

# DECIDING WHAT AREA(S) OF PRONUNCIATION TO WORK ON

P2

## The aim of this leaflet

The aim of this leaflet is to introduce to you the different areas of pronunciation you can work on and to help you identify what to focus on.

## Identifying why you want to study pronunciation

If you have decided that you want to improve your English pronunciation, it is important to make clear in your mind **WHY** you want to improve.

Your reason may be that:

- you want to be able to understand your professor's lectures better
- you may want to be able to follow what actors are saying in movies; the news on TV and podcasts more easily
- you may want to be able to join in English conversations without feeling as if people won't understand you or that you can't understand them.
- you may feel that you don't make yourself easily understood when you give presentations, hold tutorials or participate in seminar discussions etc.

Whatever your reason, try to think it through carefully. Your answer will be the key to helping you narrow down your learning objectives, select resources and use the resources in the most appropriate way. Talking with an Adviser (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-adviser-timetable/>) about your objectives, ideas for resources and how to use them, will also be essential in setting up an effective plan for your improvement

## Identifying areas to study

Once you have a clear idea of why you want to improve your pronunciation, the next thing you should consider is **WHAT** area of pronunciation to focus on.

There are a number of different pronunciation areas that you could work on to improve your listening ability as well as your spoken English. See **P6 - Glossary** for an overview of the different areas.

When you open any book on pronunciation and turn to the table of contents, you often see the areas of pronunciation. The following table summarizes them:

Connected Speech	Accurate Speech
Linking Sentence stress Weak Forms Contractions	Sounds of English: Vowels and Consonants Clusters Syllables Word Stress

**Don't forget to look at P6 to see what these terms mean!**

## Working towards a plan for your learning

Before talking with an Adviser, it's important to do a little thinking about what exactly you wish to achieve and why; what might be causing you problems or difficulties, and what resources you might like to work with. There are many ways to decide on what area or areas of pronunciation to focus on. You could base your decision on:

- Your feelings about your ability to speak accurately or fluently
- Your feelings about your listening and your ability to understand spoken English
- Your problems and your interests

- A diagnostic test which you can find on the *Pronunciation* shelf in the *Multimedia Area* <sup>1</sup>
- A language instructor's recommendations
- An English speaker's recommendations
- Advice from materials on common pronunciation problems for speakers of your mother tongue
- Areas that others have worked on. Have a look at what Cindy, Albert, Alice and Frank say:

**Cindy: My problems:** *I'm very shy about speaking in English because I find it difficult to follow what people are saying when they have a conversation. I can understand the main points but I can't really hear the*

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• <sup>1</sup> **Diagnostic test**

You can do a diagnostic test in one of the following books located on the *Pronunciation* shelf in the *Multimedia Area* to find out which area/s you have difficulty with:

*Introducing English Pronunciation, Pronunciation Pairs (Teacher's Manual), Speaking Clearly.*

If you feel that you are unable to evaluate

your own performance, you can record

your own voice and discuss it with an

Adviser.

*linking. Because I can't hear the links, I don't feel confident about speaking English because I know that my pronunciation is different.*

**My Interests:** *I love watching films and listening to songs. I like to try to act out scenes from films. This always makes my friends laugh and I like to make my friends laugh! I also like to sing songs when I go to karaoke. I'm pretty good at doing this in Cantonese and would like to be able to do it in English too.*

**Albert: My problems:** *My problem is that even though I can read and understand the meaning of English words, I don't know how to pronounce them correctly. This causes people to think that I don't understand English, and it makes me feel frustrated and shy about speaking English. I think if I focus on weak forms and word stress, I will feel much more confident about pronouncing the words that I know.*

**My Interests:** *I love reading story-books. In fact for my reading project, I read four readers from the Language Commons. I also like to read newspaper articles so that I can keep abreast of current affairs. I really want to be more confident about how the words I read should be pronounced.*

**Alice: My problems:** *When I give a presentation, I'm not sure how to group the*

*words and phrases so that I sound fluent. Sometimes I break the sentence up at the wrong place and I always stress every word. I have listened to myself on tape and I really think I sound unnatural when I speak English. I often practice giving presentations at Toastmasters (<http://cle.ust.hk/support/toastmasters/>) but I don't stress every single word in my sentence.*

**My interests:** *I love watching comedy films, especially ones with Sandra bullock in because they are funny. I also like watching 'Friends' but I sometimes get frustrated because they speak so fast and I don't always understand why things are funny.*

**Frank: My problems:** *Weak forms and contractions are the factors which affect my ability to listen to and speak fluent English. Very often when weak forms are used, I cannot hear the words. Together with the use of contractions, the speed of speech is increased quite a lot. I feel that my speech is very slow. This makes me feel as if I can't speak English fluently, so I don't feel confident when I have a conversation or give a presentation, because I think that the listener will feel very bored listening to me!*

**My Interests:** *I don't really have any particular interests but I am very interested in improving my English pronunciation so that I can speak more fluently. I want people*

*to feel interested when they listen to me, especially when I give a presentation. I want to improve so my classmates and my teacher don't fall asleep when I give a presentation!*

## Being realistic about what you expect

No one has invented a 'language pill' yet. So remember to be realistic about the amount of time you have and how motivated you are. Learning will be fun if you're interested in what you do but improving still takes time and effort for practice and reflection. Be aware of your expectations and try not to expect to improve in every area of pronunciation all at once within a short period of time

## And now...

After reading this Advice Sheet, you should have an idea of what to do and how to do it. Improving pronunciation is a long-term process and requires constant practice. Sometimes you may feel bored or frustrated or think that you are not progressing at all. If you would like any help or advice, or just a chat about your progress, please get in touch - **we are here to support your independent learning!** To contact us:

- Make an appointment to see an adviser. For details of advisers and their availability, please go to

<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-adviser-timetable/> ).

- E-mail your questions to **iLANG** ([lcilang@ust.hk](mailto:lcilang@ust.hk)).
- Ask at the reception counter of the Language Commons — if the receptionist cannot help you directly, s/he will pass your query on to one of the advisers.

## What else can you do?

- Browse the many physical (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-commons/#resources>) and online materials (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/resources-speaking/>) for Pronunciation.
- Join a Pronunciation activity or short course (<http://ilang.cle.ust.hk/speaking/>).

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