

3.15 Enunciation Skills

Aim

- To develop correct speech tone (NB/: In this chapter emphasis is given to the English language as well.)

Materials Required

- Copies of the exercises in the input.

Input

- Having exercised the vocal apparatus and having acquired command over articulation, we can concentrate on correct speech.
- The most effective and pleasant speech tone has four qualities:
 - Purity: that is a tone projected with just enough breath.
 - Resonance: that which adds a ring to the voice, makes it mellow and pleasant to listen to, and gives carrying power.
 - Volume: means power and content rather than loudness of voice.
 - Flexibility: that means using pitch, tempo, inflection, stress and tone colour to capture the meaning and context of words and what they could mean for the audience.

- To have these four qualities one needs to have:

1. perfectly formed vowel sounds,
2. clearly articulated consonants,
3. correct modulation.

- Below are exercises that will help develop all three. Practice them individually as well as in groups. The guiding presence of the instructor who can check to see if the sounds are correct is important.

1. Exercises for Vowels

- There are three groups of vowel sounds:

- Long vowels: AA, AY, EE, OH, OO – as in “Mark may see all those tools.”
- Short Vowels: as in: “The black pen is not much good.”
- Diphthongs: I, OY, OW, Y – as in: “My boy found you”

- Try to practise the long vowel sounds without strain on the throat. No need to shout. Keep the sound of each vowel for as long as you can.

- Repeat the long vowels above as M-AA, M-AY, M-EE, etc.

- Say out loud: NOW AS YOU KNOW...

- Sing the same up and down the scale...

- Take any vowel. Say it aloud with the highest note you can take, then with the lowest. Then choose a comfortable note. This will help you to find your range.

- Practise the diphthongs: I, OY, OW, Y

- Say distinctly:

day – de – die – do – duty
rat – ret – rit – rot – run
sat – set – sill – sop – subtle
lame – lean – light – loam – lucid
take – tease – tile – tome – tube
sam – sell – sill – sot – super
gasp – get – gilt – gone – gun.

- Practise long vowels:

- a. Cain slew his brother Abel.
- b. The lion will bite people.
- c. Nora ate meat on Friday.
- d. Old bones are used in making cleaning powder.
- e. Pine trees grow to a great height.

- Practise short vowels:

- a. The man’s hat was hit by a football.
- b. Good books are congenial friends.
- c. It is often best to sit still and listen.

- d. The judge said that the man was convicted.
- e. Hit or miss is a careless slogan.

2. Exercises for Consonants:

- Consonants are important because upon them speech depends for its distinctness, brilliance and firmness.
- Consonants may be divided into two kinds:

a. Vocal consonants – e.g.:

N in Nine;	M in Many	L in Leaves;
	V in Vows	W in Well or Away
	Y in Young	R in Rows;
	J in Jam	Z in Zoo;

Th in There or Those; D in Doctor;
 B in Big or Blessing
 G in Good or Going

Of these there are:

Labials (B, W and M)
 Labio-dentals (V)
 Lingua dentals (Th, Z, Zh as in azure)
 Lingua-palatals (L, N and R)
 Gutturals (NG, J)
 Orals (Y)

b. Aspirate consonants: e.g.:

H in Hot	T in Two	P in Poona
F in Fix or Food	K in Kite	TH in Thirty;
CH in Chance	S in Six	

Here too we have
 Labials (P, WH)
 Labio-dentals (F)
 Lingua dentals (TH, S, SH)
 Lingua-palatals (T and CH)
 Gutturals (K)
 Orals (H)

Exercises

1. Acquire control over each consonant by sounding it in front of the vowels e.g. Pah, Pay.
2. To exercise the “vocal” consonants, such as in the following sentences with the breath and, when the lungs are full, turn on sound from above:
 - a. Lend me your aid
 - b. Now I may go
 - c. Ring the gong
 - d. This is yours
 - e. Do not giggle
 - f. John rose well
 - g. Ring away
 - h. Good weather
3. Say Mi, Mi, Mi, Mi... clearly but as quick as you can do it. This exercises also your lips. Concentrate also on resonance for the consonants.
4. To get the explosive vocal consonants say: Blames, Dreams, Joke, Great.
5. To get the sustained vocal consonants, say: Wicked, Marvellous, Vice, Though, Zigzag, Lonely, Never, Pain, Remain, Yesterday.
6. To exercise the “aspirate” consonants, hold your diaphragm with palms down, breathe in to fill the lower lungs, then allowing the diaphragm to bob up and down, say the following:
 - Hold hot
 - Two or three
 - Pepper and salt
 - White paper
 - Fix it fast
 - Sixty six



- Three hundred and thirteen
 - She sells sea-shells on the sea shore.
7. To get the “explosive” aspirate consonants, say: PRETTY TALKER, CHERISH, KANGAROO
 8. To get the “sustained” aspirate consonants, say WHICH, FLUTTER, THROUGH, SLOVENLY, SHOUTING, HAPPY.
 9. To combine the vocals and the aspirates say:
If the wood-peck would peck wood
How much wood would the wood-peck peck
If the wood-peck would peck wood
 10. The consonant “R” which is one of the most important and forcible sounds is treated by most persons in a most casual and capricious manner. Practise it when it follows a vowel, e.g. ARM, WORD, STAR, BAR, HEAR, FEAR, SHAKESPEARE AND SHAKESPEAREAN. Also when it precedes a vowel e.g. DRUM, ROLL, ARRAIGN.
 11. Practise the following sentences, attending to the classification given:

The Labials (Vocal): B, M, W

- a. Bessie burnished the brass bowls.
- b. Ben Bolger bent his business ability to better budgeting.
- c. Bananas, bananas the bent-backed block bawled.
- d. Mocking mobs made moving monumental.
- e. The mighty medicine-man made mournful music
- f. Mary Martin made many mistakes.
- g. Wearisome work worries workmen.
- h. Washington worked wisdom into warfare.
- i. Weary wayfarers waited wolfishly for water.
- j. Wilful Walter wandered waywardly westward.

The Lingua-Dentals (Vocals) V

- a. Vexations vixens vaunt their vituperations on their victims.
- b. Varnishing vases vanquished Vera’s vanity.
- c. The villainous vagabond vaulted venturesomely into the vineyard
- d. Violent volcanoes vomit vitriolic vapours.

The Lingua-Dentals (Vocals) Z

- a. Zealous zoologists visited the zoo to study the zebras.
- b. Ziba’s zest and seal cooled in zero weather.

The Labials (Aspirate) P - Wh

- a. “Pretty Poll, Pretty Poll” the proud parrot repeated.
- b. Patience polished the piano painstakingly.
- c. Prudence Primm printed poems.
- d. When William whistled, Wheeler’s white dog went willingly.

The Labio-Dentals (Aspirate): F

- a. Fickle fortune flaunts her foolhardily fancies.
- b. Florence Ferris frantically fanned the feeble flame.
- c. A foolish fellow finds fault freely.

The Lingua-Dentals (Aspirate): S-Sh-Th

- a. Susan, the servant girl, served sandwiches to the shipwrecked sailors.
- b. Silver sails slipped silently southward, shunning sight-seeing streamers.
- c. The shaky shanty shook shockingly in the shrieking storm.
- d. A shell-shocked shepherd shunted his shivering sheep under a shelter.
- e. Thieves the thugs think not of thriftiness.
- f. Thomas thought theology was theoretical.

The Lingua-Palatals: T-Ch

- a. To multiply twelve times twenty-two taxes the thinking.
- b. Ten toothsome tarts tempted Ted’s tranquillity.
- c. The Church chimes cheered the char-women in the churchyard.

3. Exercises for Pronunciation

- We have seen how we are to obtain the correct sounding of each vowel and consonant. Now we come to the third essential of correct speech – pronunciation. This has to do with stress (or accent), with the number of syllables a

word contains, with the vowels and consonants which make up the whole word. The Oxford Dictionary can serve as a standard for the right pronunciation.

- Of the many faults in pronunciations, we have found the following to be among the most common:
- a. The placing of stress (or accent) on the wrong syllable e.g. “**exquisite**” instead of “**ex**quisite;” “**irrevocable**” instead of “**irre**vocable,” “**communist**” instead of “**com**munist”
- b. Adding of a syllable or letter e.g. ‘often’ for ‘en’; **honour** for ‘onour’;
- c. The omission of syllables or letters from words e.g. ‘Gography’ for ‘Geography’;
- d. Introduction of wrong vowels or consonants e.g. ‘evul’ for ‘evil’; ‘yor’ and ‘yors’ for ‘your’; ‘othority’ for ‘authority’, ‘thu’ or ‘de’ for ‘the’.

Exercises:

- Read aloud a simple passage and try to pronounce each word as distinctly and correctly as you can.
- Each day, learn the pronunciation of at least five words on each page of the Oxford Dictionary.

4. Exercises in Modulation – Quality, Pitch and Pace

- Our foundations are laid and we now turn to the superstructure. However correct speech may be, however good the tone, there can be no true beauty in it without contrast. Similarly, speech needs change to save it from monotony. Here lies the importance of Modulation. It is the correct and artistic use of pitch, pace, pause, inflection, tone amount and tone quality.

- a) **Quality** means rich, resonant carrying tone (smooth and pleasing) as opposed to thin, sharp or rough and grating tones. Avoid the staccato (sharp) and guttural (hoarse).

Exercises:

- Pronounce slowly and in clear, resonant tones, these words: meal, beam, bold, clear, far, gay, hold, keen, law, loom, muse, mine, ocean, pealing, roar, soothing, time, wander, way, weep, wine, woo, ring, bell.

- b) **Pitch** is the key in which anything is sung or spoken. Simply put, it is a question of how high or low the voice is. The medium pitch is the one we must employ most frequently. We change the pitch of our voices in order to avoid monotony but we must be guided by truth and meaning and not by mere rules. There are several reasons for changing pitch:

- I. When the passage spoken indicates a change of feeling e.g. from surprise to sorrow.
- II. When there is a change of subject.
- III. In speaking a parenthesis, a lower pitch and quicker pace should be used.

Exercises

- Read a script of a play or a text having dialogue between different characters. See if you can vary your pitch to convey the necessary meaning in an expressive way.

- c) **Pace** is the rate at which we speak. Some people can articulate more quickly than others. There is a general tendency, in reading and in preaching (especially when the matter is not well prepared), to speak too quickly. This usually results in careless, shoddy speech. Remember, however, that it is just as bad to drawl. So try to maintain a happy medium.

- It is of the utmost importance for the beginner to go SLOW and WITH DELIBERATION. As you pay attention to the various requirements for clear enunciation, especially when you speak slowly, you may seem stilted and unnatural. Do not worry about this. You will soon develop fluency and you will again be natural. In particular, you will be heard – and that is the main thing.
- When to speak SLOWLY: When dwelling upon matters of great importance, solemnity or seriousness, when in the midst of close, logical reasoning, as in argument, and usually when beginning to speak – the introduction should not be delivered hesitatingly or haltingly but in a “deliberate” style with excellent articulation. Do not rush over the more important parts of a selection or speech. Take time to make your thought clear, to be understood.
- When to speak RAPIDLY: Relate a narrative briskly; where there is much action, put action into your style of narration; in description you may speak rather rapidly also; details, matters of secondary importance, subsidiary points of a speech – these are usually given eloquence and earnestness; in exhortation and pleading, one may speak rapidly.
- An accomplished speaker or preacher is a master of Pace. He uses all tempos and makes them serve his purpose in convincing both the minds and hearts of his hearers, in gripping and holding the interested attention of an audience.

Review

1. The most effective and pleasant speech tone has four qualities: purity, resonance volume and flexibility.
2. To have these four qualities, one needs to have:
 - a. perfectly formed vowel sounds,
 - b. clearly articulated consonants,
 - c. correct modulation.
3. For all these qualities, there are exercises that can be done to develop and perfect them.



Reflection

1. From now on, take time to collect new words and pronounce them correctly. Make it a habit to learn new words every week and practice them in your day to day speech.

Relevant Skills

1. In preparation for a day when all participants will make a speech (the date should be decided upon by the instructor), the participants will undertake to practice their enunciation skills using the exercises above.

Resources

BOSCOM-INDIA. 'SHEPHERDS' FOR AN INFORMATION AGE. Matunga: Tej Prasarini, 2000.

References

<http://afgen.com>

Pace Wayne R, Brent D. Peterson and M Dallas Burnett. Techniques for Effective Communication. Philippines: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979.