

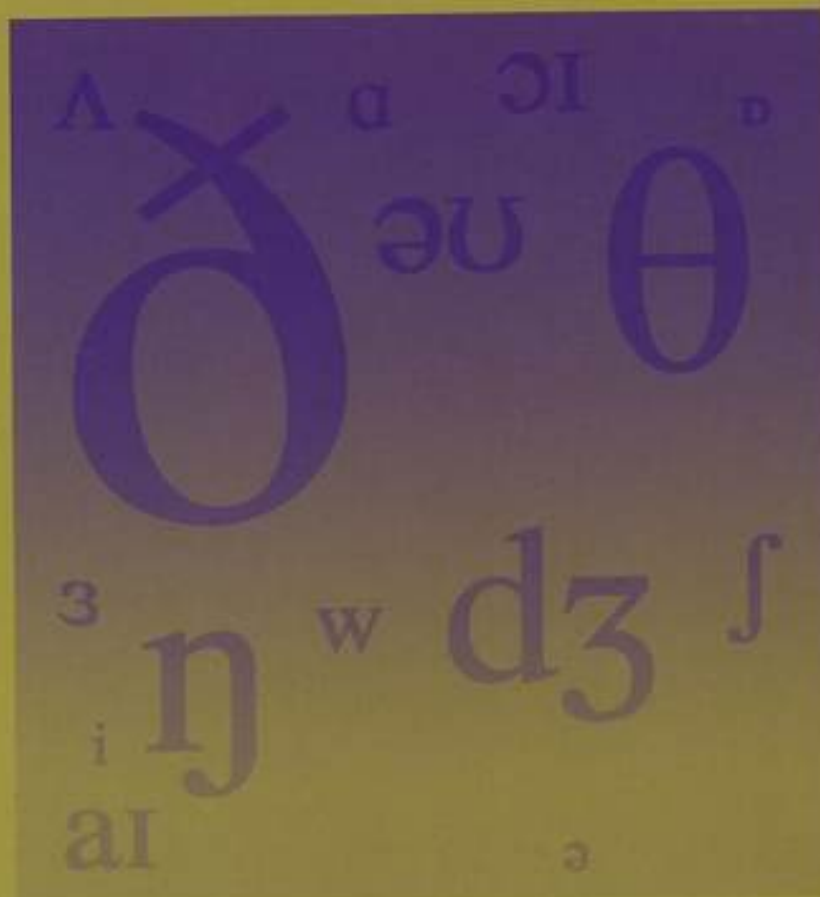
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English Pronunciation **in Use**

Self-study and
classroom use



Mark Hancock

English Pronunciation in Use

Self-study and classroom use

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To the student

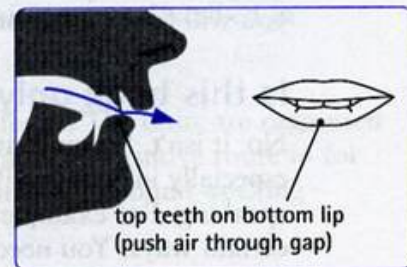
English Pronunciation in Use is a book to help students of English to work on pronunciation, for both speaking and understanding. It is written mainly for students of intermediate level.

What will I need?

You will need a cassette or CD player to listen to the recorded material that goes with this book. It will be very useful if you have equipment to record your own voice, so that you can hear your own progress. This symbol  indicates the track number for recorded material i.e. CD or cassette A, track 1.

Also, when you are studying individual sounds, it is sometimes useful if you have a mirror. With this, you can compare the shape of your own mouth to the mouth in diagrams like this one from Unit 8.

See page 163 for a labelled diagram of the mouth and throat.



How is *English Pronunciation in Use* organised?

There are 60 units in the book. Each unit looks at a different point of pronunciation. Each unit has two pages. The page on the left has explanations and examples, and the page on the right has exercises. The 60 units are divided into three sections of 20 units each. Section A is about how to say and spell individual sounds. Section B is about joining sounds to make words and sentences. Section C is about pronunciation in conversation.

After the 60 units, there is a fourth section, Section D, which contains the following:

- Introduction to phonemic symbols
- Pronunciation test
- Guide for speakers of specific languages
- Sound pairs
- Sentence stress phrasebook
- Glossary

At the end of the book there is a Key with answers.

With the book, there is also a set of four cassettes or CDs, one for each section of the book.

What order shall I do the units in?

It is better if you balance the work that you do from the three sections: first, do a unit from Section A, then a unit from Section B, then a unit from Section C, then another unit from Section A, and so on.

So, for example, you could begin like this:

Unit 1, then Unit 21, then Unit 41, then Unit 2, etc. At the end of each unit, you will find a note telling you where to go next.

If you have problems in hearing the difference between individual sounds in Section A of the book, you will be directed to one of the exercises in Section D4 *Sound pairs*.

You may want to focus your work more closely. If so, here are more ideas:

- Do the *Pronunciation test* in Section D. Count your score for each section. If you did specially well in any one of the sections, then you may want to miss the units in that section of the book.
- Look at Section D3 *Guide for speakers of specific languages*. Find your own language (the languages are in alphabetical order). The notes there will tell you which units are less important for speakers of your language and which sound pairs in section D4 are recommended.

Do I need to know the phonemic symbols?

It is possible to use this book without knowing phonemic symbols. However, it is useful to learn them because they make it easier to analyse the pronunciation of words. Also, many dictionaries use phonemic symbols to show pronunciation. In Section D1 *Introduction to phonemic symbols*, you will find a table of the phonemic symbols, plus a set of puzzles to help you learn them.

Is this book only about pronunciation in speaking?

No, it isn't. Pronunciation is important for both listening and speaking. In many of the units, especially in Sections B and C, the pronunciation point is more important for listening than speaking. For example, when they are speaking fast, many native speakers join words together in certain ways. You need to be able to understand this when you hear it, but it does not matter if you do not speak in this way. People will still understand you. Pronunciation points like this are shown with a grey background and this sign:

Important
for listening

It is your choice whether you want to just focus on listening, or whether you want to try to speak that way too.

What accent of English is used in this book?

For a model for you to copy when speaking, we have used only one accent, a Southern British accent. But when you are listening to people speaking English, you will hear many different accents. If you are not used to these, it can be very difficult to understand what is being said. For this reason, you will hear a variety of accents in some parts of the listening material for this book.

What is the *Sentence stress phrasebook*?

It can help you to speak more fluently if you say some very common expressions with a fixed pronunciation, like a single word. In Section D5 *Sentence stress phrasebook*, some common expressions are given, and they are grouped together by the way they sound: by their *sentence stress* or *rhythm*. You can practise listening and repeating these to improve your fluency.

What is in the *Glossary*?

In this book, there are some words which are specific to the subject of pronunciation. You can find an explanation of the meaning of these words in Section D6 *Glossary*.

How should I use the recordings?

When you are working with the recording, you should replay a track as often as you need to. When you are doing an exercise you may also need to pause the recording after each sentence to give you time to think or to write your answers. When you are instructed to repeat single words there is a space on the recording for you to do so, but if you are repeating whole sentences you will have to pause the recording each time.

To the teacher

Although *English Pronunciation in Use* has been written so that it can be used for self-study, it will work equally well in a class situation. In a classroom context, the learners can get immediate guidance and feedback from the teacher. Also, they can practise some of the dialogues and other exercises in pairs. You can direct students with particular pronunciation difficulties to do specific units on their own.

In order to simplify the jargon in the book, many of the terms you may be familiar with are not used. For example, the term *initial consonant cluster* is not used. The unit on initial consonant clusters is called *Unit 24 Oh, no snow!: Consonants at the start of syllables*. The following is an explanation of how the book is organised, ending with the map of contents described in phonological terms.

Section A aims to cover the sounds of English and their main spellings. The units are organised by letters rather than sounds. The intention is that this would be a more intuitive route in for non-specialist users. At the same time, this organisation helps to highlight sound-spelling regularities in English.

The vowels are covered first via the five vowel letters of the alphabet, and their 'long' and 'short' pronunciations, for example the letter A as in *tape* or *tap*. The remaining vowel sounds are presented as vowels which typically occur before a letter R. The consonant sounds are presented through either their most common spelt letter, or by one of their main spellings. The ordering of these units is more or less alphabetical.

The units in Section A are not presented as minimal pairs. Vowels are paired according to their spelling, not their potential for being confused with one another. Consonants are paired mainly where they share the same place of articulation. The units were not organised as minimal pairs for two reasons:

- Any sound can form a minimal pair with a number of other sounds, not just one. Organising units according to minimal pairs would therefore lead to a huge number of units and a lot of duplication.
- Many minimal pairs will be redundant for any given learner, so learners need to be selective. Potentially confusing minimal pairs are gathered together in Section D4 *Sound pairs*. Learners are encouraged to select from these according to their own needs.

Alternatives are included for those areas of pronunciation which are especially susceptible to variation across different varieties of English. For example, where there is a letter R with no vowel after it, many speakers do not pronounce the R and many other speakers do pronounce it, and both varieties are presented.

Many vowel sounds are treated as local variants of vowel + R. For instance, the diphthong /ɪə/ is initially presented not as a sound in itself, but as a variant of /i:/ when it occurs before R or L.

Some of the pronunciation points in the book are potentially irrelevant to some learners. For instance, for learners whose aim is mainly to communicate with other non-native speakers of English, accurate production of the sounds /θ/ and /ð/ is probably not necessary. Research suggests that where speakers substitute these sounds with other approximations such as /t/ and /d/, communication is not impeded (Jennifer Jenkins: 2000)*. In many such cases, readers are advised of this fact in the units. These pronunciation points are nevertheless included. My feeling is that a distinction can be drawn between what we *aim* for and what we *settle* for. Thus, a learner might *aim* for /θ/ and *settle* for /t/ (or /s/).

Similarly, even in cases where a learner does aspire to communicate with native speakers, there are many pronunciation features where receptive competence would be sufficient. For instance, such a learner would need to understand speech with weak forms, but not necessarily produce it. This is indicated in the units by a grey background shade and the sign 'Important for listening'. Nevertheless, there may be exercises which ask the learner to produce such features. I have observed that in many cases, there is no better awareness-raiser than to *attempt* to produce, even if the aim is receptive competence.

Section B focuses on pronunciation units which are bigger than individual sounds. The units are in three blocks, dealing in turn with syllables, word stress and sentence stress. As the title of the section suggests, these features are looked at more or less in isolation from a communicative context. For instance, in the case of word stress, it is the form as it may appear in a dictionary that is dealt with here. Similarly, in the case of sentence stress, we focus on an unmarked form in Section B. For example, 'What do you think?' is presented with the stress pattern OooO. In a specific conversational context, this same sentence could be said with the stress pattern ooOo, but sentences in conversational context are dealt with in Section C rather than Section B.

Section C focuses on pronunciation features which emerge in the context of conversation. These include discourse organisation, prominence and tone. Note that there is a lot of grey shading in this section, indicating material that is more important for listening than for production. It is felt that while productive mastery of many features of intonation will be beyond the reach of many learners, they may nevertheless benefit from a receptive awareness of them.

Note: The material in Section D3 *Guide for speakers of specific languages* is based on the pronunciation notes in *Learner English* (Michael Swan and Bernard Smith: 2001)**. Nevertheless, I have had to extrapolate from the information presented there, as many of the minimal pairs presented in this book are not specifically mentioned in the pronunciation notes in that book.

*Jenkins, J. 2000 *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
**Swan, M. and B. Smith 2001 *Learner English* (Second Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Map of contents described in phonological terms

A Letters and sounds	B Syllables, words and sentences	C Conversation
1 Introduction to vowels and consonants	21 Introduction to syllables	41 Repair strategies
2 The vowel sounds /eɪ/, /æ/	22 Introduction to word stress	42 Pronouncing punctuation
3 The consonant sounds /b/, /p/	23 Introduction to sentence stress	43 Grouping words: chunking
4 The consonant sounds /s/, /z/	24 Syllables: initial consonant clusters	44 Keeping your speaking turn: floor holding
5 The consonant sounds /d/, /t/	25 Syllables: final consonant clusters	45 Discourse markers in story telling: back-channel responses
6 The vowel sounds /i:/, /e/	26 Syllable structure and -s endings	46 Discourse markers: 'throw away' words
7 Weak vowels /ə/, /ɪ/	27 Syllable structure and -ed endings	47 Discourse markers: signalling next stage: change-of-state marker
8 The consonant sounds /f/, /v/	28 Word stress: two-syllable words	48 Pitch in pronouncing direct speech
9 The consonant sounds /g/, /k/	29 Word stress: compounds	49 Contrastive stress
10 The sounds /h/, /w/, /j/	30 Word stress: suffixes with penultimate stress	50 New and old information
11 The vowel sounds /aɪ/, /ɪ/	31 Word stress: suffixes with ante-penultimate stress	51 Emphatic stress on important information
12 The consonant sounds /ʃ/, /dʒ/, /tʃ/	32 Sentence stress: short imperatives	52 Contrastive stress on alternatives
13 The consonant sounds /l/, /r/	33 Sentence stress: unstressed words	53 Contrastive stress: correcting
14 The vowel sounds /ɑ:(r)/, /eə(r)/	34 Sentence stress: weak forms of contractions of pronouns	54 Introduction to tone: intonational idioms; fall and rise tones
15 The consonant sounds /m/, /n/, /ŋ/	35 Sentence stress: weak forms of contractions of <i>be</i>	55 Intonation: open and check questions
16 The vowels sounds /əʊ/, /o/	36 Sentence stress: weak forms of contractions of auxiliaries	56 Tonic stress placement
17 The consonant sounds /θ/, /ð/	37 Sentence stress: weak forms of articles, prepositions and connectors	57 Intonation: old and new information
18 The vowel sounds /ʌ/, /ʊ/, /u:/	38 Linking consonant to vowel	58 Intonation: continuing or finishing tones
19 The vowel sounds /ɜ:(r)/, /ɔ:(r)/	39 Linking vowel to vowel	59 Intonation: opinion, disagreement, tag questions
20 The vowel sounds /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/	40 Assimilation and elision	60 High tones: evaluative comment

1

Bye, buy

Introducing letters and sounds

A

In writing, words are made of letters. In speech, words are made of sounds. Letters are not always the same as sounds. For example, the words *key* and *car* begin with the same sound, but the letters are different. We can see this clearly if we read the two words in phonemic symbols: /ki:/, /ka:/. In the examples below, word pairs have the same pronunciation but different spelling:

buy	bye	sun	son
weak	week	weigh	way
too	two	write	right



Note: There are some exercises to help you learn the phonemic symbols in Section D1.

B

There are two kinds of sounds: consonant sounds (C) and vowel sounds (V). For example, in *duck*, there are three sounds, consonant–vowel–consonant (CVC). The number of sounds in a word is not usually the same as the number of letters. We can see this if we write the word using phonemic symbols (see Section D1). For example, *duck* is /dʌk/.

C

Writers often play with the sounds in words. For example, if they are finding a name for a cartoon character, they might:

- repeat the first sound, for example **Donald Duck**.
- repeat the final sound or sounds (this is called rhyme), for example **Ronald McDonald**.



A1 Listen to these examples of names and expressions with sound-play. Notice that the writer is playing with the *sound*, not the spelling. For example, in **Dennis the Menace**, the last three sounds of the words are the same, but the spelling is completely different.

Mickey Mouse
 Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer
 Dennis the Menace
 Bugs Bunny
 news and views
 rock and roll
 wine and dine
 While the cat's away, the mice will play.



D

There are probably some sounds in English which do not exist in your language, and others which are similar but not exactly the same. This can make it difficult to hear and make the distinction between two similar words in English.



A2 Listen to these pairs. Are any of them difficult for you?

boat – vote hit – heat so – show sung – sun wine – vine wet – wait



Note: To find out which sounds are usually easy or difficult for speakers of your language, see Section D3 *Guide for speakers of specific languages*.