

ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

exercises in

SOUND SEGMENTS

INTONATION

AND RHYTHM

English Language Institute Staff

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an intensive course in English

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INTONATION, AND RHYTHM*

ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE STAFF

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PREFACE

The Lessons in Pronunciation contained in this book are part of the 1953 revision of An Intensive Course in English for Latin-American Students by the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan. They incorporate the results of approximately 12 years of experience teaching English to some 5000 Latin-American students. In this teaching the measurement of the effectiveness of the materials and the methods was always the practical one of understanding the flow of speech in an English speaking community and of being easily understood in such a community. The very existence of the English Language Institute depended upon the success of the teaching in enabling native speakers of Spanish and Portuguese with little or no command of English to live in the United States and to study and investigate in our medical schools, clinics, graduate schools, and research centers. For the acquisition of a practical understanding and use of English only a limited time was available and only those materials and methods that proved themselves essential and efficient could be retained for this course. The 1953 revision represents thus the lesson materials that have survived this continuing critical process in the hands of a number of different teachers.

Basically the materials rest upon a descriptive analysis of the English sound system carefully compared and contrasted with the sound systems of Spanish and Portuguese.¹ For this basic work Professor Kenneth L. Pike is largely responsible. Some of these background materials have now been published in separate books such as, for example, his Intonation of American English, and his Phonemics. He has however, continued to contribute his criticism and suggestions in our struggle with the practical teaching problems of the Intensive Course. Many of the teachers who have dealt with our materials have given much to make them effective. The work of the English Language Institute has been a truly cooperative enterprise by a devoted and generous staff. Some names need special mention, Dr. Robert Lado - who also contributed the drawings, Gerald Dykstra, Lois McIntosh, Eunice Pike, Ethel Wallis, Charles Michalski, Robert Maston, Gloria Goldenberg - who has taken such a personal interest in the production of the book in its present format. But the chief burden of directing the teaching of pronunciation, of gathering and sifting and utilizing the experience of the staff, and of writing the lessons that appear here has been carried by Dr. Betty Wallace Robinett.

Charles C. Fries

¹In these particular lessons the special features of Portuguese are not included.

INTRODUCTION

Why teach pronunciation?

When a student of a foreign language who has had some instruction according to the usual methods first hears the spoken language he often fails to understand what has been said. He usually claims that the vocabulary of the utterance is too difficult for him. When a written text is placed before him he can, many times, interpret the same material correctly and react accordingly. It is not, then, only a lack of knowledge of vocabulary items which is causing the trouble. It is the inability of the student to recognize the sounds of the language.

For example, when a Spanish-speaking student learning English is confronted with a picture of a woman washing a baby and another in which the woman is watching a baby, he understands the difference in the two situations. But when he hears the English sentence The mother is watching the baby, he is often unable to decide which of the two actions is being described. Why? Because his decision usually depends upon the ability to differentiate between the final sounds of wash and watch, sounds which are extremely difficult for Latin-American students to distinguish because this contrast is not used in Spanish to distinguish meaning.

With the development of linguistic science has come the realization that the sounds of a language operate in a system. We must teach this sound system just as we teach the system of structure. Many words are distinguished solely by a difference of vowel sound as in peal, pill, pale, pal, pool, pull, pole, Paul. Likewise there are many words that are differentiated by a single consonant sound as in the series fin, pin, bin, tin, din, kin, sin, shin, thin. These contrasts in sound must be taught just as we teach the contrasting structures He's a doctor and Is he a doctor, pronounced with the same falling intonation.

The Phonemic Alphabet

In teaching English pronunciation we soon see that there is very little help that we can get from the spelling of the words. Through, cough, hiccough, though reveal four different pronunciations for the one spelling ough. On the other hand, need, read, believe, machine, receive, we, people, key, contain eight different spellings for the vowel sound in the word need. Thus we are soon aware that English is not well spelled, i.e., there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the sounds as they are uttered and the letter or symbol which appears in the written word. What does this mean to a student who is trying to learn English as a foreign language? At first many students try to pronounce the word as it is spelled. They often try to pronounce the c of muscles or the e in table. It is necessary, therefore, to have some consistent representation of the language so that the student can have a clearer understanding of the distinctive sounds which exist in the language.

It is from the realization that the sounds of a language can be systematically described and represented that the phonemic alphabet has developed. A phonemic alphabet is a systematic representation of the distinctive sound units as they are found in meaningful contrast with each other in the language. Thus [p] is contrasted with [b] as shown by such words as pin and bin; [t] contrasted with [d] in time and dime. This alphabet then contains one symbol for each significant sound, and each sound which produces a contrast in meaning is represented by a particular symbol. Therefore in the previously mentioned series of words fin, pin, bin, tin, din, kin, sin, shin, thin, each distinctive consonant sound is represented by a different symbol. It is this principle of contrast which is important in teaching the distinctive sounds within a language, and the use of a phonemic alphabet is

valuable in teaching these sounds. The alphabet on p. vii which we call the "special alphabet," is a phonemic representation of the sounds of English. It symbolizes only those differences in sound which produce a contrast in meaning, and it contains only a few symbols which are different from the ordinary letters of the spelling alphabet.

It should be emphasized here that the alphabet is not an end in itself. It is only a means to an end. Through its use the teacher can help the student fix in his mind these minimal differences of sound. This does not mean that when the student sees the symbol [i], for the vowel sound of fill for example, that he will immediately know how to pronounce that sound. From the symbol alone, it would be impossible to know what the sound is. The sounds must be taught as sounds, never as symbols. It only means that when the student sees that particular symbol he knows that the sound it represents is different from that represented by [i], which is the vowel sound of feel. The symbol thereby becomes a memory clue for the student and helps him to make the distinction between feel and fill.

It is also necessary to symbolize the significant intonation sequences which occur within the language. This symbolization helps the student remember the intonation of English which he hears orally in class.

The Introductory Lesson

The symbolization, in fact, has been found to be of such importance in the English Language Institute that the entire first day (four hours of class) in the Intensive Course is devoted to familiarizing the student with this symbolization so that the teachers may make maximum use of it throughout the course.

It was for this reason that the Introductory Lesson was devised. This lesson is divided into four parts, each part requiring about one hour of classroom practice. Part I is a general introduction to the phonemic alphabet and the intonation markings. Part II gives special attention to the symbols in the alphabet which are unfamiliar to the student. Part III is a series of drills on rhythm and intonation as represented by the intonation markings. Part IV attempts to give the student actual practice in using the symbolization in learning short conversations. It has been found that the use of this Introductory Lesson has materially improved the student's progress in learning the language.

Exercises for recognition and production of sounds

Teaching the pronunciation of a foreign language has often meant teaching the students merely to produce the sounds of the language. But pronunciation of a foreign language is a two-fold process. It involves aural receptivity or the recognition of sounds as well as the actual production of sounds. That is, a student is faced with the problem of recognizing the significant sounds in the language he is learning before he can learn to produce them. Exercises for recognition are a regular part of the pronunciation lessons of this textbook. These exercises consist of pairs of words with minimal sound differences. The use of such exercises facilitates the recognition of these contrasts in sound. Such minimal pairs as man, men or bad, bed can be used to enable the student to hear the two significant sounds in English which we symbolize as [æ] and [ɛ].

A very simple drill for practicing the recognition of this and other distinctive differences can be made by arranging minimal pairs of words on the blackboard in columns thus:

1 [æ]	2 [ɛ]
[mæn]	[mɛn]
[læs]	[lɛs]
[læd]	[lɛd]
[pæn]	[pɛn]
[bæt]	[bɛt]
[sæt]	[sɛt]

The teacher pronounces pairs of words in order to make the student aware of the contrast.¹ When the teacher is certain that the students are beginning to hear these distinctions he can then have them actively participate in the exercise. As the teacher pronounces a word from these lists the student identifies it by giving the column number in which that word appears. This gives the student specific practice in recognizing the differences, a step which is necessary before he can produce the differences accurately.

The same type of exercise can be set up with sentences as well as words. Such a pair of sentences as The man built the house, The men built the house can be numbered and contrasted in the same way. These exercises can be varied by having a student go to the blackboard and point to the word or sentence instead of calling out the number as the teacher pronounces it. The students can also write down the number of the word or sentence as the teacher gives it.

Commencing in this way with aural perception or recognition of these distinctive contrasts the students are ready for oral production, the second part of the two-fold pronunciation process. The same exercises which were used for recognition can be used to teach production. The students can first pronounce in imitation of the teacher all of the words in one column and then those of the other. Secondly, the two sounds need to be contrasted by having the student pronounce a pair of words such as pan, pen to discover whether or not they can produce a clear distinction between the sounds. After the student has demonstrated his ability to make this contrast he can then select an isolated word from the lists, pronounce it, and have the teacher or another student identify it. This exercise can be carried on around the class as a series of production and recognition drills for each student, with one student pronouncing the word and his neighbor identifying it.

Another drill can be devised by having one student pronounce a word from the columns on the blackboard, and requiring the next student to pronounce the opposite word of the pair. This results in a recognition and production exercise for each student. These drills can be varied further by using the techniques described above for recognition exercises.

¹Care must be taken to pronounce such contrasts with the same intonation on both words so that the sole difference between the words will be the sound under study.

Aids to accurate production of sounds

There are in general three means of teaching specific sound segments: 1) by imitation, 2) by articulatory description, and 3) by comparison with the nearest sound in the student's native language.

Imitation of the teacher's pronunciation is the first step for the student, but imitation is usually not sufficient. Certain devices to illustrate the general position of the tongue in articulating sounds can help the students in attaining accuracy of pronunciation. Visual aids such as diagrams and charts provide a more vivid means of explanation. These diagrams seem to give the student a better grasp of the manner of production of these sounds than any number of descriptive paragraphs. The particular type of diagram which has been found helpful in teaching the pronunciation of English speech sounds is the simple face diagram. These will be found throughout the lessons.

Often by comparing and contrasting the English sound to the nearest sound in Spanish the Spanish-speaking student is able to improve his pronunciation. Therefore throughout the lessons there are footnotes to the teacher to call attention to these points of comparison and contrast. These contrasts can often be pointed out in the articulatory descriptions illustrated by the face diagrams.

The organization of the lessons is such that attention is centered not only on the contrastive sounds in English, but also on the sounds of English which may be confused with Spanish sounds. These lessons were prepared after a thorough analysis was made of the sound system of English and Spanish.

Classroom atmosphere

Classroom atmosphere is especially important in classes dealing with pronunciation. Unless the student feels very much at home with his teacher and with his fellow students, he will not be able to achieve the freedom necessary for learning to produce sounds that are strange to him. Imitation of the teacher (even to an exaggerated degree at first) is essential in striving for an acceptable pronunciation of a foreign language. The student tends to be self-conscious if he is not completely at ease. If the classroom atmosphere is one of congeniality and freedom the student will find it easier to imitate and exaggerate the sounds which seem peculiar to him. Strain or an ill-at-ease feeling prevents development of the flexibility which is essential in learning new patterns of sound and structure.

Individual differences must also be considered in connection with imitative ability. To hold all students responsible for the same standard is an impossibility in something as unpredictable as imitative ability. The teacher needs to discover the utmost capacity of each student in this regard and hold him responsible for that capacity. This will provide a goal for each individual which will not be beyond his reach.

Over-correction may discourage the student and interruption of recitation sometimes disturbs him. It is better therefore to concentrate on the correction of a limited number of items at a time until the student can master them, and then add more until he finally reaches a state of satisfactory production in the whole utterance. It is better also to wait until the student has finished his utterance, then correct it and ask him to repeat it. In some cases a few words of encouragement prove an effective stimulus even though the student has not achieved the accuracy the teacher might desire.

Specific Aims of Lessons I-X

The specific aims in the first ten lessons of this volume are four in number: 1) to enable the student to distinguish significant features of the sound system in English; 2) to enable the student to produce all significant vowel contrasts and the [r] sound satisfactorily; 3) to enable the student to use the 2-4 intonation curve in all utterances; and 4) to reinforce certain items of grammar which may present a problem in pronunciation.

Pronunciation is an oral process. Therefore it is well to remember that the progress of a student is in direct proportion to the amount of his actual practice in hearing and producing the language. With this approach in mind and with the systematic use of the recognition and production materials in this volume, the student will soon learn to comprehend the language more easily and speak it more accurately.

Specific Aims of Lessons XI-XX

The aims of lessons XI-XX are also four: 1) to enable students to produce all significant consonant contrasts satisfactorily, plus some purely phonetic (allophonic) features which are outstanding in contrast to Spanish, e.g. English [l]; 2) to enable the student to use the 3-2 and the 2-2-4 intonation curves in addition to the 2-4 intonation curve; 3) to enable the student to produce longer utterances with smooth sentence rhythm; and 4) to reinforce further items of grammar which may present a problem in pronunciation.

Specific Aims of Lessons XXI-XXXV

One of the primary aims of lessons XXI-XXXV is to enable the students to produce consonant clusters and combinations satisfactorily. Appearing in great abundance and with great frequency in English are such clusters as [st] study, [fr] friend, [ɔt] watched, [lpt] helped, etc. Students whose native language does not permit such clusters find great difficulty in producing them accurately and with facility. Moreover, they find it difficult in producing them accurately and with facility. Moreover, they find it difficult to hear these combinations clearly. A continued effort is made in these ten lessons, to enable students to produce significant vowel and consonant contrasts satisfactorily in longer and connected contexts. Maintenance of acceptable intonation and rhythm patterns in longer contexts is also emphasized here.

The last five lessons in this volume (Lessons XXXI-XXXV) contain reviews of the sound segments which, on the basis of our experience, students find most difficult to produce correctly and in which they persist in making errors. An attempt is also made in these last lessons to give the students practice in maintaining accurate production of the sounds, rhythm, and intonation of English in less controlled situations. That is, unrehearsed talks be given by the students on many subjects in order to find the persistent errors which the student has retained. The readings on such subjects as "Politics and Government," "Music in the United States," and "Religion in the United States" are included for the purpose of practice on intonation and rhythm. There is no limit to the amount of "free" conversation which can be elicited from the students on these topics thereby giving the instructor an opportunity to discover the errors which the students are continuing to make. It is felt that by the use of these exercises the student will be able to achieve in actual speaking situations an accuracy which will be retained outside of the classroom.

Specific exercises and drills in Lessons XXI-XXXV

In lessons XXI-XXXV as in the earlier ones the use of minimal pairs of words or sentences in the exercises has been found most effective. Continued use of such minimal

pairs as washed [wɔʃt] and watched [wɔʃt] facilitates the recognition and production of such clusters as [ʃt] and [ʃt].

An exercise for enabling the student to recognize and distinguish differences which involve consonant clusters has been introduced in these lessons. Thus in such a pair of sentences as the students understand the lessons, the student understands the lessons the primary aim is for the student to distinguish between the form student as contrasted with students and the form understand in contrast to understands. Likewise, the repetition of these pairs of sentences enables the student to gain control of the production of such clusters as [nts] or [ndz].

This exercise can be used in the same manner as the minimal pairs of words and sentences were used in the other lessons, that is, they can be numbered and the students can be asked to identify them by number. For a more varied type of exercise, however, the student can be asked to supply a correlative sentence to the one which he hears. Thus if the teacher, in using the aforementioned pair of sentences, pronounces the student understands the lessons, the student can reply he understands the lessons. Or if the teacher says the students understand the lessons the student in turn can show that he has recognized the sentence correctly by saying they understand the lessons.

Various combinations of consonants which occur within phrases have been found to cause a problem for many students of English. Thus special drills, "flexibility exercises," have been introduced to enable the student to gain control of his tongue in producing the combinations of consonants such as [z-θ] in he's thinking, [z-ð] in where's the man, [ʃt-ð] in washed the dress, [st-l] in the last list, etc.

Supplementary material

In lessons XXI-XXXV some supplementary information concerning English is presented to the students. These items have been found necessary for foreign students attempting to understand and use English. One such item is a discussion of dialectal and individual differences in pronunciation in the United States (Lesson XIX).

Since English is not always spelled in a manner consistent with its pronunciation the students need every possible aid to learning the pronunciation of words which they may see for the first time. In an attempt to help the students make use of the regularities of spelling which do exist in English, a list of the most common regularities in English vowel spelling is supplied (Lesson XXVI).

Summary

Upon completion of the thirty-five lessons of pronunciation the student should have acquired a basic knowledge of the sound system in English, including intonation and rhythm patterns. Knowledge of the system, however, does not necessarily signify that the student can produce the sounds, intonation, and rhythm of English with complete accuracy. Actual practice on all the points of contrast in the system of English and also on those points which contrast with the native language of the student is continuously urged. By the use of the specific drills and exercises contained in all of these lessons the student will finally obtain freedom in the pronunciation of the language, that is, he will be able to produce the language accurately and with ease.

THE SPECIAL ALPHABET¹

CONSONANTS

[b]	[bi]	be	[p]	[pe]	pay	[ŋ]	[siŋ]	sing
[d]	[du]	do	[r]	[rum]	room	[θ]	[θɪŋk]	think
[f]	[fɔr]	four	[s]	[se]	say	[v]	[θe]	they
[g]	[go]	go	[t]	[taɪm]	time	[hw]	[hwet]	what
[h]	[hom]	home	[v]	[vɪʊəl]	vowel	[ʃ]	[ʃi]	she
[k]	[kəm]	come	[w]	[wi]	we	[ʒ]	[yʌʒʊəl]	usual
[l]	[let]	late	[y]	[yu]	you	[tʃ]	[tʃɜrʃ]	church
[m]	[mæn]	man	[z]	[zɪro]	zero	[j]	[jo]	Joe
[n]	[no]	no						

VOWELS

[i]	[it]	eat	[u]	[du]	do	[aɪ]	[aɪ]	I
[ɪ]	[ɪt]	it	[ʊ]	[gʊd]	good	[aʊ]	[naʊ]	now
[e]	[let]	late	[o]	[no]	no	[ɔɪ]	[bɔɪ]	boy
[ɛ]	[lɛt]	let	[ɔ]	[sɔ]	saw			
[æ]	[mæn]	man				[]		accent
[ə]	[bət]	but						
[a]	[nat]	not						

¹ This is a simplified phonemic representation of the sounds of English.

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INTRODUCTORY LESSON

PART I¹

1. Three essentials of good pronunciation
2. The need for a special alphabet
3. The sounds of English.
4. The marking of intonation
5. Rhythm

1. Three essentials of good pronunciation

- a) The sounds of the language
- b) The intonation of the language
- c) The rhythm of the language

The sounds of the language are important. They differentiate words. Notice the following examples:

think sink search church eat it

Intonation is produced by the sequences of pitch (tone) of the voice. Each language has its characteristic sequences of pitch. Listen carefully to the intonation of English.

He's coming. the university in the class

English rhythm is characterized by the regular recurrence of emphasized syllables. Listen carefully to the rhythm of English.

answer the class
an answer in grammar
a good answer is interesting
The class in grammar is interesting.

2. The need for a special alphabet

A special alphabet is necessary in learning to pronounce English. There are more sounds in English than there are letters in the spelling alphabet.

- a) The same spelling may have various pronunciations. Observe the different pronunciations of ough in the following words.

<u>bough</u>	[au]	<u>although</u>	[o]	<u>cough</u>	[ɔf]
<u>through</u>	[u]	<u>bought</u>	[ɔ]	<u>hiccough</u>	[əp]
				<u>enough</u>	[əf]

¹ Each of the four separate parts of the Introductory Lesson requires about one hour of class work.