. _____
- 4a. The buses are late. _____
- b. The bus are late. _____
- 5a. He washes the dishes. _____
- b. He wash the dishes. _____
- 6a. He need a bike. _____
- b. He needed a bike. _____
- 7a. She visit her sister. _____
- b. She visited her sister. _____
- 8a. The river flooded the valley. _____
- b. The river flood the valley. _____