

CAMBRIDGE HANDBOOKS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS
General Editor: Michael Swan

This is a series of practical guides for teachers of English and other languages. Illustrative examples are usually drawn from the field of English as a foreign or second language, but the ideas and techniques described can equally well be used in the teaching of any language.

In this series:

Drama Techniques in Language Learning – A resource book of communication activities for language teachers
by Alan Maley and Alan Duff

Games for Language Learning
by Andrew Wright, David Betheridge and Michael Buckby

Discussions that Work – Task-centred fluency practice
by Penny Ur

Once Upon a Time – Using stories in the language classroom
by John Morgan and Mario Rinvulcri

Teaching Listening Comprehension *by Penny Ur*

Keep Talking – Communicative fluency activities for language teaching
by Friederike Klippel

Working with Words – A guide to teaching and learning vocabulary
by Ruth Gairns and Stuart Redman

Learner English – A teacher's guide to interference and other problems
edited by Michael Swan and Bernard Smith

Testing Spoken Language – A handbook of oral testing techniques
by Nic Underhill

Literature in the Language Classroom – A resource book of ideas and activities
by Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater

Dictation – New methods, new possibilities
by Paul Davis and Mario Rinvulcri

Grammar Practice Activities – A practical guide for teachers
by Penny Ur

Testing for Language Teachers *by Arthur Hughes*

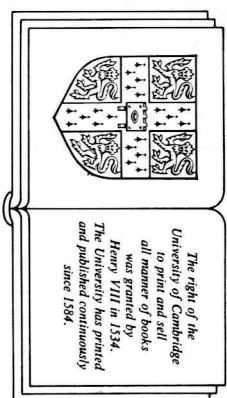
The Inward Ear – Poetry in the language classroom
by Alan Maley and Alan Duff

Pictures for Language Learning *by Andrew Wright*

Learner English

A teacher's guide to
interference and other problems

*Michael Swan and
Bernard Smith*



Cambridge University Press
Cambridge
New York Port Chester
Melbourne Sydney

1987

только кандидатскую, но и докторскую диссертацию.
 tol'ko kandidatskuyu, no i doktorskuyu dissertatsiyu.
 only candidate, but and doctor dissertation.

(From *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 7 November 1984)

После десятимесячного отсутствия вернулась к жене и
 Posle desyatimesyachnovo * otsutstviya vernul'sya k zhene i
 After ten month absence returned to wife and
 детям участник прошлогодних соревнований по
 detyam uchastnik proshlogodnikh sorevnovaniy po
 children participant last year competitions on
 спортивному ориентированию Ф. Уклонаев. Сразу же
 sportivnomu orientirovaniyu F. Uklonayev. Srazu zhe
 sport orienteering F. Uklonayev. At once
 после возвращения спортсмен начал усиленную
 posle vozvrascheniya sportsmen nachal usilennuyu
 after return sportsman began strenghened
 подготовку к новым весенним стартам.
 podgotovku k novym vesennim startam.
 preparation for new spring starts.

* this ending is written -ого but pronounced -ово.

(From *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 12 June 1985)

Farsi speakers

Lili and Martin Wilson

Distribution

IRAN, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Southern Russia, India.

Introduction

Farsi is an Indo-European language, which has been greatly influenced by Arabic. The alphabet of modern Farsi consists of 32 characters written in Arabic script, from right to left. Before the conquest of Persia by desert Arabs in the seventh century, the Farsi alphabet contained 24 characters, written in Pahlavi script. Pahlavi was the language of the Sassanians, who were conquered by the invading Arabs. After the conquest, a great deal of Arabic vocabulary entered Farsi, and Arabic script was adopted, bringing in eight extra characters, to produce the modern alphabet of 32 letters.

Although Farsi is an Indo-European language, Farsi speakers have great difficulty with reading and writing English, especially during the early stages of learning, because they are not familiar with the Latin script.

Phonology

General

The Farsi and English phonological systems differ in their range of sounds, as well as in their stress and intonation patterns. Farsi has only eleven vowels and diphthongs to 32 consonants, while English has 22 vowels and diphthongs to 24 consonants. Farsi speakers, therefore, have great difficulty in perceiving and articulating the full range of English vowels and diphthongs. In addition, there are five English consonant phonemes that do not have near equivalents in Farsi.

Vowels

Shaded phonemes have equivalents or near equivalents in Farsi, and should therefore be perceived and articulated without great difficulty,

iʔ	ɪ	e	æ	eɪ	aɪ	ɔɪ
ɑ:ʔ	ɒ	ɔ:ʔ	ʊ	aʊ	əʊ	ɪə
u:ʔ	ʌ	ɜ:ʔ	ə	eə	ʊə	aɪə aʊə

although some confusions may still arise. Unshaded phonemes may cause problems. For detailed comments, see below.

The most common pure vowel errors are likely to be:

1. /ɪ/ is often pronounced as /i:/: *sheep* for *ship*.
2. /ʌ/ is often pronounced as /ɑ:/: *cart* for *cut*.
3. /æ/ is often pronounced rather like /e/: *bed* for *bad*.
4. /ʊ/ is often pronounced as /u:/: *fool* for *full*.
5. /ə/ is often pronounced as a stressed vowel related to its orthographic form.
6. /ɪ/ is often pronounced rather like /ɒ/: *cot* for *caught*.
7. /ɜ:/ often becomes /e/ + /r/:

With diphthongs the problems are accentuated and in particular the following are likely to cause special difficulty:

8. /aʊ/ is often pronounced as a sound approaching /ɑ:/:
9. /eə/ is often pronounced as /e/ + /r/:
10. /əʊ/ is often pronounced closer to /ɒ/:
11. /ʊə/ is often pronounced as /u:/:

Consonants

p	b	f	v	θ	ð	t	d
s	z	ʃ	ʒ	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
m	n	ŋ	l	r	j	w	h

Shaded phonemes have equivalents or near equivalents in Farsi, and should therefore be perceived and articulated without great difficulty, although some confusions may still arise. Unshaded phonemes may cause problems. For detailed comments, see below.

1. /ð/ and /θ/ tend to be confused or pronounced as /t/: *ten* for *them*; *tinker* for *thinker*.

2. /ŋ/ may be pronounced as two separate phonemes, /n/ and /g/, because of its orthographic form.
3. /w/ and /v/. Although /v/ has a near equivalent in Farsi, the two phonemes tend to be confused.
4. /r/ has a weak roll or tap in Farsi and many learners have great difficulty in producing the English /r/.
5. /l/ exists in Farsi as the 'clear' /l/, (as in *leaf*), but there is no equivalent of the 'dark' /l/, (as in *feel*) and learners are likely to have problems with this.

Consonant clusters

Consonant clusters do not occur within single syllables in Farsi, and Farsi speakers therefore tend to add a short vowel, either before or in the middle of the various English clusters. Examples of initial two-segment clusters that cause difficulty are *bl*, *fl*, *pr*, *pl*, *gr*, *gl*, *thr*, *thw*, *sp*, *st*. These produce pronunciations such as:

- '*perice*' for *price*
- '*pelace*' for *place*
- '*geround*' for *ground*
- '*gelue*' for *glue*

The intrusive vowel in initial position usually approximates to the phoneme /e/, so *start* becomes '*estart*'.

With initial three-segment clusters the problem becomes greater.

Clusters such as:

- spl*, *spr*, *str*, *skr*
- in initial positions produce pronunciations such as:
- '*esperay*' for *spray*
- '*esteraight*' for *straight*
- '*esceream*' for *scream*

The intrusive /e/ is particularly common before clusters beginning with /s/.

Final consonant clusters are also likely to cause problems, with learners again inserting an /e/:

- '*promptes*' for *prompts*
- '*warmeth*' for *warmth*

Influence of spelling on pronunciation

As there are no direct links between Farsi and English spelling (apart from a few transliterations, such as *stainless steel*), the Farsi speaker has no previously known orthographic patterns which are likely to interfere with his or her pronunciation. However, spelling in Farsi is more or less phonetic, except for the omission of short vowels, and, as a result, Farsi

speakers tend to associate particular letters with particular sounds. This can cause problems with reading aloud and when words are initially encountered only in their written form. In particular Farsi speakers are likely to have difficulty with phonemes which have a wide variety of orthographic representations. For example, the phoneme /i:/, which has a single orthographic form in Farsi, can have any of the following forms in English: *ee, e, ea, ie, ei, ey, i* or *ay* (as in *quay*).

It is particularly hard for Farsi speakers to recognise that the post-vocalic *r* is not a consonant, but usually indicates a lengthening of the vowel sound.

Stress

In Farsi stress generally falls on the final syllable of a word. This is true for nouns, compound nouns, adjectives, pronouns, most adverbials and prepositions. The only exceptions to this are some adverbials and most conjunctions, where the stress falls on the initial syllable.

Verbs are only slightly more complex. For affirmative forms the stress falls on the final syllable, but with non-verbal parts of compounds and certain prefixes, including the negative *na*, it falls on the initial syllable. Word stress is thus highly predictable in Farsi, and learners have great difficulty in mastering the unpredictable stress patterns of English. Particular problems occur when stress alters meaning, as in '*content* and *cont'ent*. Weak forms also cause considerable problems. There is no equivalent to a weak form in Farsi, and vowels in unstressed syllables lose of, say, the *a* in *can*, even in an unstressed position. It follows that they will also have problems in perceiving weak forms in speech.

Intonation

Farsi sentences are divided into a series of tone groups, with each tone group containing one prominent stressed syllable, which makes a change of tone direction. Intonation groups can be divided into 'suspensive' (with more to follow), and 'final'. The basic final patterns are similar to those used in English, with a fall typical for a completed statement, a rise for a yes/no question, and a fall when an interrogative word is used. For the suspensive tone groups there is a rise to high tone on the stressed syllable, which is maintained to the end of the tone group. When carried over into English, some of these intonation patterns can produce an unusual high-pitched 'whining' effect, which is disconcerting.

In general, Farsi-speaking students do not have major difficulties with the main intonation patterns, although some of the more unusual patterns which imply distinctive attitudes and meanings present difficult-

ies. Some students will tend to adopt a chanting tone when reading aloud, with a lack of clearly indicated stress, and little or no tonal variation.

Juncture

Farsi speakers often have similar problems with English juncture to those they have with consonant clusters. Therefore, with a word boundary such as in *next street*, they will often insert an extra /e/ in several places, and produce something like '*neksetstreet*'.

In Farsi, words are spoken without assimilation (phonetic change) in juncture, so whenever this occurs in English, such as in *Would you ... /wudʒə/* it is likely to cause difficulties.

Orthography and punctuation

As stated above, Farsi is written in Arabic script, and this is completely different from the Latin script of English. It is written from right to left with the letters joining each other according to very definite rules. Farsi speakers usually have to learn a completely new alphabet, and new way of writing. There are no capital letters in Farsi and their use in English is difficult for them to master. Farsi numbers, although Arabic, are different from those used in English. They are, however, written from left to right, and normally cause relatively few problems. Beginners are also likely to have problems in the following areas:

1. Letters with mirror images, e.g. *b* and *d*, *p* and *q*.
2. Combinations of letters that could be confused if read from right to left, e.g. *tow* and *two*; *pot* and *top*; *form* and *from*.

Spelling is invariably phonetic in Farsi, and students' written English tends to be the same. Owing to the American influence in Iran in the past, American spellings such as *color* are often used.

Punctuation

Until the late nineteenth century punctuation was little used in Farsi, but during the last hundred years a system similar to that used in English has been adopted. There is, however, a greater degree of freedom in the use of commas and question marks. The question mark is reversed, *?*, and the comma is inverted, *,*. Full stops are used approximately as in English, but quotation marks are rarely used, and then not in a set way.

Generally there is less punctuation in Farsi, and Farsi writers have a tendency to join sentences together more with conjunctions, such as *and* and *but*.

Paragraphing is a recent introduction, and indentation or separation usually only occurs in newspapers.