

Section 1

Diagnosing Your Pronunciation Difficulties

For the Teacher

Diagnosis may be done informally, by simply listening to students as they speak English, or more formally, by going through the procedures outlined below. Regardless of the approach you take, the following guidelines may be helpful.

- As it is usually difficult to hear and remember everything a student needs to work on from just one exposure to that student's pronunciation, making audio recordings of students as they speak is recommended. You may then listen to these recordings later and analyze them carefully so as to arrive at a more accurate and complete diagnosis of which sounds in which positions are difficult for each student. (*Note:* After adequate instruction and practice have been provided and students have mastered their pronunciation difficulties, these "before" recordings also provide dramatic evidence of students' improvement.)
- If the number of students you work with or the speech sample you take from them is large, do not attempt to carry out a detailed microanalysis. Such an analysis is tedious and time consuming for you, and the results are often overwhelming for the students. A wiser and more practical course is to identify a few of your students' most prominent pronunciation difficulties and then work on them. As you do this, don't forget reduction and blending, word and sentence stress, intonation, and pausing. These pronunciation features are not always represented by letters of the alphabet, but they are still very important to natural-sounding speech.
- Since students are often already aware of many of their own pronunciation difficulties, an alternative diagnostic method is to simply ask them what aspects of English pronunciation they want or need help with. For a more detailed and thorough self-analysis, have students go through the procedures outlined below.
- A similar approach is a guided self-analysis in which, under

your direction, students work individually or with their classmates and decide what their major difficulties in English pronunciation are.

Note: This approach has several advantages: (1) It takes less time than interviewing each student individually. (2) It generally results in greater motivation on the part of the students. (3) In addition, it recognizes and emphasizes students' own responsibility for improving their pronunciation. The greatest disadvantage of self-analysis is that students are sometimes not aware of their own problems relative to the English sound system. In such cases, your guidance (and diagnosis) plays an important part in arriving at a correct analysis of students' difficulties.

In either case, the diagnostic materials that follow will be helpful. They can be used by students identifying their own difficulties, or by you, their teacher, as you help them discover and prioritize their pronunciation problems.