

# The Accent Method

Expanded Reprinted Edition



# The Accent Method

**A Rational Voice Therapy  
in Theory and Practice**

Kirsten Thyme-Frøkjær and Børge Frøkjær-Jensen

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# Contents

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Foreword by Margaret Gordon	xi
Foreword by Sara Harris	xiv
Preface	xvii
<b>Part I: The History and Principles of the Accent Method</b>	
1. Introduction	3
2. Historical aspects	6
3. Main principles of the Accent Method	9
<b>Part II: The Anatomy, Physiology and Acoustics of Phonation</b>	
4. Respiration	17
5. The Larynx	25
6. Phonation	40
7. Articulation	65

## Contents

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### **Part III: Teaching the Accent Method**

8. Breathing exercises	93
9. Relaxation exercises	101
10. Voice exercises	105
11. Drum exercises	124
12. Transition from voice exercises to speech	129
13. Accent Method and the treatment of stuttering	136

### **Part IV: Acoustic and Physiological Measurements**

14. Examination procedure	153
15. Results obtained by the Accent Method	161

Appendix: Voice and drum exercises	176
Further reading	177
References	183
Index	191

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## About the Authors

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Kirsten Thyme-Frøkjær

Now retired, Kirsten is a trained speech and hearing pathologist. She has worked as Lecturer in Rhetoric and Speech Therapy at Jonstrup Teachers College, Copenhagen; Lecturer in Speech Therapist Education at the Royal Danish School for Educational Studies, Copenhagen; and Lecturer in Speech Pathology at the Department of Audologopedic Education, University of Copenhagen. She spent 18 years working in cooperation with Professor Svend Smith as a co-founder of the



Accent Method. Together with Svend Smith and later with her husband Børge Frøkjær-Jensen, she taught hundreds of courses on the Accent Method at universities, hospitals and speech and voice clinics, principally in Europe.



## About The Authors

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### **Børge Frøkjær-Jensen**

has an MA in Phonetics and Music. He worked for several years with Svend Smith at the Experimental Phonetics Laboratory, Institute of Speech Disorders, Copenhagen. From 1966, he was employed at the Institute of Phonetics, University of Copenhagen as an Associate Professor lecturing and researching mainly in speech acoustics and speech physiology. From 1990 until his retirement, he taught courses in the Accent Method in partnership with Kirsten Thyme-Frøkjær.



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# Publisher's Note

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This edition is a reproduction of the original English Language Edition, published in 2001 and has been republished by popular demand among speech therapists and singing and voice teachers. In addition, original to this edition, there is a newly added chapter on stuttering and stuttering therapy, where the Accent Method has been used to great effect. Minor edits have been made, but the book remains pretty much as the original.

The reader should be aware that some of the technology mentioned, as well as some of the science, has advanced significantly, but the essence of the Method remains as solid as it did at the time of the original publication, hence the demand.

We are indebted to Kirsten Thyme-Frøkjær and Børge Frøkjær-Jensen for permission to re-publish their work and, indeed, to Svend Smith who started the ball rolling with the origins of the Method formulating some 85-plus years ago! Further, Sara Harris, who has so kindly contributed an Introduction to this edition, and Dinah Harris continue to train speech therapists and singing/voice specialists in the Accent Method.

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

The drum sessions and exercises listed in the Appendix were originally published on audio CD. These music files are now available electronically. Please contact [noelmcpherson@comptonpublishing.com](mailto:noelmcpherson@comptonpublishing.com).

# Foreword to the first edition

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The Accent Method was developed by Svend Smith, assisted by Kirsten Thyme-Frøkjær, who, together with her husband and co-author of the present volume, Børge Frøkjær-Jensen, has pioneered and refined the method over a long period. This has now culminated in the production of a series of graded voice exercises which admirably combine the basic elements required for good voice production.

The exercises are, by their very nature, practical and dynamic and in order to ensure their successful application to patients, the Accent Method is normally taught orally and demonstrated to small groups of therapists. As a result, this is the first comprehensive description of the exercises published by the founders in the English language, which makes the appearance of this volume welcome and essential reading for speech and language therapists with an interest in voice disorders.

The book is written specifically as a guide for therapists working with voice disorders. It brings together Kirsten's considerable therapeutic skills and experience as a therapist, with Børge's expertise in phonetics and acoustic measurements, both in the design and application of instrumentation. For his sterling work in this field, he

## ACCENT METHOD

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was elected a Fellow of the International Society of Phonetic Sciences in 1984 and received an Achievement Award in 2000 from the Pacific Voice and Speech Foundation.

Both authors lectured for many years at the Danish University of Education and participated in planning the Speech Pathology Course in Copenhagen University, where they also lectured.

### **Part I: The history and principles of the Accent Method**

This provides a fascinating outline of the development and rationale of this effective therapy from its inception to its current perfection. Only the authors, who have been totally immersed in this subject, could have presented this with such complete understanding and authority.

### **Part II: The anatomy, physiology and acoustics of phonation**

While suitably comprehensive and detailed, this section is a model of simplicity and is presented in a clear and readily understood manner. The integrated action of anatomical structures and physiological mechanisms fundamental to voice production is not only expertly described but also beautifully illustrated. Both students and clinicians who find heavier descriptions of these interrelated functions both daunting and inaccessible will welcome this section.

The section on phonation describes the myoelastic theory of voice production, the Bernoulli effect of airflow and aspects of register, pitch and intensity which are all essential to a knowledge of the normal and dysphonic voice. These are related throughout to the Accent Method.

### **Part III: Teaching the Accent Method**

This follows the same structure, beginning with breathing and relaxation exercises before proceeding to the most detailed description of the Accent Method exercises yet in print. Kirsten has succeeded in the very difficult task of describing practical exercises usually taught directly person to person and it is possible to work through the exercises from the text.

.....**Foreword to the first edition**.....  
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**Part IV: Acoustic and physiological measurements**

Descriptions and explanations are given for a range of procedures which can be used before and after therapy to give reliable outcome measurements. The authors summarise objective results of their investigations while using the Accent Method over the past 40 years. This provides data on the efficacy of this form of voice therapy. Notes are used liberally throughout to give clear explanations of technical terms and render the text of this difficult subject eminently readable. The authors have not included a description or classification of different voice disorders or pathologies, as the book is primarily a description of therapy and the physiological principles upon which the therapy is based.

The Accent Method can also be used as a valuable teaching aid for professional voice users, such as teachers, to promote good voice production and prevent the development of occupational voice disorders. This should become an essential bench book for clinicians and a valuable resource for lecturers, students and professional voice users.

**Margaret Gordon**

Area Speech and Language Therapist, The Victoria Infirmary,  
Glasgow

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# Foreword to the expanded, reprinted edition

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I was first introduced to the Accent Method when Bibi Fex, a renowned Swedish Speech and Language Therapist, demonstrated it at the Voice Research Society's first Voice Conservation Conference in 1985. Like many others, I was somewhat bemused at the time at how eccentric it seemed in comparison to the vocal exercises I had learned in college. Eccentric perhaps to watch, but Bibi also spoke about the scientific principles behind the technique and the research papers showing its effectiveness. It was usual for voice therapy techniques to be evidence-based in the early 1980's so, impressed by this, I thought I should give it a try, (albeit minus the drumming which I was not too good with). To my amazement patients responded well to my efforts. I went on to have some practice sessions with Ingrid Rugheimer and then was lucky enough to meet Kirsten Thyme- Frøkjær at a conference and to study with her over a week at her home in Copenhagen. Kirsten had worked alongside Svend Smith in the 1960s and following his death, the copyright for the Accent Method passed to her. When she generously invited me to stay and study with her, I not only learned to work with the Accent Method more fully, I was also privileged to observe Kirsten working with clients and witness firsthand the benefits of the technique on stammerers and dysphonics.

## Foreword to the expanded, reprinted edition

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Although the Accent Method was introduced to the UK during the 1960s, it does not appear to have been particularly popular or extensively used at the time. It was not included, or even referred to, when I covered voice therapy in my training at college. Although originally developed for use with stammerers, the technique was soon found to be beneficial as a treatment for patients suffering from dysphonia and became widely used to treat both conditions in Scandinavia and Northern Europe. It also proved to be an effective training for healthy voices and has been used as part of undergraduate voice training for speech and language therapists in Denmark and Sweden for many years.

Although Kirsten had written '*Die Akzentmethode*' with Svend Smith in 1981, the work was never translated into English. With a resurgence of interest in the Accent Method during the late 1980's and 1990's, Kirsten and Børge set out to rectify the situation and the first edition of this book was published in 2001. It proved an invaluable tool for me and many other English therapists, providing a clear, step by step guide on how to introduce the Accent Method to patients and how to progress them through the graded exercises toward speech. The text is backed up with delightful cartoon illustrations demonstrating the therapy process as the work is carried out. The audio files that accompany the book were made by Kirsten herself and are a huge help to patients and less experienced therapists in learning and practising their Accent Method skills. The theory is well-explained and the exercises well-paced, and the evenness of Kirsten's drumming is to be envied! The book also includes all the theoretical scientific underpinning behind the method along with a summary of the research evidence for its efficacy.

As English therapists began to take more interest in the method the demand for training increased. Kirsten came over to do several courses in the UK and Ireland and eventually the British Voice Association approached me to do some introductory courses for them as well. Being a multidisciplinary organisation, the BVA introductory courses were open to not only Speech and Language Therapists, but also to singing teachers and teachers of spoken voice as well. This new generation of voice professionals introduced Accent Method to their client groups and were soon convinced of its value, both with singers

## ACCENT METHOD

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and actors in vocal difficulty and with the healthy voices of those in training. Australian Speech Pathologist, Ron Morris researched the effectiveness of the Accent Method to develop the breath control of young classical singers in training for his doctoral thesis. This work went on to form the basis of the recent book *If in Doubt Breathe Out: Breathing and Support Based on the Accent Method*, which he wrote in collaboration with UK singing teacher Linda Hutchison. The book is designed primarily for singers and singing teachers and he and Linda have proved extremely creative in applying the original Accent Method exercises into singing while maintaining their full benefit.

Like the Universe, interest in the Accent Method and new applications for it seem to be ever expanding. Imagine then the frustration among new devotees when they discovered the first edition of 'The Accent Method' was out of print and could only rarely be purchased at extortionate prices from the internet. This new edition is about to change all that. It has all the treasures of the first edition plus a new section that was sadly missing from the first book; how to use Accent Method with stammerers. There has been quite a bit of publicity around the treatment of stammerers in the media recently and it would be interesting to see whether Accent Method could find its place once again in the arena for which it was created. Who knows, they may still be areas of application which have yet to be explored.

My 'Accent Method journey' began with the generosity of three women, Bib Fex, Ingrid Rugheimer and, of course, Kirsten Thyme Frøkjær. Without them I might never have found the Accent Method. It has been invaluable in my clinical work and remains a mainstay of my voice therapy practice today. I continue to be amazed at the range of positive effects it can have on patients. I very much hope this book will begin the 'Accent Method journey' of many more.

**Sara Harris**, FRCSLT, London, 2020



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# Preface to the first edition

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The development of therapeutic skills is an important aspect of speech and language therapy remediation, through which therapists can apply theoretical knowledge to help clients overcome, or learn to cope with their speech, language and voice problems or disorders. Remediable dysphonias arising from misuse or abuse of the voice comprise in some countries up to 30% of the speech and language training cost in a hospital with an ENT department. It is therefore important that clinicians are able to offer an effective and rational voice treatment, with measurable results, in the shortest possible time.

The 'Accent Method', originally developed by Professor Svend Smith, is just such a treatment. Based on a sound theoretical background in phonetics and voice physiology, Svend Smith, from his own experience as a clinician, combined the most effective elements of various voice therapies to form the Accent Method, which was developed gradually between the years 1935 and 1970. Together with Kirsten Thyme-Frøkjær, he further developed the theoretical aspects of the method during the 1970s and 1980s and carried out several objective investigations in order to evaluate the results obtained using the technique.

Because the Accent Method was developed over half a century ago, we have considered it important to include references which we

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know have been important background literature for Svend Smith. Today, the Accent Method offers a well-researched training system for the treatment of voice and speech disorders, covering exercises for relaxation, respiration and voice, including the transfer from voice exercises to reading and oral communication.

Over the last 15 years, following the publication of the two books, *Accentmetoden* (1978, published in Danish) and *Die Akzentmethode* (1980, published in German) which was revised and translated into Italian as *Il Metodo dell'Accento* (1996), there has been an increasing need for a complete presentation of the method, including the most recent research results. We therefore decided to write this book, which has been requested by many clinicians working both in speech and language therapy training and clinically with speech and voice disordered clients, right across Europe. We hope that the book will give a better theoretical understanding of the ideas behind this holistic and rational voice therapy and be of use to clinicians.

Clearly, this book does not fit into the mould for a conventional textbook on voice disorders. It is primarily a textbook on a specific voice and speech therapy technique which includes information which the authors have found to be necessary for an adequate understanding of the theory and practice of the Accent Method.

We want to express our appreciation and gratitude to Professor Emeritus Eli Fischer-Jørgensen, Institute of Phonetics, University of Copenhagen, and Chief Physician Dr Viggo Balle, ENT Department, Gentofte Hospital, Copenhagen, who have assisted us with professional proofreading of various chapters of the present book. We also want to express our warm thanks to Dr Børge Hjeremov, Jonstrup Teachers College, Lyngby and to speech pathologist Sara Harris and her husband consultant phoniatician (an ENT specialist in voice disorders) Tom Harris of London for their proofreading of parts of the English text.

We appreciate the way the two illustrators have brought life to the book through the excellent anatomical drawings made by medical illustrator Bent Nordberg, and also the sketches made by Speech and Hearing Clinician, Bo Ege.

Preface to the first edition.....

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And most of all we want to thank Margaret Gordon, Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow, for the final proofreading and advice in this book.

**Kirsten Thyme Frøkjær**  
**Børge Frøkjær-Jensen**

Copenhagen, 2001

