

UNDERSTANDING

English Pronunciation

An integrated practice course



To be used with accompanying audio recording.

By *Susan Boyer*

Boyer Educational Resources
PO Box 255, Glenbrook 2773
Phone/fax (02) 47391538

Acknowledgments:

I would like to express my thanks to the following people for their contribution to the final presentation of this book:

Firstly, I would like to thank all the teachers who trialed material contained in this book and suggested improvements. I am grateful also to my colleagues who have provided constructive feedback at various stages in the development of this book. In particular I would like to thank Dr Ruth Nichols, Sheila Addison, Alison Hey, Dr Helen Fraser, Ross Forman, Tanya Roddan, Peter Richards, Veronica Dickson, Susan Perry, James Knight, Nadia Whitehead, Polly Wells and Peter Goldworthy for their valued comments. I would like to say thank you to Darrell Hilton for the production of the accompanying audio recording and to Jeanette Christian for her careful proofreading. And of course, I am particularly indebted to the many students who have given me the necessary insight into the pronunciation needs of English language learners.

Also, I want to thank my darling Len for his encouragement and support throughout the project, as well as the many hours he spent in the production of this resource.

Illustrations on pages 46, 53, 56, 66, 82, and 116 are by Matthew J Larwood.

Images used herein were obtained from IMSI's MasterClips Collection,
1895 Francisco Blvd. East, San Rafael, CA 94901-5506, USA

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

Boyer, Susan
Understanding English Pronunciation : an integrated practice course.
ISBN 0 9585395 7 X

1. English language - Australia - Pronunciation
2. English language - Spoken English - Australia
Textbook for foreign speakers
Boyer, Leonard, 1951- . II. Title.

421.52

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior consent of the publisher.

© Boyer Educational Resources: Phone/fax 02 4739 1538
e-mail: boyer@emUNET.com.au
www.boyereducation.com.au

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Understanding English Pronunciation - an integrated practice course has been designed so students can work through it in class with other students, or alone, without the help of a teacher. Each unit of the course is based on a different topic and focuses on different sounds and features of English pronunciation.

Each unit is divided into different parts which introduce and practise various aspects of pronunciation in a systematic and enjoyable way, while also providing interesting topics through which to practise pronunciation.

Unit 1 provides an introduction to English pronunciation, using a dictionary, and a listening test.

Units 2 – 12 contain the following sections:

Preliminary Listening introduces the particular vowel sounds in focus for the unit.

Part 1 - Introduction to the topic

Part 1 introduces the topic and vocabulary needed to analyse the particular sounds in focus. In Part 1A you will listen to the text, focus on the meaning and become familiar with the vocabulary.

Part 2 - Focus on Pronunciation

In Part 2 you will analyse the sounds featured in the text in Part 1, as well as additional features of English pronunciation.

Part 3 - Extending the topic

This section introduces more vocabulary which contain the sounds in focus as well as extending the topic.

Part 4 - Analysing the sounds

This section focuses on sound discrimination and helps you to 'tune your ears' to particular sounds of English.

Part 5 - Understanding the link between spoken and written English

You will analyse ways of spelling the sounds in focus and see some patterns to English spelling.

Part 6 - Spelling Check - Dictation

Now it's time to test yourself and see what you have learnt by trying the spelling check. You are asked to complete the text as you listen again to the text that was introduced in Part 1.

Part 7 - Further Listening and Speaking Practice

This section provides more valuable listening and speaking practice as you:

- a) listen to and practise questions or conversation relating to the topic of the unit.
- b) distinguish between, and practise pronouncing the featured sounds fluently so that you are understood by other people.
- c) practise features of English pronunciation such as stress and intonation, along with fluency.

Part 8 and 9 - Review or extension activity

These sections summarise or extend the topic through informative activities, while providing further pronunciation practice of the featured sounds. In some units, additional sounds are practised.

Dear Student of English

Welcome to *Understanding English Pronunciation - an integrated practice course*. This book, along with its accompanying audio recording, has been designed to help you to understand English pronunciation and to speak English more clearly and fluently.

As you listen to the audio recording you will hear the speakers give models of the pronunciation of individual words, as well as words within sentences and conversations.

Important note to students about pronunciation

- It is important to realise that the pronunciation of a sound can change, depending on the other sounds around it in a word and that the pronunciation of words can change depending on how they are used in a sentence. The pronunciation of a word spoken slowly or singly may be different from the pronunciation of the same word spoken within the context of natural conversation. This principle applies to most languages – not only English.
- It is important to realise that no two people (even speakers of the same language) pronounce sounds and words *exactly* the same way. That's why you can recognise someone you know by their voice even when you can't see them!

Look at the examples of the word *pronunciation* written in different handwriting below. The letters are written differently but you can see they form the same word.

pronunciation *prɒnunciation* **pronunciation** *pronunciation* *pronunciation*

It is similar with spoken language. Though different speakers of the same language may pronounce words with slightly different pronunciation, listeners need to be able to recognise and understand which words are being spoken. For example, you will notice that the speakers on the audio recording pronounce the words 'answer' and 'example' a little differently from each other. However, as the words are easily understood by all speakers of English, the variation in pronunciation does not cause communication problems.

The important thing to remember when learning a new language is that your pronunciation needs to be intelligible. This means that you can be understood without difficulty. The aim of this course is to build your confidence when listening to speakers of English and help you to improve your pronunciation of English.

I hope you enjoy and benefit from using *Understanding English Pronunciation*.

Susan Boyer

Suggestions for students working through this course independently:

- Practise speaking English every day. Try to use the new words you have learnt.
- Write new or difficult words onto small cards or a small notebook that you can carry in your pocket or wallet. Remember to check the stress patterns and mark the words so that you can practise the correct pronunciation.
- Listen to English speakers every day. Ask the meaning and pronunciation of unfamiliar words.
- When listening to speakers of English, notice the way words are linked; notice how intonation is used to convey meaning and notice how speakers pause to focus on important information.
- When using this book with the audio recording, practise saying the new words aloud. Record your voice so that you can check your pronunciation.
- After listening several times to the recorded sentences in Part 7 (Units 2 – 12), practise reading the sentences aloud. Record your voice so that you can check your pronunciation.
- As you listen to your voice (on the recording), write the sentences you hear. Then compare your written sentences with the sentences in the book. Do you say the same words as the speaker on the recording?
- Compare your pronunciation with the speaker on the *Understanding English Pronunciation* recording. Do you stress the same words? Do you use the same intonation?

Symbols for instruction used in this book:



means listen to the audio recording



means do the written exercise



means discuss or practise

You will need to check words in a dictionary, so have a good dictionary nearby while you are studying. Because English words are not always pronounced as they are spelt, you will also need to use a dictionary to learn the correct pronunciation. A good dictionary will give you clear examples of pronunciation and a Pronunciation Key.

Glossary of pronunciation terms

Use this list as a reference as you are using this book:

- vowel letters** There are **five vowel letters** in the English alphabet. These are: **a, e, i, o, u**.
- vowel sounds and symbols** There are **twelve vowel sounds** in English represented by phonemic **symbols**. There are seven short sounds: /æ/, /e/, /ə/, /ʊ/, /ʌ/, /ɪ/, /ɒ/ * as well as five longer sounds, /ɑ:/, /i:/, /ɔ:/, /ɜ:/, /u:/ - a long sound is often indicated by :
*Note: Some varieties of North American English do not use the vowel sound /ɒ/ as in the word 'hot'; The short sound /ɒ/ is replaced by the longer sound /ɑ:/ making 'hot' sound like 'heart'.
- schwa** The most frequently used of all English vowel sounds, is the **unstressed sound** /ə/. The sound and symbol /ə/ are called '**schwa**'.
- diphthongs** Diphthong sounds are made from two vowel sounds put together. There are eight diphthongs: /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /eə/, /ɪə/, /ʊə/, /aʊ/ and /əʊ/ (also shown as /oʊ/). For examples of words containing these sounds see the Phonemic Chart (p. 154)
- consonant letters** The letters in the English alphabet which are not vowels are called consonants. These are: **b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z**.
- consonant sounds** Additional **consonant sounds** (represented by the following symbols) are: /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /ŋ/. Check the phonemic chart (p. 154) for examples.
- syllable** Spoken words are formed with **syllables**, meaning **units of sound**. A syllable is a unit of unbroken sound, usually containing a vowel sound.
- contraction** When two words are contracted (shortened) and linked together they form a contraction. The missing letters are shown with an apostrophe ('). For example, I have = I've; we would = we'd; he will = he'll.
- word stress** In words with more than one syllable, one syllable is usually stronger (spoken more clearly) than the other(s). The term **stressed** syllable refers to the strongest (primary) syllable in words of more than one syllable. eg. 'travel
- utterance** An utterance is a spoken message. It can be a complete sentence or one or two words. eg 'Oh no!' 'When?'
- stress within utterances** In spoken English, words which carry the main message of the sentence contain **stressed** syllables. Stressing the important words helps the listener to hear the message of the speaker. eg. I **want** to go **home**.
- prominent words** These are the words that the speaker makes **most** prominent in an utterance. They signal the most important piece of information. They are also called **focus words**. See Unit 4, Part 7 for an explanation and examples.
- connected speech** When native speakers of English talk with natural conversational speed, they use **connected** speech. This means they speak **fluently**. Their words are not spoken separately but are **linked** together, without stopping after each word.
- intonation** Intonation refers to the rising and falling tones in our voice, which in English, are used to express meaning. See Unit 5, Part 7 for some general patterns.

UNDERSTANDING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION - CONTENTS

About this book
Important notes for students
Glossary of Pronunciation Terms

Page	Topic in Focus	Sounds	Pronunciation Focus
6	Unit 1 Introduction to English Pronunciation		Sounds and Symbols Using a Dictionary Listening Test
12	Unit 2 Language Study	/æ/ and /ʌ/	Distinguishing syllables Contractions
22	Unit 3 Other Cultures	/ə/ /θ/ and /ð/	Word stress Stress within utterances
35	Unit 4 City Living	/ɪ/ and /i:/	Intonation as feedback Prominent words
47	Unit 5 National Parks	/æ/ and /ɑ:/ /b/ and /p/	Pronunciation of 'ed' endings Intonation for 'checking' & 'telling'
58	Progress Check One		
59	Unit 6 Books and Computers	/ʊ/, /u:/, /ju:/	Connected speech, word linking
67	Unit 7 Health and Happiness	/e/ and /æ/ /h/, /k/	Pronouncing 'c' as /s/ or /k/ Connected speech, sound deletion
77	Unit 8 Medical Miracles	/e/ and /ɪ/ /r/ and /l/	Consonant clusters, silent letters
86	Progress Check Two		
87	Unit 9 Festivals & Celebrations	/e/ and /eɪ/ /f/ and /v/	Word stress - revision Moving word stress
96	Unit 10 Time and Change	/aɪ/ and /eɪ/	Connected speech – revision
106	Unit 11 World of Sport	/ɜ:/ and /ɔ:/	Pronouncing 's' endings Intonation and pausing Review of /ɜ:/, /ɔ:/ and /ɑ:/
116	Unit 12 Options and Goals	/ɒ/ and /əʊ/	Pausing and 'thought groups'
126	Concluding Progress Check		
128	Answers to Exercises		
154	Phonemic Chart of English Sounds		

Unit 1

Introduction to English Pronunciation



- What is pronunciation?
- What makes the many languages of the world different?
- Which sounds of English are different to those of your first language?
- In your language, how is important information highlighted when speaking?
- Which aspects of English pronunciation do you find most difficult?

Unit 1 – Introduction to English Pronunciation

In Unit 1 you will learn

- how dictionaries can help with the pronunciation of English words
- the importance of 'stress' in the pronunciation of English.

Part 1 - The Sounds of English



Listen as you read the information.

The Sounds of English

There are twenty six **letters** in the English alphabet, including five vowel letters, **a, e, i, o, u**, and twenty one consonant letters, **b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z**.

There are, however, **over forty sounds used to speak English**.

Because there are **more sounds in spoken English than there are letters in written English**, dictionaries and pronunciation text books use **symbols to represent each of the different sounds**.

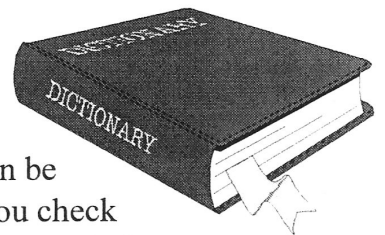
It is **not necessary to memorise** all the sound symbols of English, however it is **very helpful** to understand how your dictionary uses symbols to represent English sounds.

A Pronunciation Guide (or Pronunciation Key) will usually be within the first few pages of your dictionary (or in the front or back cover).

- **Stop the audio recording and find the pronunciation guide in your dictionary now.**

Read the following information:

Because English words are not always pronounced as they are spelt, it can be helpful to use your dictionary to learn the correct pronunciation. When you check a word in your dictionary, the pronunciation may be shown with the sound symbols between two lines / /. For example, the pronunciation of the word *six* may be shown as /sɪks/.



Many dictionaries use the same pronunciation symbols as those used in this book. The symbols used in this book are based on the **International Phonetic Alphabet**. A complete chart of English sound symbols (called phonemic symbols) is displayed on the final page of this book, with example words to explain each sound.

