

Talk a Lot

Foundation Course

Course Outline

Lesson 1 – Introduction and Basic Principles

- 1.1 Talk a Lot Foundation Course is an opportunity to study the theory of pronunciation before beginning a Talk a Lot course
- 1.2 English spelling is broken
- 1.3 We need a new phonetic alphabet to represent sounds in written form
- 1.4 The vowel sounds on the stressed syllables of content words are the most important sounds in a sentence
- 1.5 English Native speakers use sounds, stress, and connected speech without thinking about it, but you have to *learn* to do it!
- 1.6 The *Glossary of Pronunciation Terms* will be a useful reference tool during the course
- 1.7 Standard EFL course books are good at teaching reading and listening skills, but less able to teach speaking and writing

Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

- 2.1 English is not a phonetic language, which means that often spelling and sounds do not match
- 2.2 The spelling of a word and its sounds are usually two different things in English. You need to learn two parts of each word: the spelling and the sounds
- 2.3 Part of the problem is the high frequency of silent letters in English spelling
- 2.4 Students usually pronounce far too many vowel sounds when they speak English
- 2.5 The Schwa sound is the most common vowel sound in English – and the least discussed
- 2.6 The glottal stop is not a sound but rather an action – the cutting off of a sound at the moment of making it
- 2.7 We need to combine the written alphabet and the phonetic alphabet into one New English Alphabet (NEA)

Lesson 3 – Stress

- 3.1 English is a stress-timed language, not a syllable-timed language
- 3.2 Content words each have one strong stress, while function words are not stressed
- 3.3 Word stress is irregular in English
- 3.4 Communication is reduced when we don't use sentence stress
- 3.5 The sound spine is the sequence of vowel sounds on the stressed syllables in a sentence
- 3.6 It is not necessary to pronounce every letter in every word in every sentence
- 3.7 We reduce function words by using contractions and mega contractions
- 3.8 We also reduce function words by using weak forms
- 3.9 Most of the top 100 most common words in English are function words, which have weak forms that students do not generally use
- 3.10 We are not going to focus on intonation during this course

Lesson 4 – Connected Speech

- 4.1 Even with the stress and vowel sounds correct in a sentence, we still sound wrong when we don't use connected speech, because we are speaking word by word
- 4.2 We speak English syllable by syllable, not word by word
- 4.3 However, English words don't fit together very well. They are like badly-fitting puzzle pieces
- 4.4 We use the Features of Connected Speech to solve this problem. It can be learned using the mnemonic GLACIER
- 4.5 There are four possible sound connections between syllables
- 4.6 cc sound connections are the hardest to pronounce
- 4.7 The aim is to speak with only vc (vowel sound to consonant sound) sound connections between syllables, and we use connected speech techniques to achieve this
- 4.8 Friendly consonant sounds are helpful because they are happy to sit beside other consonant sounds