

12. Common Pronunciation Challenges

BVPT-104: English & Communication

Unit 3: Developing Pronunciation and Vocabulary

Topic: Common Pronunciation Challenges - Identifying and Overcoming Difficulties in English Pronunciation

□ What Is a Pronunciation Challenge?

Pronunciation challenges are **difficulties in speaking words correctly**, clearly, and naturally. These are especially common for students whose **mother tongue is not English**, because some English sounds may not exist in their native language.

In healthcare, **incorrect pronunciation** can lead to:

- Confusion (e.g., “pain” vs. “pin”)
- Miscommunication with patients or doctors
- Reduced confidence during viva or professional speech

□ Common Pronunciation Problems in Indian English Speakers

Type of Challenge	Examples	Explanation
Consonant Sound Confusion	/v/ vs /w/ → “vine” vs “wine”	These sounds are pronounced similarly in many Indian languages
Th-Sound Difficulty	“think” → “tink”; “that” → “dat”	The soft /θ/ and /ð/ don’t exist in most Indian languages
Silent Letters Ignored	“honest” → “h-onest”, “knee” → “knee”	Silent letters are often mistakenly pronounced
Ending Sound Dropping	“walked” → “walk”, “helps” → “help”	Final consonants (-ed, -s) are often skipped or softened
Stress Misplacement	“PHYSioTHERapy” instead of “PHYSio-therapy”	Wrong syllable stress can change meaning or sound unnatural
R & L Confusion	“light” vs “right”	In some regional accents, /l/ and /r/ are interchanged
Flat Intonation	Monotone voice	Lack of pitch rise/fall makes speech dull and unclear

□ How to Overcome Pronunciation Challenges

1. Listen and Repeat (Shadowing Technique)

- Watch English videos or listen to audio clips
- Pause and repeat exactly how the speaker says it
- Focus on **accent, stress, and rhythm**

□ Try *BBC Learning English* or *TED Talks*



2. Use a Mirror to Watch Your Mouth

- Some English sounds require **specific lip, teeth, or tongue positions**
- Practise in front of a mirror (especially for “th”, “sh”, “v”, “z”)

Example:

- For /θ/ in “think”, tongue should lightly touch between your teeth
- For /v/, lower lip touches top teeth

3. Record and Compare

- Read aloud and record your voice
- Compare with a native speaker’s recording
- Spot the mistakes and try again

4. Learn and Practise Minimal Pairs

Words that differ by only one sound—great for training ear and tongue!

Minimal Pairs Difference

Ship / Sheep	/ɪ/ vs /i:/
Bat / Bet	/æ/ vs /e/
Thin / Then	/θ/ vs /ð/
Fan / Van	/f/ vs /v/

5. Master Word Stress & Sentence Stress

- Use a **dictionary with phonetic symbols and stress markers**
- Practise stressing the **right syllable** in multi-syllable words

□ Example:

- PHYSioTHERapy → □
- PHYSio-therapy → □
- reHAbilitation → □ (stress on “bil”)

6. Practice Intonation and Rhythm

- English is a “**stress-timed language**” – some words are stressed more than others
- Record sentences and identify how voice **rises and falls**

□ Practice sentences:

- “I will call you TOMORROW.” (stress on ‘tomorrow’)
- “She DID it again!” (emphasis on ‘did’)



7. Use Phonetic Tools & Apps

- Try apps like:
 - **Elsa Speak**
 - **Sounds: The Pronunciation App**
 - **YouGlish** (for word examples from real speakers)

Sample Practice Exercise

Say these aloud, focusing on correct sound and stress:

1. “The **physiotherapist** helped the patient **walked** again.”
2. “Please **press** the bell if you feel **pain**.”
3. “He has a **silent** knee injury.”

Record → Listen → Correct

Summary Table

Problem	Fix It By...
Wrong stress	Learn word syllable emphasis
Dropped endings	Speak slowly, exaggerate sounds
Th-sound issues	Use tongue-tip between teeth
Flat speech	Practice with rising-falling tone
Sound confusion	Minimal pairs + daily drills

Quick Tips to Improve Pronunciation

- Speak slowly at first
- Break difficult words into syllables
- Use English daily—talk to yourself in English
- Don't fear mistakes—every mistake teaches something!