

# PLAIN SPEAKING

by Wendy Harris

# 2

## 簡明英語會話 (中級)



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# Preface

## General aims

This book has been designed to supplement the students' course book. It is not intended to stand alone as a course book although it does follow the approved Syllabus for Secondary Schools.

The main objective of the book is to present structural elements of the English language which the students have already met, in natural situations. This approach will hopefully encourage students to use more natural English and help them to understand why and how the language is used in different situations.

Since the objective is natural conversational English, the teacher should aim for maximum student talking time during classes. In large, classes this is often difficult simply because of lack of time. The technique of choral drilling can be used to make sure that the whole class is familiar with the main structures, vocabulary items and idiomatic phrases in each unit. It is suggested that as soon as the teacher feels the students can manipulate these essentials, he encourages small group and pair work to give each child the maximum opportunity of speaking. Stronger students can be placed with weaker ones to help out while the teacher can move around monitoring groups and dealing with any difficulties that occur.

## Unit breakdown

There are twenty units in this book. Each one is divided into four sections. The first section is called *Dialogue*. This consists of a short *Situation* paragraph together with an illustration to set the scene for the dialogue itself. The *Situation* is followed by short *Questions* to make sure the situation has been fully understood. The *Dialogue* comes next.

The second section in each unit deals with some aspect of pronunciation. This section covers sound production, intonation and stress patterns. Generally speaking, emphasis is put on only one of these three in each unit, but the others should not be completely ignored. If two contrasting vowel sounds are being taught, the teacher should make sure that when the students practise these sounds in the context of words and sentences, their stress and intonation patterns are acceptable.

The last two sections are both called *Language Practice*. They highlight the main structural points which have been presented through the dialogue and offer further practice of these in different situations. Teachers will notice that the first Language Practice section in each unit

is generally much more controlled than the second. This is to make sure that the students have adequately consolidated the structures and will be comfortable when they try to manipulate them in freer conversational situations.

### **Suggestions for presentation and use of each section**

**1 Situation** Either as a short reading comprehension or aural comprehension. The illustration can provide the basis for general questions and 'scene setting' before the students read or hear the text. After presenting the text, the teacher can then check that the situation has been fully understood by using the Questions orally round the class. More questions can be added if the teacher feels particular vocabulary items are unfamiliar to the students. If the teacher decides to present the Situation orally, it is suggested that he allow the students to read the text silently after the Questions have been completed. Understanding the Situation is essential for the effective use of the dialogue which follows.

**2 Dialogue** If the dialogue is presented as an aural comprehension exercise on tape, the procedure might be as follows:

- (i) Pre-teach necessary vocabulary items.
- (ii) Teacher plays tape all through while students look at the picture, *not* the text.
- (iii) Teacher asks check questions to make sure the students have the gist of the conversation.
- (iv) Teacher plays tape section by section — perhaps three or four lines at a time, breaking at an appropriate point — and asks more detailed check questions. Students should still *not* see the text.
- (v) Teacher then plays tape line by line or sentence by sentence, and asks the class chorally and/or individually to repeat each section, copying the intonation and pronunciation.
- (vi) Teacher plays tape once more while students follow text in their books.
- (vii) Teacher allows students to read text silently in their own time and ask any questions they need to.

If a tape is *not* used, the teacher may read the dialogue himself or assign two students to read it after having prepared it for a homework exercise. After the dialogue has been presented and the teacher is sure

the students have fully understood it, the class can be divided into groups or pairs to practise by themselves. After a few minutes, the teacher might reproduce a skeleton dialogue on the board using only key words from the text. The students should close their books and try to re-create the dialogue using the skeleton. A final rounding off exercise which is always fun and tends to stick in the students' minds is *acting out*. The teacher may choose one or two couples to re-arrange the furniture at the front of the class and then act out the scene with movements, appropriate gestures and facial expressions. Non-acting students can be involved as stage managers, directors, prompts (usually essential!) etc. This free stage activity is particularly valuable if the students can be encouraged to criticise each other's performances constructively and, needless to say, in English. At lower levels the teacher will have to be instrumental in this criticism by asking simple *yes/no* questions like 'Can you hear him?' 'Is he speaking slowly?' 'Is that right?'.

**3 Pronunciation** The elements of pronunciation, stress and intonation which are covered in this section of each unit are all based on problems likely to arise from the dialogue. The pronunciation point may be related to the structure, particular vocabulary items or the way words are linked together in connected speech. Examples are given from the Dialogue and/or Language Practice sections so that the teacher can refer back and give the exercise a meaningful context. Pairs practice is used frequently, both for the production of individual sounds and the formation of intonation patterns. It is suggested that, once the teacher has given two or three examples and drilled them thoroughly with the whole class, he should then divide the students into groups or pairs and let them practise at their own speed. Once the idea of self-help has been established, students will be eager to check their partners and will become much more able to spot mistakes in their own oral production. It is unreasonable to expect perfect pronunciation from anyone but a native speaker so teachers should not set their sights too high. They should insist on clarity and make sure that the students are comprehensible both to the teacher and each other. The Pronunciation section should take the least classroom time of all the sections.

**4 Language practice** The idea of these sections is to give the students plenty of manipulation of the structures which occur in the Dialogue. Again choral drilling for one or two examples will give the students a solid base. They can then practise together in groups or pairs, concentrating on accuracy, speed and good pronunciation. During

lesson preparation, teachers might find it helpful to collect together some extra material appropriate to the particular unit, such as maps, flashcards, etc. This material can be introduced as an extension of the Language Practice exercises and form the basis for free-stage work once the teacher is sure that the students are able to cope adequately with the structures. The real test comes in free-stage work when students are encouraged to make up their own situations and dialogues. It quickly becomes apparent whether they have grasped the concept of the structure and are able to manipulate it comfortably or not.

### Social register and idiom

The English language is not just a collection of words governed by complicated rules. It is a means of communication which also enables its speakers to express emotions and delicate shades of meaning. People decide how to behave towards each other in any social situation not so much by what they say but how they say it. The word 'yes' can express anger, impatience, joy, surprise, horror and many more emotions, simply by a change in the pitch and intonation of the speaker's voice.

Similarly, attitudes towards people, situations and ideas can be made very clear by the use of simple idioms. Without these idioms, the language sounds stilted and 'bookish'. It lacks a natural flow and warmth. Teachers will find idioms in some of the units in this book, phrases like 'I'm not surprised' and 'Poor old Steve'. Students should be made aware that these idioms cannot be translated or understood word by word. They must be taken as a unit, treated, if you like, as one word. They can most effectively be presented to the students through simple situations.

Social register means being able to select the appropriate group of words from a selection of phrases or sentences which all basically mean the same thing. 'Shut the door!' 'I wonder if you'd mind shutting the door, please,' and 'It's rather chilly in here, isn't it?' all mean 'I am cold and I want you to shut the door'. Which one you chose would depend on whom you were talking to and where you were. Social register, like idiom, is another means of establishing relationships towards people and attitudes towards things. It gives colour, warmth and above all fluency to the language. It is a very necessary part of English, which would sound rather like a talking computer without it.

## PHONETIC SYMBOLS USED IN THE TEXT

### Vowels

/æ/	as in	cat
/ʌ/	as in	cup
/ɪ/	as in	seat
/i/	as in	sit
/e/	as in	pen
/ɜ/	as in	work
/ɑ/	as in	part
/ʊ/	as in	could
/aɪ/	as in	high
/eɪ/	as in	day
/aʊ/	as in	now
/əʊ/	as in	home
/ɔ/	as in	door
/ə/	as in	above
/o/	as in	hot

### Consonants

/r/	as in	red
/dʒ/	as in	edge
/tʃ/	as in	much
/s/	as in	six
/ʃ/	as in	ship
/ð/	as in	this
/f/	as in	fat
/l/	as in	life
/h/	as in	hold
/ŋ/	as in	sing

# Contents

## UNIT

- 1 The Happy Valley Youth Club
- 2 Raising Money
- 3 The New Club Room
- 4 Breakdown
- 5 The Mona Lisa?
- 6 The Injured Captain
- 7 Crisis
- 8 Locked In
- 9 The Long Hot Summer
- 10 Losing Lucy
- 11 Interviewing Bill
- 12 Maths and Football
- 13 Re-decorating
- 14 Mind the Window!
- 15 Babysitting
- 16 A Wet Night
- 17 The Reluctant Speaker
- 18 Geoff
- 19 Drinks for Everyone
- 20 Film Night

## PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

- /æ/ contrasted with /ʌ/
- Liaison with /r/
- Contrasting /i/ /ɪ/ and /e/
- Intonation of tag questions
- /dʒ/ contrasted with /tʃ/
- /ɜ/ contrasted with /ɑ/
- /s/ contrasted with /ʃ/
- /ʊ/ as in *could*
- Placing main stress
- Elision in past simple and continuous
- /aɪ/ as in *why* contrasted with /eɪ/ as in *day*
- Changing main stress
- /ð/ contrasted with /f/
- /aʊ/ contrasted with /əʊ/
- /ɔ/ contrasted with /ɒ/
- Intonation of polite requests
- Elision and liaison with 'must' and 'mustn't'
- /l/ and /r/ practice
- Weak and strong pronunciation of *have* and *has* – /həv/ /hæv/ /həz/ /hæz/
- Elision and liaison in 'How long have they . . . ?' and 'How long has he . . . ?'

## LANGUAGE PRACTICE

'too/enough' with 'much' and 'many'

some/any/much/many • present and past simple of 'to be'

Comparison of adjectives • -er than • as ... as • not as ... as

a few/a little/a lot • more/fewer/less • past simple

Comparative and superlative adjectives

Comparative and superlative adverbs with present and past simple

Present and past simple with adverbs of frequency • 'bring' and 'take'

'can/can't' and 'could/couldn't' for ability to do something

ask/tell someone to do something • ask how much/many ...

Past simple and continuous: ... was doing while ... was doing •  
... was doing when ... did

Indirect questions in the present • Reported speech

Indirect questions in the past • Reported speech

Gerund of purpose: 'It's for -ing'

Present perfect simple + 'just' • 'been' contrasted with 'gone'

Imperative • Present perfect simple + 'already'

Polite requests and offers

'want to' contrasted with 'must'

'used to'

Present perfect contrasted with past simple

Present perfect continuous + 'for' and 'since'

# 1 The Happy Valley Youth Club

## Dialogue

### Situation

Bill Lam owns a bookshop. In his spare time, he runs a youth club in Happy Valley. The youth club might have to close because there isn't enough money. Bill's called a committee meeting to discuss the situation. Mary Tong's the publicity officer, Steven Lee's the secretary and Pamela Au-Yeung's the treasurer. They don't want the club to close.



### Questions

- 1 What does Bill Lam do?
- 2 What does he do in his spare time?
- 3 Where's the youth club?
- 4 Why might the club have to close?
- 5 Who's at the meeting?
- 6 How many committee members are there?
- 7 What jobs do they do on the committee?
- 8 Do they want to keep the club open?

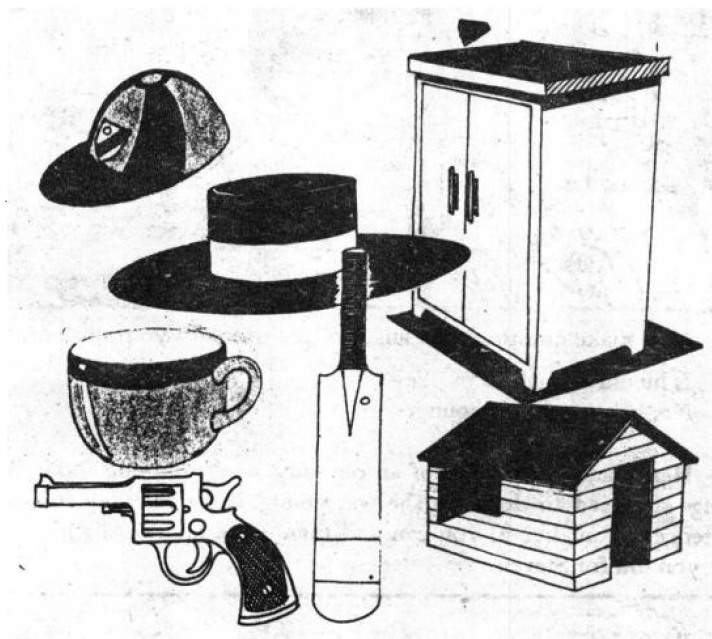
### Dialogue

- Bill:** I've called this meeting because the club's in trouble.
- Mary:** What's wrong, Bill?
- Bill:** We might have to close the club.
- Mary:** Oh no! Why?
- Bill:** There isn't enough support.
- Steven:** I know there aren't enough members, but this room's too small. We haven't got enough space for more people.
- Bill:** Secondly, there isn't enough money.
- Pamela:** Bill's right. There isn't much money left.
- Bill:** We need more money and bigger premises.
- Steven:** We don't want the club to close. What shall we do?
- Bill:** Raise some money. Quickly.

# Pronunciation Practice

Look at these pictures and ask questions about each one like this:

- 1 What's this? It's a .....
- 2 What's that? It's a .....
- 3 Is that a .....
- 4 Yes it is./No, it isn't. It's a .....



In some words the vowel sound is /æ/ and in the rest it's /ʌ/. Both sounds are short. Now practise these pairs of words with your partner. Say the words quickly and ask if they are column 1 sounds or column 2 sounds.

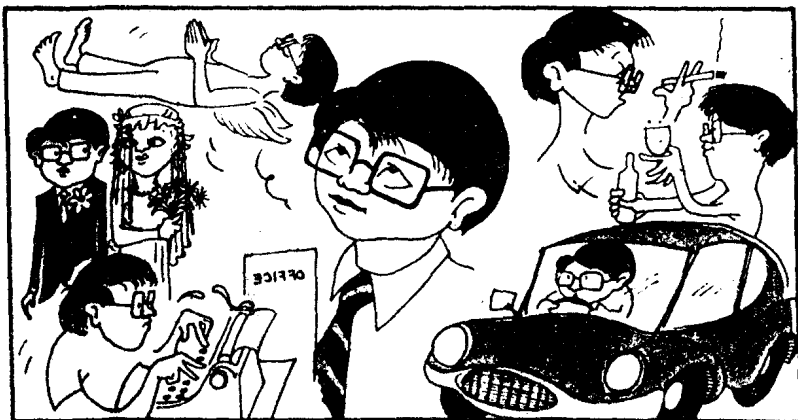
/æ/  
cap  
bat  
hat  
cat  
bag  
fan

/ʌ/  
cup  
but  
hut  
cut  
bug  
fun

## Language Practice 1

Look at this picture of Steven and make as many *too young to* statements as you can. Here's an example:

He's too young to smoke.



Now make questions and answers like this with your partner:

- A: Is he old enough to smoke?  
B: No, he's much too young.

Here's another picture of an old lady. She's thinking about all the things she used to do when she was young. Make as many *too old to* sentences about her as you can and then make questions and answers like you did for Steven.



## Language Practice 2

Here's a list of things the club needs:

more	support
	members
	money
	space
	activities
	equipment
	facilities

Make short conversations with your partner like this:

- A: The club needs more support.  
B: Isn't there enough?  
A: The club needs more members.  
B: Aren't there enough?

It will be difficult to find a new club room because Hong Kong is small and crowded. Here are some statements about Hong Kong and its problems. Can you complete them by adding *there's too much* or *there are too many*.

- 1 Housing is a problem because ..... people.
- 2 Parking is a problem because ..... cars.
- 3 Working in Central is a problem because ..... noise.
- 4 Walking home in the rush hour is a problem because ..... pedestrians.
- 5 Catching a bus to school is a problem because ..... passengers.

## 2 Raising Money

### Dialogue

#### Situation

Bill and the committee organised a fete to raise money for the youth club. The fete was held in Victoria Park last weekend. Bill and his wife sold second-hand books from their shop on the book stall. Pamela and her friends had a cake stall. Mary had a white elephant stall. Her friends gave her a lot of things that they no longer wanted to keep. Steven had a games stall and the rest of the youth club members organised a concert and sports.



#### Questions

- 1 How did the committee raise money for the club?
- 2 Where was the fete held?
- 3 When was it held?
- 4 Did Bill and his wife sell new books?
- 5 What did Pamela and her friends do?
- 6 Did Mary sell elephants?
- 7 What's a white elephant stall?
- 8 What did Steven do?

#### Dialogue

- Steven:** How much money did we make, Pam?
- Pamela:** We made quite a lot.
- Steven:** There were lots of people at the fete, weren't there?
- Pamela:** Yes. Bill's very pleased.
- Steven:** Did you have any cakes left on your stall?
- Pamela:** No. We sold them all.
- Steven:** A lot of people came to my games stall. There weren't any prizes left.
- Pamela:** The concert was good, wasn't it?
- Steven:** Yes, and the sports were very successful, too.
- Pamela:** What have you got in that box?
- Steven:** Some things from the white elephant stall. Nobody wanted to buy them.
- Pamela:** I'm not surprised. What are they?

Practise these words slowly. Make a good, clear /r/ sound at the beginning of each one.

river      rain      roof      rubber

writing      wristwatch

Notice that *wr* is pronounced /r/.

Now practise saying these sentences smoothly by joining the /r/ sounds onto the next word.

There isn't much.

The |re isn't much.

There aren't many.

The |re aren't many.

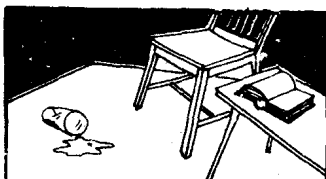
There are a lot.

The |re a |re a lot.

# Language Practice 1

Look at these pictures and practise the conversations with your partner.

- 1 There's some water on the floor.  
How much is there?  
There isn't much.



- 2 There are some people outside.  
How many are there?  
There aren't many.



- 3 There's some ink on this shirt.  
How much is there?  
There's a lot.



- 4 There are some cockroaches in this cupboard.  
How many are there?  
There are a lot.



Now make up more conversations with your partner using these pictures.

