

Longman Handbooks for Language Teachers

The Teaching of Pronunciation

a classroom guide

BRITA HAYCRAFT

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The teaching of pronunciation

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of my father, the late Fil. Dr. Gösta Langenfelt.

*Brita Haycraft
May 1975*

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Contents

INTRODUC	I
TEACHING PLAN	5
BIBLIOGRAPHY	6

One. THE INITIAL NON-TEXT STAGE 7

Introducing stress 7, *Pure imitation* 7, *The meaning introduced* 7, *Enacting* 7, *Sound joining and sound clusters* 8, *Awareness of the strength of stress* 8, *Teaching stress and intonation together* 9.

Introducing intonation 10, Starting with beginners 11, *Pure imitation* 11, *Responses* 11, Vocabulary and structures 14, Further direct training in intonation 15, *Teaching the use of the whole voice range* 15, *Enthusiasm, surprise, and vigorous denial* 16, Tune distinction 17, *The ultimately rising tune for questions requiring yes or no answers* 18, *Increasing the vocabulary* 19, *The falling tune of question-word questions* 20, Structures during the first six lessons 21.

Starting with non-beginners 22, *Pure imitation* 22, *Responses* 23, *Using the whole voice range* 23, *Falling and rising tunes* 25, *The falling tune with ever-growing surprise* 26, Tune distinction 26, *The falling tune in questions beginning with question-words* 28, *Spelling exercise* 29, Structure practices 29, 1. *Response tags* 30, 2. *Statement and question-tags* 30, *Other structures* 31.

Speech of more than one stress for beginners 31, Vocabulary and structures for numbers, age, dates, and years 34, Follow-up material 35, Distinguishing simple sounds 36.

Two. THE INITIAL TEXT STAGE 37

Using a sign system 38, Starting to read passages 40, Back to reading for non-beginners, 43 Joining sounds together into sound clusters 43, *Beginners* 43, *Non-beginners* 44, Deciding the stress and intonation pattern 46, *Intonation* 47, Selecting reading material 48, *Beginners* 48, *Non-beginners* 49, Making texts come to life 50, *Material other than from books* 51, *Reading and structural exercises* 52.

Three. PERFECTING PRONUNCIATION 56

Dividing the time between teaching structure and pronunciation 57, Common errors in stress 58, *Some effects of misplaced stress* 60, *Stress, rhythm, and speaking speed* 61, *Sentences and sense groups* 62, Word stress 62, Sentence stress 63, *Repetitions* 67, Unstressed words and syllables 69, Common difficulties with intonation 70, A workable model pattern 77, *Making the pattern more lively* 79, *Unstressed words surrounding the pattern* 80, The 'Emphatic' pattern 81, The rising tune 82, Tone of voice 83, Some rules of intonation 84, A memory aid 87, Tunes and sense groups 88.

Four. THE INDIVIDUAL SOUNDS

90

Common types of error 90, Familiar sounds 92, Teaching policy 93, *Teacher's knowledge of phonetics* 94, *The alphabet and dictation* 95, Correction Formulas 97.

Five. TEACHING TECHNIQUE

114

Encouragement and enlivenment 114, Pitfalls 115, Enriching pronunciation teaching 117, *Visual aids* 118, Conversation classes 118, Individual training and homework 119.

Six. EXERCISES IN INTONATION, STRESS, SOUND CLUSTERS, AND SPEECH STYLES

123

APPENDIX

149

Ear training: intonation 149, Two tunes for advanced students 151, Stress 152, Further 'rules' of stress 153, How to practise main stress in long words 155, Guide to the articulation of sounds 159, The consonants 159, *The vocal cords* 160, *Classification of the consonants* 160, The vowel limit 161, The vowels 161, *Classification of the vowels* 162, The diphthongs 163, List of words which occur in weak and strong forms 166.

Phonetic symbols used

CONSONANTS		VOWELS				
Symbol	Key Word	Number	Old symbols	New symbols	New ALD	Key Word
p	pea	1	i:	i:	i	sheep
b	bay	2	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ	ship
t	tea	3	e	e	e	bed
d	day	4	æ	æ	æ	bad
k	key	5	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɑ	calm
g	gay	6	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	pot
		7	ɔ:	ɔ:	ɔ	caught
tʃ	cheer	8	u	ʊ	ʊ	put
dʒ	jump	9	u:	u:	u	boot
		10	ʌ	ʌ	ʌ	cut
		11	ə:	ə:	ə	bird
		12	ə	ə	ə	cupboard
f	few	(DIPHTHONGS)				
v	view	13	eɪ	eɪ	eɪ	make
θ	thing	14	əʊ	əʊ	əʊ	note
ð	then	15	aɪ	aɪ	aɪ	bite
s	soon	16	aʊ	aʊ	aʊ	now
z	zero	17	ɔɪ	ɔɪ	ɔɪ	boy
ʃ	fishing					
ʒ	pleasure					
h	hot	18	ɪə	ɪə	ɪə	here
		19	eə	eə	eə	there
m	sum	20	ʊə	ʊə	ʊə	poor
n	sun					
ŋ	sung					
l	led	(TRIPHTHONGS)				
r	red	—	eɪə	eɪə	eɪə	player
		—	əʊə	əʊə	əʊə	lower
		—	aɪə	aɪə	aɪə	tire
j	yet	—	aʊə	aʊə	aʊə	tower
w	wet	—	ɔɪə	ɔɪə	ɔɪə	employer

This edition uses the new phonetic notation¹ for English vowels that is used in *A Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Longman) and in the forthcoming new (14th) edition of the *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (Dent). These symbols are in column two of the table. For comparison the old symbols (used in the first edition, and in earlier editions of the EPD) are shown in the first column. The third column shows the new symbols used in the 3rd edition of the *Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (OUP).

Other symbols, used in this book for foreign or dialect sounds, are:

[a] as in North Country 'bath' or Germ. 'Katze', Fr. 'chat'

[œ] a half-open front rounded vowel used by Scand., Fr., and others

[ʔ] glottal stop as in Cockney 'wha'?' — 'what'?

[ʁ] uvular versions of r as known in Fr. and Germ., etc.

[ç] voiceless palatal fricative as in Swedish 'tjänare'

[x] voiceless velar fricative as in Scottish 'loch,' Germ. 'ach' and Span. 'Juan'

Introduction

This is a book about teaching pronunciation in the widest sense of the word. It contains suggestions and exercises to help the teacher make his students improve their way of speaking English not only in special pronunciation lessons but also in their general language classes.

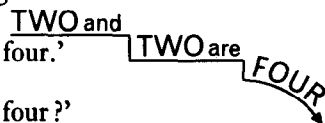
The emphasis in language teaching has changed to give spoken English the same importance as written English. This book has therefore been written to help teachers give their students a grasp of spoken English early on, whether the teacher is a native English speaker or a foreign teacher with good English. This book is also designed to encourage those teachers who have little theoretical knowledge of English phonology.

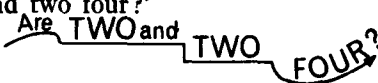
By 'pronunciation in the widest sense' we mean the main features that make up speech. The parts of pronunciation discussed in this book are listed below.

Stress—The strength of voice placed on a particular syllable in a word—as in 'particular'—or on a particular word or words in a sentence—**Water is heavier than air.**

Stress can be compared with the beat in music. The stressed words in an English sentence are usually evenly spaced, even though the number of unstressed syllables between them may vary—'Bob saw Tom twice' and 'Bob would have eaten a splendid dinner'. Having the same number of stresses, both sentences are said in much the same time-space, although the second has more than twice as many syllables.

Intonation—The tune of a sentence, comparable with the rise and fall of the tune in a piece of music. Intonation is the movement of the voice, between high and low pitch. English has two basic tunes:

Ultimately falling—"Two and two are four." 

Ultimately rising—'Are two and two four?' 

When and how these tunes are used, and how native speakers of English use intonation to convey friendliness, interest, indifference, and emotion, will be discussed later.

Sounds—The articulation of the different consonants and vowels in English, and the use of weak forms. Sounds have an essential role in pronunciation, but in teaching their importance tends to be exaggerated at the expense of stress and intonation, and in many books already published the teaching of sounds has been comprehensively covered. The main text of this book therefore gives only a list of correction formulas for the more common errors, and the sounds themselves are briefly analysed in the appendix.

Sound linking—Teaching students to link together clusters of sounds which they may think are difficult or impossible. Just as an English person may think it difficult to say a word beginning with 'mb-', though he says 'number' without difficulty, so a foreigner learning English may have unnecessary difficulties with 'str-' as in 'strike' or 'thr-' as in 'through'.

Speech flow—Saying a sentence as a meaningful unit, not as a series of disconnected and separate sounds or words. This entails a combination of correct stress, intonation, and sound linking. Thus we aim for:

'It isn't as difficult as it seems' *or*

'It ISN'T as DIFficult as it SEEMS' *rather than*

'It. Is. Not. As. Difficult. As. It. Seems.'

Different nationalities will clearly have different problems in producing the correct patterns of stress and intonation, and the sounds of English. The teacher's success will depend on counteracting the interference of the student's mother-tongue. This book gives teaching hints about some of the more frequent manifestations of interference from several European languages in stress, intonation and sounds.

All learners, regardless of nationality, may be divided into two categories of pronunciation:

Beginners—Those who have had no previous contact with English at all. They are quite rare, especially among adult Europeans. With such learners, the teacher's only problem will be the avoidance of mother-tongue interference, if he presents oral English in a planned way.

Non-beginners—Those who have had some contact with English, from a teacher or perhaps from radio, television, or the cinema. In such learners, the teacher always faces an established interference from

the mother-tongue, and they are also likely to have acquired bad speech habits from hearing or practising wrong patterns. A non-beginner who has learnt English abroad, and who comes to England speaking English quite fluently, may be disappointed when English people do not understand him; his belief that he speaks an acceptable form of English, and his surprise on finding that we try to change his pronunciation, may set up an additional psychological barrier which the teacher must break down.

Non-beginners may therefore learn how to speak English less easily than beginners, and a European is unlikely to find pronunciation less difficult to learn than a non-European. The assumed similarities between English and other European languages may obstruct the learner's progress as much as they help it.

The classification of students according to their ability to write English rarely corresponds with their ability to speak English; an untrained student in an advanced class may speak English less well than a well-trained recent beginner, and a teaching plan must take this into account. In the teaching plan outlined in this book, the term 'beginner' refers to the student who starts at the beginning of the most elementary course, although he may well have much in common with the non-beginner defined above.

Since all learners search for equivalents of the new language in their own mother-tongue, in structure as well as in pronunciation, the new language should be taught as independently as possible.

The teacher will do well to delay showing the written version until the learner can pronounce the spoken version with some ease; an initial period of purely oral teaching is invaluable. The beginner who is shown a book and asked to start reading it after the teacher, encounters difficulties and commits errors which could be avoided.

The teacher must distinguish clearly between the two main stages in the learning process.

First, we must help the learner to train his ear to distinguish variations in stress, intonation, and sound.¹ This stage is vital; if a student cannot hear the difference between 'THIS is LONDON' and 'This IS London', he will be unable to imitate any stress pattern or to form a deliberate pattern of his own. If he cannot distinguish between obvious variations in intonation, his speech is unlikely to reflect his mood and intent. If he cannot recognize the difference between 'f' and 'p', he will be unable to say them

1. We do not of course suggest that learners should have formal ear-training. Training to distinguish variations in *all sounds* should be optional in the early stages. An initial study of all the sounds would be too abstract for a large class or one of mixed nationalities, and the teacher will do better to wait until he can tell which particular sounds cause trouble.

differently; he will tend to confuse minimal pairs such as fit and pit, and will make up a non-word like [fi:k] instead of [pi:k].

After some ear-training, learners may try to reproduce patterns, words, and sounds for themselves. We may have to 'edit' the language we teach, to avoid complex patterns of stress and intonation until the learners have mastered the simple patterns. What is essential, too, is to maintain the students' motivation for speaking better. This depends on what they are first made to study when they learn or re-learn pronunciation. I have found the most useful and stimulating order to be: *first*, meaningful sentence stress within a context, accompanied by relevant expression, i.e. basic intonation; *second*, help with the difficult and important sounds.

Remedial measures

Some of the diagrams and procedures in this book may appear strange to the phonetician looking for a detailed representation of English phonology as such. It is important, however, to regard them as quick guidelines used in a classroom to suggest the words which ought to be stressed and the approximate intonation to be used in general language exercises.

Sometimes, blackboard diagrams are devised as extreme remedies to uproot speech habits that defy any straightforward correction. At times, devious procedures are needed to by-pass mother-tongue interference.

A selective approach to the teaching of pronunciation is as important as it is in structure teaching. An example of this is the simplified presentation of stress and intonation. Just as we teach a structure in stages, avoiding complex uses until the easy concept has been taught, so we avoid secondary stresses until main stresses are recognised and understood. This means that until students get used to stressing the important words in the given context, other words which may have some stress but do not 'deserve' a particular pitch movement are treated as having no stress at all. No rhythm exercise is attempted.

Until students produce questions and answers with an intonation that indicates some involvement on their part, all questions are said with simulated politeness or curiosity, and all answers are practised with high or medium falls on the nuclear words—except where a distinctive low rise is needed. The high fall is a guide showing the students the general direction their voices should follow. Whether the high fall ends in a slight rise or not, need not be indicated at this point. As soon as the fall-rise has been taught as a meaningful tone, distinctive marking is used.

As long as help is given to students to grasp these simple features of speech in their first two or three weeks of study, stress and intonation can develop into an aid to structural or notional teaching rather than appearing to be an obstacle.

Teaching Plan

A. An initial period of no text (THE INITIAL NON-TEXT STAGE):

Fifteen to thirty teaching periods for beginners and elementary non-beginners. At least three teaching periods for other non-beginners.

This book deals with the vocabulary and the amount of language that can be taught without the use of a book or written work as well as ways of enlivening the teaching by means other than books.

B. A subsequent period when text is first used (THE INITIAL TEXT STAGE):

At least ten teaching periods for learners of any level.

The book describes a suitable sign system to be taught and used by the students; and it discusses suitable reading texts.

C. After periods A and B the teaching is planned so as to maintain and improve the standard of pronunciation the students have reached, and are capable of assimilating.

The scheme of work in the following pages is merely an outline. It may be possible to proceed faster, or necessary to go slower. The essential factor is a high standard of pronunciation. Pace will vary according to the environment, the type of students and their nationality, apart from the more obvious factors; the size of the class, the duration cycle, and time span of the class, the academic background of the students and their willingness to co-operate. All students have a universal interest in experimenting with ways of speaking in a new language and it is a pity that it is so often left unexploited.

The system of the parallel lines

The text within these thin inner lines represents suggested procedure in the classroom itself.

Theory and discussion are placed outside the lines.

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Note. The dates in parentheses refer to publication of the first edition of the titles mentioned.

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CHAPTER ONE

The initial non-text stage

Introducing stress

The teacher must himself be certain on what syllable stress should occur¹ and be able to hear where he places the stress in a sentence which he has just spoken. A wrongly indicated stress may spoil a foreign student's grasp of the stress pattern of a sentence.² The teacher must decide where the stress is to be placed in a sentence, it must be correct in its context, and he must be able to repeat the sentence several times, correctly stressed, in order that the students may learn it from him. There is a tendency to tire during repetition causing the stress pattern to change, which *must* obviously be avoided.

How can we introduce stress to a class of beginners?

Pure imitation. Using no text, begin with some useful expressions: e.g. 'Hello!', 'Goodbye!', 'Good morning!', 'Good afternoon!' Stress is placed on '-lo', '-bye', 'morn-', '-noon'. The class is made to repeat these greetings several times in abstract, both in chorus and individually. Should a student have difficulty with, for example, 'Hello!', the teacher makes him just repeat the stressed '-lo' several times. Then the whole 'Hello!' can be tried. Although these greetings are not yet used in a situation, the teacher must say them with a normal expression, and not allow them to appear as isolated dead noises.

The meaning introduced. The teacher indicates the time of day by means of a clock, or by drawings.

6 a.m. to 12 noon *cue* 'Good morning!'

12 noon to 5 p.m. *cue* 'Good afternoon!'

Enacting. The teacher should go out of the room and come in again saying 'Hello!' motioning the class to respond 'Hello!'. This is also done with the other greetings. A student is asked to go out and return repeating the teacher's act, or two students are placed at either ends of the classroom and as they walk


1. See Appendix, pp. 153-8.

2. See Appendix, pp. 152-3, about personal ear-training for teachers who feel uncertain about the placing of stress.

towards each other they exchange 'Hello's'. With the other greetings a clock set to the appropriate time will help the student to use the correct greeting. Although some beginners may know the words of greeting it is still useful to revise them like this. Speech other than greetings can be used but whatever is first said it must exemplify where stress is placed.

The teacher helps, prompts, and corrects the students' efforts by merely repeating the cues in an encouraging way, often by *over-emphasizing* the stressed syllables, always getting the student to repeat. A phrase may go back and forth between teacher and student ten or twelve times, accompanied by approving expressions or comments from the teacher like 'good!', 'quite good!', or 'very good!'. His facial expression (or approving gestures) should soon convey the rough meaning of the comments. As soon as possible, the other students can be brought in to indicate which performance was nearest the teacher's—the beginning of the practice of useful listening and discernment.

Sound joining and sound clusters. Care must be taken to speak the greetings with normal speed and pronunciation: 'Good morning!' is said 'good-MORNING', 'gdMORNING', 'dMORNING', or even 'MORNY'. A too distinct or too slow 'GOOD MORNING' is un-English and it creates difficulties with sounds and sound clusters, so destroying the object of the exercise. When articulation of a number of syllables confuses students, writing 'linked'

circles on the blackboard will clarify them, so  for 'good MORNING'.¹

Note. These early exercises are best kept simple and limited, and only a brief explanation of their meaning is necessary. This is an oral training stage supplemented with visual aids where necessary. Above all, one should not interfere with the learner's ability to imitate the sounds of the words from seeing them written on the blackboard. It is unwise to insist on perfection in all the pronunciation aspects of these examples at this stage, as it is bound to be discouraging. What one should insist on is the exact mimicking of the teacher's stress pattern, using different examples. Further phrases to be introduced early on are, for example, 'Good bye' and 'Good night', 'Thank you', 'Please', 'Yes', 'No', 'Sorry', 'Excuse me'. More suggestions are given on the following pages.

Awareness of the strength of stress. Ask students their names, and as they say them, show the stress as it is heard with beats of the hand in the air, or fist

1. W. Stannard Allen (*Living English Speech*) uses squares to present stress pattern (see Bibliography).

against palm. Françoise (beat on '-oise'), Heinrich (beat on 'Hein-'), Ali (beat on 'A-'), Lin-Yuh (beat on 'Lin-' and again on '-Yuh'), Anna Maria (beat on '-ri-'), etc. Check that the student has understood the place of stress correctly. Is it

ROBERTo O o o ?, or RoberTO o o O ?, or is it RoBERto o O o ?. Students

should say and beat the stress of their own names to the class, and then be asked to beat the stress in further names of people and objects. The first inkling of sentence stress is given when the teacher asks a female student 'Are you Miss or Mrs. X, or Dr. X?' or asks a male student 'Are you Mr. or Dr. or Father Y?' There should be a certain amount of emphasis in the student's reply, or if there isn't the teacher pretends he hasn't heard and repeats the question until he obtains the required degree of emphasis in the reply.

Beginners and non-beginners should be asked to practise listening for stress in their own surnames, the names of their countries, towns, etc., as said in their own language. Their findings should give them some idea of strong stress and weak stress. In addition non-beginners can be asked to decide where the stress occurs in the name of their own language as said in English, e.g. JAPANESE, PORTUGUESE, TURKISH, and perhaps indicate where they would put the stress in the sentence 'I speak English very well'. Comparing their observations in class should prove an instructive exercise. If the students are being taught in Great Britain then they should perfect their skill in saying their address, telephone number, bus stop, underground station, etc., with the correct stress, rhythm, and speed.

Note. Introducing stress in this simple way allows the student to grasp the essential factors in articulate pronunciation of English words without becoming involved with a very large vocabulary.

Teaching stress and intonation together. Intonation depends on stress, changes in the stress pattern at once affect the intonation pattern, changes in the tune occur only on a *stressed* syllable. If we imagine intonation as a moving track, then we can illustrate a change as follows:

I CAN come at two o'clock I CAN come at, TWO o'clock

Even if a foreign student could imitate the required intonation pattern by just humming it, he would have difficulty in maintaining it in the sentence if he placed the stress on the wrong words, or even on the wrong syllables. Stress depends on intonation, but in a less obvious way. Since no speech is produced without some tune, intonation must be taught with stress, otherwise the student will merely borrow from his own language. The wrong stress may confuse or alter the meaning of a sentence, the wrong intonation will convey the wrong mood or attitude, and given the wrong

stress and the wrong intonation a sentence may appear incomprehensible or misleading though the individual sounds and grammatical structure are perfect.

Introducing intonation

Tone refers to the voice pitch of any stressed syllable.

Tune refers to the sequence of tones in a sense group: often a grammatical unit. The most important element is the last moving tone.

If the last tone glides down, the sentence has a falling tune.

If the last tone glides up, the sentence has a rising tune.

Apart from knowing the two basic patterns of English intonation and their significance, the teacher must be able to detect a falling tone from a rising tone, and high pitch from a low pitch, in his own voice as well as in a student's. Without this ability he cannot be sure that he is correcting satisfactorily, or that he is not altering the intonation pattern inadvertently in a sentence he repeats. It is not a special musical talent but a skill most teachers can acquire very quickly.¹

The teacher must speak at a normal speed or the students will get used to a pace different to that which they hear outside the classroom. It is also important to speak with more expression than one would normally use, so making the intonation pattern deliberately more audible, though the sentences may be trivial like, 'Have you got a match?' The normal flat intonation of such trivia is not clear enough for the student to imitate, and should he adopt it generally, he would appear to sound indifferent. Moreover, it is easier for a foreign student to copy an excited intonation.

To begin with, the practice examples are short with only the ultimate rise or fall being trained, but done correctly. Longer sentences can later be tried with minimal difficulty as the movement of the tune is studied in detail. Simple sentences like 'I'm going' and 'Are you going?' with their single stressed syllable are easy to copy but a sentence like 'Mrs. MacDonald is arriving by the 6.30 train next Monday morning' cannot be managed by anyone without proper conscious control of his voice pitch. The early teaching must include training in gaining this control.²

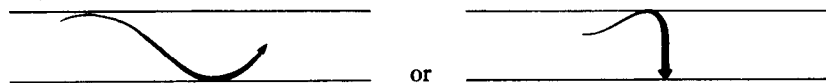
Students repeat the teacher's patterns in close imitation. The patterns can be demonstrated by movement of the arm or by tracing them on the blackboard. By either method they must correspond with his voice.

1. In the Appendix (pp. 149-151) ways of training oneself to tell these distinctions are described.

2. See pp. 74-5 for ways of training pitch control, and p. 134 for special exercises. *Living English Speech*, Exx. 1, 2, offers some very good exercises (see Bibliography).

Starting with beginners

Pure imitation. It is practical to start with the greetings suggested on p. 7, using a very clear intonation, e.g. 'Hello', 'Good afternoon', 'Good bye'.



The teacher simply repeats these so far meaningless phrases, maintaining the same stress and intonation pattern. The students repeat them after him, and are corrected on both stress and intonation. The meaning of the words is now introduced (see p. 7), followed by the active exchange of one of the greetings. The teacher prompts and helps the students to speak and understand what they are saying, making sure that the greetings are said with expression. He may further help them by describing the movement of the tune with his arm or by beating the stress with his fists.

If this initial teaching method is adopted students will never use outlandish intonation and say 'gooder morrrNING!', 'good UFTerrnoon', or 'hellaw', they will only know how to speak the way they have heard their teacher speak. If in the first few lessons, the limited vocabulary, structures, and phrases are taught with the same definite stress and intonation pattern, the students will get used to listening for stress and intonation as well as for the actual sound formations. This is of the the greatest value if students are to regard stress and intonation as elements of a sentence just as important as its sounds or grammatical function.

The first few lessons consist only of guided responses given by the students to questions asked by the teacher. The falling tune¹ in its simplest form, comprehension and structure of the responses are the elements to be taught; the tune and detailed meaning of the question need not concern the student yet.

Responses. In the same lesson as the greetings are taught the names of the students² become known and this provides us with a good deal of exercise material. Using the names, the students can be taught to say 'yes' or 'no' as required.

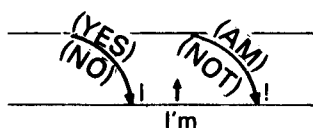
T. Are you Pierre?	P. Yes.
Anna Maria?	T. No.
Teresa?	T. Yes.
Anna Maria?	A. Yes.

1. *Groundwork of English Intonation*, Tone IIH, pp. 23, 27 (see Bibliography).

2. This exercise is not spoiled if the teacher pretends not to know the student's name.

Half-way through the practice, the falling tune of 'yes' and 'no' is shown more clearly with a hand movement, the teacher displaying more emphasis and responsiveness as he says 'yes' and 'no', and illustrating the falling movement of the tune on the blackboard like this.

The whole class should say 'yes' and 'no' in this more precise way, once or twice in chorus, then individually, as the teacher finds out their names. The last student is taught to say 'Yes, I am' and the following illustration of the tune is drawn on the blackboard



The words should not be written on the blackboard.

The intonation line representing 'Yes, I am' and 'No, I'm not' should be left on the blackboard as the following responses are practised using mixed questions. Checking that he has got the names right the teacher can deliberately get them wrong, so teaching the student to protest:

- T. (to Peter) Are you Ali? P. No, I'm not.
(to Heidi) You aren't Heidi? H. Yes, I am.

Questions needing obvious affirmation are then asked

- T. Are you (student's correct name)? S. Yes.
Are you from (student's country or town)? S. Yes.
Are you (student's nationality)? S. Yes.
Are you in a classroom, school of English? S. Yes.

Questions needing obvious denial are then asked

- T. Are you Elizabeth Taylor? S. No, I'm not. I'm . . .
Mao Tse-Tung?
You're President (X)? or: No, I'm . . .
Martin Luther? (The response depends on the
Julius Caesar? mood of the speaker.)
a policeman?
from (mention wrong city,
country)?