主编 康有金

高级英语口语阶梯教程

Step by Step to Speaking Advanced English

理论指导	自我效能感理论、发现学习理论、情商理论、建构主义理论和格式塔心理学理论。
实际训练	从吞吞吐吐到口若悬河、从晷流利却不精准到既流利又精准、从本土化到国际化、从单一文化到多元文化、从需要准备到无需准备、从不自然到自然、从直白表述到艺术表达。
实际应用	从校园的生活实际场景和学习实际场地来进行实地操练英语口语、从学生学习的实际内容出发来掌握和提高英语口语。

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Step by Step to Speaking Advanced English

主　　编　康有金

执行主编　王　瑞　李明霞

副 主 编　宋红波　陈　尧　刘　璇　刘亚娜

编　　者　康有金　王　瑞　李明霞　宋红波
　　　　　陈　尧　刘　璇　沈国环　任丹丹
　　　　　王丹萍　柳晓利　吴爱香　任晓娟
　　　　　胡　园　田　慧　周　慧　柯　可
　　　　　徐　晓　刘梦琳　秦　雯　曹　慧
　　　　　陈平香　张萃敏　雷　冰　马青春

策　　划　汤定军

出版说明

　　《高级英语口语阶梯教程》(Step by Step to Speaking Advanced English)系武汉科技大学研究生"公共英语口语"精品课程暨英语专业"高级英语"精品课程的建设成果,也是武汉科技大学立项教材。该教材可以用做研究生公共英语口语课教材和英语专业本科三、四年级口语教材,也可以作为非英语专业口语提高教材。

　　本书从理论方面、实际训练和实际应用方面探索口语习得过程,力争用科学的理论来指导实践,使口语训练和应用建立在科学理论基础上。我们选取了"自我效能感"理论、"发现学习"理论、"情商"理论、"建构主义"理论和"格式塔心理学"理论作为本书训练和实际应用英语口语的理论基础。这是理论方面的循序渐进。本书还特别强调了通过实践来训练口语的过程,抓住实践的每一个关键环节。我们以中高级英语口语为基础,首先训练学员从"吞吞吐吐"到"口若悬河",从"虽流利却不精准"到"既流利又精准",从"本土化"到"国际化",从"单一文化"到"多元文化",从"需要准备"到"无需准备",再从"不自然"到"自然",最后从"直白表述"到"艺术表达"的口语最高境界。这是训练过程的循序渐进。实际应用才是最为重要的,口语非实际应用而不能提高。我们选取了校园的生活实际场景和学习实际场地来进行实地操练英语口语。从选取热门话题对话到长段的独白循序渐进地进行口语演练。从学生学习的实际内容出发通过历史、政治、哲学、心理学、教育学、社会、文化、经济、文学等多方面的英语实际应用来掌握和提高英语口语,学中做,做中学。不知不觉中,学生的口语得到了巩固和提高。这是本书的一个重要特点。

　　本书的另外一个特点就是将字、词、句的巩固和提高有机地结合起来。在扩充学习者的词汇量的同时将句法和各种句式结构进行了整体梳理和复习巩固,既突出了词法、句法和习惯用法阶梯渐进,也强调了语法、逻辑和美学的阶梯渐进。

　　综上所述,本书是一本难得的训练口语的教材。但是,由于编者的能力和时间所限,书中错漏在所难免,敬请读者多提宝贵意见。

　　本教材在编写过程中得到了武汉科技大学研究生处、教务处和外国语学院的大力支持,编写组表示十分感谢。本书分别由武汉科技大学的康有金、华中师范大学的王瑞和河南教育学院的李明霞具体负责编写工作,由康有金负责全书的统稿。

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Part III Pragmatically

Part I   Theoretically

We begin the journey of the book, *Step by Step to Speaking Advanced English*, from psychological theories. We provide you with the kaleidoscopic scenery. This journey has five connected legs.

In Chapter 1, through reviewing the theory of Self-Efficacy, we lead the hikers to survive the stormy conditions by gaining mastery experience and vicarious experience. Starting from their own preliminary success, they will learn the experience to overcome unpredicted difficulties and obstacles. To do so, we enlighten readers to gain mastery experiences to establish firm self-concept, arousing them to gain vicarious experiences by learning from the failure of other people, persuading them into finding their true selves, analyzing the psychological factors affecting their efficiency.

In Chapter 2, through reviewing the theory of Discovery Learning, we try to discover whether we are well equipped with the necessary provision we need to cover the long hike. Readers of potential spoken English trainees will dig out their defects in aspects of spoken English as phonology, vocabulary, syntax and pragmatics from self-reflection and environment-interaction. These are where they will initiate their dynamics.

In Chapter 3, through reviewing the theory of Emotional Intelligence, we help the travelers to manage their emotions and also those of others to develop team sprit indispensable to finish the journey. By making use of such sources of high emotional intelligence as self-awareness, altruism, personal motivation, empathy, and the ability to love and to be loved by friends, partners, and family members, readers will be highly intelligent with their emotions. They will learn to understand themselves (their goals, intentions, responses, behaviors and all others), and their feelings. Thus they will finally develop their emotional intelligence in five domains: knowing their emotions, managing their own emotions, motivating themselves, recognizing and understanding other people's emotions, and managing relationships (managing the emotions of others).

In Chapter 4, through reviewing the theory of Constructivism, we inspire the hikers to reconstruct their own cognition of the nature of the journey. From the theories of these influential figures and important achievements of constructivism, readers of spoken English can construct their edifice of English. Their real practice in the real world rather than the

fictitious condition, their extemporaneous reaction to the stochastic topics, their reconstruction of their cognition, their internalization of knowledge through assimilation and accommodation, their active interaction with other peers, their collectivism established in group discussion, their convergence of the social and practical elements by intrapersonal process and interpersonal interaction all add up to construct his communicative competence.

In Chapter 5, through reviewing the theory of Gestalt Psychology, we encourage the hikers to enjoy the beauty along the whole journey. Readers are directed not to practice each part of speaking—phonology, morphology, syntax and pragmatics separately. They do them together as a whole. Because from the essence of Gestalt Psychology, they know the organic integrity of all the interactive parts carries greater significance than the sum of the isolated items. At the same time, they reformulate the six famous laws of the theory— Law of Closure, Law of Similarity, Law of Proximity, Law of Symmetry, Law of Continuity and Law of Common Fate, and finally get insight into the wisdom to serve their spoken English.

The proof of the pudding is in eating. Readers who are about to improve their spoken English can read this part to prepare themselves theoretically for spoken English.

Chapter 1

Find Your True Self

—from Self-Concept to Self-Esteem, and Self-Efficacy

Excellent oral performance lies in your strong self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a term used in psychology, roughly corresponding to a person's belief in their own competence. People with high self-efficacy think more of "whether I can do something well" than of "whether others can do it better than I". It has been defined as the belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals. It focuses on factors that create a meaning for individuals. It is believed that our personalized ideas of self-efficacy affect our social interactions in almost every way. Understanding how to foster self-efficacy is a very important goal for positive psychology because it leads to living a more productive and happier life. Now that self-efficacy is such a vitally important term in psychology, it is only rational of us to apply it to the training of spoken English.

Social cognitive theory psychologist Albert Bandura has defined self-efficacy as people's

belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations. Human beings' sense of self-efficacy can play a major role in how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges. The concept of self-efficacy lies in the center of Bandura's social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of observational learning and social experience in the development of personality. The main concept in social cognitive theory is that an individual's actions and reaction in almost every situation are influenced by the actions that individual has observed in others. People observe others acting within an environment whether natural or social. These observations are remembered by an individual and help shape social behaviors and cognitive processes. This theoretical approach proposes the idea that changing the way an individual learns his or her behaviors in early stages of mental development could have a far-reaching impact on his or her mental processes in later stages of development. Since self-efficacy is developed from external experiences and self-perception and is influential in determining the outcome of many events, it is an important aspect of social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy represents the personal perception of external social factors. According to Bandura, people with high self-efficacy, that is, those who believe they can perform well are more likely to view difficult tasks as something to be mastered rather than something to be avoided. Accordingly, they step courageously forward to meet the challenges. Low self-efficacy can lead people to believe tasks are harder than they actually are. As a result, people with low self-efficacy step cowardly backward to avoid challenges. This often leads to poor task planning, as well as increasing stress. As we have observed, people become erratic and unpredictable when engaging in a task in which they have low self-efficacy. By comparison, people with high self-efficacy often take a wider overview of a task in order to take the best route of action. They are shown to be encouraged by obstacles to make a greater effort. Self-efficacy also affects how people respond to failure. A person with high self-efficacy will attribute the failure to external factors, while a person with low self-efficacy will attribute failure to low ability. Those who have high self-efficacy in a task are more likely to make more of an effort and persist longer than those who have low self-efficacy. The stronger self-efficacy people have, the more active the efforts they make are. So we assume that people with high self-efficacy train themselves better speakers than those with low self-efficacy. Therefore, to be more proficient in spoken English people should first of all develop a strong self-efficacy.

Believing you can succeed in a chosen field is vitally important to you. You will be more inclined to take on a task if you believe you can succeed. People generally avoid tasks where their self-efficacy is low, but will engage in tasks where their self-efficacy is high. People with self-efficacy significantly higher than their actual ability often overestimate their ability to complete tasks, which can lead to difficulties. On the other hand, people with a self-efficacy significantly lower than their ability are unlikely to grow and expand their skills. Researchers have discovered that the optimum level of self-efficacy is a little above ability, which encourages

people to tackle challenging tasks and gain valuable experience.

This coincides with Vygotsky's discovery of the Zone of Proximal Development. It helps us understand the Middle Distance better. Standing too far away from the paint hanging on the wall we can't see it clearly, while too close, it is distorted. So a little above our ability is the optimum level we stand on to begin fostering the development of our self-efficacy in training our spoken English. This leads us to go a little beyond what we can do. With a definite goal visibly cherished in the distance in training us to speak English, we can constantly hold our perseverance to continue approaching to it. The more we practice, the closer we are to it. Then it will not be long before we are very good at spoken English.

The factors affecting self-efficacy as Bandura points to are four sources. We can make a good study of the sources to improve the self-efficacy of the trainees of spoken English so that we may facilitate their practice.

1　Mastery Experience

"Mastery experience" is the most important factor deciding a person's self-efficacy. Simply put, success raises self-efficacy, failure lowers it. Erik Erikson, German psychologist put it more clearly. "Children cannot be fooled by empty praise and condescending encouragement. They may have to accept artificial bolstering of their self-esteem in lieu of something better, but what I call their accruing ego identity gains real strength only from wholehearted and consistent recognition of real accomplishment, that is, achievement that has meaning in their culture." What Erik Erikson says reveals the essence of mastery experience. Experience gained in obtaining success is the ultimate factor that makes people believe they will succeed.

Your success in something you attempt to do strengthens your confidence more than any empty praise or condescending encouragement. Having this in your mind, you will make every possible preparation for your actual performance you will encounter in an important occasion to practice your spoken English, say an English corner or an English speech contest. One success is the preliminary to another even greater success. This chain goes on and on. You have mastered the secret to success, which is the mastery experience you gain in the preliminary attempt. As the Law of Inertia works, the experience you have gained in the previous speech or contest, lays solid ground for you to try again. Since you are psychologically prepared for greater and more success, you are on the way to be in the virtuous circle. A soldier filled with righteous indignation is bound to win. For the first appearance on the stage of a spoken English performance, you can never prepare enough. Once you finish the task, you feel the sweat taste of the harvesting fruit. The taste is still there on the tip of your tongue next time you try to fulfill a second task. The mastery experience you gain in the first attempt will benefit you the rest of your life. This experience can even transfer you to other fields apart from spoken English. Hold it on and live with yourself, especially when you have just gained some success. Cool your head

till the end. Don't get overwhelmed by your own achievements.

Now that failure lowers self-efficacy that will in turn lowers people's confidence to have more success, people should try their best to avoid failure. But failure is usually not what we can avoid. So getting well prepared for every speaking activity in advance is what people should keep in mind in the first place. Strong self-efficacy is vital to success. But it also breeds over-self-efficacy, which in turn adds to pride that will lead to failure. A soldier puffed up with pride is bound to lose. If you think you can succeed just because you have experienced many such similar occasions, you will then let loose of all your precaution for any possible consequence. You are on the edge of failure. So even if your self-efficacy is strong, you may not necessarily succeed next time since things are different. What facilitated your success the last time may not do the same this time. And the temporal-spatial circumstances are no longer the same, either. The audience, the topics and the environment are also changed. So you still need careful preparations to gain another success in speaking activity. We have in our mind from the beginning till the end that one success has little to do with the next except that it strengthens our self-efficacy so that we have more confidence to face the next still more challenging task.

Learning worthy lessons from our own personal experience is an individual philosophy. There are as many such philosophies as there are people trying to do it. Each individual is as different from the others as rice is from wheat. Your judgment of the situation, your appreciation of the environment, your strategy of communication, and above all, your communicative proficiency are all different from those of other people. Besides, your personality, your individuality, your character, your temperament, and above all, your way of understanding the society and universe, are all different from those of others. So other people cannot duplicate your success in spoken English training. Neither can you replicate their success in the English speech contest. So it is the best principle to follow to stick to your own practice to discover your new route to your own New Continent. Thus in accumulating your personal mastery experience we encourage more of your independence than of your collaborations with other trainees.

2 Vicarious Experience

"If they can do it, I can do it as well." This is a process of comparison between oneself and someone else. When people see someone succeed in something, their self-efficacy will increase meanwhile when they see people fail, their self-efficacy will decrease. This process is more effectual when a person sees himself or herself as similar to his or her own model. If a peer who is perceived as having similar ability succeeds, this will usually increase the observer's self-efficacy. Although not as influential as mastery experience, vicarious experience is a powerful influence when a person is particularly unsure of himself or herself. Therefore we apply this source of self-efficacy to improve spoken English trainees' self-efficacy to facilitate

their practice.

While mastery experience is necessary to establish your self-efficacy, vicarious experience is essential to maintain it. When you are feeling desperately in darkness for a way out of it, a tiny ray of sunlight can serve as a lift for the lame lamb to get over the threshold. Peer learning is such a timely lift. Peer imitations fall in three aspects.

First look up at the peers a little more advanced. Such peers can benefit most if you are a wise peer yourself. As "if they can do it, I can do it as well" echoes all the time within you, when you see your peers talking grammatically in English, you ask yourself why you are talking discursively; when you see your peers talking logically, you can't help asking yourself why you are talking fallaciously, why they improvisatorially, you preparedly, why they multi-culturally, you homo-culturally, they figuratively, you literally. The questions go on and on and in getting the answer to each of the questions, you approach a step toward perfection of your spoken English. As you go on practicing your spoken English this way, your pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, sentence patterns, idioms, figures of speech and so on will gradually improve. Your reservoir of spoken English constantly has live water to supply it. In building this big pool, your self-efficacy is built at the same time. And with a strong self-efficacy established, you are more confident to build the reservoir bigger and bigger. Since water in it evaporates all the time, getting more water to provide it with is quite necessary.

We are not only learning from our peers by looking up, we are also doing so evenly. Peers of the same qualification and standard can be also helpful to us. It depends on our attitude towards mutual benefit. As we know from lines in a poem written by Su Dongpo, a poet in the Song Dynasty, "Of Mountain Lu we cannot make out the true face, for we are lost in the heart of the very place." Su's philosophy tells us that we are often blinded by our own image of the world. When we are speaking, our focus is not on the listening but speaking itself. So the peer audience can hear better than we do. Generally, those closely involved cannot see as clearly as those who are not. Therefore, learning from the audience can benefit our spoken English, too. If you are learning earnestly, honestly and modestly, the peers are sure to point out where you are not appropriate in the previous speech you make. Learning this way is hundreds of times as effective as you do it alone. The learning of all the constituents of spoken English like vocabulary, idioms, figures of speech and proverbs is put in a kaleidoscopic background. This variable of practicing spoken English is more natural than the artificial classroom.

We are not only looking up and evenly at our speaking peers, and we may sometimes look down at them. That is, we sometimes talk to peers that are at present not on the same level of spoken English as we are. It is also beneficial to strengthen our self-efficacy. The way they look at us with lots of admiration, the way they listen to us with difficulty, yet still find it difficult to understand us completely, add to strengthen our self-efficacy. We teem with pride of achievements of months of even years of laborious work of practicing spoken English. As

Confucius once put it, "Among any three people walking together, I will find something to learn for sure." Once and again you will meet with some peers who want to share your experience with you. Your summarization of your past experience will help you put the previous fragments to formulate a whole as your own theory. But this summarization will lead you to some new discovery that you have in fact experienced a lot of ups and downs, many of which could have been avoided if you had done them again. These twists and frustrations have tolerated your temper. But they will save your peers' time. Thus the reflection from your past experience of spoken English training is a way of theorization. While we help others, we help ourselves; while we help ourselves, we help others. Tell our peers how to improve their spoken English as we improve ours.

3 Social Persuasions

Social persuasions relate to encouragements. These can have a strong influence—most people remember times when something was said to them significantly altered their confidence. While positive persuasions increase self-efficacy, negative persuasions decrease it. It is generally easier to decrease someone's self-efficacy than to increase it.

Our confidence to speak English as courageously as is necessary comes from many aspects, among which are social persuasions. When we have achieved some progress, the grown-ups including our teachers and parents will encourage us in time to promote us. Their encouragements make us believe what we have just achieved is worthy of our diligence. Following the Law of Good Continuation developed by Gestalt Psychology, we continue to achieve more progress for more praises from our authority. Our continuation to achieve more for more praises will add to strengthen our self-efficacy, which in turn gives us more confidence to have greater success. Thus social encouragements are also important sources for us to have strong self-efficacy.

However, as we grow more mature, we will come to see that these encouragements are external factors. The grown-ups sometimes are more strategic to see your potential for even better performance and their negligence of encouraging you is only a tactic to hint that you can even achieve more. So they will put off their praise of you till the next time when you reach their target. If you are intelligent enough to see their intelligence, you will be a wise wiz. And their negligence will motive you to take a longer step toward perfect in spoken English. Believing that their not praising you at the time being means you are more potential will strengthen your self-efficacy. And your strong efficacy will finally get greater accomplishment.

Social persuasions include your own appreciation of your true self. Self-approval is an important part of self-perfection. If you can approve yourself for what you have done, you do harm to your self-efficacy. Affirmation of yourself at different stages is necessary to strengthen your belief that you are doing what is right in the right course. So encourage yourself to continue

practicing spoken English in the chosen way. Affirmation from the authority is necessary, but that from yourself is indispensable. Sooner or later you will be your own authority.

4　Physiological Factors

In unusual, stressful situations, people commonly exhibit signs of distress. Suppose they are speaking their tongues fail them and they fail to find a proper word or expression to express what are in their minds as they expect, they may feel extremely embarrassed. A person's perceptions of these reactions can markedly alter a person's self-efficacy. If a person gets "butterflies in the stomach" speaking English in the public, those with low self-efficacy may take this as a sign of their own inability, thus decreasing their self-efficacy further, while those with high self-efficacy are likely to interpret such physiological signs as normal and unrelated to his or her actual ability. Thus, it is the person's belief in the implications of their physiological response that alters their self-efficacy, rather than the sheer power of the response.

So the realization that the "butterflies in the stomach" has nothing to do with their ability will protect one's self-efficacy. And next time when you speak in the public again, you will not have in your mind the dark image that you will fail to perform well again. Our psyche has a mechanic to do automatic repairs. We will in time make use of this mechanic to put ourselves right. Having inside our minds the ups and outside the downs is the best way to repair. It does not mean we forget how we make mistakes and make them again.

Realizing why you have "butterflies in the stomach" is also important for your self-repair. Your tongue slipped because there was a bat flying around the stage that suddenly blocked the light. And that was why you were scared to slip your tongue. It was also because you had taken the wrong reference that set you in a panic when you got on the stage. None of these has anything to do with your ability.

Our ability includes aptitude, an innate component of a competency to do a certain kind of work at a certain level, either physical or mental; intelligence, defined in different ways, from abstract thought, understanding, communication, reasoning, learning, planning, to problem solving; and skill, learning capacity to carry out pre-determined results often with the minimum outlay of time, energy, or both, either domain-general or domain-specific skills. Having examined the nature of ability, we come to see the irrelevance between our ill performance and our ability. Consequentially, "butterflies in the stomach" is just an eerie experience human beings all have now and then come across this way or another. We can just leave them alone and forget them. So find yourself back again and restore your self-efficacy.

From self-efficacy to spoken English efficiency, we need to apply the four sources well to the actual practice. We gain mastery experience from our own tentative trying to make progress in speaking to establish our self-efficacy. We obtain vicarious experience from peers more advanced in spoken English than us to improve our spoken English in all aspects. We attain such

experience from peers of the same qualification and standard to have mutual benefit, from those of lower qualification and standard to reflect on our retrospection what we have done well enough. Social persuasions both from grown-ups and from within ourselves can help to strengthen the well-established self-efficacy. Thus with our psyches well put right to protect us from being vulnerable of ruining our efficacy, we are ready to be good at spoken English.

Chapter 2

Prepare Your Potentials for Persistent Progress

—from Discovery to Development

Discovery learning is a method of inquiry-based instruction and is considered as a constructivism-based approach to education. It takes place in problem-solving situations where the learner draws on his own experience and prior knowledge and is a method of instruction through which students interact with their environment by exploring and manipulating objects, wrestling with questions and controversies, or performing experiments. Jerome Bruner is often credited with originating discovery learning in the 1960s.

Essential philosophy is "Practice in discovering for oneself teaches one to acquire information in a way that makes that information more readily viable in problem solving." This philosophy later became the discovery learning movement of the 1960s. The mantra of this philosophical movement suggests that we should "learn by doing". And in this chapter, the readers of this book are to know a novel philosophy—"learn to speak by discovery".

1　Why to Discover

Why is discovery so important in learners' spoken English? Discovery learning is a method that proves feasible and successful, which can be applied to any field related to learning and teaching. To learn to speak a foreign language well can not be achieved only by teachers' instruction. Rather, it is a long way that learners must take and explore by themselves. In this sense, discovery is of great value for spoken English. And it is justified as follows:

Firstly, learners' potentials in speaking may be tapped by discovery. Generally, one of the toughest barriers for language learners to open their mouth to speak out what they want is emotional factor, which largely impedes the exploitation of one's potentials in speaking. Actually, any one who dares not to speak or always speaks like chicken is just defeated by his/her imagined enemy. Therefore, this virtue monster will not disappear until learners know about

themselves objectively and accurately. By what? By discovery. Try to discover their own problems existing in every part of speaking and analyze them. Then, they may heave a sigh of relief, because they are not as bad as they used to imagine. Getting some improvement in the weak aspects, they may probably speak as the native speakers do. Even if they find lots of problems by discovery, it is better than they always idle away worried days. What they should do next is just to crack the nuts. Nothing is impossible once you discover a real you for yourself.

Secondly, learners' motivation in speaking can be intensified by discovery. "Practice makes perfect." is an age-old saying which we can not be more familiar with. However, as to practicing spoken English, learners, especially those who don't have opportunities to chat with native English speakers, don't seem to be motivated enough. In fact, it is unrealistic for every learner to practice oral English in authentic language circumstances. Therefore, the wise one would resort to other means to stimulate native speakers to keep on drilling rather than to give it up. Among all the choices, to urge on him by discovery is quite effective. On the one hand, once they have found out their problems in speaking by discovery, they may see the beacon light of hope. Then they will not be frustrated easily because they know exactly their symptoms and they will recover with time and efforts. On the other hand, if they realize the discrepancy between their way of speaking and the native speakers', they may find that the gap is not so large to bridge. They just arrange the most common words to express their ideas. Nothing is difficult. From their discovery, they would be highly motivated to actively practice their spoken English as much as possible. This inside motivation is the best engine for any kind of learning.

Thirdly, learners' unique method in speaking can be formulated by discovery. All roads lead to Rome. The point is whether or not they can find a road that suits them. Many language learners' failure in oral competence is largely due to their following suit blindly. One day, they were told reciting is very useful, so they spent every morning in carrying out the recipe. However, they were unable to make fluent and improvised speech in English after years of efforts; the other day, they were persuaded to improve their oral English by watching American TV series. From then on, they became crazy about those authentic materials only to find they still can not speak as grammatically and naturally as those handsome ladies and gentlemen. They should find their own way to success by discovery instead of just playing catch-up. Try to make clear their weak points, their edges, their habits, their interests and so on, and finally discover a unique method to improve their spoken English, which can not be told but to be done by themselves. In a word, no one can succeed by mere imitating, and discovery can help him/her figure out a way tailored for himself/herself perfectly.

Lastly, learners can always enjoy the benefits brought by discovery. To some extent, discovery learning is a life-long fortune for every learner, for it is not a dead learning theory but a revolutionary way of managing his/her learning. Once the learners insight its essence, and

successfully put it into practice, they will keep on making it serve them in other fields. More often than that, many learners apply discovery learning consciously at the very beginning. Day by day, they will find that once they recognize their problems, they analyze and attempt to solve them habitually. From consciousness to unconsciousness, they have made good use of and gotten benefits from Bruner's philosophy. So, for those who haven't seen the value of discovery learning, why not just begin with learning to speak by discovery?

2　What to Discover

What problems should the learners focus on when they "learn to speak by discovery"? In fact, they should pay attention to every detail of their speaking. But it seems to be so gigantic a project that they may not know where to begin. To make the work more systematically done, they had better scan the parts of speaking one by one, that is, try to discover their defects in phonology, vocabulary, syntax and pragmatics. In the following couple of paragraphs, we are to elaborate on the points they are required to care much about.

In phonology, pronunciation, punctuation, liaison and intonation are worth learners' attention. Have you ever felt sort of uncomfortable when you hear the expression "Thank you" be overwhelmingly pronounced like "三Q"? Have you ever heard of the joke that a male Indian said: "I'm dirty (thirty), and my wife is dirty (thirty), too." when he introduced his age and his wife's age to others. Though their non-standard pronunciations make you feel strange, the speakers themselves don't recognize their problems at all. They just keep their ways of speaking and go on making more people frown on them, if they don't discover the defects in their pronunciation. Therefore, as learners, they should check themselves right now and timely discover imperfection in them. Perhaps they are taking it for granted that what they speak is Received Pronunciation or General American, but actually they are playing the lead in others' joke on their poor pronunciation. Punctuation and liaison sound a contrary pair, but they play different roles in speaking. Punctuation or pause is usually used to group every meaningful chunk while liaison, sound of words running into each other, is the unconscious habit of speaking of native speakers. If the learners fail to pause when necessary but pause when unnecessary, they can't make their speech understood, no matter how standard their pronunciation is. And if they still utter in a way that every phone is exactly pronounced without liaison, they will not give any credit for their spoken English because no normal native speaker would take the trouble to make clear each phone in utterances for the sake of convenient and economical rules. Intonation is the variation of pitch while speaking to convey surprise or irony, or to pose a question. In English, intonation is usually used to distinguish question and statement. You should know a falling intonation for wh-questions (e. g. Who do you like?) and statements (e. g. She passed it narrowly.) and a rising intonation for echo or declarative questions (e. g. She passed the exam?). Yes or no questions (e. g. Did she pass the exam?)