

HERE'S WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS GUIDE:

"This is EXACTLY what I wanted to know. Right to the point! Just what I needed, and for once, I didn't have to wade through a lot of other stuff..."

Judy Thompson, Author of *Grass is Black* Sound Dictionary



"I loved loved loved your "toolkit." Honestly, I LEARNED. I learned from a text...I felt like you were chatting with me over tea or a beer, yet still talking to me to as a professional...I appreciate that kind of respect from a scholarly author..."



Gina Hamann, MATESOL,
Teaching English to Speakers of
Other Languages

American English for Arabic Speakers,

A Guide to Pronunciation

-Peggy Tharpe



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TWO THINGS BEFORE WE BEGIN...

If you'd like to know more about what I'm publishing and doing in pronunciation and speaking fluency, join me at <http://peggytharpe.wix.com/updates>

AND...

On the last page of this guide, there's a little thank you gift from me—a free booklet of my 7 most popular blogposts...so far. It's a weird collection, but hey...you, the readers, picked them! We seem to have eclectic tastes.

WHY I WROTE THIS

Native speakers like myself don't always understand the sound system of their first language very well. After all, we are born into it...like our skin. By six months in utero, we are already listening to the intonation and rhythm of our mothers' speech patterns. We don't explain it very well to English learners for just that reason.

My goal is to help you think about teaching and learning pronunciation in a new way. I believe if we understand "why" something is happening, we will better know "what" to do and maybe even "how" to do it. In this book, I explain the "what" and "why", and share my own student-tested and enthusiastically-received strategies for the "how".

I hope to help you, the teacher or student, understand the dynamic features of spoken English and spoken Arabic from a new perspective, that is, understand the similarities and differences between the two, and address the challenges faced by students more effectively, efficiently, and confidently.

I received my master's degree in TESOL a long time ago, but I learned the most about teaching pronunciation in the last ten years, working one-to-one with adult executives and graduate students. In such a small setting, with just one person and myself in the room, I learned what I never could before, when I was teaching mixed-level, mixed-L1 classes. I learned about the sound of my own language, from the inside out. I learned what the challenges were for each language speaker I worked with, and how the problems faced by Arabic speakers, for example, differ from those faced by Japanese or Spanish or Chinese learners of English. And most importantly, I learned to understand and explain the sound system of my own language, American English.

I've come this far by standing on the shoulders of my teachers, and I wouldn't be writing to you now without the feedback and experiences of my colleagues and students. Thanks to everyone whose path has crossed or joined with mine!

WHY YOU SHOULD READ IT

When you're putting together a puzzle, at the beginning you look at each puzzle piece and examine the shape, seeing it as this distinctive form in your hand, with no relationship to the other pieces on the table.

Then there's that moment when you realize what the image probably is, and where the colors are concentrated, and what the lines and shadows probably indicate. From then on, when you pick up a new piece, you know with more and more certainty what its relationship is to the rest. You're seeing the bigger picture, not just a collection of separate, oddly shaped pieces.

When I started teaching pronunciation, I had only puzzle pieces; my traveling-teacher file box (before the internet was robust) was full of every kind of pronunciation exercise I might possibly need. When my clients had a problem, I would whip out an exercise sheet and teach it diligently. I taught rules for liaisons, and rules for schwa, and rules for syllable stress. And then one day, I finally saw the whole picture instead of a boxful of separate rules. I finally understood the English sound system in a new way.

I want *you* to feel that moment too because it is really wonderful...when everything connects and you know how all the bits and pieces, vowels and consonants, liaisons, schwa, pitch change, intonation, rhythm, everything—how all of it forms a bigger picture—the dynamic sound system of English.

Not a teacher? That's OK! If you are an Arabic speaker looking for a way to improve your English pronunciation, this book may help. If you can read this, then there's no reason you can't apply everything I talk about here to your own learning.

If you're an experienced pronunciation teacher, I hope this will give you some new perspectives. You may already know what to teach; allow me to share my ideas on why to teach it and how to teach it so it sticks.

If you're a brand new ESL teacher, there are a couple of books that I recommend to help you make sure you have all the little pieces of the pronunciation puzzle; you can't finish the puzzle until you have all the pieces. They're listed in the back of the book.

See you on the inside.....Peggy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter 1. It's the Little Things That Matter: Differences between Arabic and English

Chapter 2. Comparing Arabic and English Vowels

Chapter 3. Comparing Arabic and English Consonants

Chapter 4. Teaching the Sounds of English Vowels

Chapter 5. Comparing The Structure of Our Words

Chapter 6. Teaching Consonant Clusters

Chapter 7. Comparing the Structure of our Words

Chapter 8. Soundprints - The Internal Rhythm of English Words

Chapter 9. Teaching Rhythm

Chapter 10. Teaching The Brain About Stress Patterns in English

Chapter 11. Teaching the Body About the Rhythm of English

Chapter 12. Liaisons, Reductions, and Other Alterations

Chapter 13. Comparing Arabic and English Intonation

About The Author

Coming Soon!

CHAPTER 1. IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER

First, a quick note. If you are teaching children, this guide will help strengthen your own understanding of English sounds, but remember that children's brains are biologically designed to statistically analyze, process and absorb language input, especially between the ages of 4-8. If you expose them to enough live-human-language during those years, they will process all of this naturally without the kind of explicit instruction and analysis that adults need.

If you are teaching adults, there are some things to keep in mind. Adults respond best to certain pedagogical approaches. If you'd like to know more about adult learners prefer, [read this blog post](#) I wrote about what works best with adult learners.

WHERE WE SPEAK FROM

A very noticeable difference between Arabic and English is the overall sound of the languages. What makes them sound so different?

I've made rough diagrams of where English and Arabic consonants are articulated inside the mouth. Each circle represents a sound.

As you can see, where the two languages make their sounds differs greatly. When one is learning a new language, one must also learn to use one's jaw, tongue, and lips differently, and these, in our first language, have been unconscious muscle movements for most of our lives.

Showing your adult students these diagrams helps them begin making sense of why they are having problems (in the case of strong accents) and what to do differently inside their mouths (in the case of beginning learners). Cover the labels and show these cutaway diagrams to them, asking which is English and which is Arabic. It will do something wonderful...it will raise their awareness. When humans are faced with information they haven't learned before, they must process it and organize it for the first time. This gives you, the teacher, a chance to form a new and different template for English that is not anchored to the sound system of Arabic but instead, has a new neurological and neurolinguistic foundation in their brains.

One of the best parts about teaching adults is that they like to analyze and synthesize. So one of the first things a teacher should always do with adults is to raise their awareness about something and give them time to explore and learn. A person can't change what they don't recognize, so first...build awareness.

Here's an exercise that will help you develop your understanding of the challenges your students face, at a deeper level.

Go to SoundsofSpeech.uiowa.edu

At the top of the page, choose English. Click through the consonants, one by one, and look at the place of articulation. For example, [p] and [b] are made with lips touching. [k] and [g] are made with the center-back/top of the tongue pressing against the soft palate.

Go through all the consonants to get an overall sense of where English sounds are formed (and not formed). Then go through the vowels. Where would you explain the place of articulation for the major English vowels. In the next chapter, I'll share my vowel set with you.

To map out Arabic sounds, it's much trickier. There are no interactive diagrams, that I know of. If you really want to know more about the Arabic sounds, you'll have to do what I did: listen to the Arabic sounds and read their descriptions on this website <http://arabic.tripod.com> and try to ascertain where the sounds are articulated. That's what led me to the Arabic diagram I created. Perhaps my marks aren't 100% accurate, but I found this an enlightening exercise.

