

PRACTICE FOR BETTER PRONUNCIATION

英语语音语调实训教程

主编◎袁利



西南交通大学出版社

Practice for Better Pronunciation

英语语音语调实训教程

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// PREFACE

Practice for Better Pronunciation aims to help beginners or intermediate learners work on their pronunciation. The practices and activities in this book are designed for those who want to improve English pronunciation as well as for those who wish to communicate confidently. Learning a language needs to begin with the pronunciation and although most learners can read and write well, they may face communication problems. This book can improve their pronunciation abilities in order to express easily and communicate clearly and fluently. *Practice for Better Pronunciation* focuses on problems of sounds, spellings, syllables, the stressed, the weak, linking, rhythm, pause and intonation, etc.

How is the book organized?

The introduction part talks about the basic description of sounds and the different accents of English. The main part, section A to C, is about English phonemes, the problems in connected speech including consonant clusters, the stress and rhythm, linking etc., and an introduction to English intonations. The last part includes references, phonological terms, foreign words reading etc.

The connected and communicative speech and intonation are the focuses of the book and phonemes are self-studied if necessary. The activities in each unit maximize students' talking time and provide sufficient practice to improve the communicative abilities. "Learning for communication" of each unit is about the cultural information or background of English-speaking countries, which focuses on some pronunciation problems. The special focuses in this book can be listed as follows:

- Minimal pairs for distinguishing the difficult sounds;
- Emphasis on speech abilities improvement;
- English culture for communication;
- Additional strategies for long-term pronunciation improvement;
- A group of words at the beginning of each unit, which may be a sentence or a few lines of a poem etc. for an pre-reading.

How does the teacher use the book?

This book aims to help students gain a better understanding of pronunciation and improve their speaking and listening skills. At the beginning, the teacher can test students

to list their problems. Teachers' assessments can give students the proper guidance, which is good to set their realistic goals and make reasonable measures. And then, teachers can ask students read the two or three lines of words in every unit of this book, which is a lead-in and mainly about the key points of each unit. Finally, in order to make students catch up easily, some suggestion given to the teachers are as follows:

- Make students read through the basic description in the introduction before they learn;
- Guide students to choose their specific focus;
- Individualize the curriculum to meet the diverse needs learners;
- Emphasize the natural, relevant communicative contexts through the listening and speaking activities.

How do students use the book?

When students learn a foreign language, they should know:

First, language starts with the ear. If learners want to have a better pronunciation, they should listen to English as much as possible. Sometimes listening is not for the meaning but for the sound of it, i.e. understanding the meaning as well as correct sounds. Audio input, including English songs, films, TV series, or radio program can be helpful.

Second, imitation is an important way to learn a language. The ability of imitation gives us the gift of speech, so imitation and practice is a basic and golden key to gain better pronunciation.

At last, speech communication is the final goal of learning instead of sounds correcting or words reading. Remember to say English aloud, not silently, to use English both in classroom and after class.

How to improve?

Some suggestions are for you as follows:

- Working on pronunciation individually as well as with partners, small groups;
- Engaging yourself in the roles of both speaker, listener and monitor to recognize, distinguish, correct the clear and unclear pronunciation forms;
- Not be afraid of mistakes, because they are a natural, necessary part of the process of pronunciation improvement;
- No more emphasis on absolute accuracy because you are not native speakers, and the purpose of speaking is to be easily understood;
- Attitude is an important element in pronunciation improvement;
- Good motivation is the key to good learning.

Acknowledgement

The book may be helpful to learners, and the author will appreciate those who give useful encouragement, helps and suggestions, and those who drive the author to finish the first edition. Meanwhile the author would gratefully express the appreciation to John Wells, Ann Baker, Mark Hancock, Martin Hewings, the book writers of *English Intonation: An Introduction, Ship or Sheep, English Pronunciation in Use* and *Pronunciation Practice Activities: A Recourse Book for Teaching English Pronunciation*, because of their great ideas of pronunciation teaching. Meanwhile, some useful audio materials, are taken and adopted into exercises in this book, which are not for commercial use but for students' classroom activities. The author would salute these writers and carry on the sincere appreciation to their contributions. The book presents students some pronunciation knowledge, some helps in listening and speaking, as well as some cultural inputs, which should be inevitably revised gradually and the author will acknowledge thousands of thanks to editors for their helps and efforts.

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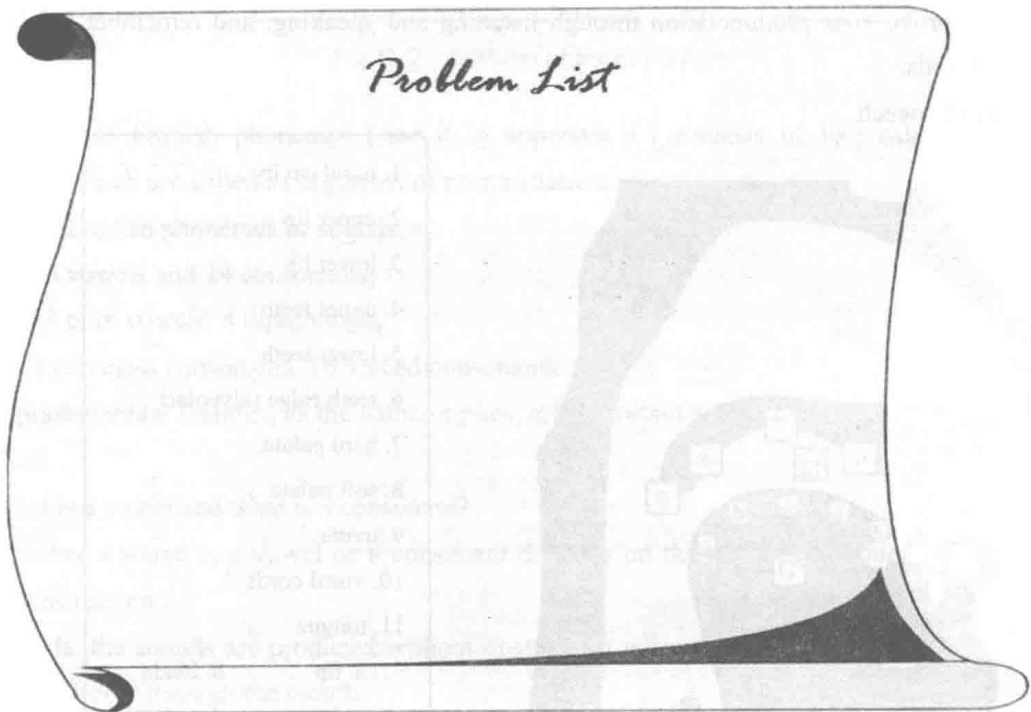
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Introduction

Pronunciation problems

Students' pronunciation problems vary from one to another, so they need a general test to find out what they are. Only when they know the pronunciation status and problems can students find the proper way to solve them. Therefore, learners need not only a test, but also a problem list, which aims to alert themselves and their teachers to make the best of book and help improve their pronunciation indeed. Teachers will design some listening, reading and speaking activities in advance and help students recognize their own pronunciation problems.



What is the better pronunciation?

Speaking activities and speech communication are based on better pronunciation for an intermediate learner, but what is the better pronunciation? To some extent, the person who has the better pronunciation should have the following abilities:

- Have one acceptable or standard accent, British accent or American accent.
- Make sounds correct (including vowels, consonants) and make each sound in English way as native speakers do.

- Make the speech proper and correct in “stress patterns, rhythm patterns” and any other discourse features that carry proper meaning in communication.
- Make the speech natural and “the weak and strong, the linking, the pause” should be involved in natural speaking process.
- Make “tone patterns, intonation patterns” right, and proper according to the meaning you want to express.

Personal goals’ setting

When you set your pronunciation goals, you need to be realistic. Three factors, which you should take into consideration, are the purpose of learning, the level of English and the approach of improvement.

You might have difficulties in consonants and vowels, or you may have been struggling with the stress, rhythm and intonation, or you may have problems of fluency. Problems with sounds can influence your understanding of words. Problems with stress, rhythm and intonation, can affect your understanding of the meaning of speakers. Therefore, you need set personal goals to improve gradually, and start with the correct sounds, and then the fluency of the speech.

Try to improve your pronunciation through listening and speaking, and remember to choose the authentic materials.

Organs of speech

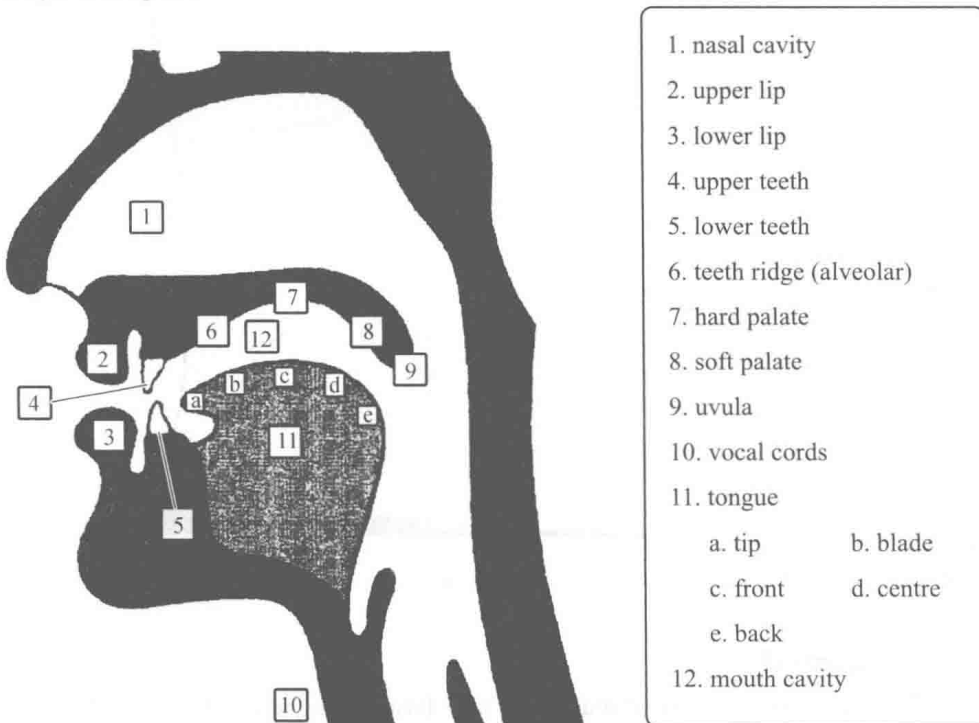


Fig. 0-1 Organs of speech

For beginners of pronunciation learning, it is important to know organs of speech (see Fig 0-1). A sound can be pronounced, many organs of speech will be involved, but two important parts will be

mainly discussed: nasal cavity and mouth cavity, because the flow of air can be easily recognized. Most of English sounds are produced in the mouth cavity and only three nasals in nasal cavity.

- √ Focus on the four parts in the mouth cavity: lips, teeth, tongue and the cover of mouth.
- √ Tell the difference between them: the teeth ridge, the hard palate and the soft palate.
- √ Distinguish the different parts of tongue because of the different roles in sounds' pronunciation.

Basic description of sounds

English pronunciation is about two aspects: sounds pronunciation and something in connected speech, which are described as follows (see Fig. 0-2)

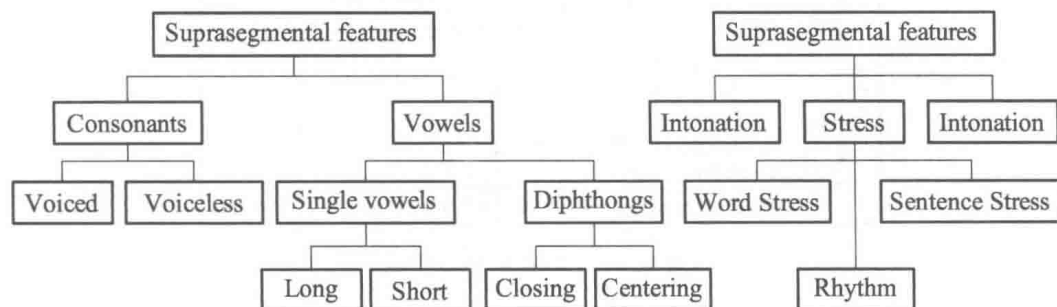


Fig. 0-2 Features of pronunciation

The set of English phonemes (see it in appendix 1) consists of two categories: vowels & consonants, which are called as segments of pronunciation.

- √ 44 English phonemes or sounds;
- √ 20 vowels and 24 consonants;
- √ 12 pure vowels, 8 diphthongs;
- √ 8 voiceless consonants, 16 voiced consonants.

Suprasegmental features, as the name implies, are important features of the speech, including stress, intonation...

What is a vowel and what is a consonant?

Whether a sound is a vowel or a consonant depends on the air going through the mouth with or without obstruction.

Vowels: the sounds are produced without obstruction when the flow of air passes through, that is, the air goes freely through the mouth.

- √ 12 basic vowels, called primary cardinal vowels, are pure vowels;
- √ 8 diphthongs, the combinations of two pure vowels;

Vowels are often discussed from four aspects (as in Fig. 0-3 & Fig. 0-4):

- √ The position and height of the tongue;
- √ Open or close teeth;
- √ Unrounded or rounded lips.

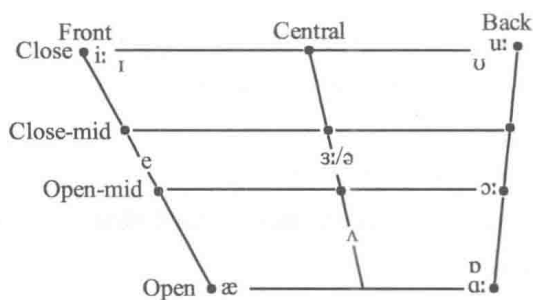


Fig. 0-3 Primary cardinal vowels

Tongue ↑ High ↓ Low	Vowels				Diphthongs		
	Front		Back		End at front → End at back		
	i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	eɪ	ɪə	əʊ
	e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ɔɪ	ʊə	aʊ
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	ɑɪ	eə		
Lips can be:							
Spread	Neutral	Rounded		Closing	Centring	Closing	

Fig. 0-4 Features of vowels

Consonants: the sounds are produced with a complete or partial obstruction, which prevents the air from going freely through the mouth.

Consonants are often discussed from three aspects (as in Fig. 0-5^①):

- ✓ State of glottis: the voiceless and the voiced;
- ✓ Manner of articulation: plosives or stops, fricatives, affricates, nasals, lateral, approximants;
- ✓ Place of articulation: bilabial, dental, alveolar consonants...

		Place of articulation →											
		bilabial		labio-dental		dental	alveolar		palato-alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal	
Manner of articulation	plosive	p	b				t	d			k	g	
	fricative			f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ		h
	affricate									tʃ	dʒ		
	nasal		m					n				ŋ	
	lateral							l					
	approximant		w					r			j		
		State of glottis											
		Voiceless						Voiced					

Fig. 0-5 Consonants

Actually, English 44 sounds are difficult to describe, but learners can distinguish each of them according to the following descriptions.

① Fig. 0-3, Fig. 0-4, Fig. 0-5 are rearranged, based on the chart of IPA (2018).

Table O-1 Description of vowels



Vowels (D. J. ^①)		Vowels (K. K. ^②)	Words	Tongue position	Tongue height	Teeth status	Lips	Long /short	
V O W E L S	1	i:	i	see	front	high	close	spread	long
	2	ɪ	ɪ	miss	front	high	mid-close	neutral	short
	3	e	ɛ	letter	front	middle	mid-open	spread	short
	4	æ	æ	jam	front	flat	open	spread	short
	5	u:	u	too	back	high	close	rounded	long
	6	ʊ	ʊ	foot	back	high	mid-close	rounded	short
	7	ɒ	ɑ	bottle	back	middle	mid-open	rounded	short
			ɔ	cross	back	middle	mid-open	rounded	short
	8	ɔ:	ɔ	four	back	flat	open	rounded	long
	9	ɑ:	ɑ	car	back	flat	open	neutral	long
			æ	ask	front	flat	open	spread	short
	10	ɜ:	ɜ/ɜr	first	centre	middle	mid-open	neutral	long
11	ə	ə	about	centre	middle	mid-open	neutral	short	
		ə ^③	metre	centre	middle	mid-open	neutral	short	
12	ʌ	ʌ	bus	centre	flat	mid-open	neutral	short	
D I P H T H O N G S	13	eɪ	e	table	front	middle-high	to mid-close	closing	long
	14	aɪ	aɪ	time	front	flat-high	to mid-close	closing	long
	15	ɔɪ	ɔɪ	voice	front	middle-high	to mid-close	closing	long
	16	əʊ	o	no	back	middle-high	to close	closing	long
	17	aʊ	aʊ	how	back	flat-high	to close	closing	long
	18	ɪə	ɪr	ear	centre	high-middle	mid-open	centring	long
	19	eə	ɛr	chair	centre	middle	mid-open	centring	long
	20	ʊə	ʊr	tour	centre	high-middle	mid-open	centring	long

Sounds like /i:/ and /ɑ:/ can be called vowels, because the air freely goes through the mouth, and sounds like /s/ and /d/ should be called consonants, because we can clearly feel it difficult for the air to pass through the mouth. However, some sounds are not easy to recognize, for example, English sound /h/ in “hay” and /w/ in “way” are consonants, and they do not obstruct the flow of air more than some vowels do.

① The list of symbols in British English is from the 15th edition of *Everyman's English Pronunciation Dictionary* by Daniel Jones.

② The list of symbols in American English is from *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English* by John S. Kenyon & Thomas A. Knott.

③ /ɜ/ and /ɜr/ refer to the sound with “r” in GA, and /ə/ without “r”; /ɒ/ in GB has two different forms in GA, /ɑ/ and /ɔ/ in words watch /wɑtʃ/, long /lɔŋ/; so does /ə/, /ə/ and /ə/ in words about /ə'baʊt/, teacher /'titʃə/.

Table O-2 Description of Consonants



Consonants (D. J.)		Consonants (K. K.)	Words	State of glottis	Manner of pronunciation	Place of pronunciation	
C O N S O N A N T S	1	p	pen	voiceless	stop /plosive	bilabial	
	2	b	best	voiced	stop /plosive	bilabial	
	3	t	top	voiceless	stop /plosive	teeth ridge	
	4	d	day	voiced	stop /plosive	teeth ridge	
	5	k	cat	voiceless	stop /plosive	velar	
	6	g	glass	voiced	stop /plosive	velar	
	7	f	after	voiceless	fricative	labio-dental	
	8	v	very	voiced	fricative	labio-dental	
	9	s	set	voiceless	fricative	alveolar	
	10	z	zoo	voiced	fricative	teeth ridge	
	11	θ	thanks	voiceless	fricative	inter-dental	
	12	ð	that	voiced	fricative	inter-dental	
	13	ʃ	cash	voiceless	fricative	alveo-palatal	
	14	ʒ	Asia	voiced	fricative	alveo-palatal	
	15	h	hat	voiceless	fricative	glottal	
	16	tʃ	much	voiceless	affricate	alveo-palatal	
	17	dʒ	large	voiced	affricate	alveo-palatal	
	18	m	more	voiced	nasal	bilabial	
	19	n	now	voiced	nasal	teeth ridge	
	20	ŋ	long	voiced	nasal	velar	
	21	l	lovely	voiced	lateral	teeth ridge	
	22	r	road	voiced	approximant	teeth ridge	
	23	w	hw	way	voiced	Approximant /glide	bilabial
	24	j	j	usual	voiced	approximant /glide	palatal

The phonetic transcriptions in this book will use Daniel Johns' transcription as the standard.

Accents of English

More than 3.72 billion people can speak English in the world and some of them regard English as the first language or mother tongue, some of them the second language^①. English, as an international language, has many different accents in different areas. Precisely, American English, Australian English etc. are the results of colony conquering. Even in the same English speaking country, different dialects can be found, for example, dialects from southern England, northern England, Scotland, and Wales are

① English is the first language in more than 40 countries and places and second language in about 27 countries according to the statistics in *The Future of English* by David Graddol, 2000.