

# **CLEAR ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION**

A Practical Guide

Dick Smakman



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# Clear English Pronunciation

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*Clear English Pronunciation* provides students with the tools to effectively communicate in English without centring solely on native-speaker pronunciation models. The focus of the book is on individual pronunciation targets rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Divided into four sections, each featuring detailed articulatory explanations, sample sentences, and recordings to help learners improve their pronunciation, this book:

- introduces the phenomenon of pronunciation as part of a broader communicative realm;
- explains and demonstrates the melody and rhythm of understandable and natural English pronunciation;
- supports students in identifying and practising their own pronunciation issues.

Supported by an interactive companion website which features recordings and expanded explanations of key topics, *Clear English Pronunciation* is an essential textbook for international learners of English who want to improve their pronunciation skills in diverse social settings.

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Dick Smakman

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# Preface

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## **Pronunciation**

For several reasons, pronunciation is an atypical aspect of language learning. It distinguishes learners on the basis of skills other than the academic. First of all, it involves control over many tiny muscles in the speech tract, and is in that respect more practical and physiological than other linguistic skills. It is also different because it is an uncomfortable skill to some. Second-language pronunciation often involves imitating both the pronunciation and subtle communicative habits of real or prototypical speakers. This act of imitation may feel a little unnatural. Another reason for the special role of pronunciation is its function as personality marker. Listeners will make judgements on the basis of pronunciation skills; a speaker's image, professionalism, and even personality and intelligence are gauged through their pronunciation in particular.

The term 'pronunciation' as referred to above is used in a broad sense. It refers not only to the way the mouth is shaped during the production of consonants and vowels, but also to a system of stress and intonation, and to general articulation habits. Bourdieu (1991) emphasised that while individual sounds are often studied in isolation, and subsequently compared with equivalents in other people's speech, they are only a part of a larger pronunciation style in which all individual articulation features (consonants and vowels, but also intonation and general vocal-tract usage) should be studied as an "indivisible totality" (86). Together, these form your pronunciation, and this skill thus entails a broad behavioural pattern.

Because of the intrinsic complexity of pronunciation, the outcome of a pronunciation course is harder to control or predict than the outcome of courses on other aspects of language acquisition; most notably, grammar and vocabulary. While a specific grammatical construction or word choice is often simply correct or incorrect, successes in pronunciation are often difficult to measure objectively. Different people will all perceive and evaluate a certain pronunciation (its understandability, its beauty, its correctness, etc.) in their own way (Hoorn, Smakman, & Foster, 2014). Whether someone's pronunciation is 'good' depends on its successes and failures in specific communicative settings. With



so many potential judges, a challenge that learners face is to choose the right pronunciation for their own purposes.

## **Approach to pronunciation in this book**

*Clear English Pronunciation* takes a stance for the learner of English and their real-life pronunciation issues while communicating. Achieving the highest possible degree of mutual intelligibility in discourse is considered the core challenge that the learner faces – having one’s sounds be interpreted the way one desires, and interpreting the sounds of one’s interlocutor as well as possible. With this in mind, five principles to teaching pronunciation as applied in this book are explained next. The places in this book where sources of information can be found have been added.

### ***1 Non-articulatory pronunciation skills***

Pronunciation is the act of using the muscles in your speech tract in such a way that speech sounds come out of it for others to hear and interpret. Good pronunciation is supported by not only your speech tract but, actually, your whole body and your mind. Before one is ready to improve one’s pronunciation, it is useful to learn how one can use one’s physique and psyche towards natural and understandable pronunciation.

Learners need to deal with their insecurities, know their audience and adjust to them, and they need to be aware of how their pronunciation will be evaluated. This readiness and motivation could be considered the social psychological part of one’s pronunciation skills. The physiological conditions that determine whether one will be successful in acquiring a good pronunciation consist of breathing technique, body language, body posture and movement, facial expression, eye contact, and, for instance, hand gestures. The socio-psychological and physiological are combined in the skill of perceiving and producing sound distinctions. Controlling all of these skills and putting them to good use will help one feel more confident and ready. Chapters 2 and 4 deal with all of these aspects that are not strictly articulatory. The sources used are in these chapters.

### ***2 Prosody***

Prosody refers mainly to the music and rhythm of one’s pronunciation. It includes intonation, loudness, speech tempo, and rhythm (Crystal, 2008). The most well-known and largest varieties of English share two basic intonation patterns according to most sources that were consulted, and these two patterns have been used as a model. Tips about tempo and silences are from sources with a more general approach to English pronunciation or pronunciation in general. The sources used for intonation and other prosodic aspects include: Lujan (2016), Dinger, Smit, and Winkelman (2008), Collins and Mees (2003), Gussen-

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hoven and Broeders (1997), Brazil (1994), Johns-Lewis (1986), Bolinger (1986, 1989), and various websites with instructions by speech therapists as well as other experts on pronunciation. Prosody is dealt with in Part B.

### **3 Consonants and vowels**

If one is ready to start a pronunciation course, then a pronunciation model is needed as a focus – consonants and vowels. The consonants and vowels of all kinds of native Englishes have been described in detail in many sources. This course does not explicitly follow a narrow native-speaker model from one of these sources. It is understood that international norms of understandable English are shaped by the standardised versions of the type of English that according to Crystal (2003) stems from the “traditional bases” (53) of this language, where it is the primary language of daily communication for most inhabitants. These bases include Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These Englishes are often called Inner Circle Englishes (Kachru, 1992). Other types of English are also highly functional on an international plane, including the standardised versions of the Englishes from the former British colonies across the world. Unfortunately, there is no model or general guideline that tells us which set of phonemes (i.e. speech sounds) constitutes ‘internationally understandable English’.

Inner Circle Englishes in particular are said to provide norms for learners of English (Jenkins, 2015). The pronunciation of these Englishes has for many decades dominated international Anglophone television and radio broadcasts, and it is nowadays widely used as an online tool for international communication. The English and American ways of pronouncing English in particular are influential, as they are models used in education all over the world. For this book, the basic sounds that Inner Circle Englishes seem to share is the model. In Chapter 9 and in Parts C and D, information on pronunciation variation amongst accents of English is explained where relevant.

Some of the tips in this book tend slightly more towards one pronunciation model than another. Practical reasons to do with understandability and achieving clear sound distinctions are behind this. The general sound descriptions in Chapter 3 allow for much personal variation. Learners do not need to worry about mixing sounds from one or more of the above model accents with each other or with their native tongue. Their pronunciation needs to be within the window of variation of what is intelligible. It may well be that some sounds of their native tongue also fall into this realm of wide intelligibility. The functionality of your accent does not depend on a formal or strict model but on how it is perceived and evaluated. To test this, most chapters in Parts B, C, and D will test your understandability.

The selected set of phonemes (basic speech sounds) for this book is in agreement with available descriptions of such sets, amongst others the one on Wikipedia (2019) (“International Phonetic Alphabet Chart for English Dialects”). Most

of the symbols used represent articulations that can be assumed to be widely understandable, when pronounced in accordance with the pronunciation features that the International Phonetic Alphabet assigns to them (IPA, 2018). In Chapter 9 and in the chapters in Parts C and D, explanations are given of how speakers vary in how they pronounce sounds. The complete list of symbols used in this book is in Chapter 3. Learners can check the pronunciation of words through a website that is provided to actually hear how words may be pronounced in two well-known varieties of English: standard United States English ('General American') and standard English from England ('Received Pronunciation').

This book deals with all the sounds that are commonly presented in existing pronunciation courses. More attention is paid to potentially problematic sounds than sounds that are usually pronounced intelligibly. A pronounced sound is problematic if the listener does not interpret it as intended by the speaker the first time the speaker utters it. This means that not all sounds are equally worthy of attention. Also, speech sounds and pronunciation problems that are frequent require more attention than less frequent ones. For instance, the combination of final sounds in the word *besieged*, [dʒd], is much less frequent than that in the word *must*, [st].

#### **4 Phoneme contrasts**

The speech sounds dealt with in this book are common reasons for miscommunication amongst large groups of learners. Rather than only presenting speech sounds as individual targets for learners to focus on, each of the sounds this book discusses is compared with one or more other sounds that are articulatorily similar. The idea is that similarity between sounds causes intelligibility problems and that distinguishing between sounds is an efficient way to become more understandable. The chapters in Parts C and D in particular contrast two, three, or more articulatorily similar speech sounds and explain the ways in which they are different from each other.

If articulatory similarity is the guideline, then each speech sound could be compared with several other speech sounds. Speakers with different backgrounds have problems distinguishing between different sets of speech sounds. On the other hand, there are phoneme distinctions that large groups of speakers find problematic. These are the basis of the selection of speech sounds to be contrasted in this book. This selection is based on five sources:

- 1 First of all, sources were consulted that describe the pronunciation issues of speakers who speak a 'large' language, with very many speakers. French, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, and Russian fall into this category. There are articles, books, and websites in which these issues are described, like Abdulhadi (2015) (for speakers of Arab) and Shi and Li (2010) (for speakers of Mandarin Chinese). The unnecessary rhotacisation of vowels (for instance, pronouncing *method* like 'methurd') is an example of an issue these sources mention.

- 2 The second source of information is ‘Lingua Franca Core’ (Jenkins, 2015), which is a list of pronunciation features that are important in order for English pronunciation communication to be intelligible. Pronunciation features that are in this list are, for instance, producing the right vowel length distinctions (distinguishing between the short vowel in *pick* and the long vowel in *peak*) and avoiding consonant deletion at the beginnings of words (pronounce all three initial consonants in a word like *strokes*).
- 3 The third source of information used for the selection of pronunciation challenges at the phonemic level in this book is information by linguists and other academics in the field – who have learned English themselves and are in most cases English-language experts and/or phoneticians. These have sent the author their personal overviews of the common challenges of learners who share their native tongue. This yielded, for instance, the phenomenon of vowel nasalisation. This comes down to reducing the vowel and final nasal to only a nasalised vowel, in words like *sun* and *sang*, making these endings like the ending in the French word *pain*.
- 4 The fourth source are auditory analyses of the recordings of learners speaking English that were collected for the companion website: [www.universiteitleidennl/clearenglishpronunciation](http://www.universiteitleidennl/clearenglishpronunciation). These showed, for instance, that the final devoicing of obstruents (see Chapter 3) is a serious issue across a wide variety of languages. Final devoicing takes place if *bed* sounds like *bet*.
- 5 The fifth and last source of information are websites and clips that are freely available online. Many professionals and non-professionals have posted their personal overview of the most pertinent pronunciation issues of people with various language backgrounds. Interesting and useful tips on rhythm were found on these websites, for instance.

## 5 Knowing the skills of interlocutors

*Clear English Pronunciation* does not focus on the pronunciation of sounds for aesthetic effect or to show off your pronunciation and at the same time pass judgement on your interlocutor’s pronunciation. Instead, gauging and adjusting to the interlocutor is treated as part of the skill of pronouncing English clearly and as a determinant of pronunciation quality. Speakers with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds need to learn to understand each other and get along on equal terms. To that end, interlocutors will need to accommodate to each other, which is conducive to natural and equal communication. Each chapter in Parts B, C, and D not only introduces a specific issue and enables you to test whether you suffer from the issue at hand. These chapters also urge you to learn about other learners’ pronunciation issues.

Learners are all in the same boat and investigating each other’s accents will enable them to evaluate their own accent. This approach helps learners feel empowered to set their own goals and address their own pronunciation needs. This

approach instils confidence in the learner that one's native accent is a source of information and power rather than only a source of potential confusion and shame.

## **Audience and objectives**

This course focuses on the learner of English who wishes to make their English pronunciation more understandable. It aims at the learner who is currently able to speak English but who feels that their pronunciation is not perceived perfectly by those they want to be understood by, be they native speakers of English or not. The learner who aims to use English in real life to communicate with speakers with many different linguistic and cultural backgrounds will benefit most from this book.

The book will help learners think critically about pronunciation variation and models. If one wants to improve one's pronunciation, one should examine the criteria that pronunciation should meet. It is common for learners to feel a distance between the English that they are taught and the English that suits their goals and personality. This book tries to bridge this gap by stimulating learners to discover their English pronunciation needs.

At the end of this course, learners will be better able to make motivated choices as to which pronunciation norms are their target. They will have reduced the number of less intelligible sounds as well as confusing prosodic and other high-level pronunciation patterns in their English pronunciation. They will also understand other learners' pronunciation issues better.

This book is not a self-study book. It cannot be used without good teacher input and instruction. Students need guidance on peer-reviewing, and the teacher's assessment of the understandability of the students' English, which is an important part of the book, should be guiding rather than be seen as just another assessment. This means that the teacher teaching this course needs good intuitions of language variation, international communication in English, as well as some basic phonetic knowledge.

## **Practicalities**

All the numbered items in this book are available in audio through the companion website. The items are pronounced by a range of speakers with different linguistic backgrounds. Included are, mostly, native speakers of English. In addition, there are non-native speakers whose English is of a high understandability level (near-native speakers) and who are therefore suitable as pronunciation models. Finally, examples are given of less successful non-native speakers pronouncing sounds less intelligibly. The companion website gives the background of each speaker.

This companion website also contains detailed pronunciation tips for speakers with specific language backgrounds. It also contains a selection of articles on the issue of English pronunciation in a globalised world.

To help students practise the right sounds in the practice items given, highlighting has been applied. Boxes around text are used for this. A specific letter could be boxed, or a syllable, a word, or a set of words. Because English spelling and pronunciation are not always in sync and because different Englishes treat spelling differently, the boxing in the practice items is in some cases merely an intuitive and rudimentary indication of the place in the practice item where a specific sound phenomenon can be found. Where necessary, explanations are given as to what the boxes denote specifically.

Phonetic information is used to explain phenomena. This is done in such a way that those with no linguistic background can go through the articulatory explanations. Terms are explained in the chapters in Parts B, C, and D, and Chapter 3 contains an introduction to articulatory phonetics.

The practical chapters in Parts B, C, and D consist of the following sections:

- 1 The *What could go wrong?* section explains which sounds may be confused by learners and gives examples of mispronunciations causing misinterpretations.
- 2 The *Is this your problem?* section enables students and their teachers to determine whether there is a need to continue with the rest of the chapter. This section reveals whether learners are able to produce (i.e. pronounce) and perceive (i.e. hear) certain sound distinctions. If a student's production and perception are both functional, the decision could be made to skip the rest of the chapter.
- 3 The *Explanation and practice* section explains the pronunciation issue at hand and gives advice on how to solve the problem. When useful, spelling information is given in that section. All kinds of exercises to practise distinctions are in this section. It ends with a listen-and-repeat exercise.
- 4 The *Key* section gives the answers to listening exercises in the chapters.

Hooked brackets are used in this book to refer to sounds, because these brackets are associated with the way sounds are actually pronounced. They allow one to be very specific and indicate that, for instance, the phoneme /p/ can be pronounced with a puff of air, [p<sup>h</sup>], or without, [p]. It is understood that transcribed sounds do not represent one specific way of pronouncing these sounds but are general hints. They will still be pronounced differently by speakers – both native and non-native. It is also understood that by far most learners tend to produce sounds that are a mixture of their first language and one or more pronunciation models, and this situation is in this book considered natural and not in need of change if the sounds in question are understandable.

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# Your pronunciation before the course

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The main reason for you to read this book is, hopefully, to improve your English pronunciation. To measure your progress at the end of the course, let's record you speaking English before you've gone through all the information and instructions.

### *Task 1.1*

First study and then read out the text below, which is part of the first page of 'Life of Pi' by Yann Martel (2001). For inspiration, you could listen to one of the speakers on the website who read out this text. Choose the speaker you want to sound like. Record yourself while reading. After reading out the text, talk about a random topic (something that interests you) for two more minutes in the same recording.

- 1 My suffering left me sad and gloomy. Academic study and the steady, mindful practice of religion slowly brought me back to life. I have kept up what some people would consider my strange religious practices. After one year of high school, I attended the University of Toronto and took a double-major Bachelor's degree. My majors were Religious Studies and Zoology. My fourth-year thesis for Religious Studies concerned certain aspects of the Cosmogony Theory of Isaac Luria, the great sixteenth-century Kabbalist from Safed. My Zoology thesis was a functional analysis of the thyroid gland of the three-toed sloth. I chose the sloth because its demeanour – quiet, calm and introspective – did something to soothe my shattered self. There are two-toed sloths and there are three-toed sloths, the case being determined by the fore-paws of the animals, since all sloths have three claws on their hind-paws. I had the great luck one summer of studying the three-toed sloth in situ in the equatorial jungles of Brazil. It is a highly intriguing creature. Its only real habit is indolence. It sleeps or rests on average 20 hours a day. Our team tested the sleep habits of five wild three-toed sloths by**



**placing on their heads, in the early evening after they had fallen asleep, bright red plastic dishes filled with water. We found them still in place late the next morning, the water of the dishes swarming with insects. The sloth is at its busiest at sunset, using the word 'busy' here in a most relaxed sense. It moves along the bough of a tree in its characteristic upside-down position at the speed of roughly 400 metres an hour. On the ground, it crawls to its next tree at the rate of 250 metres an hour, when motivated, which is 440 times slower than a motivated cheetah. Unmotivated, it covers four to five metres in an hour.**

☞ Now, talk about a random topic for two minutes.

***Task 1.2***

Post your recording in a closed online forum of which the students in this course are members. Have three of your fellow students listen to your recording, and listen to three recordings of fellow students. While listening, write down what you think of the following aspects of each recording:

- voice quality (warm voice, breathy voice, etc.)
- clarity of pronunciation (clear or less clear) and why
- striking vowels or consonants (perhaps a specific sound is very unclear)
- intonation (lively or monotonous)
- speed (rushed or not).

Share your findings with the speakers you have evaluated.

At the end of the course, you will be asked to record the above text again and evaluate three students' recordings again, so that the effects of the course will be noticeable. Hopefully, your pronunciation will be even better than it is now.

## Part A

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# Second-language pronunciation

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Part A introduces the art of English pronunciation and how you can approach it as a learner. Chapter 1 (*Your pronunciation before the course*) tests your pronunciation skills and habits before the course starts. Chapter 2 (*Improving pronunciation*) presents general pronunciation hints that help you deal with the more specific problems in this book more easily. Chapter 3 (*Using the speech tract*) explains how the speech tract works and presents the sounds that it can produce when you speak English. Chapter 4 (*Using other pronunciation tools*) explains how the way you use your speech tract is only a part of your pronunciation skills. Besides this obvious tool, there is the way you move your body, your confidence, and some other factors that together determine how your pronunciation will be produced and perceived.



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# Improving pronunciation

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### **The learnability of pronunciation**

To go from a less understandable to a more intelligible accent, one needs to do some work. For some, English pronunciation is a set of sounds that are learned step by step, while for others they form a fortress of sounds that can only be approached as a whole. Some are better at analysing and changing their own pronunciation than others are, and the judges are still out on why this is so or how this works (Cook, 2009; Geeslin & Long, 2014). If these judges knew, different types of learners could be placed in different classrooms and learn in their own style and at their own pace (Smakman & De France, 2015). What any researcher and teacher will agree on is the fact that all speakers can benefit from breaking down and analysing their own and other people's speech (into sounds, intonation patterns, and the like). By analysing and reflecting, the pronunciation fortress may be torn down and rebuilt brick by brick.

The previous chapter started with the observation that pronunciation is a difficult skill to learn. This book gives you many pronunciation tips and exercises that you can use to help improve this skill. Before you start on those, however, it is advisable to critically assess your own pronunciation habits. It may well be that the reason you are not always understood perfectly are some bad habits when you pronounce English. In many cases, those habits are a greater challenge than that of replacing unclear sounds and sound combinations with more understandable ones. The current chapter urges you to discover whether some changes of habit might be advisable for you.

### **Eight pronunciation-learning tips**

You may have habits that are detrimental to your pronunciation. The rest of this chapter contains eight general tips to address such habits. Following these tips may help you push your pronunciation forward considerably and give you the extra confidence to kick-start you into more detailed and systematic pronunciation improvement.

**Tip 1: Slow down**

By far the most important tip that will help you become more understandable is to slow down when you speak, especially when you start speaking. Listeners need to be prepared to digest your L2 (second-language) English, and that means they need to work out how you speak English. As a learner, you need to start slowly and only speed up when you get the impression that the listener understands your specific English pronunciation habits. Only highly advanced speakers who are easily understood can speak relatively quickly and still be understood by a wide audience. Chapters 10 and 11 provide instructions that will help you control speed a little better.

**Tip 2: Speak consistently loudly**

Sometimes syllables, words, clauses, and sentences suffer from a lack of loudness at their ends. Dinger et al. (2008) called this the “night-candle effect” (34). Candle lights slowly die. You will be recognised as a night-candle speaker if you often need to repeat what you say at the ends of sentences. The idea is that you don’t let your utterances die slowly but keep them alive until their end. To that end, make sure not to swallow up the ends of syllables, words, clauses, or sentences. It is even advisable to place some emphasis on these parts, especially the ends of sentences. Chapters 6, 7 and 10 in particular help you practise this aspect of pronunciation.

The opposite of the candle-stick style is what Dinger et al. (2008) called a “slow-burner” style (101). Some people speak softly when they start talking, which means that people might immediately interrupt them with an “Excuse me?!” Make sure that when you start speaking, your audience is attuned. It may take some eye contact or even a little fake cough to draw people’s attention. After that, speak loudly from the get-go. Chapter 4 deals with the related issue of confidence. Chapter 10 is also useful in tackling this challenge of prosodic consistency when pronouncing English.

**Tip 3: Overarticulate rather than underarticulate**

You can choose to pronounce all sounds without opening your mouth much, as you perhaps would when casually speaking your native tongue, but this makes these sounds mutually more similar and unclear. In cases when a sound is not pronounced well, the listener will need the context (amongst others, social, logical, or grammatical context) to deduce which sound you mean. For instance, if a pilot says that another plane is on their ‘*ruhduhr*’, it is obvious from the context that they do not mean *raider* but *radar*. Communication can be interrupted because sounds are confused with other sounds (listeners hear another sound) or because sounds are difficult to hear (listener does not hear which vowel is meant).

What often happens is that the speaker produces a string of mumbled sounds and expects the listener to construct meaning on the basis of this information. To help the listener, you need to overarticulate somewhat sometimes, especially if you are still in the early stages of learning English pronunciation. Underarticulating suggests that you are not too concerned about the listener's interests. Sometimes, learners underarticulate sounds because they are not sure about the right pronunciation, but in the end it is better to mispronounce sounds than to be generally less intelligible. Parts C and D deal with the pronunciation of individual phonemes, so that you will feel more certain and articulate sounds with conviction.

Do not leave out or insert sounds because this is how it works in your native tongue and therefore comes easily. For instance, four consecutive consonants are used to pronounce *xtr* in the word *extremely* (namely [k], [s], [t], and [ɹ]). These should all be pronounced. If pronounced quickly, perhaps under the influence of consonant clusters in one's native tongue, this word may come out as the non-existent '*is treamly*', i.e. without the [k]. A problem that some learners have is that in their native tongue such strings of consonants are not common, and these speakers may pronounce *extremely* as something like '*eccassuhtahreemally*', because in their native tongue vowels usually separate consonants. A final example is when insecure speakers revert to unclear vowels that all sound similar, somewhere in the middle of the mouth (see Chapter 3). The word *peak*, if not pronounced clearly, may come out as *peck* or *pick*.

#### **Tip 4: Focus on the music of your English**

Part B of this book deals with rhythmic and other high-level features of pronunciation. When learners think of improving their pronunciation, they usually think of making their consonants and vowels sound better, but in actual fact a large part of their understandability depends on speed, stress, intonation, and general rhythm. Playing with these may have an instant positive effect on your understandability. Many of the chapters in Part B deal with the 'music' of your pronunciation, whose importance is often underestimated by learners.

#### **Tip 5: Find your L2 persona**

If you want to improve your pronunciation, it helps if you take a speaker or speaker type as an example. Imitating these will likely make your pronunciation resemble theirs. Imitate the way they move the muscles in their speech tract, most of all. When you speak English as an L2, you may benefit from sounding almost like a different person. Once you have found this 'articulatory setting', this way of using the vocal tract, then all of the sounds you produce may come out better. For some learners, this approach of adopting a new persona when speaking a second language works, for others it does not. If this approach makes you sound awkward, it is better not to try too hard to sound like your model speaker(s).

**Task 2.1**

Listen to the speakers below. For each speaker, write down on a scale from 1 to 5 whether you want to sound like them. After each item, take a few seconds to write down why you like the speaker's English pronunciation so much or not (understandability, clarity of voice, type of accent, or perhaps images the speaker evokes). In the group of learners in your group, see whether there is perhaps a hierarchy of speakers, and whether perhaps arguments used to like or dislike speech styles recur. On the companion website, check the real background of these speakers.

- |   |           |    |           |
|---|-----------|----|-----------|
| 1 | Speaker A | 7  | Speaker G |
| 2 | Speaker B | 8  | Speaker H |
| 3 | Speaker C | 9  | Speaker I |
| 4 | Speaker D | 10 | Speaker J |
| 5 | Speaker E | 11 | Speaker K |
| 6 | Speaker F |    |           |

**Tip 6: Adjust your general linguistic level to your pronunciation level**

Try to keep your word-choice level and the grammatical level of your English at the same level as your pronunciation level. If your pronunciation is not fully understandable, then squeezing in discourse markers such as *you know*, *like*, *kind of*, *sort of*, and *in fact* may make you even less easy to follow. Dinger et al. (2008) explained how repetitive lexical habits may make a person less pleasant to listen to and can often confuse their language. In the same vein, highly complex sentences with difficult native-sounding phrases and expressions go together best with a high level of pronunciation. Chapter 4 is useful reading material for this topic.

**Tip 7: Read your audience**

Every listener has their own pronunciation habits and style. They have a certain native tongue, or a few of them, and thus their own understanding of sounds. They also have their own way of being interested in what you have to say and willingness to make an effort when listening to you. Knowing your listener in these respects helps communication. You need to adjust to their skills and habits in all kinds of ways. Avoid simply pronouncing the English you think is right, at the pace and level you think is suitable, but gauge the listener while carefully starting the exchange and then decide on your pronunciation style. Chapter 4 deals with audience assessment as part of the skill of pronouncing sounds well.

Furthermore, all the chapters in Parts B, C, and D teach you to fathom the specific pronunciation issues of learners.

***Tip 8: Find a learning routine***

Taking a course only lays the foundation of clear English pronunciation. For your level to stay the same or go up, you need to continue developing your pronunciation. You need a daily routine. You could sit down every day and imitate your favourite speaker for a minute, for instance. You could imitate newsreaders every day. You could perhaps go through this course book and the recordings again and again. If you get to speak English regularly in your daily life, then a recommended method is to consider every sound you produce as part of your pronunciation schooling and be critical of your performance. You can talk to a mirror, record yourself regularly, and judge your own recording. You can use a pronunciation tool regularly, even (see [www.universiteitleiden.nl/clearenglish/pronunciation](http://www.universiteitleiden.nl/clearenglish/pronunciation)). Make sure that taking this or another pronunciation course is not the aim itself but that improving your pronunciation is. Going through a course once and leaving it at that is never enough.



# Using the speech tract

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### The voice

The speech tract is the part of your body from the vocal cords to the lips and nostrils. It consists of a number of joined cavities that determine the nature of your voice: the throat (pharynx), the mouth (oral cavity), and the nose (nasal cavity). Speech sounds are formed by pressing air from the lungs through the speech tract. The oral cavity is where most of the subtle muscle movements to form such sounds take place. Its shape can be changed by moving the larynx, the soft palate, the tongue, the lower jaw, and the lips. The pharynx and nasal cavity cannot be controlled this way, but the amount of air going through them can be adjusted to change the quality of vowels in particular. With all these techniques, we produce and manipulate articulation. Figure 3.1 shows a typical speech tract and its components.

The natural shape of your speech tract determines the quality of your voice. Although it may resemble that of relatives, your voice quality is by definition unique. It can in fact function as an identification tool in the same way as a fingerprint or eye scan can. The voice acts as a strong feature of recognition and even evokes images. Some people have a naturally smooth voice, which may evoke confidence, while others have a voice that inadvertently has the opposite effect. Hoarse voices could be associated with a love of smoking, but also with sexiness. Voice quality thus affects how one's messages are perceived.

### Voice control

Everybody's speech tract is naturally shaped a certain way, and much of this shape cannot be changed through practice. People's voice quality stays with them throughout their lives and will mainly develop under the influence of age, while behavioural patterns could also affect it. Usually, these behaviours are not of the healthy kind: smoking and eating too much, using the voice wrongly, too much singing, too many parties, and, for instance, the use of chemicals through medication or drug use. Viruses and bacteria also influence the voice, but usually only temporarily. Healthy voices are those of people with a moderate lifestyle who breathe in clean air and have wholesome dietary habits.

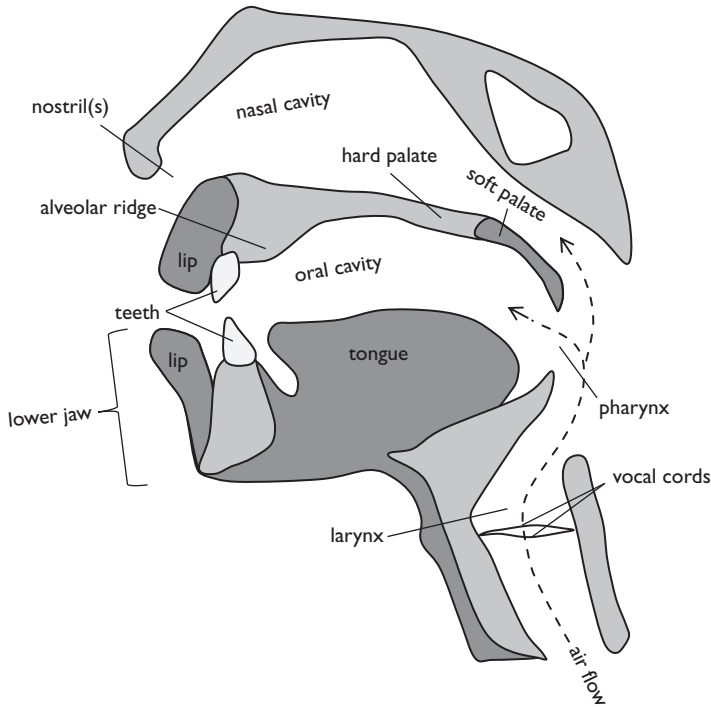


Figure 3.1 The speech tract.

One could take up (or quit) smoking just to develop a certain voice, but one could also look after one's voice in less radical ways. People who have taken singing lessons know how to optimally use their voice. Optimally in this sense means that as little air as possible is lost when it passes through the vocal cords. One can save energy, and at the same time reach more loudness, by avoiding a husky voice, because a tense style of whispering leads to a loss of energy and loudness, and it simultaneously taxes the vocal cords. Being aware of such things helps one use the voice efficiently and maintain it.

Every culture will have their own connotations attached to voice quality or use of the voice. Speakers can compensate for unwanted connotations of their voice by changing their articulation techniques in all kinds of ways. One could, for instance, manage emotions affecting the voice. A breaking or trembling voice could be due to nerves, anger, pain, or to someone being touched emotionally. Shyness and insecurity may cause your vocal cords to tighten and your voice going up in pitch and sounding thin. A crowing voice often suggests cheerfulness. As a learner of a second language, it is advisable to become aware of the natural connotations that one's voice use may have to your specific audience and to put that to your advantage (Dinger et al., 2008).

## Breathing technique

For your speech tract to produce the intended sounds, you'll also need to control your breathing and avoid hyperventilation. Hyperventilation comes down to breathing out too much, due to which less oxygen is passed on to the brain. Hyperventilation is directly relatable to stress and anxiety. Speaking a language that is not your native tongue could be the cause of stress, and this could affect your breathing. Avoiding the articulation of too many sounds on one breath is a simple way to avoid hyperventilation. Breathe out as much as in when you're under pressure. Breathing through one's nose is a habit that one could adopt because it is associated with a more balanced (and healthy) breath inhalation and exudence. To be able to pronounce sounds better, it is advisable to understand one's breathing and how one's voice indirectly reacts to it.

A final tip: try not to clear your throat as a habit. Instead, swallow more often. Under the pressure of a presentation or speaking a second language, people sometimes focus too much on the lubrication of their throat. Clearing your throat through coughing actually stimulates the need to cough even more; it prolongs the feeling that something (like phlegm or dryness) is on your vocal cords or in your throat, whereas in fact it sometimes isn't.

## Writing down speech sounds

If you know how to control your speech tract, voice, and breathing, then that helps you control your English pronunciation. One of the necessary improvements is replacing unclear sounds with clearer ones. Tackling this challenge becomes easier if you learn to think in terms of speech sounds that come out of a speech tract rather than in terms of spelling as it appears on paper. In this book, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) will be used to that end, and some basic phonetic terminology is used in many places in this book. This is done for practical reasons. Don't worry; in the text itself, the terms are explained, where necessary, and there is always this chapter for reference. A full IPA chart can be seen in the Appendix.

Below is a representation of the sounds of internationally understandable English. The chapters in which they are discussed are indicated as well (this is the case for most of the sounds). The bold chapter numbers refer to the chapters that focus on the sound in question explicitly. The Preface of this book explains the choices made in this selection of phonemes. The symbols are representations of speech sounds. The symbols often resemble orthographic representations (the spelling) but there's no absolute one-to-one relationship. An orthographic **n** is usually [n] in phonetic spelling, but the spelling **ng** is oftentimes noted down as [ŋ]. The letters **oo** may be represented phonetically as [u:] or [ʊ], amongst others, depending on how they are pronounced.

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Sample words</i>	<i>Discussed in chapter</i>
[ə]	about, arena	3, 6, 7, 13, 19, 23, 25, 27, 28, 31
[ɪ]	kit, pink	3, 9, 12, 29
[ʌ]	bus, flood	3, 23, 27
[ʊ]	book, put	3, 25, 28
[æ]	trap, cab	3, 9, 30, 31
[ɛ]	dress, met	3, 30, 31
[ɛ:]	Mary, variable	3, 31
[u:]	goose, new	3, 16, 28
[i:]	beam, fleece	3, 6, 9, 12, 29
[ɜ:]	heard, flirt	3, 23, 24
[ɑ:]	ah, father	3, 9, 23, 27
[ɒ]	boss, cloth	3, 9, 26, 27
[ɔ:]	all, bought	3, 24
[aɪ]	by, bite	3, 9, 27
[ɔɪ]	boys, loitering	3, 25
[aʊ]	about, now	3, 27
[eɪ]	lake, paid	3, 6, 9, 29
[oʊ]	goat, home	3, 9, 25, 26
[p]	pop, appoint	3, 12, 14
[b]	Bob, above	3, 12, 14, 16
[t]	gluten, bet	3, 9, 12, 14, 15
[d]	dot, bed	3, 12, 14, 15
[tʃ]	cheese, Dutch	3, 9, 12, 13, 18
[dʒ]	gin, edge	3, 12, 18
[k]	kilo, back	3, 12, 14
[g]	gal, big	3, 9, 12, 14
[f]	feet, deaf	3, 12, 15, 18
[v]	vow, dove	3, 12, 15, 16, 18
[w]	wish, aware	3, 9, 16
[θ]	thing, cloth	3, 12, 15
[ð]	thus, breathe	3, 12, 15
[s]	seems, best	3, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18
[ʃ]	shoot, ash	3, 12, 14, 17, 18
[z]	zinc, busy	3, 12, 15
[ʒ]	measure, usual	3, 12, 18
[h]	hope, behave	3, 9, 21
[j]	yard, beyond	3, 9
[l]	leave, bell	3, 4, 20, 32
[ɪ]	red, bereavement	3, 4, 20, 32
[m]	milk, dumb	3, 33
[n]	neat, dine	3, 7, 9, 33
[ŋ]	ring, dining	3, 9, 33

If you type in these words in <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/help/phonetics.html>, you can hear what the consonants and vowels above sound like.

## Consonants types

During the production of vowels, the airstream from the lungs passes freely through the vocal tract. During the production of consonants, on the other hand, obstructions take place. The outgoing air is interrupted through several pronunciation techniques (manners of articulation) and in several places in the mouth (places of articulation). Another distinction between consonants is that of voice: consonants are either basically voiceless or voice. (The latter two terms are associated with the qualities ‘fortis’ and ‘lenis’, which are discussed in Chapter 12.)

### 1 Place

Places of articulation are usually determined by some lower part of the speech tract touching or almost touching some upper part. The resultant places of articulation are visualised in the overview in Figure 3.2. Places of articulation typically overlap, so these are very general indications.

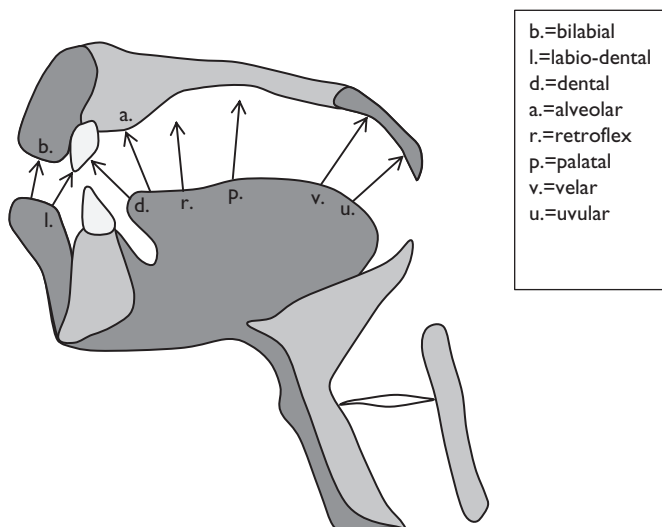


Figure 3.2 Places of articulation (consonants).

**Task 3.1**

Listen to the items below and repeat them. In each word, the boxed consonant is pronounced in a different place of articulation. The places of articulation roughly go from the back of the mouth to the front; try to feel this while pronouncing the boxed consonants.

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 a <b>h</b> oy! ([h], between vocal cords) | 25 <b>R</b> oy ([r], alveolar)    |
| 2 [h h h]                                   | 26 [r r r]                        |
| 3 <b>g</b> oo ([g], velar)                  | 27 <b>s</b> o ([s], alveolar)     |
| 4 [g g g]                                   | 28 [s s s]                        |
| 5 <b>c</b> oy ([k], velar)                  | 29 <b>z</b> oo ([z], alveolar)    |
| 6 [k k k]                                   | 30 [z z z]                        |
| 7 <b>s</b> ing ([ŋ], velar)                 | 31 <b>l</b> oo ([l], alveolar)    |
| 8 [ŋ ŋ ŋ]                                   | 32 [l l l]                        |
| 9 <b>y</b> ou ([j], palatal)                | 33 <b>th</b> e ([ð], dental)      |
| 10 [j j j]                                  | 34 [ð ð ð]                        |
| 11 <b>sh</b> oot ([ʃ], post-alveolar)       | 35 <b>th</b> ing ([θ], dental)    |
| 12 [ʃ ʃ ʃ]                                  | 36 [θ θ θ]                        |
| 13 <b>be</b> ige ([ʒ], post-alveolar)       | 37 <b>e</b> ve ([v], labiodental) |
| 14 [ʒ ʒ ʒ]                                  | 38 [v v v]                        |
| 15 <b>ch</b> ease ([tʃ], (post-)alveolar)   | 39 <b>f</b> oe ([f], labiodental) |
| 16 [tʃ tʃ tʃ]                               | 40 [f f f]                        |
| 17 <b>j</b> udge ([dʒ], (post-)alveolar)    | 41 <b>m</b> e ([m], bilabial)     |
| 18 [dʒ dʒ dʒ]                               | 42 [m m m]                        |
| 19 <b>t</b> ea ([t], alveolar)              | 43 <b>w</b> e ([w], bilabial)     |
| 20 [t t t]                                  | 44 [w w w]                        |
| 21 <b>d</b> o ([d], alveolar)               | 45 <b>p</b> ie ([p], bilabial)    |
| 22 [d d d]                                  | 46 [p p p]                        |
| 23 <b>n</b> o ([n], alveolar)               | 47 <b>b</b> uy ([b], bilabial)    |
| 24 [n n n]                                  | 48 [b b b]                        |

**2 Manner**

The manners of articulation of consonants are: with a little puff of air (plosive), through the nose (nasal), with friction (fricative), or with a narrowing or semi-obstruction of the speech tract (approximant). Affricates are combinations of a plosive and a fricative. You can feel the difference between them when you pronounce them. Some of the manners of articulation can be prolonged into a continuous sound (nasal, fricative, approximant), while others cannot (plosives, affricates).

**Task 3.2**

Listen to the items below and repeat them. Try to feel the difference between the manners of articulation.

- |                                     |                                    |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 49 a <b>h</b> oy! ([h], fricative)  | 73 <b>c</b> oy ([k], plosive)      |
| 50 <b>h</b> h h                     | 74 <b>k</b> k k                    |
| 51 <b>sh</b> oot ([ʃ], fricative)   | 75 <b>t</b> ea ([t], plosive)      |
| 52 <b>ʃ</b> ʃ ʃ                     | 76 <b>t</b> t t                    |
| 53 <b>be</b> ige ([ʒ], fricative)   | 77 <b>d</b> o ([d], plosive)       |
| 54 <b>ʒ</b> ʒ ʒ                     | 78 <b>d</b> d d                    |
| 55 <b>s</b> o ([s], fricative)      | 79 <b>p</b> ie ([p], plosive)      |
| 56 <b>s</b> s s                     | 80 <b>p</b> p p                    |
| 57 <b>z</b> oo ([z], fricative)     | 81 <b>b</b> uy ([b], plosive)      |
| 58 <b>z</b> z z                     | 82 <b>b</b> b b                    |
| 59 <b>th</b> e ([ð], fricative)     | 83 <b>si</b> ng ([ŋ], nasal)       |
| 60 <b>ð</b> ð ð                     | 84 <b>ŋ</b> ŋ ŋ                    |
| 61 <b>thi</b> ng ([θ], fricative)   | 85 <b>n</b> o ([n], nasal)         |
| 62 <b>θ</b> θ θ                     | 86 <b>n</b> n n                    |
| 63 <b>e</b> ve ([v], fricative)     | 87 <b>m</b> e ([m], nasal)         |
| 64 <b>v</b> v v                     | 88 <b>m</b> m m                    |
| 65 <b>f</b> oe ([f], fricative)     | 89 <b>y</b> ou ([j], approximant)  |
| 66 <b>f</b> f f                     | 90 <b>j</b> j j                    |
| 67 <b>ch</b> ease ([tʃ], affricate) | 91 <b>r</b> ang ([ɹ], approximant) |
| 68 <b>tʃ</b> tʃ tʃ                  | 92 <b>ɹ</b> ɹ ɹ                    |
| 69 <b>j</b> udge ([dʒ], affricate)  | 93 <b>l</b> oo ([l], approximant)  |
| 70 <b>dʒ</b> dʒ dʒ                  | 94 <b>l</b> l l                    |
| 71 <b>g</b> oo ([g], plosive)       | 95 <b>w</b> e ([w], approximant)   |
| 72 <b>g</b> g g                     | 96 <b>w</b> w w                    |

**3 Voice**

Consonants can be categorised as either voiceless (inactive vocal cords) or voiced (vocal cords vibrating). It should be noted that in running speech the use of the vocal cords is less predictable for some categories of consonants. Voiced fricatives and plosives in particular may lose some or all of their voice in such speech. A general rule is that the more attention is paid to speech the more likely it is that potentially voiced sounds are actually voiced. Read Chapter 12 for more information hereon.

**Task 3.3**

Listen to the items below. Try to hear the difference between sounds that are basically voiced and voiceless.

- |                                    |                                |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 97 a <b>h</b> oy! ([h], voiceless) | 119 e <b>v</b> e ([v], voiced) |
| 98 [h h h]                         | 120 [v v v]                    |
| 99 s <b>h</b> oot ([ʃ], voiceless) | 121 <b>g</b> oo ([g], voiced)  |
| 100 [ʃ ʃ ʃ]                        | 122 [g g g]                    |
| 101 <b>s</b> o ([s], voiceless)    | 123 <b>d</b> o ([d], voiced)   |
| 102 [s s s]                        | 124 [d d d]                    |
| 103 <b>th</b> ing ([θ], voiceless) | 125 <b>b</b> uy ([b], voiced)  |
| 104 [θ θ θ]                        | 126 [b b b]                    |
| 105 <b>f</b> oe ([f], voiceless)   | 127 si <b>ng</b> ([ŋ], voiced) |
| 106 [f f f]                        | 128 [ŋ ŋ ŋ]                    |
| 107 <b>c</b> oy ([k], voiceless)   | 129 <b>n</b> o ([n], voiced)   |
| 108 [k k k]                        | 130 [n n n]                    |
| 109 <b>t</b> ea ([t], voiceless)   | 131 <b>m</b> e ([m], voiced)   |
| 110 [t t t]                        | 132 [m m m]                    |
| 111 <b>p</b> ie ([p], voiceless)   | 133 <b>y</b> ou ([j], voiced)  |
| 112 [p p p]                        | 134 [j j j]                    |
| 113 bei <b>ng</b> e ([ŋ], voiced)  | 135 <b>R</b> oy ([ɹ], voiced)  |
| 114 [ŋ ŋ ŋ]                        | 136 [ɹ ɹ ɹ]                    |
| 115 <b>z</b> oo ([z], voiced)      | 137 <b>l</b> oo ([l], voiced)  |
| 116 [z z z]                        | 138 [l l l]                    |
| 117 <b>th</b> e ([ð], voiced)      | 139 <b>w</b> e ([w], voiced)   |
| 118 [ð ð ð]                        | 140 [w w w]                    |

**Vowel types**

Vowels are pronounced while the air freely flows through the vocal tract, unhindered by, for instance, the tongue and lips. The mouth is open during the production of vowels. Length is one way of distinguishing between vowels. The basic length of vowels is usually categorised as either long or short. Changes within the course of a vowel are another distinguishing feature; some vowels consist of one sound ('monophthongs'), while others consist of two ('diphthongs'). Another way to distinguish vowels from each other is by changing the place in the mouth where they are pronounced. Vowels can be placed on two dimensions in this respect: the open/close dimension and the front/back dimension. These three qualities are explained separately below.



## 1 Length

English vowels have a basic length. Long vowels are longer than short ones. The symbol for long vowels contains a length mark (“:”); [u:] is long and [ʊ] is short. It should be borne in mind that context is a more powerful factor than natural length of vowels. Long vowels can be very short in specific contexts, while short vowels can be very long. This is explained in Chapter 12.

### Task 3.4

Listen to the words below and repeat them, distinguishing very clearly between short and long vowels. Like the speaker, exaggerate a little bit.

- 141 **ba**m – **ba**lm (short [æ], long [ɑ:])  
 142 **Lu**ke – **loo**k (long [u:], short [ʊ])  
 143 **bi**t – **bea**t (short [ɪ], long [i:])  
 144 **co**me – **ca**lm (short [ʌ], long [ɑ:])  
 145 **dot**ter – **da**ughter (short [ʊ], long [ɔ:])  
 146 **de**ter – **pi**zza (long [ɜ:], short [ə])

## 2 Diphthongs/monophthongs

The long and short vowels above are all monophthongs, because they consist of one vowel. There are also diphthongs, which start with one vowel and end with another. The first vowel is usually more prominent than the second vowel. Learners need to make sure that the second vowel in diphthongs is not underpronounced or unpronounced. Diphthongs have two symbols in their transcription: the most common English diphthongs are usually transcribed as [aɪ, ɔɪ, aʊ, eɪ, oʊ]. Some transcription systems distinguish three more diphthongs, all of which end in [ə], but these could be interpreted as being the result of a non-rhotic speech style; this is explained in Chapter 19.

### Task 3.5

Listen to the words below and repeat them, distinguishing very clearly between monophthongs and diphthongs. Like the speaker, exaggerate a little bit.

- 147 **wo**ke – **w**ok (diphthong [oʊ], monophthong [ʊ])  
 148 **bu**zz – **bu**ys (monophthong [ʌ], diphthong [aɪ])  
 149 **ta**ke – **ti**ck (diphthong [eɪ], monophthong [ɪ])  
 150 **go**ut – **g**ut (diphthong [aʊ], monophthong [ʌ])  
 151 **w**alk – **w**oke (monophthong [ɔ:], diphthong [oʊ])  
 152 **lo**in – **l**awn (diphthong [ɔɪ], monophthong [ɔ:])

The last two examples above are possibly the most challenging, because diphthongs are naturally long and that makes it difficult to distinguish them from long monophthongs. Make sure long monophthongs are truly like one vowel, and make sure that diphthongs start and end with different vowels and are relatively long.

### Task 3.6

Listen to the items below and do what the speaker does: first pronounce the diphthong as two separate vowels and then these two vowels merged together.

153 **w**oke – **w**oke [o, ʊ] – [oʊ]

154 **b**uys – **b**uys [a, ɪ] – [aɪ]

155 **t**ake – **t**ake [e, ɪ] – [eɪ]

156 **g**out – **g**out [a, ʊ] – [aʊ]

157 **t**oys – **t**oys [ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ]

### 3 Front/back, open/close

Controlling place of articulation of vowels comes down to controlling the narrowing of the space in the mouth by raising or lowering the tongue and jaw. Front vowels are pronounced with the front of the tongue raised, while for back vowels this is the back of the tongue. Close vowels are pronounced with the tongue raised more closely to the roof of the mouth than open vowels. There are many vowels that are in between open/close and in between front/back. It is generally difficult for speakers to feel such subtle differences. The vowel chart in the Appendix gives a general impression of where in the mouth vowels are pronounced. The chart can be interpreted as a mouth: the left-hand side is the front of the mouth, the right-hand side is the back of the mouth.

### Task 3.7

Listen to the items below and repeat them. Try to feel the difference between front and back and between close and open; do this by feeling where the tongue is raised and how far it is raised.

open

158 **b**oss [ɒ]

159 [ɒ ɒ ɒ]

160 **f**act [æ]

161 [æ æ æ]

close

162 **b**eat [i:]

163 [i: i: i:]

164 **d**o [u:]

165 [u: u: u:]

front

166 **b**eat [i:]

167 [i: i: i:]

168 **b**et [ɛ]

169 [ɛ ɛ ɛ]

back

170 **f**oot [ʊ]

171 [ʊ ʊ ʊ]

172 **c**ore [ɔ:]

173 [ɔ: ɔ: ɔ:]

# Using other pronunciation tools

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### Good pronunciation

To support speech sounds, articulatory skills can be developed together with all kinds of other abilities that we possess, like using our body language. Indeed, the French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1991) did not draw a strong dividing line between body-language ability and other language abilities. He framed the idea of subtle body language playing an important role in communication through the concept of ‘bodily hexis’, which comes down to a state of mind leading to certain mannerisms. One’s state of mind reveals itself not only in mannerisms inherent to language production, but also in the way one stands, walks, eats, and laughs.

Bourdieu suggested that the producer and the receiver of language have a shared understanding of the existence of unspoken messages. The receiver will perceive (understand the literal meaning of) and evaluate (assess the intention of) the speaker’s pronunciation and other habits in a certain way. The language producer needs to respond to their own knowledge of audience perception and interpretation. Ideally, the interlocutor reciprocates these efforts and also applies such knowledge in improving spoken discourse.

Most of this book is about controlling the vocal tract, but this chapter takes a quick look at how pronunciation can be seen (and used) in a larger context of non-articulatory communication skills and also skills to improve one’s state of mind so that communication is improved.

### A Perception

Perception skills, i.e. being able to discern sound distinctions, are part of someone’s pronunciation skills. Whether and how you perceive your own and other people’s pronunciation influences how you yourself pronounce sounds. Your perception skills thus consist of two aspects: your skill to hear the distinctions in your own sound production and your ability to distinguish other speakers’ sounds. Your interlocutor needs to work with the same two skills, and success of communication depends partly on how successful you and your interlocutor are in putting these skills to good use.

You may believe that you are clearly distinguishing between two sounds, while in actual fact this distinction is not there in the speech signal. Your [ɪ] and [I] may sound very different to you, but your speech tract may not convincingly be producing this distinction. Then there's your perception of the sounds of people you are talking to; you need to be aware of whether you are perceiving the distinctions that they are intending to make. Maybe they are producing a convincing difference between [I] and [ɪ] but you are not registering this distinction and are instead placing both sounds in the same category; perhaps both sounds sound like the first letter/sound in the word *light*.

An added challenge is that what you hear is by definition not what someone else hears. Indeed, Flege, Munro, and MacKay (1995) mentioned that someone's pronunciation could be due to the lack of accurate hearing of foreign sounds, making it difficult to then pronounce them like the original. If a sound were played to an audience – for instance, [æ], which is the vowel in the word *cap* –, then every member in that audience is likely to hear a slightly different sound. How this works is largely uncertain, but age is thought to play a role as well as native tongue. People of different ages hear certain frequencies more easily than others (this is a physiological factor), and the rules of your native tongue cause your brain to attach importance to some acoustic distinctions and less to others (this is a nurtured cognitive factor). So, while communicating, don't expect everyone involved to hear the exact same sounds, but instead anticipate possible misperceptions by both interlocutors.

#### **Task 4.1**

One student stands in front of the group, thinks of a certain word, and pronounces the vowel in that word. Each of the other students writes down a word in which this vowel occurs. The speaker then indicates which word they had in mind. Check whether the listeners heard the same vowel. You can use <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/help/phonetics.html> for this.

## **B Communicative adjustment**

Perception skills can be used to develop the habit of first assessing and then adjusting to the pronunciation level of others. Try not to expect your interlocutor's English to be of the same level as yours. Instead, try to figure out what their level is during the beginning of the discourse. Use their pronunciation skills as a cue and also general hints in their facial expression and body language during communication. If necessary, overarticulate a little, and repeat words. Explicitly mention your mood or intention, if the person you are talking to does not seem to understand the meaning of your intonation. If this adjustment feels unnatural, then bear in mind that you would want others to do the same if their pronunciation was different from yours. Bear in mind also that it is quite common that

during a discussion one can grow attuned to a system of confusing pronunciations.

Besides adjusting to the pronunciation habits of the person you are talking to, you may want to adjust your interpretation of the rhythmic and intonation patterns of the speaker if their general level of English is low. It is important to not interpret the prosodic pattern of the learner very strictly. In other words, anticipate that the mood is also ‘mispronounced’ by learners (and that you – also a learner – are also not expressing mood wholly unambiguously).

If you do not adjust your pronunciation to others and others do not adjust to you, then the differences in style and level may lead to power differences between interlocutors, based on language competence. The most competent speaker will have more power than the less competent speaker: they may speak more, they may be better able to express themselves, they may be more likely to win an argument, etc. This non-adjustment may come down to one of the interlocutors (or both) showing off their good English rather than being concerned about mutual comprehension. This also means that sometimes the perfect newsreader-imitation English that you have mastered is distracting rather than functional. You may need to temporarily apply it less strictly, so as to accommodate the person(s) you are addressing.

### **C Reading signs**

Communication can be looked at in a broader way than the linguistic and include the study of signs. A sign is something that stands in for anything other than itself. Pronunciation can be placed in this larger realm of communication as being one of a plethora of signs. One’s pronunciation choices constitute signs that may be expressive of one’s cultural and personal identity. In the same way as clothes do, your pronunciation will evoke ideas in the minds of listeners about your personality, intentions, background, and style. This is true when you speak using your native tongue, but it is also true when you produce a second language.

The interpretation of pronunciation as a sign depends on the sociocultural context: where you are communicating and with whom. Interlocutors with different backgrounds may interpret your pronunciation differently, because these people have in the course of their lives developed all kinds of associations of sounds and what these sounds index. The frame of reference of the listener and speaker together determine how a message is perceived. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure (1978 [1916]) explained the concept of meaning depending on the value assigned to language by humans. This meaning tends to change and vary. It depends on the way language is used and where the language is uttered. The culture in which it appears is a particularly strong determinant of meaning, as is the question whether it is a first or second language of the person producing the utterance. When communicating, it is advisable to be aware of signs that you and others are – inadvertently or not – sending out.

**Task 4.2**

Each student listens to the speakers below and writes down the following: (a) the actual sentence that they hear, (b) the mood that the intonation expresses, (c) the cultural background of the speaker, and, finally, (d) what the connotations are of the culture of the speaker. The key to the sentences and the background of the speakers is on the companion website. Compare your interpretation with those of fellow students.

**1 Speaker A:**

- a Sentence: ...
- b Mood: ...
- c Speaker background: ...
- d Cultural connotations: ...

**2 Speaker B:**

- a Sentence: ...
- b Mood: ...
- c Speaker background: ...
- d Cultural connotations: ...

**3 Speaker C:**

- a Sentence: ...
- b Mood: ...
- c Speaker background: ...
- d Cultural connotations: ...

**4 Speaker D:**

- a Sentence: ...
- b Mood: ...
- c Speaker background: ...
- d Cultural connotations: ...

**5 Speaker E:**

- a Sentence: ...
- b Mood: ...
- c Speaker background: ...
- d Cultural connotations: ...

**D The body**

One could say that speaking a second language requires some acting skills. Acting is a combination of language production and body movement. Kinesics (facial expression and body language) and proxemics (physical space between people) can be used consciously as support for your spoken message. When you speak, the way your speech reaches the audience and is perceived by them is not only dependent on audible cues but also on visual cues – how your body moves while you are talking. Visible factors that bear meaning are eye contact, facial expression, physical attitude, nodding, and, for instance, hand gestures. When talking to someone, your body, i.e. your silent communicator, should be in sync with the message you are communicating verbally.

An advisable default facial expression might be just a Mona Lisa smile – friendly and modest. Although smiling is interpreted in different ways across the world, it is safe to say that in international communication such a smile is considered positive, and it helps smooth discourse. Make sure that you make eye contact with your listener every now and again, if only to read their reactions to what you're saying. When speaking in front of a group, try to move your eyes

from one person to the next. Start with someone in the front and make eye contact; then pick someone in the back, and maybe by the end of your talk you will have made eye contact with many, most, or all of the people in the room. When presenting, you should feel free to sit, stand, or lean the way you want, but keep your head high and body upright. Bear in mind that in most cases standing and walking around a little bit leaves a good impression and makes people pay attention more. If you're a 'sitter', then standing up every now and again and walking around a little bit for a minute or so will do wonders to the attention paid to your presentation.

**Task 4.3**

- 1 Sit in front of a classmate and talk about your hobby or another topic for a few minutes. Try to talk as you always do when informally chatting with someone.
- 2 Your classmate only listens and writes down how they experience your eye contact, general body language, and hand gestures.
- 3 Then, the classmate speaks and you make notes.
- 4 After that, discuss how you've experienced the way the other talked and give hints for improvement. Don't forget to indicate positive aspects.

**Task 4.4**

- 1 Film yourself saying the following sentences three times: 'Jingping Han is staying home to wait for her grandmother. They get on like a house on fire. Grandmother is not only wise; she also keeps up with the latest trends.' Learn these sentences by heart, so that you don't read from a piece of paper. Re-record efforts in which you mispronounce words or forget your lines. Film your whole body. For each of the three versions, use a different facial expression and body language, and adjust the way you pronounce the sentence to the mood you are trying to bring across.
- 2 Post the recording in a closed online forum. Comment on the body language of three other students. Are the body, the mood, and the pronunciation in sync? Which is the best version, and why?

**E Confidence**

Our experiences and habits can lead to an inefficient and uncomfortable physical posture and breathing pattern. Eutony refers to the ideal degree of physical and mental ease to be able to act in a relaxed way and deal with this problem of discomfort (Melville, 2019). The idea of Eutony was developed by Gerda Alexander (1908–1994), a German musician, dancer, and mime artist. Through her experience and training, she developed the idea of the balance between body and movement and of becoming attuned to one's surroundings. This idea was

borrowed from well-known Asian therapeutic methods like *chi-gong* (Chinese) and *shiatsu* (Japanese), which aim at getting the energy flowing in the body and releasing blockages (Barral, 2007). Coming to terms with your natural place and movement in social surroundings will help you find the right balance to achieve a degree and type of tension that is relaxing but also keeps you focused and creative (Barral, 2007; Melville, 2019).

Pronunciation is affected negatively by an imbalance as described above, and if one is pronouncing a second language, confidence and relaxation levels may be particularly low because of the tension it evokes. Speaking a second language may lead to a feeling of detachment between you, the speaker, the language you are trying to use, and the social setting. Not being at ease in a social space, being overly self-conscious, and not being convinced that you are worth listening to will lead to pronunciation patterns that both the speaker and audience or interlocutor are uncomfortable with: jumbled, rushed, etc. If you are convinced that you are worth listening to, then you will spend more time on the act of speaking, and you will automatically slow down, because you want people to really listen to what you're saying. You don't necessarily want to end your presentation or interaction as quickly as possible.

Confidence, or a lack thereof, can be grounded in causes outside your personality. You may be born and raised in an environment that brings a degree of confidence or not. By the time they are teenagers, people are firmly instilled with different degrees of confidence because of the way their parents and peers gave them feedback in their childhood. Your schooling and your culture may have instilled confidence in international communication in you (Bayley, 1994; Dewaele, 2004; Saville-Troike, 1984; Young, 1991). When it comes to second-language English, having regular access to native-speaker English may help you feel confident. Simply speaking English regularly makes you more confident. The distance of your native tongue to English is another factor, as are the successes of the English lessons that you have had so far.

Gerda Alexander advised people to find trust – in their personality and their spontaneity and in their ability to discover how their body works. Embrace the English pronunciation that you have and do not be ashamed, even if you are in the company of more fluent speakers. Acknowledge the likelihood of people you are addressing being on your side and wanting to hear what you have to say. As a result, you will be more relaxed, which will help normalise your breathing, voice quality, and the general quality of your pronunciation.

Confident speakers will be more likely to get even better, because they are more likely to speak and be spoken to often. Unconfident speakers could be advised to try to be less afraid to make mistakes. Other learners understand their position well, while native speakers of English are known to be very appreciative of others learning their language. In the end, everyone wants to understand you and would prefer you to make mistakes rather than mumble and run out of breath. People often take over each other's nerves and discomfort, and this circle needs to be broken.



***Task 4.5***

- 1 Stand in front of the group and tell them something that you remember from your childhood, or an anecdote of something interesting or funny. Talk as you usually talk to groups of people.
- 2 On a piece of paper, the listeners describe the degree to which you came across as nervous or confident.
- 3 The listeners give the piece of paper to you, the speaker.

## Part B

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# Combining sounds

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You will learn about consonants and vowels in Part C and Part D. Of course, consonants and vowels act in unison when forming phoneme clusters, and these, in turn, form syllables, words, phrases, and sentences. These are then produced at a certain speed, with a certain rhythm and with a certain intonation pattern. Part B deals with these higher levels of pronunciation before dealing with the intricacies of individual phonemes. Chapter 5 (*Intonation*) discusses the pitch variation of your pronunciation and the messages that it can send. Chapter 6 (*Vowel reduction*) explains how some vowels are usually not pronounced fully and how this is actually necessary in many cases. Chapters 7 (*Word stress*) and 8 (*Stressful words*) explain the rules for the way individual words should be stressed, and these chapters contain the most commonly mispronounced words in English. Chapter 9 (*Pronunciation variation*) explains how two different ways to pronounce certain words are often both acceptable. Chapters 10 (*Sentence stress*) and 11 (*Silences*) look at how sentence stress in combination with pausing will help you develop a pleasant rhythm while speaking English. Chapter 12 (*Fortis and lenis endings*) explains the very important skill of ending syllables softly or more abruptly, which is important and meaningful in English. Chapter 13 (*Contraction and assimilation*) deals with the way in which specific words can be combined and how syllables can be naturally linked together by letting consonants influence each other. Remember that the rhythm and music of one's speech is a combination of all of the above features, and that it is difficult to separate one skill from the other.



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# Intonation

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### What could go wrong?

Intonation is a difficult skill to master and use consciously. Neither learners nor native speakers generally think about it when speaking. Learners often import pitch variation patterns from their L1 (first language) into their English and attach meaning to them. This may lead to misunderstandings. A learner might be a fan of card games and say *I really like playing card games* but give the impression that they are being cynical. Or a learner who says *I'm sad* might sound like they are asking a question: *I'm sad?* Only listeners who share the native tongue and culture of the learner may then be able to fully understand the mood the learner is trying to bring across through pitch variation. The second example, *I'm sad*, also shows that intonation can change the meaning of sentences. What makes intonation all the more confusing is that even amongst native speakers, intonation patterns and their meanings show considerable variation.

#### Task 5.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English whose intonation is confusing. The words with the confusing intonation are boxed.

- 1 whose heart **doesn't want weeping**
- 2 The legendary city of Troy is also said to be located **in Turkey**.
- 3 **I wished I had been in his shoes**.
- 4 What I am worried about **is** they **took my badge**.
- 5 To judge from the entrance the dawn was **making**, it promised to be a very iffy day – **that is**, blasts of angry sunlight **one minute**, fits of freezing rain the next.

## Is this your problem?

Intonation is generally not understood very well by learners of English, which is why it is advisable to study this chapter and do the tasks presented. Becoming aware of intonation is an important first step for learners. Another reason to go through this chapter is that intonation is largely an intuitive skill that can be developed by listening critically to confusing intonation patterns and imitating sentences that have a successful intonation. Rather than considering intonation too difficult to improve, try and listen carefully and discover how intonation is used by others. Exercises are provided so you can test whether you are interpreting intonation patterns similarly to other people.

### *Task 5.2*

Say each of the sentences below and apply an intonation that expresses the content well. Have your fellow students decide whether you are communicating the moods and meanings clearly enough.

- **I love my indigestion pills!**
- **Why do they make them so fruity?**
- **They're also very cheap, so I'll keep buying them, again and again.**
- **I really really hope my chemist will not run out of my favourite pills!**
- **The fear and the stress over this makes my problem even worse, ha ha!**

### *Task 5.3*

Listen to the items below and discuss with your fellow students what the meaning or mood is of the message (happiness, boredom, etc.) in each item. Is there a strong consensus amongst students in your group on the interpretation of the mood? The way these sentences are likely to be interpreted is in the key at the end of this chapter.

- 6 **Try not to bore me!**
- 7 **Are you from around here?**
- 8 **Why? Please explain that to me.**
- 9 **I'm so happy about that, you know.**
- 10 **I'm a dentist, a doctor, so I'm always right about your teeth!**

## Explanation and practice

Intonation refers to the pitch of your voice going up and down – the ‘music’ of pronunciation. Intonation in most Englishes mainly expresses mood: boredom, interest, surprise, anger, appreciation, happiness, or perhaps a neutral mood.



### 1 Falling intonation

To produce a falling intonation pattern, a Fall, you first go slightly up at the beginning of the intonation unit, and then you end on a low note. This is generally associated with a neutral mood but it can also be used to give a simple command. If you use this intonation pattern regularly, you will also sound confident; you know what you're saying.

#### Task 5.6

Below are sentences with a convincing falling intonation pattern. The intonation units are boxed.

- |    |            |    |                             |
|----|------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 21 | Yes.       | 25 | It adds up to four.         |
| 22 | Dorota.    | 26 | Love is like the wind.      |
| 23 | Yasushi.   | 27 | I think Tito will be there. |
| 24 | Go to bed. |    |                             |

If you want to express even more firmness in your statement with a falling intonation, then you can emphasise the falling pattern. The falling intonation then starts higher and falls lower. While the regular Fall expresses a neutral and good-humoured attitude, this High Fall expresses even more good-humouredness, and considerable enthusiasm. Try to use it; you might find that people will appreciate your positive attitude.

#### Task 5.7

Listen to the items below. The first item is an example of a regular Fall intonation; the rest are examples of the High Fall.

- |    |           |    |                             |
|----|-----------|----|-----------------------------|
| 28 | Hi.       | 35 | Helllllooooo!               |
| 29 | Hi!       | 36 | Kiko is there!              |
| 30 | Yes!      | 37 | Long time, no see!          |
| 31 | I did!    | 38 | It's My Little Pony!        |
| 32 | Wow!      | 39 | What wonderful news!        |
| 33 | No way!   | 40 | Oh come on; you'll be fine! |
| 34 | Tomorrow! |    |                             |

### 2 Rising intonation

The rising intonation pattern, the Rise, comes down to your pitch going down slightly and then sharply rising again. This intonation pattern is mainly associated with the expression of doubt or surprise but it can also be used to

indicate that you have not ended a sentence or clause yet. It may be advisable to use this pattern every now and again, because it will make you sound open-minded, communicative, and inquisitive.

### Task 5.8

Below are sentences with a rising intonation pattern. Behind them is the mood/meaning of the statement. Listen to these items.

- 41 **Tomorrow?** (a question that involves some doubt)
- 42 **Are you sure?** (neutral question)
- 43 **Without delay?** (neutral question)
- 44 **Will Katinka be there?** (neutral question)
- 45 **Are you from around here?** (neutral question; you are genuinely interested)
- 46 **Do you have any interesting hobbies?** (neutral question; you are genuinely interested)
- 47 **Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves.** (more to come)
- 48 **By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart.** (more to come)
- 49 **Malachi, ...** (expressing that more names will follow)
- 50 **We were doubly blessed?** (neutral question; converts a statement to a question)

It should be noted that the same question can be asked with a falling and a rising intonation. ‘Tag questions’ – like *hasn’t he?* and *don’t you?* – at the ends of sentences do not always conform to the rising pattern, although they are questions, strictly speaking. If the answer is implied in the tag question, then a falling intonation is advisable. Speakers can thus communicate the degree to which they are certain about the answer through a rising or falling intonation. Note that a question with a Fall intonation may also come across as rather strict and rhetorical.

### Task 5.9

Listen to the items below, which demonstrate the two ways of asking the same question.

- 51 **What never felt so right?** (falling intonation, business-like, firm question)
- 52 **What never felt so right?** (personal, friendly, softens the request or question)



Do not use the Rise too readily and frequently, because the hearer will not know when you have finished your sentence, and they may feel that you are uncertain or immature. Bear in mind that to some people, many Rises make you sound endearing.

### *Task 5.10*

Listen to the person below pronouncing the same utterances with a tendency towards a rising intonation (and with a regular intonation).

- 53 And then one day, a little girl cockroach comes to work in the **factory**. And her name was **Suzy**. Suzy **Cockroach**. And she was really something **else**, and they both dug her like **crazy**. So, one **night**, one of the boy **cockroaches**, **Bernie**, decided that he will go to her and tell her of his **love**, and he walked up to her standing in the **moonlight**, and he says to her, very **softly**, and **tenderly**: “Say, what’s a dirty cockroach like you doing in a nice clean place like **this?!?**” (rising intonation)
- 54 And then one day, a little girl cockroach comes to work in the **factory**. And her name was **Suzy**. Suzy **Cockroach**. And she was really something **else**, and they both dug her like **crazy**. So, one **night**, one of the boy **cockroaches**, **Bernie**, decided that he will go to her and tell her of his **love**, and he walked up to her standing in the **moonlight**, and he says to her, very **softly**, and **tenderly**: “Say, what’s a dirty cockroach like you doing in a nice clean place like **this?!?**” (more varied intonation)

The stronger version of the rising intonation, the High Rise, shows intense surprise or doubt. Such a strong rise can also be used to express scepticism. The initial low is lower, and the rise at the end is higher than a regular rising intonation.

### *Task 5.11*

Listen to the strong rising intonation in the items below. The first item is the exception; it has a regular rising intonation pattern and is used to show the contrast between regular and strong rising.

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 55 <b>To<b>mor</b>row?</b>     | 61 <b>You have no <b>time</b>?!?</b>      |
| 56 <b>To<b>mor</b>row?!?</b>   | 62 <b>You can't <b>make it</b>?!?</b>     |
| 57 <b>Yes?!?</b>               | 63 <b>Are you asking <b>me</b>?!?</b>     |
| 58 <b>Here?!?</b>              | 64 <b>Is Azucena going <b>away</b>?!?</b> |
| 59 <b>Busy? <b>Busy</b>?!?</b> |   |
| 60 <b>Why, you say?!?</b>      |   |

### 3 Level intonation pattern

The Level intonation pattern expresses disinterest and boredom, generally, and it may even send out a message of annoyance and passive aggression. This is perhaps more of an intonation pattern to avoid than one to learn and practise.

#### Task 5.12

Listen to the bored, disinterested, and annoyed people in these items. They apply a Level intonation pattern.

- 65 **No.** (bored; Level)  
 66 **I suppose.** (bored; Level)  
 67 **Nice.** (disinterested; Level)  
 68 **Watching telly.** (bored; Level)  
 69 **Ron will be there.** (bored; Level)  
 70 **It adds up to four.** (annoyed; Level)

#### Task 5.13

Go through the chapter to see which intonation unit is probably used in the items below and indicate this pattern. Also, write down the type of intonation pattern that is used. After adding this information, listen to the items and repeat them.

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 71 <b>No.</b> (bored)             | 81 <b>Without delay?</b> (neutral)      |
| 72 <b>Yes.</b> (bored)            | 82 <b>It adds up to four.</b> (neutral) |
| 73 <b>Harry?</b> (neutral)        | 83 <b>Tomorrow?</b> (doubtful)          |
| 74 <b>Siobhan.</b> (neutral)      | 84 <b>Tomorrow!</b> (emphatic)          |
| 75 <b>I suppose.</b> (bored)      | 85 <b>Ron will be there.</b> (neutral)  |
| 76 <b>Go to bed.</b> (neutral)    | 86 <b>It adds up to four.</b> (bored)   |
| 77 <b>I did!</b> (emphatic)       | 87 <b>Ron will be there?</b> (neutral)  |
| 78 <b>Nice.</b> (disinterested)   | 88 <b>Are you sure?</b> (sceptical)     |
| 79 <b>Are you sure?</b> (neutral) | 89 <b>Without delay?</b> (sceptical)    |
| 80 <b>Watching telly.</b> (bored) | 90 <b>Ron will be there!</b> (emphatic) |
- 91 **Are you from around here?** (neutral)  
 92 **Simanique, ...** (expressing that there's more to come)

***Task 5.14***

Rather than listening to and repeating the above items, say the words first (after reading the mood description behind them) and then listen to how they should be pronounced. On the companion website is a version of the sentences that starts with a voice saying 'speak'; this is followed by a (long enough) silence and the correct pronunciation of the first item (i.e. **no**). After that one, you can continue with the next item.

**Key**

***Key to Task 5.3***

6 = annoyance, 7 = neutral question that expresses doubt, 8 = firmness, minor annoyance, 9 = neutral statement, not overjoyed, 10 = irony

***Key to Task 5.5***

11 = neutral statement, 12 = question, 13 = question-like intonation expression 'I'm listening', 14 = minor excitement, or the speaker is pleasantly surprised, 15 = boredom or annoyance, 16 = neutral statement, 17 = question intonation, 18 = surprise, 19 = pleasantly surprised, minor happiness, 20 = disinterest

# Vowel reduction

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### What could go wrong?

If all vowels in your English are pronounced fully and clearly, then this may come across as exaggerated and unnatural. It also means that syllables and words can receive a confusing emphasis. If you say *I can play a Darbuka drum* and pronounce all vowels with a similar effort, then you are emphasising the word *can* and thus the fact that you are capable of playing this instrument, as if someone has just suggested you are not. You are also emphasising the word *a*, which might suggest that you are emphasising that you can only play one at a time. This involuntary emphasising can be confusing.

#### **Task 6.1**

Listen to the sentences below. The boxed sounds are unnecessarily pronounced fully.

- 1 the<sup>□</sup> second most important thing
- 2 at the end <sup>□</sup>of those long benches was<sup>□</sup> an open door, and inside was<sup>□</sup> an empty classroom
- 3 carries her baby crocodile into<sup>□</sup> the river
- 4 a crocodile's eyes are on the top <sup>□</sup>of its head
- 5 can, for example, easily c<sup>□</sup>onsist of three or four courses

### Is this your problem?

Vowel reduction is generally not understood very well. Most speakers reduce vowels in their native tongue, but in English this system may be different. It is therefore advisable to study this chapter and do the exercises.

## Explanation and practice

Vowels that receive stress in words, phrases, and sentences should, in principle, be pronounced fully. ‘Fully’ here means with much effort of the articulators, much relative loudness, and much relative length. Full vowels tend to be closer to the edges of the vowel chart (see Chapter 3) and they are relatively clear (easy to identify). Fully pronounced vowels may have a slightly higher pitch. Vowels that do not receive stress are typically ‘reduced’, which means that they can be pronounced with less effort of the articulators, making them relatively soft-sounding and often slightly lower pitched. They are closer to the central parts of the vowel chart. Vowel reduction is part of placing emphasis because it increases the contrast between full and reduced vowels. You could say that reduced vowels are pronounced less clearly, because they often sound mutually more alike than those that are pronounced fully. Reduced vowels often sound like [ə] (see Chapter 3). This is the first sound in the word **about** and the last sound in the word **pizza**.

### Task 6.2

Let’s practise pronouncing [ə]. Reduced vowels often sound like this vowel. Relax your articulatory muscles, leave your mouth hanging half open, and produce a vowel sound with the mouth in that relaxed position. It is a relatively dull vowel, as you can tell. It sounds like the vowel in a long **uhm**.

## 6 Uuuuuuuuuuhm

### Reduction in function words

There is a set of common words, ‘function words’, that typically contain a reduced vowel. Function words carry only grammatical meaning. If you remove the function words from a sentence, you will probably still understand the main message of the sentence. Examples are: prepositions (**in, on, at**), auxiliaries (**are, was, do**), quantifiers (**some, any, all**), and pronouns (**we, this, they**). These words are more often reduced than pronounced fully. Not reducing function words may be perceived as overarticulated speech. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is a little confusing or surprising occasionally. An important reason to learn about reduced forms is to not miss words in which they occur when someone else is producing them. Below are some common function words and how they are typically pronounced. Not all speakers have the same tendency to reduce vowels.

Word	Reduced		Full
a	[ə]	7 I've found <b>a</b> man.	8 I said <b>a</b> man, not that particular one.
am	[əm, m]	9 I <b>am</b> not in love.	10 <b>Am</b> I?
an	[ən]	11 That's <b>an</b> awkward feeling.	12 <b>An</b> apple, not two.
and	[ənd, ən, nd]	13 Russians <b>and</b> Ukrainians.	14 <b>And</b> ?! How was it?
are	[ə]	15 <b>Are</b> you going?	16 <b>Are</b> you?
as	[əz]	17 <b>As</b> big <b>as</b> anything.	18 Big <b>as</b> what?!
at	[ət]	19 She works <b>at</b> night.	20 <b>At</b> four, not after.
but	[bət]	21 Good, <b>but</b> late.	22 Yes, <b>but</b> ...
can	[kən, kn]	23 <b>Can</b> you sit?	24 <b>Can</b> you?
could	[kəd]	25 It <b>could</b> go wrong.	26 It <b>could</b> , yes.
do	[də]	27 <b>Do</b> you know?	28 <b>Do</b> you?
does	[dəz]	29 <b>Does</b> it matter?	30 <b>Does</b> it?
for	[fə]	31 A present <b>for</b> me?	32 What <b>for</b> ?
from	[frəm]	33 That girl is <b>from</b> here.	34 Where <b>from</b> ?
have	[həv, əv, v]	35 I <b>have</b> been bad.	36 <b>Have</b> you?
had	[həd, əd, d]	37 They <b>had</b> rather go blond.	38 I <b>had</b> it, but I lost it.
has	[həz, əz, z]	39 This <b>has</b> caused much grief.	40 <b>Has</b> he?
I	[wəz, wz]	41 I wish I <b>was</b> your lover.	42 But, it <b>was</b> me!
must	[məst, məs]	43 You <b>must</b> be tired.	44 You <b>must</b> come!
of	[əv, v]	45 Mull <b>of</b> Kintyre	46 What's it made <b>of</b> ?
will	[wəl]	47 I <b>will</b> get the door.	48 <b>Will</b> you, please?
would	[wəd, wd]	49 <b>Would</b> you do that?	50 <b>Would</b> you?

### Emphatic 'the'

The article *the* has two pronunciations: [ði:] (with the vowel of the word *me*) and [ðə] (with the first vowel in the word *about*). The first one is common before a vowel, the second one is common before a consonant. Say [ði:] in *the apple* and [ðə] in *the pear*. If you want to emphasise the word *the*, then you need to say [ði:] emphatically, even if a consonant follows. If you say [ði:] in *the pear*, then you are foregrounding the idea that the pear in question is all the rage; that special pear that everyone is talking about! Another common way to refer to your beloved pear is by pronouncing *the* as [ðə] but rather emphatically.

**Task 6.3**

Listen to the difference between **the** before consonants and vowels and when used as an emphasis marker.

- 51 She is **the** woman for **the** job (twice regular [ðə])  
 52 She is **the** woman for **the** job; **no other is more suitable** (emphatic [ði:] and regular [ðə])  
 53 **The** apple does not fall far from **the** tree (regular [ði:] and regular [ðə])  
 54 **This is not just any issue; it is the issue! It's the one we discussed before!** (emphatic [ði:] and regular [ðə])

**Reduction in content words**

Content words are meaningful words, like nouns (*shop, house*), verbs (*swim, study*), and adverbs/adjectives (*green, good*). If you remove content words from a sentence, you will no longer understand the gist of the message. There are many more content words than function words. A general rule is that the stressed syllable in content words receives the fullest vowel, while other vowels may be reduced. Note that the [ə] is pronounced even if the word as a whole is emphasised, although [ə] is associated with reduction. This phoneme therefore still occurs in unstressed syllables in emphasised words.

**Task 6.4**

Listen to the words below. The boxed vowels are reduced. There are two emphasised words (the ones with an exclamation point), which still contain reduced vowels.

- |                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 55 <b>Predict that!</b>        | 60 <b>the closest thing to you</b> |
| 56 <b>villages</b>             | 61 <b>in supermarkets</b>          |
| 57 <b>common denominator</b>   | 62 <b>pass on that notion</b>      |
| 58 <b>within the tribe</b>     | 63 <b>Articulate!</b>              |
| 59 <b>they travel together</b> |                                    |

**Task 6.5**

Listen to the texts below. They are read out without preparation or instruction by two speakers. The boxed sounds are pronounced as [ə]. You'll hear that one speaker uses this vowel more than the other. Some occurrences of this vowel are compulsory, while others are not.

- 64 Get out! Go on! I have opened the door for you, yeah? If you don't want to make it, go now! Yeah? It will save us all a bit of time, yeah? If you don't think you can cut it. No? Good! Okay, you are all looking at me and you are going "Well, yeah, you are a success, you have achieved your goals, yeah? You are reaping the rewards." Sure, but "Oy Brent, is that all you care about? Chasing the Yankee dollar?"
- 65 Get out! Go on! I have opened the door for you, yeah? If you don't want to make it, go now! Yeah? It will save us all a bit of time, yeah? If you don't think you can cut it. No? Good! Okay, you are all looking at me and you are going "Well, yeah, you are a success, you have achieved your goals, yeah? You are reaping the rewards." Sure, but "Oy Brent, is that all you care about? Chasing the Yankee dollar?"

### Task 6.6

Below are the recordings of a number of words with reduced vowels of the two speakers above. Listen to how they are pronounced.

- 66 the, for, at, rewards (first speaker)  
 67 Okay, and, achieved, your (second speaker)

### Reduction as a way to distinguish words

If a word ends with *ate*, then the vowel in the syllable *ate* can be pronounced fully or reduced. The stressed version leads to a verb. If not, then the word is a noun or adjective.

### Task 6.7

Listen to the following items. The syllable *ate* in the left-hand word in each pair has a reduced vowel [ə], while the right-hand word has a full pronunciation of this syllable (diphthong [eɪ], as in the word *day*).

- 68 the graduate – to graduate [ə, eɪ]  
 69 very articulate – to articulate [ə, eɪ]  
 70 the advocate – to advocate [ə, eɪ]

### Task 6.8

Listen to the items and repeat them, bearing in mind the difference between reduced and full vowels. The boxed vowels are reduced.



- 71 He advocates peace.  
72 Close the front door.  
73 You're a conceited boy.  
74 Buy me a Moscow Daily.  
75 The advocate advocates.  
76 Yuk, you have an accent!  
77 Perfect strangers we are.  
78 Quite the prolific author!
- 79 He frequents art galleries.  
80 Sumo wrestling is the best.  
81 What an articulate person!  
82 It's the cold November rain.  
83 We need to recruit new staff.  
84 I wouldn't call him desirable.  
85 Lemon squash is my favourite.  
86 I dislike her authoritarian style.
- 87 You're playing devil's advocate.  
88 Tokyo Gate Bridge is over there.  
89 It will save us all a bit of time, yeah?  
90 They dread staying in another room.  
91 I like tomato soup more than miso soup.  
92 Shanghai Times Square is the place to be.

# Word stress

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### What could go wrong?

If we place the stress on the wrong syllable in a word, then this may confuse the listener. The noun **ac**cent may turn into the verb **ac**cent (the boxed syllables are the stressed syllables) or vice versa. It may also be that the listener has difficulty figuring out which word is meant if unexpected stress is placed on a syllable. For instance, placing the stress on the wrong syllable in **he**reditary or **de**termine (the wrong stress is boxed) may turn these words into something like the non-sense phrases ‘*herry de terry*’ and ‘*deeter mine*’. Such mispronunciations are often considered very distracting, even if listeners know which word is meant.

#### *Task 7.1*

Listen to the examples of learners of English in which wrong word stress can be heard. The words containing the wrong stress placement are boxed.

- 1 someone who is sensitive to **abrupt** shifts of weather
- 2 and has a **unique** tolerance policy
- 3 free from the **complicated** customs
- 4 if you have tight **contacts**
- 5 call an **ambulance**

### Is this your problem?

If one looked at the percentage of words that are generally mispronounced by individuals, then word stress could be considered a small issue. The problem is that each learner has their own set of word-stress issues. By going through the rules and exercises in this chapter, you will become more aware of the challenges and opportunities that word-stress placement can bring. You are advised to study this chapter and do the exercises, especially if you have noticed that people sometimes misinterpret your words because of incorrect stress placement.

## Explanation and practice

A list of rules is one way to learn about English word stress, but the problem is that this list is too long to be useful and that it has many exceptions. Instead, this chapter will discuss a few aspects of word stress that large groups of learners often experience issues with. It should be noted that prominence of syllables is not just achieved by making one syllable more prominent, but also by reducing other syllables (see Chapter 6).

### ***Issue 1: The stress in nouns and adjectives is different from that in related verbs***

There are pairs of words with the same spelling, where one is a noun or adjective and the other is a verb. In many cases, the verb has a stressed second syllable, while the noun or adjective has a stressed first syllable.

#### ***Task 7.2***

Listen to the pairs of words below, in which the word on the left-hand side is a noun and the other word a verb. The stressed syllables are boxed.

- |   |   |    |                                      |
|---|---|----|--------------------------------------|
| 6 | an <b>accent</b> – to <b>accent</b>     | 9  | <b>frequent</b> – to <b>frequent</b> |
| 7 | an <b>abstract</b> – to <b>abstract</b> | 10 | <b>perfect</b> – to <b>perfect</b>   |
| 8 | a <b>decrease</b> – to <b>decrease</b>  |    |                                      |

### ***Issue 2: Certain word-final syllables are likely to be unstressed***

The following strings of letters often appear as a part of syllables at the ends of words: *y*, *ous*, *ion*, *ity*, *ance*, and *ence*. As a rule, you should not stress these.

#### ***Task 7.3***

Listen to the examples. The boxed syllables are unstressed (and many of the vowels they contain sound like [ə]).

- |    |                     |    |                     |
|----|---------------------|----|---------------------|
| 11 | uncann <b>y</b>     | 14 | van <b>ity</b>      |
| 12 | delic <b>ious</b>   | 15 | deliver <b>ance</b> |
| 13 | associa <b>tion</b> | 16 | refer <b>ence</b>   |

**Issue 3: Teens and tens get a different stress**

Teens (*fourteen*, *fifteen*, *sixteen*, *seventeen*, etc.) get stress on the last syllable. For tens (*forty*, *fifty*, *sixty*, *seventy*, etc.), the stress tends to go to the first syllable. It is, by the way, advisable to clearly pronounce [n] in the tens so that you do not mix up a number like *19* with *90* or *13* with *30*.

**Task 7.4**

Listen to the items below. Listen to the stressed syllables in particular. Where possible, stressed syllables are boxed.

17 **four**teen

18 40

19 18

20 **eight**y21 **the** numbers 19 or 90**Issue 4: Stress shifts in running speech**

In words pronounced in isolation, word stress is relatively predictable and easily learnable. In running speech, however, word stress will regularly shift. There is also considerable variation on this point amongst speakers. In case of doubt, stress more rather than fewer syllables.

**Task 7.5**

Listen to these items. The boxed syllables are stressed in the 'wrong' place, but these word-stress placements are preferred anyway.

22 A **d**irect flight flies directly.23 **a**ssociation – **A**ssociation Football24 It's been seven hours and **f**ifteen days.25 The **N**ew York Jets26 Lovely **N**ew Jersey spring weather**Task 7.6**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Pay attention to the way the speaker places word stress.

27 **e**legant28 **d**elicate29 **p**recious30 **r**eference

- |    |              |    |                                 |
|----|--------------|----|---------------------------------|
| 31 | penitence    | 38 | the year 1815                   |
| 32 | irrelevant   | 39 | separate chairs                 |
| 33 | as of 1330   | 40 | frequent flyer miles            |
| 34 | to frequent  | 41 | the number thirteen             |
| 35 | desirability | 42 | accentuate your accent          |
| 36 | to graduate  | 43 | A direct flight flies directly. |
| 37 | combination  | 44 | I'm in a New York state of mind |
- 
- 45 It's been seven hours and fifteen days.  
46 separate the advocates from the protesters

# Stressful words

---

### What could go wrong?

English spelling is highly irregular and has relatively many words whose pronunciation is not completely predictable on the basis of their spelling. There are a number of words that learners of English typically pronounce wrongly. Sometimes, the rules explained in the previous chapter apply to these words, and you can also find other lists of stress and pronunciation rules online. However, there are many exceptions to these rules, and many words have over the ages developed an unexpected pronunciation, like the place name **Loughborough**, which is [lʌfbrə] to many speakers (the stressed syllable is boxed), which sounds like ‘*luffbra*’. Also, learners of English have over time developed their own idiosyncratic pronunciation for certain words. A well-known example is the word **variable**. Many learners have grown accustomed to pronouncing the second syllable in this word with stress and making it sound like *eye* [aɪ], so that they pronounce the word as [vəraɪəbəl], ‘*vuhrah-yable*’. The internationally most understandable pronunciation, however, is with the stress on the first syllable, i.e. as [vɛɪrɪəbəl], ‘*veh-riable*’. The words **said** and **says** are also subject to this, as many speakers now pronounce these words with the vowel [eɪ] (the vowel in **say**) rather than the more internationally acceptable and understandable vowel [ɛ] (the vowel in **bed**). There are many more of such words. It is important for learners to be aware of this and make conscious choices.

#### Task 8.1

Listen to the examples of speakers unclearly pronouncing specific English words.

- 1 reflected by the oval glass-in-**lead** window embedded in the wall
- 2 It has no meaning; it's just a **concatenation** of circumstances
- 3 the first day of **elementary** school
- 4 the door frame was **crooked**
- 5 and **breath**-taking wildlife

## Is this your problem?

### Task 8.2

Read out the words below; underline the syllable that receives the strongest stress. Then listen to the recording and determine if your pronunciation and stress are correct. Be very critical. You might want to let others decide whether your renditions were correct. The key as to the correct stress patterns is at the end of this chapter.

- |               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 6 variant     | 11 apostrophe      |
| 7 definite    | 12 definitively    |
| 8 analysis    | 13 clandestine     |
| 9 variable    | 14 democratisation |
| 10 definitive | 15 democratise     |

## Explanation and practice

A word can be considered mispronounced if it is generally misunderstood. In general, the Inner Circle (see the Preface to this book) way of pronouncing English words is guiding in this respect. For the most part, there is agreement on the pronunciation of the word-stress patterns of English by speakers from this group of speakers, including on the fact that some words can be pronounced in more than one way. Some of the variation in this respect is dealt with in Chapter 9 as well.

Mispronunciations mostly come down to misplacing stress and choosing a wrong vowel. Mispronounced words do not necessarily lead to confusion (the above-mentioned mispronounced version of *variable* is well known and widely used, in fact, besides incorrect), and in most cases your intuition is right and you do actually pronounce many words that others have a problem with correctly. It is important to find the words that you tend to mispronounce and analyse what you do wrong. Maybe there's a pattern.

Sometimes your pronunciation is correct and understandable but different from mainstream pronunciations. Finding out whether this is the case can be done by checking the various ways to pronounce a word online; for instance through <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/help/phonetics.html>. This difference is often caused by British and American English pronunciation being different. Chapter 9 also deals with this issue.

### Task 8.3

Think of how you pronounced the words in the list above (*variant*, etc.). If there was a problematic word, or if there were problematic words, then determine whether you mispronounced them because of wrong word stress (prominence of a certain syllable) or because of an unclear vowel (articulation).

Below are three categories of words with a tricky pronunciation. These are (1) relatively common words, (2) slightly less common words, and (3) more advanced words from professional and academic fields. Some of these words are pronounced in more than one way by native speakers, and even native speakers are puzzled by some of these words. In some cases, words have two widely used pronunciations; in these cases, both are in the recording.

### **Category 1: Relatively common words**

Below are words that are notorious for their tricky pronunciation and that are common in daily professional and often also in non-professional communication.

#### **Task 8.4**

The recording starts with a voice saying ‘Speak’. After this voice, pronounce the word **abolish** and then listen to the speaker’s rendition. Check whether your stress and vowels were like the speaker’s. Do this for the other words as well, while the recording continues. Highlight words that you mispronounced, and study the pronunciation of the highlighted words some more afterwards. Try and find a pattern in your mispronunciations (stress versus vowel articulation).

- 16 **abolish** | **access** | **accumulate** | **acknowledge** | **admirable** | **advertisement** (2x) | **advantageous** | **aesthetic** | **altar** | **alter** | **aluminum** | **aluminium** | **amateur** (2x) | **ambiguity** | **ambiguous** | **analysis** | **anatomy** | **apostrophe** | **applicable** | **aristocracy** | **ascertain** | **Asia** (2x) | **asthma** | **atheist** | **an attribute** | **to attribute** | **authoritative** | **balcony** | **ballet** (2x) | **bankruptcy** | **bargain** | **bathe** | **bombing** | **the bough of a tree** | **to bow** | **bow and arrow** | **buffet** (2x) | **bury** | **café** | **canal** | **canary** | **canoe** | **carbon monoxide** | **cello** | **the Celtic language** | **chalet** | **chic** | **cholera** | **circuit** | **cauliflower** | **cliché** (2x) | **clientele** | **closet** | **coincide** | **colleague** | **colonel** | **comb** | **commentary** | **comparable** | **comparative** | **complimentary** | **consequence** | **consequently** | **consistency** | **consistently** | **the construct** | **contemporary** | **contribute** (2x) | **controversy** (2x) | **couch** | **cough** | **country** | **courier** | **creator** | **creature** | **crèche** | **crooked** | **cupboard** | **currant** | **current** | **cushion** | **consequent** | **data** | **debt** | **debut** | **decorative** | **a defect** | **definable** | **definite** | **definitely** | **definitive** | **definitively** | **democracy** | **democratisation** | **derivation** | **derivative** | **the African desert** | **a sweet dessert** | **to desert** | **to deter** | **to determine** | **diabetes** | **diagonal** | **diameter** | **disciple** | **distribute** | **distributor** | **divers** | **diverse** | **I dreamt a dream** | **I dreamed a dream** | **educative** | **elementary** | **eliminate** | **elite** | **elitist** | **emphasis** | **emphatic** | **empirical** | **to envelop** | **an envelope** | **environment** | **to enquire** | **equivalent** | **an estimate** | **euphemism** |



exaggerate | examine | examining | executive | exhibit | exhibition | extremist | figure (2x) | finite | folk | fork | forehead (2x) | foreigner | garage (3x) | genre | geometry | gigantic | graffiti | gynaecologist | hereditary | heroic | heterogeneous | heterogeneity | hideous | hierarchy | homogeneous | homogeneity | a house | to house | houses | hygienic (2x) | hypocrisy | hypothesis | hypotheses | ideology | ignorance | illegible | imply | indicative | inevitable | infer | inherent | innovative | inseparable | integrity | intelligible | interpret | interpretation | reinterpretation | interpretative | interpretive | misinterpret | intimacy | intriguing | intuitive | an invalid answer | inventory | iron | ironic | irony | irreparable | laboratory (2x) | lawyer | layer | the layout | lead pipes | lease | leisure | leopard | lettuce | to levy taxes | Levi's | library | lieutenant (2x) | lilac | linen | livestock | luxurious | luxury | managerial | mariner | maritime | masseuse | mausoleum | major | mayor (2x) | medicinal | medieval | melancholic | melancholy | memo | her memoirs | meteorology | metropolis | metropolitan | migrate | migratory | miniature | miniscule | minute details | the minutes of the meeting | monarch | monetary | monk | monkey | monogram | moustache (2x) | mow the lawn | muscle | muscular | myth | niche (2x) | nonetheless | nuclear | occur | occurrence | octave | often (2x) | olive | oven | parameter | parliament | pedal | percentage | personal | personnel | persuade | phenomenon | pianist | pier | pint | plagiarism | plough | plumber | polish | Polish | porcelain | portrait | prayer | precede | precious | precise | predominant | preface | preferable | preferably | prestigious | prior | priority | procedural | processing | promenade | prophet | protein | psalm | pseudonym | psychiatric | psychiatrist | pudding | pullover | pulp | purchase | pyramid | quarrel | ravine | reassure | receipt | recipe | regime | regiment | reinforce | reluctance | reliable | remedy | rendezvous | repertoire | replica | reside | resign | resignation | resolute | resolve | resources | restaurant | a resume | rheumatism | rigid | nasty rowing | row your boat | sabotage | sacrifice | salmon | sarcasm | sardine | satire | saucepan | says | said | schedule (2x) | schizophrenia | schizophrenic | senile | sheik | solicitor | the sun shone | to sew | sewage | simultaneous | squealing sows | sow your seeds | spaniel | speedometer | spinach | spontaneity | spontaneous | subsequently | suede | three-piece suit | suite | sweater | swollen | sward | sword | to tear | tears | thermometer | triangle | tribunal | triple | the unrest | vaccine | vaccination | to vary | variability | variable | variant | variance | varied | variety | various | version (2x) | vice versa | vineyard | violin | violinist | VIP | a magic wand | wasp | Wednesday | wharf | whereas | woman | women | won | a nasty wound | wound up | x-ray | yacht | zebra (2x) | zoology

**Category 2: Less common words**

Below are more words that are notorious for their tricky pronunciation. Compared with the previous list, this list contains a higher number of words that are not generally used in daily non-professional communication.

**Task 8.5**

Do what you did in Task 8.4. The recording starts with a voice saying ‘Speak’, so that you know that you need to pronounce **absenteeism**.

- 17 **absenteeism** | **accessory** | **adjacent** | **adjective** | **adjunct** | **adverb** | **adverse** | **adversely** | **an aged man** | **a middle-aged man** | **aggregate** | **aisles** | **allegation** | **allege** | **allegory** | **ally** | **alibi** | **allies** | **amiable** | **analogous** | **analogy** | **anticipate** | **antiperspirant** | **anxiety** | **appalling** | **appreciation** | **apprentice** | **appropriately** | **apricot** | **arbitrary** | **archaic** | **archangel** | **assassin** | **assassinate** | **asylum** | **authoritarian** | **autonomy** | **auxiliary** | **aye** | **bald** | **beneficiary** | **bold** | **banal** | **banquet** | **beloved** | **bias** | **binary** | **the blessed man** | **bourgeois** | **breathe** | **breathy** | **caricature** | **carrier** | **catastrophe** | **caterpillar** | **chamber** | **chandelier** | **chestnut** | **chisel** | **chore** | **chorus** | **christen** | **clandestine** | **cleanly** | **cleanse** | **cleansing milk** | **clerk (2x)** | **cocoa** | **coherent** | **colloquial** | **colon** | **comrade** | **concurrent** | **connoisseur** | **conquest** | **consecutive** | **consecutively** | **consequentially** | **constituency** | **contractor** | **corps** | **corpse** | **counterfeit** | **coup** | **courteous** | **courtesy** | **crooked** | **crusade** | **I cursed** | **the cursed Tsar** | **cylinder** | **to defect** | **a defect** | **debris (2x)** | **demeanour** | **diaper** | **the direct object** | **dissolve** | **divisible** | **dogged** | **to defect** | **demonstrable** | **depot** | **derelict** | **designate** | **destined** | **determiner** | **docile** | **draught** | **drought** | **edible** | **eligible** | **eminent** | **encore** | **ensuing** | **ethic** | **en route** | **entourage** | **entrepreneur** | **to envelop** | **enviable** | **the envy** | **to envy** | **equation** | **equity** | **era** | **espionage** | **Estuary English** | **ether** | **exert** | **exhale** | **extremity** | **facet** | **facetious** | **facsimile** | **falcon** | **famine** | **fasten** | **fatigue** | **feud** | **fiery** | **feisty** | **foetus** | **forfeit** | **formidable** | **forte** | **fragile** | **frigid** | **gauge** | **futile** | **gem** | **generative** | **genuine** | **ginger** | **guillotine** | **gymnasium** | **habitually** | **harassment (2x)** | **heather** | **hegemony (3x)** | **heir** | **heroin** | **heroine** | **heroism** | **hiccough** | **hostage** | **hiatus** | **hover** | **hydrometer** | **hyena** | **hyperbole** | **illegality** | **imagery** | **impasse** | **impediment** | **incentive** | **incidence** | **indict** | **indictment** | **indigenous** | **indolence** | **infamous** | **integral** | **interrogative** | **intestines** | **intricate** | **invariable** | **invariably** | **variably** | **isle** | **jagged** | **infinitive** | **he leapt** | **a learned man** | **legislate** | **legislative** | **legislature** | **lever (2x)** | **lexicography** | **linger** | **liquor** | **liquorice** | **livelihood** | **livestock** | **loch (2x)** | **longitude** | **longwinded** | **to lure** | **machismo** | **magistrate** | **magnetism** | **mall** | **manoeuvre** | **manure** | **masquerade** |

mauve | mediocre | mediocrity | menace | militia | mirage | miscellaneous | miscellany | mischief | misogynist | mistletoe | molest | mongrel | morale | moral | morass | mortgage | mould | to mourn | narrate | narrative | nausea | negligence | negligible | negotiate | negotiation | nourish | nuisance | obese | obesity | obligatory | oboe | obsolete | odour | omen | omit | orchard | orchid | oxygen | pageant | palate | palatal | paradigm | parentheses | participle | pastry | pathetic | patronise | peasant | pedestal | pedigree | perfume | penal | perpetual | perseverance | pharaoh | pheasant | physicist | pious | plimsolls | pneumatic | poll | potpourri | practicable | practitioner | premises | presume | prevalent | proceeds | a prophecy | to prophesy | prosaic | prosecute | prosodic | purgatory | putting-green | quay | quotient | ragged | rabbi | raisin | rapport | raspberry | ratio | ration | rational | rationale | realm | reassessment | reconnaissance | refuge | refugee | rehabilitate | Renaissance (2x) | resonance | resound | rhetoric | rhetorical | rhubarb | Romance prefixes | rugged | sacred | saliva | scarce | scent | sceptre | scheme | schism | sever | sewer | shovel | shove | sieve | significance | to signify | simile | sinew | singe | sleigh | soothe | sour | sovereign | sparse | species | squirrel | stamina | staunch | stifling | stingy | sublime | subordinate | subsidiary | subsidy | superfluous | swap | swamp | swarming | trivial | supposedly | syllable | synthesis | synthetic | tangerine | tearing | tempestuous | theoretician | threshold | tomb | treachery | tuition | tumult | utensil | versatile | veterinary | violate | waistcoat | warrant | yearn | yeoman | zeal | zealous

### Category 3: Professional and academic words

Below are words that are notorious for their difficult pronunciation, and some of these words even cause problems for native speakers. A relatively low number of these words might occur in daily informal conversations.

#### Task 8.6

Do what you did in Task 8.4. The recording starts with a voice saying ‘Speak’, so that you know that you need to pronounce **abscond**.

- 18 **abscond** | adjectival | adversary | affidavit | affricate | ague | albeit | alimony | allegiance | alveolar | ambisyllabic | anaesthetic | anaesthetise | antecedent | antipathy | antipodes | archipelago | atrocious | atrocity | audacious | audacity | aural | aviation | awry | bade | bestow | bigot | bigoted | bilabial | biro | buoy | cache | cacophony | capacious | cartilage | catacomb | catechism | caveat | centenary | centrifugal | chamois | chasm | chassis | chaste | chastise | chastity | cherub | chivalrous | citadel | coalesce | coax | coerce | colliery | colt | combatant | compère |

concatenation | congruent | consul | contour | coronal | couplet | covert | covet | cowardice | cuckoo | credence | crevice | culprit | cussed | dearth | declination | decrepit | deign | deity | deluge | derisory | despicable | despotism | desultory | deterrent | diacritic | diaphragm | diglossia | diletante | diminutive | dinghy | diphtheria | diphthong | dishevelled | disparate | dough | doughty | dynamo | dysentery | echelon | edify | efficacy | elision | elongated | emaciated | enamel | enamour | endeavour | envisage | epenthesis | ephemeral | epitome | epoch | equator | equatorial | equilibrium | ere | erudite | erudition | escapism | eschew | exaltation | exasperate | exchequer | exegesis | exile | exultation | facade | feign | felicitous | fête | fiend | fluid | foliage | fuchsia | furlough | gaiety | genie | geyser | ghoulish | gibberish | glacier | gnaw | grandeur | granite | hangar | harlequin | hearse | heathen | heinous | haemorrhage | heresy | heretic | hermetic | heron | hitherto | homage | homophone | hovel | hydrogen | illiteracy | illusory | imperative | imperceptible | imperial | impetus | impetuous | implacable | indigent | indignant | ingenious | ingenuous | in situ | integer | intrepid | inveigh | iodine | ion | ironmonger | irrevocable | jackal | jeopardise | jeopardy | kinaesthetic | laity | lamentations | languid | lapel | laryngeal | larynx | lathe | lavish | leant | leper | leprosy | levity | liqueur | livelong | longevity | lough | lugubrious | machination | mahogany | malevolent | malice | mania | maniacal | manifold | marital | marquis | masonry | meander | mercenary | Messrs | mica | mischievous | miser | mishap | mitigate | monophthong | monophthongisation | municipal | myriad | neigh | nomenclature | nucleus | oblique | obsequies | obsequious | oesophagus | ominous | omnipotent | omniscient | opulent | orator | oust | pedant | palatalisation | palsy | panacea | parabola | pasty | patriarch | patron | pejorative | peremptory | perimeter | perjury | petulant | pharynx | pharyngeal | piebald | pivot | plaid | placid | plover | pneumonia | poignant | polemic | polysyllabic | porpoise | portend | portent | portmanteau | posterity | precedence | precedent | précis | precocious | precocity | pre-emptive | prerogative | presentiment | privy | pulley | pulpit | putrid | putty | quadruped | qualm | quoth | ravish | relish | resin | retaliate | reticent | revel | revere | reviles | rhotic | rhotacisation | ricochet | rivulet | sacrilege | scald | scant | scanty | scold | scythe | simultaneity | sinecure | sloth | slough | slovenly | sluice | smoulder | soliloquy | sojourn | solace | specious | squalid | stalwart | stealthy | stipend | stirrup | studious | strophe | succinct | subpoena | surmise | swarthy | syllabic | synod | syringe | tally | tangent | tangential | tarry | three-toed | thyroid gland | ton | tonnage | tortoise | trachea | transient | triphthong | trough | twopence | typhoid | uncouth | uvular | vagrancy | valiant | valise | vehement | vengeance | venison | venom | verbiage | veritable | via | viscera | viscount | wainscoting | wan | Wolsey | wrath | wreathe | wretched | wrought | xenophobe | yolk | zealot

## Key

### *Key to Task 8.3*

The boxed syllables are stressed: **v**ariant, **d**efinite, **a**nalysis, **v**ariable, **d**efinitive, **a**postrophe, **d**efinitively, **cl**andestine, **d**emocratisa**ti**on, **d**emocrati**s**e

## Pronunciation variation

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### What could go wrong?

The previous chapter showed that some words have multiple parallel pronunciations. Not being aware of this makes learners feel that they should change their pronunciation habits, while this is not necessary. There is no reason to change your pronunciation of the first vowel in the word *either*, whether it be pronounced as the monophthong [i:] (like the vowel in *beat*) or the diphthong [aɪ] (like the vowel in *by*). The same is true for either pronouncing the *t* in the word *often* or not. Both options are equally acceptable. An issue is that learners might know one of the versions and not the other, and this may lead to minor confusion.

### Is this your problem?

**Task 9.1**

Listen to the words below and circle the words that you think are pronounced incorrectly. The key to this task is at the end of the chapter.

- |               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1 garage      | 11 thermometer   |
| 2 neither     | 12 pasta         |
| 3 often       | 13 advertisement |
| 4 schedule    | 14 Asia          |
| 5 getting     | 15 Asia          |
| 6 often       | 16 speedometer   |
| 7 pasta       | 17 garage        |
| 8 controversy | 18 garage        |
| 9 assume      | 19 schedule      |
| 10 potato     | 20 dreamt        |

## Explanation and practice

Parallel pronunciations are often due to the traditional distinction between standard British and American English. Because of these parallel language norms, some words can be pronounced in two or more ways in international contexts. It should be noted that ways to pronounce a word are not always strictly typical of either of these countries, as sometimes the same variation exists within these countries as well. The two pronunciations of the word *often*, for example, are common in both countries. The two pronunciations of *either* are common in Britain, while the pronunciation of this word that starts with an [aɪ] is less common in the United States than in Britain. Below are eight sources of pronunciation variation that sometimes lead to confusion as to which pronunciation is correct.

### 1 Vowel variation: [æ] versus [ɑ:]

Many words have traditionally had a version with the [æ] vowel and an equally correct version with [ɑ:]. This is a particularly well-known example of variation based on parallel forms, and it occurs in very frequent words.

#### Task 9.2

Listen to these examples of words pronounced with [æ] (first rendition) and [ɑ:] (second rendition). Repeat the one you prefer.

21 **last** – **last**

22 **bath** – **bath**

23 **pass** – **pass**

24 **can't** – **can't**

25 **example** – **example**

26 **laughter** – **laughter**

### 2 Vowel variation: [ɔ:, ɒ] versus [ɑ:]

In the list of phonemes that the most well-known varieties of English share (Chapter 3), there is a vowel that has a particularly varied way of being pronounced, namely the vowel represented by the symbol [ɒ]. Some speakers in general prefer a more open version of this vowel, which tends towards [ɑ:], while others pronounce this more open realisation in certain phonetic contexts only.

#### Task 9.3

Listen to these examples of words pronounced with a less open (first rendition) and more open (second rendition) vowel. Repeat the one you prefer.

- 27 **boss** – **boss** [ɒ, ɑ:]  
 28 **not** – **not** [ɒ, ɑ:]  
 29 **got** – **got** [ɒ, ɑ:]
- 30 **call** – **call** [ɔ:, ɑ:]  
 31 **walk** – **walk** [ɔ:, ɑ:]  
 32 **caught** – **caught** [ɔ:, ɑ:]

### 3 Other vowel differences

The pronunciation of some words can vary when it comes to the nature of the vowel of the stressed syllable or another prominent vowel.

#### Task 9.4

Listen to these examples of words with two pronunciations of a certain vowel. Both versions are pronounced. Repeat the one you prefer.

- 33 **again** – **again** [eɪ, ε]  
 34 **evolution** – **evolution** [i:, ε]  
 35 **economic** – **economic** [i:, ε]  
 36 **aesthetic** – **aesthetic** [i:, ε]  
 37 **leisure** – **leisure** [i:, ε]  
 38 **zebra** – **zebra** [i:, ε]  
 39 **neither** – **neither** [i:, aɪ]  
 40 **semi** – **semi** [i:, aɪ]  
 41 **anti** – **anti** [i:, aɪ]  
 42 **either** – **either** [i:, aɪ]
- 43 **migraine** – **migraine** [i:, aɪ]  
 44 **privacy** – **privacy** [ɪ, aɪ]  
 45 **dynasty** – **dynasty** [ɪ, aɪ]  
 46 **vitamin** – **vitamin** [ɪ, aɪ]  
 47 **missile** – **missile** [ə, aɪ]  
 48 **vase** – **vase** [ɑ:, eɪ]  
 49 **tomato** – **tomato** [ɑ:, eɪ]  
 50 **envelope** – **envelope** [ɑ:, ε]  
 51 **clerk** – **clerk** [ɑ:, ɜ:]
- 52 **progress** (noun) – **progress** (noun) [ɒʊ, ɒ]  
 53 **project** (noun) – **project** (noun) [ɒʊ, ɒ]
- 54 **scone** – **scone** [ɒʊ, ɒ]  
 55 **falcon** – **falcon** [æ, ɒ]  
 56 **wrath** – **wrath** [æ, ɒ]  
 57 **patent** – **patent** [æ, eɪ]  
 58 **patronise** – **patronise** [æ, eɪ]
- 59 **pasta** – **pasta** [æ, ɑ:]  
 60 **route** – **route** [aʊ, u:]  
 61 **whoops** – **whoops** [ʊ, u:]  
 62 **been** – **been** [i:, ɪ]

### 4 Tapping of [t]

The letter *t* between vowels can be pronounced in two ways, and these are usually transcribed as [t] and [ɾ]. The [t] represents the traditional pronunciation as a *t*, and the symbol [ɾ] represents a *d*-like sound – a small tap against the alveolar ridge. The latter is neither good nor bad, and it may well be that this ‘tapping’ is more frequent than the pronunciation of the letter *t* as an actual [t]. The [ɾ] variant is associated more with fast and natural speech, while the [t] variant is considered more emphatic (and in line with spelling). Both ways are



correct, and both can be used in slow and formal speech and in fast and informal speech.

### Task 9.5

Listen to the words below and repeat the one you prefer. The boxed sounds are subject to variation. The speaker pronounces the version with [t] first and then the 'tapped' version, with a [ɾ].

63 later – later

64 turtle – turtle

65 bottle – bottle

66 better – better

67 butter – butter

68 getting – getting

69 autumn – autumn

70 computer – computer

71 literature – literature

72 Get it over with! – Get it over with!

73 It's getting better. – It's getting better.

74 It doesn't matter! – It doesn't matter!

75 Let's get on with it! – Let's get on with it!

76 It all worked out well. – It all worked out well.

77 There's the little baby! – There's the little baby!

### 5 Consonant variation: pronouncing [ŋ] or [ŋ] at the ends of words

In fast or informal English, the [ŋ] at the end of a word may turn into an [ŋ]. Usually, these are multi-syllable words whose spelling ends in *ing*, like *walking*, *talking*, and *taking*. It is better if you didn't do this, as it doesn't help your understandability and may come across as a little too informal. It is important to recognise this in other people's English though.

### Task 9.6

Listen to the differences in how *ing* is pronounced. The second version is pronounced with [ŋ].

78 having – having

79 making – making

80 happening – happening

81 What's happening – What's happening?

82 she's walking all over them – she's walking all over them

83 I am a cruising dance machine! – I am a cruising dance machine!

84 walking the walk, talking the talk – walking the walk, talking the talk

Please note that [ŋ] at the ends of words is sometimes pronounced as [ŋg], i.e. with the first sound in the word **goal** at the end. There is no need for this addition of [g] so it is better to avoid it.

**Task 9.7**

Listen to the way some speakers add an unnecessary [g] after [ŋ].

- 85 the entrance the dawn was making  
 86 My song sounds like a dirge.  
 87 A crocodile has a long body and mouth and a long tail  
 88 showing hospitality  
 89 as long as rare excitement

**6 Consonant variation: adding [h] after [w]**

In some words starting with **wh**, a minority of native speakers pronounce an [h]-like sound at the beginning; this sounds a little bit like a breathy [w]. One advantage of this is that you can make a distinction between these words and words whose pronunciation would otherwise be identical. You'll need to learn to recognise this pronunciation.

**Task 9.8**

Listen to how [w] may be followed by [h].

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 90 wine                | 94 when (without [h])   |
| 91 whine (without [h]) | 95 Wales                |
| 92 whine (with [h])    | 96 whales (with [h])    |
| 93 when (with [h])     | 97 whales (without [h]) |

**7 Consonant variation: inserting [j]**

In a small set of very frequent words, some speakers pronounce a [j] before a vowel, while others don't.

**Task 9.9**

Listen to whether [j] is pronounced (first version) or not (second version) in the items below. Repeat the rendition you prefer.

98 **n**ew – **n**ew [nj, n]99 **f**igure – **f**igure [gj, g]100 **t**une – **t**une [tj, t]101 **a**ssume – **a**ssume [sj, s]**8 Stress variation**

Some words can have two different stress patterns. With this variation often come different vowels.

**Task 9.10**

Listen to these examples of words pronounced with two different stress patterns. The boxed syllables are stressed. Repeat the one you prefer.

102 **d**ebris – **d**ebris103 **g**arage – **g**arage104 **a**dmirable – **a**dmirable105 **r**eparable – **r**eparable106 **a**dvertisement – **a**dvertisement107 **c**ontroversy – **c**ontroversy108 **p**erfume – **p**erfume**Task 9.11**

Each of the words below is pronounced twice. Listen to and then repeat one of these ways (the one you prefer). The boxes denote the sounds that require attention (spelling, pronunciation, stress).

107 **l**ast – **l**ast108 **n**ew – **n**ew109 **l**ater – **l**ater110 **c**an't – **c**an't111 **o**ften – **o**ften112 **a**gain – **a**gain113 **t**urtle – **t**urtle114 **s**cone – **s**cone115 **b**ottle – **b**ottle116 **e**ither – **e**ither117 **d**ebris – **d**ebris118 **g**arage – **g**arage119 **t**omato – **t**omato120 **v**ersion – **v**ersion121 **p**rivacy – **p**rivacy122 **a**utumn – **a**utumn123 **d**ynasty – **d**ynasty124 **e**xample – **e**xample125 **m**igraine – **m**igraine126 **a**esthetic – **a**esthetic127 **e**conomic – **e**conomic128 **r**eparable – **r**eparable129 **a**dmirable – **a**dmirable130 **G**et over it! – **G**et over it!131 **c**ontroversy – **c**ontroversy132 **a**dvertisement – **a**dvertisement133 **L**et's **g**et on with it! – **L**et's **g**et on with it!134 **I**t all worked out well. – **I**t all worked out well.135 **T**here's the **l**ittle baby! – **T**here's the **l**ittle baby!

## Key

### *Key to Task 9.1*

The pronunciation of the words **potato**, **speedometer**, and **dreamt** is incorrect.

# Sentence stress

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### What could go wrong?

If you stress the wrong words in sentences, this might lead to confusion as to what the speaker is trying to forefront. Imagine that the boxed words in the following two sentences carry stress: *I **am** cycling home/I am **cycling** home*. It should be clear that there is a difference between the two sentences. The first version might refute the suggestion that you will not be cycling home, and the second version may be a way to place emphasis on you cycling home rather than, perhaps, walking home. An issue that often occurs is that no clear stress is placed on any specific word in a sentence. In that case, it is unclear whether attention should be paid to a specific aspect of the sentence. If you say *I am so happy that you're here* without any of the words stressed, that doesn't sound like you are very happy; *I am **so** happy that you're here* or *I am so happy that **you**'re here*, with stress on *so* or *you*, will probably bring across the message better. A wrong sentence stress may thus also signal the wrong mood, or inadvertently suggest an absence of a mood.

#### Task 10.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English who produce a confusing sentence stress pattern. The issues are boxed. One might expect these boxed words to receive less or more stress within the sentence/phrase.

- 1 **You** should go there.
- 2 It promised to be a very iffy day; **that is**, blasts of angry sunlight one minute, ...
- 3 ready to help out, **be it** with directions to the nearest bar
- 4 The branch of an old filicium tree **shaded me**.
- 5 I will tell you about Turkey because **I'm from Turkey**.

## Is this your problem?

Sentence stress is not the most serious of challenges for learners, but if your intention and meaning are often misinterpreted, then wrong sentence-stress placement might be one of the reasons. Most learners are not too aware of this aspect of pronunciation, while it may be used to their advantage. In any case, it is advisable to read this chapter. It should be noted that sentence stress, intonation, word stress, and silences usually work in unison. Their effects are, in fact, difficult to separate. All of these aspects are discussed in Part B of this book.

## Explanation and practice

Stress refers to placing emphasis on syllables by making them a little louder, longer, and/or higher in pitch. Vowels in stressed syllables have a clearer pronunciation than those in less stressed syllables (see Chapters 6 and 7). Sentence-stress vowels usually carry even more stress than stressed vowels at the word level. Sentence stress refers to placing stress on certain words within a sentence; usually these are key words. Sometimes, there's only one such stressed word.

We use sentence stress to contrast two ideas, emphasise something, or perhaps clarify a misunderstanding. Most of us apply sentence stress naturally when we speak. Learners of English need to make sure that their stress patterns have the same effect on listeners' understanding as they intend.

Some words are typically more likely to receive sentence stress than others do. In a neutral intonation pattern in English, nouns tend to receive most of the stress, even without an effort by the speaker to emphasise them. Verbs also naturally receive considerable stress. Less-stressed or unstressed syllables may be pronouns (like *he* and *that*), auxiliaries (like *am* and *have*), prepositions (like *at* and *on*), and articles (*the*, *a*, and *an*). The general pattern of not stressing function words and stressing content words is interrupted if speakers want to emphasise a certain part of a sentence. The most common way is to stress the word that is emphasised, or the words that are emphasised.

### Task 10.2

Listen to the items below as well as their specific meaning (given between brackets). Try to repeat them if you can, paying attention to stressing some words and not others.

- 6 **I** said that Helaku might want to reconsider his new cologne. ("It wasn't someone else who said it.")
- 7 I said that **Helaku** might want to reconsider his new cologne. ("Not someone other than Helaku.")
- 8 I said that Helaku **might** want to reconsider his new cologne. ("I'm only saying that he should give his cologne some extra thought.")

- 9 **I said that Helaku might want to reconsider his New cologne.** (“His old cologne seems fine.”)
- 10 **I said that Helaku might want to reconsider his new cologne.** (“His deodorant is okay.”)

Besides emphasising one syllable/word, more than one syllable/word may be emphasised in each sentence. This is probably the most common pattern. In the task below, stress is not placed quite as emphatically as in the above sample items, as the message is not hammered home quite so enthusiastically.

### *Task 10.3*

Listen to how syllables/words in the following sentences are emphasised. Circle the ones that receive considerable stress. Did you circle the same as other students? Listen to the recording again after comparing your circles with those of fellow students.

- 11 **Most Macau visitors know that in the heart of Coloane live two giant pandas and their offspring.**
- 12 **But many are not aware that two red pandas have recently taken up residence alongside the bigger animals at the Seac Pai Van Park.**
- 13 **Luo Luo, a three-year-old male red panda, and companion Tong Tong, a female of the same age, arrived at the park via a two-hour flight from Chengdu, China, in December 2016.**
- 14 **Though often nicknamed “the lesser panda,” red pandas Luo Luo and Tong Tong hold their own at Seac Pai Van Park, drawing in admiring crowds who “ooh” and “aah” their way through their visit.**
- 15 **With adorable features, furry appearances and a friendly, gentle vibe, it’s no wonder that the red pandas fascinate the park’s visitors.**

Typically, new and important information (often at the end of the sentence) is emphasised, while given and less important information (often at the beginning of the sentence) is not. In English, therefore, the final parts of sentences tend to receive the most emphasis.

### *Task 10.4*

Read the text below, and underline the parts that you think should be emphasised (i.e. new and important information). Then, compare your underlining with those of other students and with the pronunciation of the speaker in the recording. Bear in mind that different people stress different words.

**16 Mexico City's Paseo de la Reforma avenue is now patrolled every day by 100 female police officers on bicycles. Since January, the transit officers – most of whom are recent graduates of the capital's Police University – have been riding up and down the emblematic boulevard to keep a discerning eye on fellow cyclists as well as motorists and pedestrians. Among the officers' duties are directing traffic, attending motor vehicle accidents, administering first aid and accompanying the frequent protest marches that make their way along the avenue.**

### ***Syllable-timed versus stress-timed***

Languages can roughly be divided into stress-timed and syllable-timed languages. In stress-timed languages, like English, stressed syllables occur at regular intervals. The unstressed and less stressed syllables need to be squeezed in between these stressed syllables, so that the language has a relatively regular rhythm of stressed syllables. In syllable-timed languages, on the other hand, each syllable tends to receive a similar amount of time. You can see this difference between the two types of rhythmic patterns in the pictures below. The size of the hands denotes degree of prominence of syllables.

Stress-timed (English):



Syllable-timed:



Although these visualisations are of course a little bit too crude, the pictures show that some syllables in stress-timed languages receive relatively little time and will thus be less easy to hear. In syllable-timed languages, each syllable lasts for a similar amount of time, while stress-timed languages have a variety of syllable durations. An intuitive observation is that stress-timed languages have a more messy rhythm than syllable-timed languages. This messiness could be viewed as a complicating factor, but it could also be viewed as a degree of freedom.

Examples of languages that tend towards stress-timing are Swedish, English, Russian, European Portuguese, Dutch, and Arabic. Examples of languages that tend towards syllable-timing are: Japanese, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Italian, and Finnish. There are languages that are subject to debate in this sense (including some in this list). If one's native tongue is a syllable-timed language, one needs to learn to go from stressed syllable to stressed



syllable and unstress other syllables, rather than give equal time to all syllables. Try not to give similar stress to all syllables, because that may come across as rather cold and automatic. Stress important information and unstress less important information.

### *Task 10.5*

Find out if your native tongue is stress-timed or syllable-timed. Check this through an internet search. Make sure that several reliable sources say the same thing before deciding that you speak either a syllable- or stress-timed language as a native tongue.

### *Task 10.6*

If possible, two students with a syllable-timed and two students with a stress-timed language as a native tongue read out the sentences below. The rest of the group listens and tries to describe the difference. Which syllables are stressed and unstressed? What is the general rhythm like? What is the general mood like?

- 17 Crickets are seen as tasty food by many, while some consider them to be melodic pets. Actually, some people keep crickets for their soothing chirp and then eat them when they're fully grown.**

### *Task 10.7*

Listen to the items and repeat them, placing the stress on the boxed syllables. Some of the sentences have stressed syllables to emphasise words, and these syllables receive relatively much stress, while others have stressed syllables because regular stress is part of the natural rhythm of English. The latter stress is less prominent.

- 18 I said that Helaku might want to reconsider his new cologne.** (“I didn’t shout it,” or an emphatic repetition of the sentence by the speaker.)
- 19 I said that Helaku might want to reconsider his new cologne.** (“I didn’t say it is necessary for him to reconsider it.”)
- 20 I said that Helaku might want to reconsider his new cologne.** (“There’s no need for him to renegotiate his partner’s current cologne.”)
- 21 I’m not marrying him!**
- 22 I’m not marrying him!**
- 23 What have you been up to? You’re filthy.**

- 24 What have you been **up** to? You're **filthy**.
- 25 **Crickets** are seen as **tasty** food by many, while **some** consider them to be melodic **pets**.
- 26 **Actually**, **some** people keep crickets for their **soothing** chirp and then **eat** them when they're **fully** grown.

# Silences

---

### What could go wrong?

Having no silences in your speech will make you come across as rushed. If you say *Yesterday \*silence\* I saw her*, the sentence sounds natural because of the short silence. A lack of well-placed silences also makes one's speech a little less meaningful, as it fails to highlight bits of information. If you lengthen the silence in the sample sentence above, attention is naturally drawn to the word *Yesterday*. Wrongly placed silences can change the literal meaning of sentences. The sentences *I pointed out the painting \*silence\* which he found offensive* does not mean the same thing as *I pointed out the painting which he found offensive* (without a silence). In the first version, the word *which* refers to the act of pointing out the painting; in the second version this word could also refer to the painting itself. Also, a lack of silences makes it harder to determine when sentences start and end. If you say the sentences *Ask him where we're going. Anywhere would be fine*, then not inserting a silence between the sentences is confusing, as the listener will hear *Ask him where we're going anywhere would be fine*. It is listener-unfriendly if you do not pause, or if you do not pause in the right places.

#### Task 11.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English who fail to insert clear silences. The word before and the issue are boxed.

- 1 Hello everyone who's listening. My name is Sabina.
- 2 I'm here in my cousin home, so he just came from Pakistan. That's why I want to meet him.
- 3 some of the most exotic and breath-taking wildlife you will ever see, including including the Big Five
- 4 Russian culture is very very very rich. We gave the world great poets
- 5 The thorns in which he fell pierced his eyes.

## Is this your problem?

### *Task 11.2*

Listen carefully to the sentences below and answer the questions between brackets. Silences affect the meaning (together with other techniques, like word-stress placement). Punctuation has been left out. The key to this task is at the end of the chapter.

- 6 **My father never made chocolate which we all hated** (what does the word **which** refer to?)
- 7 **My father never made chocolate which we all hated** (what does the word **which** refer to?)
- 8 **Ask him where we're going anywhere would be fine – Ask him where we're going anywhere would be fine** (Which of the two renditions of the same sentence is the best?)

### *Task 11.3*

Listen to sentences 6 and 7 above again, bearing in mind their meaning (see the key at the end of this chapter). Repeat the speaker's rendition. Fellow students can determine whether you are communicating the same meaning as the speaker or not.

## Explanation and practice

Silences have three important functions, which are sometimes difficult to separate. An important function is to make your speech more pleasant to listen to. The speaker will be able to breathe more and relax, and for listeners this relaxed state is also comforting. It helps them follow the speech and understand which sounds are pronounced, because they get little pauses to reflect on what was said. As indicated above, silences can also change the meaning and grammar of sentences. A final function worth mentioning is forefronting. Silences can 'announce' information that a listener should pay attention to and they can draw attention to a word that was just mentioned.

There are short and long silences; short silences are typical in places where there is a comma. Short silences are expected in regular running speech to make sure the reader doesn't misunderstand the grammar or where sentences end. Long silences can be used for forefronting and to indicate the end of a sentence.

**Function 1: Make pronunciation easy to listen to**

**Task 11.4**

For each sentence below, insert vertical lines where you think the speaker will put short silences. The short silences could, of course, be the places where there are commas, but such silences may also be placed elsewhere. Compare your suggested short silences with those of other students; do you have more or fewer? Are they in the same places or not?

- 9 I want to talk about middle-aged men.
- 10 Okay, you're 35, maybe 40.
- 11 You've got a bit of spare cash in the bank, and you want to buy yourself a big powerful sports bike, because you weren't allowed to when you were 17, 'cause your mom and dad said no.
- 12 Now, there are going to be a few problems with that.
- 13 This is what you'll have in mind – the open roads, tearing through the countryside, the wind in your helmet; you and the machine in perfect harmony.
- 14 It is an appealing concept.
- 15 The reality, however, is somewhat different because, let's be honest, you're middle-aged so you'll have a bit of a gut, and that will look ridiculous in your leather romper suit.
- 16 Don't worry though, because I think I have a solution.
- 17 This is the Atoma, from a small Somerset company, called Aried.

**Task 11.5**

Read out the sentences above, and leave silences as you indicated in the previous task (your vertical lines). Then listen to the speaker. Compare your silences with those of the speaker.

**Function 2: Add meaning to utterances**

An important function of shorter silences is to distinguish or clarify syntactic relationships. Different silences could thus bring about different meanings of utterances.

**Task 11.6**

Listen to the sentences below and discover how shorter silences affect the literal meaning of utterances. Punctuation has been left out.

- 18 **This is the Atoma** \*shorter silence\* **from a small Somerset company called Aried**
- 19 **This is the Atoma from a small Somerset company** \*shorter silence\* **called Aried** (confusing)
- 20 **This is the Atoma from a small Somerset company called Aried** (confusing)
- 21 **This is what you'll have in mind** \*shorter silence\* **the open roads** \*shorter silence\* **tearing through the countryside** \*shorter silence\* **the wind in your helmet**
- 22 **This is what you'll have in mind** \*shorter silence\* **the open roads tearing through the countryside** \*shorter silence\* **the wind in your helmet** (incorrect)

### **Function 3: Forefront information**

Longer silences give the speaker the opportunity to highlight words and phrases that are important. Words that are followed by a longer silence are thus fore-fronted, as the words in question will echo in the brain of the listener. If longer silences precede important information, they are like cliff hangers; the reader wonders what's coming.

#### **Task 11.7**

Listen to the sentences below and discover how longer silences draw attention to the bits of information that come before them or that follow them.

- 23 **All we know is, he's called** \*longer silence\* **The Stich!**
- 24 **And away he goes,** \*longer silence\* **like a rocket.**
- 25 **Goodness, that is so** \*longer silence\* **quick!**
- 26 **Oh no, no music for him to listen to because, of course, the Atoma** \*longer silence\* **hasn't got a stereo.**
- 27 **Down to 'Chicago'; look at that;** \*longer silence\* **no understeer,** \*longer silence\* **no oversteer.**
- 28 **Okay, you're 35,** \*longer silence\* **maybe 40.** \*longer silence\* **You've got a bit of spare cash in the bank, and you want to buy yourself a big powerful sports bike,** \*longer silence\* **because you weren't allowed to when you were 17, 'cause your mom and dad said** \*longer silence\* **no!**

#### **Task 11.8**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Pay attention to silences.

- 29 **Finnish customs and manners are \*longer silence\* clearly European, \*shorter silence\* with only a few national variations, \*shorter silence\* and attitudes are liberal.**
- 30 **There is \*longer silence\* very little chance of a visitor committing fundamental social gaffes or breaches of etiquette that would fatally damage relations between himself \*longer silence\* and his hosts.**
- 31 **Such breaches are viewed by Finns with equanimity \*shorter silence\* if committed by their own countrymen \*shorter silence\* and with understanding or amusement if committed by foreigners.**
- 32 **Codes of behaviour are fairly relaxed, \*shorter silence\* and reputations \*longer silence\* – good or bad – \*longer silence\* are built up over time as the result of personal actions \*shorter silence\* rather than conforming to norms or standards.**
- 33 **It is difficult in Finland to make or break a reputation with a single social blunder. (no silences)**

## Key

### *Key to Task 11.2*

In item 6, **which** refers to the fact that dad never made chocolate. In item 7, **which** is followed by an opinion about the chocolate. The second rendition of the sentence in item 7 is better than the first. In the fourth item, emphasis is placed on the Chilean company having made/produced the truck.

### *Key to Task 11.5*

The speaker inserts the following silences:

- 9 **I want to talk about middle-aged men.**
- 10 **Okay, \*short silence\* you're 35, maybe 40.**
- 11 **You've got a bit of spare cash in the bank, \*short silence\* and you want to buy yourself a big \*short silence\* powerful sports bike, \*short silence\* because you weren't allowed to when you were 17, \*short silence\* 'cause your mom and dad said no.**
- 12 **Now, \*short silence\* there are going to be a few problems with that.**
- 13 **This is what you'll have in mind \*short silence\* – the open roads, \*short silence\* tearing through the countryside, \*short silence\* the wind in your helmet; \*short silence\* you and the machine in perfect harmony.**
- 14 **It is an appealing concept.**

- 15 **The reality, however, \*short silence\* is somewhat different \*short silence\* because, \*short silence\* let's be honest, \*short silence\* you're middle-aged \*short silence\* so you'll have a bit of a gut, \*short silence\* and that will look ridiculous in your leather romper suit.**
- 16 **Don't worry though, \*short silence\* because I think I have a solution.**
- 17 **This is the Atoma, \*short silence\* from a small Somerset company, called Aried.**



# Fortis and lenis endings

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### What could go wrong?

A common mistake for speakers is to pronounce the vowel and the following consonant(s) in certain syllables in such a way that listeners actually hear a different word or a non-existent word. In practice, this mistake may lead to *clog* (a wooden shoe) sounding like *clock* and *love* sounding like the non-existent 'luff'. It may also lead to *ice* sounding like *eyes*. It leads to confusion as to the nature of the final consonant. The problem is a combination of the muscular effort expended to the final consonant and the effect it has on the length of the preceding vowel. Not getting this right is one of the more serious causes of miscommunication between learners of English and their interlocutors, and it applies to certain types of (very frequent) syllable endings.

#### *Task 12.1*

Listen to the examples of learners of English in which this issue of confusing syllable endings can be heard. The issues are boxed.

- 1 A crocodile's eyes are on the top of its head.
- 2 a word that cannot, uh, be found or explained in other languages
- 3 many Greek people have and, uh, it comes from their soul and, uh, it means exactly when you
- 4 lived there for more than forty years
- 5 while one lies alone in bed

### Is this your problem?

#### *Task 12.2*

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the 14 selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- **rip – rib**
- **ribs – rips**
- **log – lock**
- **bag – back**
- **mat – mad**
- **leak – league**
- **badge – batch**
- **clocks – clogs**
- **cogs – Cox**
- **sig – sick**
- **pig – pick**
- **Duff – dove**
- **his – hiss**
- **etch – edge**

### *Task 12.3*

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the two types of syllables endings.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>6 rip – rib</b></li> <li><b>7 ribs – rips</b></li> <li><b>8 log – lock</b></li> <li><b>9 bag – back</b></li> <li><b>10 mat – mad</b></li> <li><b>11 leak – league</b></li> <li><b>12 badge – batch</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>13 clocks – clogs</b></li> <li><b>14 cog – cock</b></li> <li><b>15 sig – sick</b></li> <li><b>16 pig – pick</b></li> <li><b>17 Duff – dove</b></li> <li><b>18 his – hiss</b></li> <li><b>19 etch – edge</b></li> </ul> |
|---|--|

## **Explanation and practice**

When certain consonants are at the end of syllables, the syllable rhyme (i.e. the vowel followed by the final consonant(s)) could feel as if it is short and abruptly cut off or it could feel particularly lengthy and ending smoothly. Learners need to know which consonant sounds make a syllable ending either abrupt or smooth. ‘Fortis’ consonants make the syllable ending abrupt, ‘lenis’ consonants make the syllable ending more smooth. Spelling is an important cue. The overview below shows which consonants are fortis and which are lenis and how spelling often reveals this.

<i>‘fortis’</i>		<i>‘lenis’</i>	
<i>Phonetic symbol</i>	<i>Frequent spelling</i>	<i>Phonetic symbol</i>	<i>Frequent spelling</i>
[p]	<i>p, pe</i>	[b]	<i>b, be</i>
[t]	<i>t, te</i>	[d]	<i>d, de</i>
[f]	<i>f, fe</i>	[v]	<i>v, ve</i>
[s]	<i>s, ce</i>	[z]	<i>s, se</i>
[ʃ]	<i>sh, che</i>	[ʒ]	<i>g, ge</i>
[θ]	<i>th</i>	[ð]	<i>th, the</i>
[k]	<i>k, ke, ck</i>	[g]	<i>g, ge</i>
[tʃ]	<i>sh, ch, ti, ci, si, su</i>	[dʒ]	<i>j, dge, ge</i>

The qualification ‘fortis’ comes down to ‘energetic’ or ‘strong’, while ‘lenis’ means ‘relaxed’ or ‘weak’. This categorisation is relevant only for the class of consonants that block the airflow temporarily and are referred to as ‘obstruents’ (the two lists of sounds in the above overview). Fortis obstruents are usually pronounced without vibrating vocal cords (they are thus ‘voiceless’), while lenis obstruents may be either voiced or voiceless. It is often said that lenis obstruents are ‘potentially voiced’. The lesson to learn is to shorten vowels (a lot!) before fortis obstruents, lengthen vowels (a lot!) before lenis obstruents, and to end the syllable clearly and audibly with either a fortis or lenis obstruent. Learners should therefore simultaneously deal with vowels (make short/long) and their subsequent obstruents (make fortis or lenis).

#### **Task 12.4**

Try to pronounce the nonsense items below. Pronounce lenis obstruents voiced. Try and feel the difference between the fortis and lenis obstruents. Listen to how the speaker pronounces these four items.

- 20 ‘**fotisukapeshythitch**’ (fortis obstruents, no vibrating cords)  
 21 [f t s k p ʃ θ tʃ] (fortis obstruents, no vibrating cords)  
 22 ‘**vodizugabezhythidge**’ (lenis obstruents, vibrating cords)  
 23 [v d z g b ʒ ð dʒ] (lenis obstruents, vibrating cords)

The obstruents in the two ‘words’ above occur at the beginning of the syllable, which is relatively easy for many learners. This chapter, however, is about these consonants at the end of the syllable. English allows both fortis obstruents [p, t, f, s, ʃ, θ, k, tʃ] and lenis obstruents [b, d, v, z, ʒ, ð, g, dʒ] at the end of syllables, and in this respect English is difficult. Some other languages allow only [p, t, f, s, ʃ, θ, k, tʃ] in final position in the syllable (even if there is a ‘b’ or ‘d’ in the spelling, for instance). The name **Bob** is usually pronounced with a [p] at the end in Dutch, for instance, even if Dutch people read a ‘b’ in the spelling. Due to this rule, English **bed** sounds a lot like **bet**, and the English verb **lose** sounds like the adjective **loose** if pronounced with a Dutch accent. This phenomenon makes it hard for some to pronounce the rhymes of certain syllables in English understandably. The good news is that if you find it easy to pronounce lenis obstruents at the beginning of syllables, you only need to learn to pronounce these same sounds at the ends of syllables.

#### **Task 12.5**

Listen to the distinctions between fortis and lenis endings of words.

- 24 **leak** – **league** (fortis – lenis)      28 **rip** – **rib** (fortis – lenis)  
 25 **breath** – **breath**e (fortis – lenis)      29 **lock** – **log** (fortis – lenis)  
 26 **leash** – **beige** (fortis – lenis)      30 **mat** – **mad** (fortis – lenis)  
 27 **live** – **life** (lenis – fortis)
- 31 **the Corrs** – **the course** (lenis – fortis)  
 32 **badge** – **batch** (lenis – fortis)

The spelling tips mentioned above become a little blurry when there is more than one consonant at the end of the closed syllable. The fortis/lenis distinction also applies to syllable-final clusters of consonants; these consonants could as a cluster have a fortis or lenis nature. An extra challenge is that if there is an *l* or *r* in the spelling after the vowel, or an *n*, that this sound can then be treated as part of the vowel.

### Task 12.6

Listen to the fortis and lenis endings in consonant clusters.

- 33 **bird** – **Bert** (lenis – fortis)      38 **clutch** – **judge** (fortis – lenis)  
 34 **bent** – **bend** (fortis – lenis)      39 **beach** – **besiege** (fortis – lenis)  
 35 **built** – **build** (fortis – lenis)      40 **logged** – **locked** (lenis – fortis)  
 36 **caused** – **cast** (lenis – fortis)      41 **scrooged** – **bleached** (lenis – fortis)  
 37 **buzzed** – **bust** (lenis – fortis)

So far, the focus has been on the final consonant. A rule is that the vowel is shortened if the ending is fortis. If there is a lenis consonant or consonant cluster after a vowel, the vowel is lengthened.

### Task 12.7

Let's practise fortis endings. Listen to and repeat the items below. Make the vowels very short and the subsequent consonants voiceless and very abrupt. Exaggerate a little, like the speaker.

- |                  |                          |                  |
|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 42 <b>hip</b>    | 49 <b>missed</b>         | 56 <b>texts</b>  |
| 43 <b>hit</b>    | 50 <b>heaps</b>          | 57 <b>tart</b>   |
| 44 <b>sick</b>   | 51 <b>built</b>          | 58 <b>teeth</b>  |
| 45 <b>coughs</b> | 52 <b>seeks</b>          | 59 <b>kit</b>    |
| 46 <b>pith</b>   | 53 <b>loose</b>          | 60 <b>cat</b>    |
| 47 <b>boss</b>   | 54 <b>douche</b>         | 61 <b>zit</b>    |
| 48 <b>lush</b>   | 55 <b>tit</b> (the bird) | 62 <b>spiked</b> |

**Task 12.8**

Let's practise lenis endings. Listen to and repeat the items below. Make the vowels very long and the subsequent consonants very smooth. Like the speaker, exaggerate a little.

63 ease

64 raise

65 rise

66 covers

67 loves

68 padded

69 bereaved

70 soothed

71 rouge

72 furs

73 stab

74 causes

75 fears

76 build

77 log

78 logged

79 teethe

80 carve

81 sieve

82 buyers

83 players

84 coward

85 flowers

86 clouds

Through the length sign ‘:’, some English vowels are traditionally categorised as long. To a degree, the principles described so far ‘overrule’ this traditional length distinction. Vowels with ‘:’ in their transcription (see Chapter 3) followed by a fortis obstruent may in fact be shorter than vowels that do not have a length sign and are followed by a lenis obstruent. The vowel [ɪ] may be longer than the vowel [i:], for instance.

**Task 12.9**

Listen to the items below. You will hear that a vowel that is traditionally short is in fact long and that a traditionally long vowel comes out as very short.

87 hīd [ɪ]

88 heat [i:]

89 Lēz [ɛ]

90 lease [i:]

To varying degrees, native speakers and learners insert a ‘glottal stop’ [ʔ] before syllable-final [p], [t], and [k] in closed syllables. A glottal stop is a silence after an abruptly terminated vowel and is a salient feature of some speakers’ English. This ‘abrupt silence’ then precedes one of these sounds (**t** in **gets**, for instance). You will sometimes hear speakers use this glottal stop to replace [t] (**tt** in **getting**, for instance), but it is best not to adopt this habit.

**Task 12.10**

Listen to these words pronounced with strong glottal reinforcement (left-hand word) and without such reinforcement (right-hand word).

91 **six** – **six**  
 92 **sip** – **sip**  
 93 **out** – **out**  
 94 **met** – **met**  
 95 **took** – **took**  
 96 **slack** – **slack**

97 **speak** – **speak**  
 98 **getting** – **getting**  
 99 **clutching** – **clutching**  
 100 **vegemite** – **vegemite**  
 101 **breakfast** – **breakfast**  
 102 **not much** – **not much**

### Task 12.11

Listen to the items and repeat them. The boxed parts are the rhymes of syllables in which the fortis/lenis distinction can be heard well. Try to exaggerate a little bit by making the boxed parts either very long and soft-ending or very short and with abrupt endings.

- 103 **bag** (lenis)  
 104 **dog** (lenis)  
 105 **trap** (fortis)  
 106 **crab** (lenis)  
 107 **back** (fortis)  
 108 **dock** (fortis)  
 109 **badge** (lenis)  
 110 **loudness** (lenis)  
 111 **batch** (fortis)  
 112 **cobblers** (lenis, lenis)  
 113 **edgeways** (lenis, lenis)  
 114 **kid gloves** (lenis, lenis)  
 115 **crab** – **trap** (lenis, fortis)
- 116 **bag** – **back** (lenis, fortis)  
 117 **dog** – **dock** (lenis, fortis)  
 118 **rich** – **ridge** (fortis, lenis)  
 119 **rope** – **robe** (fortis, lenis)  
 120 **vibe** – **wipe** (lenis, fortis)  
 121 **mate** – **maid** (fortis, lenis)  
 122 **mend fences** (lenis, lenis)  
 123 **league** – **leak** (lenis, fortis)  
 124 **half-hearted** (fortis, lenis)  
 125 **above board** (lenis, lenis)  
 126 **badge** – **batch** (lenis, fortis)  
 127 **my niece's knees** (lenis, lenis)
- 128 **wild goose chase** (lenis, fortis, fortis)  
 129 **both your houses** (fortis, lenis)  
 130 A little **bird told me** (lenis, lenis)  
 131 **pears for your heirs** (lenis, lenis)  
 132 **babes and sucklings** (lenis, fortis, lenis)  
 133 a **cog** for the machine (lenis)  
 134 **whistle down the wind** (lenis)  
 135 **packed to the gunwales** (fortis, lenis)  
 136 **up the apples and pears** (fortis, fortis, lenis)  
 137 You've never seen it so **good** (lenis, lenis)  
 138 **crab soup** and **lobster bisque** (lenis, fortis, lenis, fortis)  
 139 **hanged, drawn and quartered** (lenis, lenis)  
 140 Man **does not live** by bread alone (lenis, lenis)  
 141 A Euro **saved** is a Euro **earned** (lenis, lenis)  
 142 Valentine's Day **poems** and **sayings** (lenis, lenis, lenis)  
 143 A fool and **his** money are soon **parted** (lenis, lenis)

## Key

### *Key to Task 12.3*

The speaker pronounces the following words: **rip, rips, log, back, mad, league, badge, clocks, cog, sig, pick, Duff, hiss, etc.**

# Contraction and assimilation

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### What could go wrong?

Sometimes, speakers overarticulate combinations of two words. An example is the word combination *she* and *is*. In natural communication, these would be reduced in both spelling and pronunciation to *she's*, [ʃi:z], and the same goes for *I* and *will*: *I'll*, [aɪl]. If you say *I will go home*, with *will* pronounced fully, then you may be emphasising that your intention to go home is very strong. The phrase *Tuyen has travelled home* usually comes out as *Tuyen's travelled home*, unless one wanted to give emphasis to the fact that Tuyen has in fact travelled home rather than not. A related issue is the merging of sounds of two adjacent words. For instance, if you say *ten people*, then it is most natural to say something like '*tem people*', so that the *n* in *ten* and the *p* in *people* more or less assimilate. Another example is the word combination *kiss Shermon*, in which it is most natural for the *ss* in *kiss* to take on the shape of the *sh* in *Shermon*. Using or avoiding the phenomena at hand are not usually the reason why speakers misunderstand each other, nor do learners find pronouncing such word combinations a serious challenge. However, not merging pairs of words leads to slightly stilted speech. The challenge is to articulate clearly (see Chapter 4) but at the same time merge certain word combinations anyway. Another challenge is to recognise these phenomena in other speakers' speech.

#### *Task 13.1*

Listen to the examples of learners of English who do not combine two words naturally, although they could. The issues are boxed.

- 1 So, it is the most fortunate thing.
- 2 how far it is away from their home town, they will have to go back
- 3 His shiny bike got stolen.
- 4 They do not eat grass.
- 5 ten more people



## Is this your problem?

### *Task 13.2*

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the 12 selected items once. For each item pair, the other students circle the word combination that they hear you say. Check what your audience wrote down and find out whether you know how to pronounce certain pairs of words clearly.

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| • <b>I've voted – I voted</b>     | • <b>that is all – that's all</b>           |
| • <b>he's zoo – he zoo</b>        | • <b>the king's here – the king is here</b> |
| • <b>I'll leave – I leave</b>     | • <b>white paper – wipe paper</b>           |
| • <b>tan king – tanking</b>       | • <b>he hasn't been – he has not been</b>   |
| • <b>it'll let go – it let go</b> | • <b>I've no idea – I have no idea</b>      |
| • <b>we're here – we are here</b> | • <b>that's not true – that is not true</b> |

### *Task 13.3*

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two items in each of the item pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in recognising contractions.

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>6 I've voted – I voted</b>      | <b>12 that is all – that's all</b>           |
| <b>7 he's zoo – he zoo</b>         | <b>13 the king's here – the king is here</b> |
| <b>8 I'll leave – I leave</b>      | <b>14 white paper – wipe paper</b>           |
| <b>9 tan king – tanking</b>        | <b>15 he hasn't been – he has not been</b>   |
| <b>10 it'll let go – it let go</b> | <b>16 I've no idea – I have no idea</b>      |
| <b>11 we're here – we are here</b> | <b>17 that's not true – that is not true</b> |

## Explanation and practice

Task 13.2 was a way to find out whether you are able to pronounce two words separately when necessary, or merge them when it does not interfere with understandability. You should be able to do both. Sometimes it is okay and natural to combine words while in other cases overarticulation is needed in order to be clear on which two words you mean. Merging words together in the way described above can be achieved through contraction or assimilation. Both are part of clear articulation.

**I Contraction**

Contraction refers to word pairs – often pronouns and verbs, but not always – that in running speech turn into one merged item: *it'd* for *it had*, *it's* for *it is*, and *he'll* for *he will*, etc. Usually, the verbs *be*, *have* and *will* are reduced in some way. As you can see, spelling can be adjusted to this; letters of the original words may be replaced with an apostrophe. You can also not adjust spelling and still contract in your pronunciation. You can write *I will* and still pronounce it as if you wrote it as *I'll*. Doing the opposite, in this case pronouncing *I will* if the spelling is *I'll*, is a little unusual, however. Contraction can be used this way to place or shift emphasis, and it affects degree of formality, with less contraction evoking more formality. Please note that the contracted forms of *will not* and *shall not* are *won't* and *shan't*. The latter is a bit formal and rare. Note also that contracting *has* to *'s* in the spelling is informal. Below are the most common ways to contract.

<i>Non-contracted form</i>	<i>Contracted form</i>
<b>am</b>	<b>'m</b>
<b>are</b>	<b>'re</b>
<b>are not</b>	<b>aren't</b>
<b>is</b>	<b>'s</b>
<b>is not</b>	<b>isn't</b>
<b>was not</b>	<b>wasn't</b>
<b>were not</b>	<b>weren't</b>
<b>have</b>	<b>'ve</b>
<b>have not</b>	<b>haven't – 've not</b>
<b>has</b>	<b>'s</b>
<b>has not</b>	<b>hasn't</b>
<b>had</b>	<b>'d</b>
<b>had not</b>	<b>hadn't – 'd not</b>
<b>will</b>	<b>'ll</b>
<b>will not</b>	<b>'ll not – won't</b>
<b>would</b>	<b>'d</b>
<b>would not</b>	<b>wouldn't</b>

A rule is that if a negated form is contracted, the verb, not the negation, gets stress; the item *haven't* is pronounced with a stressed *have* and an unstressed *n't*. The latter bit is sometimes even difficult to hear.

**Task 13.4**

Listen to the ways contracted forms are pronounced.

- |                        |                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 18 I'm here            | 31 I've not been here           |
| 19 you're here         | 32 Nguyen hasn't been here      |
| 20 you aren't here     | 33 Hoang's not been here (has)  |
| 21 you're not here     | 34 Cuong's here                 |
| 22 it's here           | 35 they hadn't been here        |
| 23 it isn't here       | 36 they'd not been here         |
| 24 it's not here       | 37 I'll be here                 |
| 25 it wasn't here      | 38 I'll not be here             |
| 26 we weren't here     | 39 I won't be here              |
| 27 I've been here      | 40 it wouldn't be good          |
| 28 I haven't been here | 41 it'd not be good             |
| 29 Khiem's gone        | 42 let's go                     |
| 30 Meng'll fix it      | 43 Tuyen's travelled home (has) |

### Task 13.5

Listen carefully to the boxed bits below. They show that although the spelling may not suggest contraction when speaking, word combinations may nevertheless be contracted.

- 44 I **will not** be lectured about sexism and misogyny by this man. I **will not**.
- 45 People who hold sexist views and **who are** misogynists **are not** appropriate for high office.
- 46 He **does not** need a motion in the House of Representatives; he needs a mirror. **That is** what he needs.
- 47 **Let us** go through the Opposition Leader's repulsive double standards.
- 48 This is the man from whom **we are** supposed to take lectures about sexism.
- 49 Every day in every way, across the time the Leader of the **Opposition has** sat in that chair and **I have** sat in this chair, **that is** all **who have** heard from him.
- 50 Now **who is** one of them?
- 51 Peddling a standard for Mr Slipper **he would not** set for himself.
- 52 Peddling a standard for Mr Slipper **he has not** set for other members of his frontbench.
- 53 Peddling a standard for Mr Slipper **that has not** been acquitted by the people who **have been** sent out.
- 54 But **we will** see none of that from the Leader of the Opposition because on these questions **he is** incapable of change. His double standards **should not** rule this Parliament.

## 2 Assimilation

Natural speech is not only characterised by contraction but also by assimilation. Assimilation refers to the influence of one sound on the articulation of another. The result tends to be that the two sounds become more alike (Crystal, 2008). A result may also be that the two sounds turn into another sound altogether.

### Task 13.6

Listen to the examples of assimilated consonants.

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 55 | <b>white</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">p</span> <b>aper</b>  | sounds like <b>wipe paper</b> because the [t] in <b>white</b> takes on the place of articulation of the [p] in <b>paper</b>                             |
| 56 | <b>ten</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">n</span> <b>books</b>   | sounds like ' <b>tem</b> ' <b>books</b> because [n] in <b>ten</b> takes on the place of articulation of [b] in <b>books</b>                             |
| 57 | <b>on</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">t</span> <b>he bench</b> | sounds like <b>on a bench</b> because [ð] in <b>the</b> fails to be pronounced fully under the influence of the [n] in <b>on</b>                        |
| 58 | <b>this</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">s</span> <b>hell</b>   | sounds like ' <b>thish</b> ' <b>shell</b> because [s] in <b>this</b> takes on the place of articulation of the first sound in <b>shell</b> , namely [ʃ] |
| 59 | <b>don't</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">j</span> <b>you</b>   | the [t] in <b>don't</b> and the [j] in <b>you</b> influence each other, which leads to the sound [tʃ]   |
| 60 | <b>news</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">p</span> <b>aper</b>   | lenis [z] at the end of <b>news</b> turns into fortis [s] under the influence of the fortis [p] that is at the beginning of <b>paper</b>                |
| 61 | <b>mind</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">b</span> <b>ogging</b> | the [d] at the end of <b>mind</b> disappears under the influence of the [b] in <b>ogging</b> : you will hear <b>mine bogging</b>                        |
| 62 | <b>bit</b> <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">k</span> <b>oins</b>    | the [t] at the end of <b>bit</b> disappears under the influence of the [k] in <b>oin</b>  |

Several types of assimilation like this exist (Cediel & Velásquez Vélez, 2011). The lesson to learn is that if you do this naturally, you don't need to suppress it. In fact, it is very natural to do this and not doing it leads to overarticulated speech.

### Task 13.7

Listen to the items and repeat them. Contract/assimilate the way the speaker does.

63 I' ll  
64 I' m

65 I am  
66 I will

- 67 tin pen  
68 tin pen  
69 Got you!  
70 Got you!  
71 a kind man  
72 a kind man  
73 It'd be good  
74 Who're you?  
75 Who are you?  
76 It would be good
- 77 I'll not be lectured  
78 Who's at the door?  
79 Who is at the door?  
80 I will not be lectured  
81 Opposition's sat there  
82 Opposition has sat there  
83 But we'll see none of that  
84 But we will see none of that  
85 Can clean soccer be enjoyable?

## Key

### *Key to Task 13.3*

The speaker pronounces the following words: I voted, he zoo, I'll leave, tan king, it'll let go, we're here, that is all, the king's here, white paper, he has not been, I have no idea, that is not true.

## Part C

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# Difficult consonants

---

Part C teaches you to distinguish between consonants that are articulatorily similar. Chapters 14 to 18 mainly discuss how you can pronounce the difference between certain consonants that are pronounced in the front of the mouth. These chapters are: Chapter 14 (*Pronouncing **pea**, **tea**, and **key** [p, t, k]*), Chapter 15 (*Pronouncing **teeth** and **teethe** [θ, ð]*), Chapter 16 (*Pronouncing **veer**, **beer**, and **Wear** [v, b, w]*), Chapter 17 (*Pronouncing **see** and **she** [s, ʃ]*), Chapter 18 (*Pronouncing **veal** and **zeal** [v, z]*). The subsequent two chapters deal with the confusion that can arise if the letter ‘r’ is part of words. Chapter 19 (*Choosing rhotacisation*) introduces the phenomenon of this sound affecting the pronunciation of preceding vowels and it urges learners to decide on whether they want to pronounce this letter at the ends of syllables, while Chapter 20 (*Pronouncing **right** and **light** [r, l]*) focuses on the sound ‘r’ at the beginning of syllables. Chapter 21 (*Unpronounced consonants*) explains how certain consonants are not pronounced at all and that pronouncing them may be confusing. Chapter 22 (*Consonant tests*) tests your production and perception skills for consonants.



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# Pronouncing *pea, tea, and key* [p, t, k]

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## What could go wrong?

Sometimes, the sounds [p], [t], or [k] at the beginning of syllables may be interpreted as [b], [d], and [g], if pronounced in a specific way. The word **pea** will sound like **bee**, the word **tea** will sound like **Dee**, and a word like **coat** may come out as **goat**. It may also be that nonsense words are heard, like ‘**bedween**’ (for **between**) and ‘**googing**’ (for **cooking**). If you do not articulate these three consonants [p, t, k] clearly, this may on occasion hinder communication.

### Task 14.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English pronouncing [p], [t] or [k] unclearly.

- |                                       |                                      |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 I <b>p</b> ersonally                | 4 they are more im <b>p</b> ortant   |
| 2 Indonesian population <b>t</b> otal | 5 are on the <b>t</b> op of its head |
| 3 they came in second <b>p</b> lace   |                                      |

## Is this your problem?

### Task 14.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • I like <b>t</b> ea – I like <b>D</b> ee   | • <b>c</b> oat – <b>g</b> oat               |
| • <b>c</b> lean – <b>g</b> lean             | • <b>C</b> assie – <b>g</b> assy            |
| • <b>b</b> etting – <b>b</b> edding         | • <b>t</b> own – <b>d</b> own               |
| • <b>C</b> arey – <b>G</b> ary              | • <b>b</b> light – <b>p</b> light           |
| • I hate <b>p</b> eas – I hate <b>b</b> eas | • I love <b>p</b> ets – I love <b>b</b> ets |



**Task 14.3**

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the consonants.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 6 I like <b>te</b> a – I like <b>De</b> e       | 11 <b>co</b> at – <b>go</b> at               |
| 7 <b>cl</b> ean – <b>gl</b> ean                 | 12 <b>Ca</b> ssie – <b>ga</b> ssy            |
| 8 <b>bet</b> ting – <b>bed</b> d <del>ing</del> | 13 <b>to</b> wn – <b>do</b> wn               |
| 9 <b>Ca</b> rey – <b>Ga</b> ry                  | 14 <b>bl</b> ight – <b>pl</b> ight           |
| 10 I hate <b>pe</b> as – I hate <b>be</b> es    | 15 I love <b>pe</b> ts – I love <b>be</b> ts |

**Explanation and practice**

The problem is that the three sounds [p, t, k] are not always aspirated at the beginning of syllables by speakers, although they should be. Aspiration is a phenomenon that is usually transcribed as [p<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>, k<sup>h</sup>], which shows that a little 'h' follows [p], [t], or [k]. Aspiration comes down to adding a puff of air after the three sounds in question.

The rule is that aspiration is applied at the beginning of the syllable (**ca**n, **to**, **po**o, etc.). From an articulatory point of view, that could be the end of a word, if the next word starts with a vowel; as in *a sock in the drawer, it is*, and *hat in hand*. The following sound does not need to be a vowel necessarily; there is aspiration in *between*, *train*, and *clean* as well. At the beginning of stressed syllables, aspiration is strongest (**ca**t). At the beginning of unstressed syllables, aspiration tends to be less audible (*hopping, a sock in the drawer*), and if syllable-initials [p, t, k] are preceded by [s] or [ʃ], they need not be aspirated at all (*station, keep schtum*). Bear in mind that aspirating too often or too enthusiastically is less problematic than not aspirating at all.

**Task 14.4**

Pronounce the phonetic symbols below, and feel their place and manner of articulation.

- 16 [t t t p p p k k k]

**Task 14.5**

Listen to the following words pronounced with and without aspiration. Repeat each item. The asterisks indicate wrong pronunciations (but imitate these as well). For comparison, words with syllable-initial [g] and [d] have been added.

- |    |                                     |    |   |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|---|
| 17 | <b>b</b> uys                        | 27 | <b>p</b> ea* (without aspiration)           |
| 18 | <b>p</b> ies* (without aspiration)  | 28 | <b>p</b> ea (with aspiration)               |
| 19 | <b>p</b> ies (with aspiration)      | 29 | <b>g</b> old                                |
| 20 | <b>g</b> ood                        | 30 | <b>c</b> old* (without aspiration)          |
| 21 | <b>c</b> ould* (without aspiration) | 31 | <b>c</b> old (with aspiration)              |
| 22 | <b>c</b> ould (with aspiration)     | 32 | <b>D</b> rew                                |
| 23 | <b>D</b> ee                         | 33 | <b>t</b> ru <u>e</u> * (without aspiration) |
| 24 | <b>t</b> ea* (without aspiration)   | 34 | <b>t</b> ru <u>e</u> (with aspiration)      |
| 25 | <b>t</b> ea (with aspiration)       | 35 | <b>s</b> tay* (with aspiration)             |
| 26 | <b>b</b> e                          | 36 | <b>s</b> tay (without aspiration)           |
- 37 **p**eace and **u**nderstanding (with aspiration/without aspiration)  
 38 **p**eace and **u**nderstanding\* (without aspiration/with aspiration)

**Task 14.6**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Most of the boxed items are aspirated, not all.

- |    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|---|
| 39 | <b>t</b> ickled <b>p</b> ink [t <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> ]                  | 56 | <b>t</b> urn the <b>t</b> ables [t <sup>h</sup> , t <sup>h</sup> ]                            |
| 40 | <b>t</b> alk the <b>t</b> alk [t <sup>h</sup> , t <sup>h</sup> ]                 | 57 | <b>p</b> icture- <b>p</b> erfect [p <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> ]                           |
| 41 | <b>k</b> iss and <b>t</b> ell [k <sup>h</sup> , t <sup>h</sup> ]                 | 58 | <b>I</b> love that <b>t</b> une! [t <sup>h</sup> ]  |
| 42 | <b>t</b> rain <b>s</b> tation [t <sup>h</sup> , t]                               | 59 | <b>S</b> top <b>c</b> omplaining [t, p <sup>h</sup> ]   |
| 43 | <b>t</b> ake <b>p</b> otluck [t <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> ]                  | 60 | <b>s</b> pinning <b>s</b> poons [p, p]  |
| 44 | <b>k</b> ee <u>p</u> <b>s</b> ch <u>tum [k<sup>h</sup>, t]</u>                   | 61 | <b>t</b> wo <b>p</b> eas in a <b>p</b> od [t <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> ] |
| 45 | <b>p</b> ig in a <b>p</b> oke [p <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> ]                 | 62 | <b>L</b> ook at that <b>c</b> ard. [k <sup>h</sup> ]  |
| 46 | <b>D</b> o <b>b</b> ees <b>p</b> ee? [b, p <sup>h</sup> ]                        | 63 | <b>W</b> here's my <b>g</b> ap? [g]   |
| 47 | <b>D</b> o <b>p</b> eas <b>p</b> ee? [p <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> ]          | 64 | <b>W</b> here is my <b>c</b> ap? [k <sup>h</sup> ]  |
| 48 | <b>p</b> ee <u>ping <b>T</b>om [p<sup>h</sup>, p<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>]</u> | 65 | <b>W</b> here is the <b>c</b> oal? [k <sup>h</sup> ]  |
| 49 | <b>b</b> ees in a <b>p</b> ot [b, p <sup>h</sup> ]                               | 66 | <b>W</b> here is the <b>g</b> oal? [g]  |
| 50 | <b>p</b> eas in a <b>p</b> ot [p <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> ]                 | 67 | <b>T</b> o <b>b</b> e or not to <b>b</b> e. [b, b]  |
| 51 | <b>t</b> ake the <b>c</b> ake [t <sup>h</sup> , k <sup>h</sup> ]                 | 68 | <b>c</b> ast the first <b>s</b> tone [k <sup>h</sup> , t]                                     |
| 52 | <b>b</b> ees and <b>p</b> eas [b, p <sup>h</sup> ]                               | 69 | <b>p</b> aint the <b>t</b> own red [p <sup>h</sup> , t <sup>h</sup> ]                         |
| 53 | <b>p</b> ie in the <b>s</b> ky [p <sup>h</sup> , k]                              | 70 | <b>I</b> love <b>c</b> atching <b>p</b> eas. [k <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> ]               |
| 54 | <b>p</b> ull up <b>s</b> takes [p <sup>h</sup> , t]                              | 71 | <b>T</b> o <b>p</b> ee or not to <b>p</b> ee. [p <sup>h</sup> , p <sup>h</sup> ]              |
| 55 | <b>p</b> anic <b>s</b> tations [p <sup>h</sup> , t]                              |    |   |

72 **keep** a **stiff** **upper** lip [k<sup>h</sup>, p<sup>h</sup>, t, p<sup>h</sup>]

73 **put** a **spanner** in the works [p<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>, p]

74 **I** love nature and all its **peas**. [p<sup>h</sup>]

***Task 14.7***

Redo Tasks 14.2 and 14.3.

**Key**

***Key to Task 14.3***

The speaker pronounces the following words: **I like Dee, clean, betting, Gary, I hate bees, coat, gassy, town, blight, I love pets.**

# Pronouncing teeth and teethe [θ, ð]

---

### What could go wrong?

The letter combination **th** is pronounced in mysterious ways by learners sometimes. The high frequency of this combination makes the issue all the more pertinent. These letters may come out as [t], [d], [s], [z], or even [v] or [f]. The word **forth** may then sound like **fort**, **they** may sound like **day**, **with** may sound like 'wis', **whizz**, 'wiv', or 'wif'. These pronunciations are potentially confusing in communication. In English, some words are distinguished by pronouncing **th** in two different ways: the verb **mouth** and the noun with the same spelling are an example of this, and so are the words in the word pairs **thy/thigh** and **either/ether** (for some speakers). Fortunately, such word pairs are relatively infrequent.

#### Task 15.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English mispronouncing **th**.

- 1 fits of freezing rain **th**e next, all of it seasoned **with** sudden gusts of wind – one of **th**ose days
- 2 Just **th**ink how many thoughts a blanket sm**oth**ers.
- 3 uh, **th**ere is Pescara
- 4 or a **th**ree decker
- 5 Croatian football team did extremely well at **th**e World Cup last summer in Russia; **th**ey came in second place, but everyone **th**ought **th**ey were **th**e champions!

## Is this your problem?

### Task 15.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the 12 items you selected. Read them out once only. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- |                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| • teeth – teethe | • sink – think          |
| • with – wit     | • tank – thank          |
| • whizz – with   | • soothe – Suse         |
| • ether – either | • shrew – through       |
| • teeth – teat   | • through – true        |
| • tease – teethe | • dare they – their day |

### Task 15.3

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two items in each of the item pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the consonants.

- |                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 6 teeth – teethe  | 12 sink – think          |
| 7 with – wit      | 13 tank – thank          |
| 8 whizz – with    | 14 soothe – Suse         |
| 9 ether – either  | 15 shrew – through       |
| 10 teeth – teat   | 16 through – true        |
| 11 tease – teethe | 17 dare they – their day |

## Explanation and practice

The letters *th* in most cases represent one sound in English, not two. There are two ways in which *th* can be pronounced, and these are here referred to as ‘lenis th’ and ‘fortis th’ (see Chapter 12). The lenis equivalent is pronounced with the vocal cords possibly trembling, while the fortis equivalent has no vocal cord activity. Both ‘fortis th’ and ‘lenis th’ sounds are pronounced by pressing the tongue against the upper teeth or between the teeth and pressing air through the resultant narrowed space. The place of articulation of the two *th*’s are shown below.

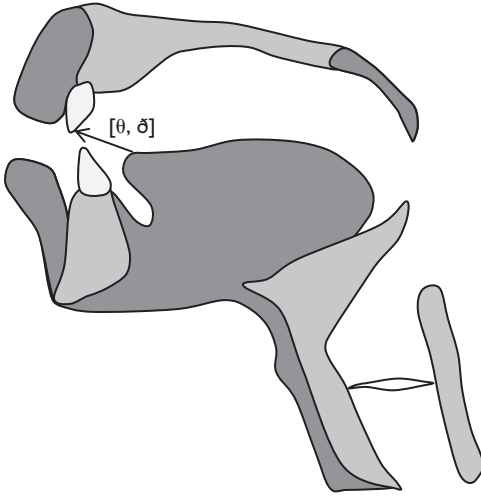


Figure 15.1 Place of articulation of [θ] and [ð].

### Lenis *th* [ð]

The most frequent pronunciation of *th* is as a lenis sound. It occurs in high-frequency function words (see Chapter 6) starting with these two letters, like *the*, *their*, *them*, *those*, *these*, *they*, *their*, *this*, *that*, and *then*. In some verbs, this *th* may occur at the end: *breathe*, for instance. This lenis *th* is different from a [d]. The problem is that speakers who pronounce [ð] as if it were a [d] do not usually consider it a priority to change this pronunciation, probably because it does not lead to confusion very often. Nevertheless, it is advisable to consistently make the distinction in order to deal with those cases where it does matter. A distinction can thus be made between *there* and *dare*, and between *they* and *day*. You can distinguish between the two by pronouncing [ð] by touching the teeth with your tongue and [d] by touching the alveolar ridge (the hump just behind your teeth) with the tongue. Furthermore, [ð] can be prolonged, while [d] cannot, because [d] is a plosive. If you do try and prolong this sound, it will sound like ‘*dzzz*’, some other combination of a plosive and another sound, or a string of individual *d*’s. The [ð], on the other hand, is a fricative, i.e. a friction-based sound. You can keep saying *th* as long as your breath lasts.

#### Task 15.4

Pronounce the phonetic symbols below the way the speaker does, and feel their place and manner of articulation.

**Task 15.5**

Listen to the items below being pronounced with a [ð] first and then with a [d]. The words with an asterisk are mispronounced.

19 **these** – **these\***20 **those** – **those\***21 **they're** – **they're\***22 **bathing** – **bathing\*****Task 15.6**

Repeat each item below, making the boxed sound relatively long and emphatic, like the speaker does.

23 **these**24 **there**25 **those**26 **they're**27 **bathing**28 **to mouth**

Lenis *th* is sometimes replaced with sounds other than [d] as well. These phoneme replacements are more disturbing for communication.

**Task 15.7**

Listen to the pairs of words below. The second version is wrongly pronounced.

29 **booths** – **booths\*** (with [v])30 **booths** – **booths\*** (with [t])31 **without** – **without\*** (with [z])32 **without** – **without\*** (with [t])**Fortis th [θ]**

The fortis version of *th* is slightly less frequent but it occurs in a larger set of words (usually content words; see Chapter 6). Examples of such words are: **thick**, **thong**, **south**, **theatre**, **thousandth**, and **thirteen**. It is in most cases pronounced with inactive vocal cords. This is, in fact, the most important difference between [θ] and [ð], because the latter is often pronounced with active vocal cords. Mispronouncing fortis *th* is usually done in three ways. It is replaced with a [t] sound that may be followed by an [h]-like sound, i.e. an aspirated [t]. It may also be replaced by an [s] or [f] sound. Other replacements also exist.

**Task 15.8**

Pronounce the phonetic symbols below, and feel their place and manner of articulation.

33 [θ θ θ t<sup>h</sup> t<sup>h</sup> t<sup>h</sup> s s s t t t t<sup>h</sup> t<sup>h</sup> t<sup>h</sup> f f f θ θ θ]

**Task 15.9**

Listen to the clear and to the confusing pronunciations of [θ] in the items below. The words with an asterisk are mispronounced.

- 34 **th**irteen people\* (with aspirated [t])
- 35 **th**irteen people\* (with [s])
- 36 **th**irteen people
- 37 get into the **ba**th\* (with [f])
- 38 get into the **ba**th\* (with [s])
- 39 get into the **ba**th
- 40 It's the **tru**th\* (with [t])
- 41 It's the **tru**th\* (with [s])
- 42 It's the **tru**th
- 43 **Be**neath the **sk**ies\* (with [s])
- 44 **Be**neath the **sk**ies\* (with [t])
- 45 **Be**neath the **sk**ies

**Two final 'th' comments**

First of all, it should be noted that not all *th* occurrences are pronounced as [θ] or [ð]. Certain names with *th* in the spelling have a [θ] pronunciation while others have a [t] pronunciation for *th*. In a small set of compound words (two words forming one larger word), in which one word ends with a *t* and the next starts with an *h*, the *th* is also not pronounced as [θ] or [ð] but as two separate sounds.

**Task 15.10**

Listen to how the items below are pronounced; note that although they all have *th* in their spelling, not all are pronounced with [θ] or [ð].

- 46 **th**yme [t]
- 47 **Est**her [t]
- 48 **Th**ailand [t]
- 49 the **Th**ames [t]
- 50 **M**other **Th**eresa [t]
- 51 **foo**thill [th]
- 52 **Gath**urst [th]
- 53 **foo**thold [th]
- 58 **Th**ea [θ]
- 59 **Ke**ith [θ]



60 **Cathy** [θ]61 **Ethan** [θ]62 **Thorn** [θ]63 **Arthur** [θ]64 **Athena** [θ]65 **Talitha** [θ]

The second important thing to know about **th** is how to pronounce it in words containing **with**. This **th** can be pronounced as [θ] or [ð], and both are equally fine.

**Task 15.11**

Listen to the two ways words containing with can be pronounced.

66 **with** – **with** [θ, ð]67 **without** – **without** [ð, θ]68 **within** – **within** [θ, ð]**Task 15.12**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Distinguish clearly between [θ and ð]

69 **thin** [θ]70 **that** [ð]71 **they** [ð]72 **with** [ð]73 **their** [ð]74 **there** [ð]75 **think** [θ]76 **thank** [θ]77 **another** [ð]78 **although** [ð]79 **anything** [θ]80 **everything** [θ]81 **good-for-nothing** [θ]

82 Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say **that they** were perfectly normal, **thank** you very much [ð, ð, θ]

83 **They** were **the** last people you'd expect to be involved in **anything** strange or mysterious, because **they** just didn't hold **with** such nonsense [ð, ð, θ, ð, ð]

84 Mr Dursley was **the** director of a firm called Grunnings, which made drills [ð]

85 He was a big, beefy man **with** hardly any neck, **although** he did have a very large moustache [ð, ð]

86 Mrs Dursley was **thin** and blonde and had nearly twice **the** usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on **the** neighbours [θ, ð, ð]

87 **The** Dursleys had a small son called Dudley and in **their** opinion **there** was no finer boy anywhere [ð, ð, ð]

- 88 **The Dursleys had everything they wanted, but they also had a secret, and their greatest fear was that somebody would discover it** [ð, θ, ð, ð, ð, ð]
- 89 **They didn't think they could bear it if anyone found out about the Potters** [ð, θ, ð, ð]

***Task 15.13***

Redo Tasks 15.2 and 15.3.

**Key**

***Key to Task 15.3***

The speaker pronounces the following items: **teeth, wit, whizz, ether, teeth, tease, sink, tank, soothe, shrew, through, dare day.**

# Pronouncing veer, beer, and Wear [v, b, w]

---

### What could go wrong?

In their effort to pronounce a *v* in fast speech, some speakers produce a sound that can easily be interpreted as *b* or *w*. Their native tongue may not distinguish between these three sounds the same way that English does. From the social and also the grammatical context, it is usually quite clear what a learner is trying to pronounce. The difference between the three words in the title, for instance, is unlikely to lead to confusion, because *v*eer is a verb, *b*eer is a noun, and *W*ear is a proper name (a river). However, an unclear distinction between the three consonants means that the listener has to figure out themselves which sounds you are producing. At the ends of syllables, the problem could also arise. It is confusing if you pronounce *dove* as *dub* and *have* as *hab*, for instance.

#### Task 16.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English not clearly distinguishing between [v], [b], and [w].

- 1 deeply rooted in the rituals and traditions of  the
- 2 that area of the  world
- 3 into the ri<sup>v</sup>er
- 4 the latest robotic  visitor
- 5 li<sup>v</sup>ing in my city

### Is this your problem?

#### Task 16.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the 18 selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- **w**e – **b**ee
- **v**ery – **b**erry
- **b**eer – **v**eer
- **W**ear – **b**eer
- **b**owel – **v**owel
- **d**ove – **d**ub
- the letter ‘**v**’ – the letter ‘**b**’
- **w**ill – **b**ill
- **v**eal – **B**eale
- **w**ait – **b**ait
- **w**heel – **v**eal
- **b**ear – **w**here
- **v**ote – **b**oat
- **w**illing – **b**illing
- **b**uy – **w**hy
- **r**ove – **r**obe
- **v**ile – **w**hile
- **r**evel – **r**ebel

### Task 16.3

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the consonants.

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 6 <b>w</b> e – <b>b</b> ee                           | 15 <b>w</b> ait – <b>b</b> ait       |
| 7 <b>v</b> ery – <b>b</b> erry                       | 16 <b>w</b> heel – <b>v</b> eal      |
| 8 <b>b</b> eer – <b>v</b> eer                        | 17 <b>b</b> ear – <b>w</b> here      |
| 9 <b>W</b> ear – <b>b</b> eer                        | 18 <b>v</b> ote – <b>b</b> oat       |
| 10 <b>b</b> owel – <b>v</b> owel                     | 19 <b>w</b> illing – <b>b</b> illing |
| 11 <b>d</b> ove – <b>d</b> ub                        | 20 <b>b</b> uy – <b>w</b> hy         |
| 12 the letter ‘ <b>v</b> ’ – the letter ‘ <b>b</b> ’ | 21 <b>r</b> ove – <b>r</b> obe       |
| 13 <b>w</b> ill – <b>b</b> ill                       | 22 <b>v</b> ile – <b>w</b> hile      |
| 14 <b>v</b> eal – <b>B</b> eale                      | 23 <b>r</b> evel – <b>r</b> ebel     |

## Explanation and practice

If pronounced carefully, consonants [b], [v], and [w] are all pronounced while the vocal cords are active, so they have ‘voice’ in common. The place (shown in Figure 16.1) and manner of articulation of these consonants, on the other hand, are mutually distinct.

The challenge for learners is that they need to distinguish between not two, but three consonants that are mutually confusable. The easiest thing is to contrast pairs of consonants before practising all three of them. Let’s start with [w] and [b]. These two sounds have their place of articulation in common: between the lips (as the mouth picture in Figure 16.1 show). The difference between these consonants is that [b] is a plosive (pronounced through a little burst of air from the touching lips) and [w] is an approximant (the lips don’t close during its production). It is best to pronounce [w] with rounded lips. This rounding causes the [w] to resemble the vowel [u:], which is in the word *goose*, because the air escapes relatively freely through the vocal tract.

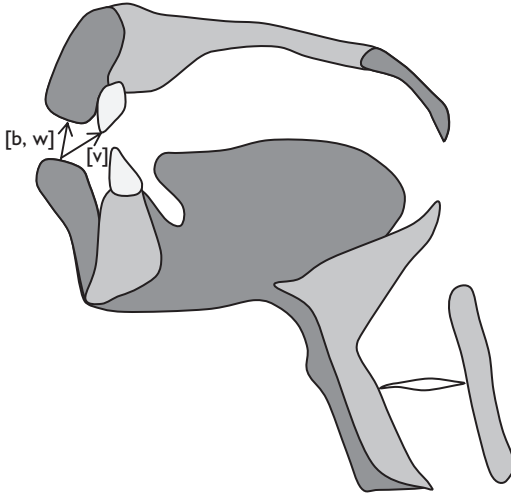


Figure 16.1 Place of articulation of [v], [b], and [w].

#### Task 16.4

Let's practise distinguishing between [b] and [w]. Listen to the recording and repeat the items.

24 The **B**illows – the **w**illows

25 **w**as – **b**oss

26 **J**abber**w**ock – **B**ay**w**atch

27 **W**ii – **b**ee

28 **w**hopper – **b**opper

29 **D**ub**a**i – **D**w**i**ght

30 **w**ander – **B**andersnatch

31 **w**hizz – **b**iz

32 **b**orogoves – **w**ar graves

33 **doo-w**op – **doo-b**op

Let's look at the difference between [v] and [w]. As the mouth picture in Figure 16.1 show, [v] is pronounced between the upper teeth and the lower lip, while [w] is pronounced between the lips. The main audible difference between the two consonants lies in friction. The vowel-like qualities of [w] involve no friction whatsoever, while [v] is pronounced with considerable audible friction.

#### Task 16.5

Let's practise distinguishing between [v] and [w]. Listen to the recording and repeat the items.

- |    |                                 |    |  |
|----|---------------------------------|----|--|
| 34 | <b>Veep</b> – <b>w</b> weep     | 39 | <b>l</b> over – <b>l</b> ower            |
| 35 | <b>V</b> iking – <b>w</b> hile  | 40 | <b>v</b> ine – <b>w</b> hine             |
| 36 | <b>v</b> eal – <b>w</b> heel    | 41 | <b>r</b> ewind – <b>r</b> ave <b>o</b> n |
| 37 | <b>r</b> evive – <b>r</b> eward | 42 | <b>r</b> evelation – <b>r</b> eward      |
| 38 | <b>w</b> ill – <b>v</b> ilify   | 43 | <b>r</b> evive – <b>r</b> eward          |

The difference between [v] and [b] is place and manner of articulation. While [b] is pronounced between the lips, [v] is pronounced with the lower lip pressed against the upper teeth. An easy-to-remember difference between [v] and [b] is that [v] can be pronounced as a prolonged sound (‘vvvvv’). For [b], this is not possible.

### *Task 16.6*

Practise distinguishing between [v] and [b]. Listen and repeat.

- |    |   |    |                                   |
|----|---|----|-----------------------------------|
| 44 | <b>v</b> – <b>b</b>                               | 49 | <b>V</b> iking – <b>b</b> iking   |
| 45 | <b>b</b> rillig – <b>v</b> room                   | 50 | <b>v</b> ice – <b>B</b> ryce      |
| 46 | <b>v</b> room – <b>b</b> room                     | 51 | <b>b</b> owels – <b>v</b> owels   |
| 47 | <b>d</b> evil – <b>d</b> ouble                    | 52 | <b>cl</b> ubbing – <b>cl</b> over |
| 48 | <b>r</b> e <b>b</b> uke – <b>r</b> e <b>v</b> ere | 53 | <b>r</b> eveal – <b>r</b> ebel    |

### *Task 16.7*

Pronounce the items below, and feel their place and manner of articulation.

### 54 [v v v b b b w w w v v v w w w b b b]

So far, the three consonants in question were practised at the beginning of syllables and words. At the end of a syllable, however, these sounds may also occur. The [w] does not usually occur at the end of syllables, although certain vowels end with a sound that resembles [w]. This is illustrated by the words *tow* and *toe*, which have the same pronunciation, [tɔʊ], and the final sound has [w]-like qualities.

### *Task 16.8*

Practise distinguishing between the three consonants at the ends of syllables. Listen and repeat.

- 55 toves – tows  
 56 dove – dub  
 57 club – glove  
 58 above – a bobsled  
 59 Java dove – Jubjub bird  
 60 relive – ad lib  
 61 outgrave – grave  
 62 Bob – Labov  
 63 love – lobster  
 64 rave – grab

**Task 16.9**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Distinguish clearly between [v], [b], and [w].

- 65 we  
 66 dub  
 67 bee  
 68 very  
 69 dove  
 70 beer  
 71 veer  
 72 Wear  
 73 berry  
 74 revoke  
 75 rebuke  
 76 visitors  
 77 Java dove  
 78 borogoves  
 79 veer – beer  
 80 the letter ‘v’  
 81 the letter ‘b’  
 82 Wear – veer  
 83 beer – Wear  
 84 lovely Libby  
 85 vowel length  
 86 bowel length  
 87 the very thing  
 88 the berry thing  
 89 the Jubjub bird  
 90 I’m on a vacation  
 91 veer – beer – wear  
 92 beer – Wear – veer  
 93 Cast your vote here.  
 94 Cast your boat here.  
 95 That’s a dub, I think  
 96 Let us visit the river.  
 97 That’s a dove, I think  
 98 not Bob but Bill Labov  
 99 Take me to the ribbon.  
 100 Is that Ambrogio Veal?  
 101 Thank you very much!  
 102 I live to love you, Sibby  
 103 That sounds like a dove.  
 104 Look, it’s Fabrizio Beale!  
 105 Thank you, Barry March!  
 106 Let’s live and love, Sibby!
- 107 It is because we are between bells.  
 108 It is because we are between wells.

**Task 16.10**

Redo Tasks 16.2 and 16.3.

## Key

### *Key to Task 16.3*

The speaker pronounces the following words: **bee**, **very**, **veer**, **Wear**, **bowel**, **dove**, **the letter 'b'**, **bill**, **veal**, **bait**, **veal**, **bear**, **vote**, **willing**, **buy**, **rove**, **while**, **revel**.



# Pronouncing see and she [s, ʃ]

---

### What could go wrong?

Not distinguishing very clearly between [s] and [ʃ], so between words like **see** and **she**, is not the most serious issue for many speakers, but it is an issue nevertheless because listeners need to listen extra carefully if speakers don't make this distinction. If you say *I'm sitting on a chair* and pronounce the [s] like a [ʃ], then that's confusing (and embarrassing). Confusion may also occur at the end of syllables, making *lease* sound like *leash*. The opposite problem might be equally confusing; some speakers pronounce [ʃ] like [s], which means that they say *seas* *sigh* when they mean to say *she's* *shy*.

#### Task 17.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English mispronouncing [s] or [ʃ].

- 1 each parent and child sitting on the bench
- 2 on our bed or sleep
- 3 Eindhoven, the fifth largest city in the country
- 4 think that she is by, and feed upon the shadow of perfection
- 5 an old filicium tree shaded me

### Is this your problem?

#### Task 17.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- show – sho
- sea – she
- lass – lash
- Sall – shall
- Ss! – Sh!
- crash – crass
- pussycat – pushy cat
- lease – leash
- Sue – shoe
- suit – shoot

### Task 17.3

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the consonants.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 show – sho</li> <li>7 sea – she</li> <li>8 lass – lash</li> <li>9 Sall – shall</li> <li>10 Ss! – Sh!</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 crash – crass</li> <li>12 pussycat – pushy cat</li> <li>13 lease – leash</li> <li>14 Sue – shoe</li> <li>15 suit – shoot</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## Explanation and practice

The letters *s* and *sh* in most cases represent the sounds [s] and [ʃ], respectively, although there are exceptions. Both [s] and [ʃ] are fricatives – which means they come to existence as a result of friction in the mouth – that are made with the tongue pressed against the upper part of the mouth and that involve no vocal cord usage. The three main means of distinction between these two sounds are place, tension, and lip movement.

Let's first look at place of articulation. This is shown in Figure 17.1. The consonant [ʃ] is produced by pressing the tongue against the hard palate and/or retracting it and bunching it up against the palate. When producing [s], the palate is not involved, because this sound is pronounced just behind the teeth; the tongue is pressed against the alveolar ridge.

Another difference between these two sounds that could be used to distinguish between them is the tension with which they are pronounced. In many internationally intelligible Englishes, [s] is relatively 'sharp', which means that it requires considerable muscle tension; thus, the air is pressed out of the mouth with much pressure because the tongue closes off the mouth relatively strongly. The result is an [s] that could be qualified as 'hissing' or even 'whistling'. This pressure is usually much less in [ʃ], a sound which lets the air pass through more freely. A final way to distinguish between these sounds is to smile during the production of [s] or pretending to be pronouncing an [i:] while pronouncing it, i.e. the vowel in *bee*. The sound [ʃ], on the other hand, is typically pronounced with rounded lips, as if you were pronouncing an [u:], i.e. the vowel in *boo*.

**Task 17.4**

Pronounce the phonetic symbols below, and feel their place and manner of articulation.

**16 [s s s f f f s s s f f f]****Task 17.5**

Pronounce the [s] and [ʃ] in the items below and exaggerate a little, like the speaker. Try and smile while saying [s], and relax your articulatory muscles during [ʃ]. Feel their place and manner of articulation.

- 17 bus  
18 Sissy  
19 stone  
20 house  
21 Ss!

- 22 shopping  
23 shoot!  
24 shocking  
25 Sh!  
26 Whoosh!

**Task 17.6**

Listen to the items and repeat them.

- 27 so [s]  
28 Ss! [s]  
29 Sh! [ʃ]  
30 see [s]  
31 sew [s]  
32 so so [s, s]  
33 show [ʃ]  
34 skeleton [s]  
35 Whoosh! [ʃ]  
36 shopping [ʃ]  
37 see – she [s, ʃ]  
38 sift – shift [s, ʃ]  
39 sigh – shy [s, ʃ]  
40 busy sissy [s, s]  
41 sew – show [s, ʃ]  
42 suit – shoot [s, ʃ]  
43 sues – shoes [s, ʃ]  
44 niece – niche [s, ʃ]  
45 a hissing voice [s, s]  
46 a Yen saved [s]  
47 shocking socks [ʃ, s]  
48 seasons of mist [s, s]  
49 deuce – douche [s, ʃ]  
50 I am serious. And don't call me Shirley [s, s, ʃ]  
51 Sunnyside is a place of ruin and despair [s, s, s, s]  
52 Mrs Robinson, are you trying to seduce me? [s, s, s]  
53 You know how to whistle, don't you, Steve? [s, s]

- 54 My Mama always said life was like a box of chocolates [s, s]  
55 Listen to me, mister. You're my knight in shining armour [s, s, ʃ]  
56 Life is a banquet, and most poor suckers are starving to death! [s, s, s]  
57 Would you be shocked if I put on something more comfortable? [ʃ, s]

*Task 17.7*

Redo Tasks 17.2 and 17.3.

**Key**

*Key to Task 17.3*

The speaker pronounces the following words: **show, sea, lass, shall, Ss!, crash, pussycat, lease, Sue, suit.**

## Pronouncing *veal* and *zeal* [v, z]

---

### What could go wrong?

A common mistake for learners is to pronounce **v** and **z** at the beginnings of words and syllables in such a way that they sound like **f** and **s**. If you do this, your **v**ery may come out as **f**erry, and your **z**oo sounds like **S**ue. Some speakers are aware of this mistake and wrongly change their [s] into a [z] and their [f] into a [v]. This doesn't happen quite as often or as systematically, but it is very noticeable if you say **v**iew instead of **f**ew or 'spezzivv' instead of **s**pecify.

#### Task 18.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English pronouncing **v** and **z** unclearly.

- 1 it's **v**ery beautiful
- 2 I **z**recently saw this public restaurant.
- 3 in a **s**pecific language
- 4 more **d**esirable
- 5 nice **v**iew

### Is this your problem?

#### Task 18.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- **f**ault – **v**ault
- **z**oal – **s**eal
- **z**oo – **S**ue
- **this s**eal – **this z**eal

- **z**it – **s**it
- **f**owl – **v**owel
- **z**its – **s**its
- **f**an – **v**an
- **this v**eal's good – **this f**eels good
- **f**eet – **v**eet

**Task 18.3**

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the consonants.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 6 <b>f</b> ault – <b>v</b> ault         | 11 <b>f</b> owl – <b>v</b> owel                       |
| 7 <b>z</b> eal – <b>s</b> eal           | 12 <b>z</b> its – <b>s</b> its                        |
| 8 <b>z</b> oo – <b>s</b> ue             | 13 <b>f</b> an – <b>v</b> an                          |
| 9 <b>this s</b> eal – <b>this z</b> eal | 14 <b>this v</b> eal's good – <b>this f</b> eels good |
| 10 <b>z</b> it – <b>s</b> it            | 15 <b>f</b> eet – <b>v</b> eet                        |

**Explanation and practice**

The phoneme symbols for *v*, *f*, *z*, and *s* are the same as the letters: [v, f, z, s]. At the beginning of syllables, this relationship between spelling and phonetic symbols is strong; in most cases, a *v* at the beginning of a syllable is pronounced as [v], for instance. The main exception is that syllable-initial occurrences of *s* that are not at the beginning of a word are sometimes pronounced as [z] (as in *de sire*), but in most other cases the letter *s* is pronounced as [s]. The places of articulation of [v] and [f] on the one hand and [z] and [s] on the other are shown in Figure 18.1.

Place of articulation of [v, f, z, s] is not an issue for most learners. A trickier difference between the phonemes [v] and [f] and between the phonemes [z] and [s] is the use of voice; [v] and [z] are usually lenis (see Chapter 12) and potentially voiced, while [f] and [s] are fortis and voiceless. Speakers of some languages will not distinguish very clearly between [v] and [f] and between [z] and [s] at the beginning of the syllable because this distinction is absent or very subtle in their native tongue. The *v* at the beginning of syllables is much more frequent than *z*, by the way.

**Task 18.4**

Pronounce the phonetic symbols below, and feel their place and manner of articulation.

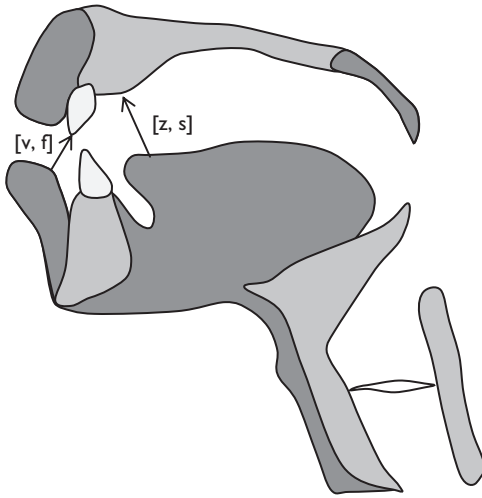


Figure 18.1 Place of articulation of [v], [f], [z], and [s].

### Task 18.5

Listen to each item below and, just like the speaker does, exaggerate the voice in syllable-/word-initial v or z.

- 17 sit
- 18 zit
- 19 fan
- 20 zoo
- 21 Sue
- 22 van
- 23 seal
- 24 feet
- 25 zeal
- 26 fault
- 27 vault
- 28 devour

- 29 berserk
- 30 this seal
- 31 that zeal
- 32 vivisection
- 33 it's his feet
- 34 it's his Veet!
- 35 zits in the zoo
- 36 this feels good
- 37 this veal's good
- 38 he sits in the zoo
- 39 very large ferries
- 40 Oh see, CC Rider

What is true for [z] and [s] and for [v] and [f] is also true for [ʒ] (the first consonant in *Azure*) and [ʃ] (the consonant in *shoot*); [ʒ] may sound like [ʃ] at the beginning of syllables. Words that may be confused because of this are, fortunately, relatively infrequent.

**Task 18.6**

Listen to the items below and notice that [ʒ] may be mispronounced as [ʃ]. Each word is pronounced twice: correctly and incorrectly.

- 41 **measure – measure\***  
 42 **usual – usual\***  
 43 **vegetarian – vegetarian\*** ([dʒ] is pronounced as [tʃ])  
 44 **bege – bege\***

**Task 18.7**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Pronounce [v] and [z] unambiguously and distinguish them clearly from [f] and [s].

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 45 <b>s<u>i</u>t</b>                | 61 <b>The <u>v</u>ery best</b>  |
| 46 <b>z<u>i</u>t</b>                | 62 <b>S<u>u</u>e – s<u>o</u>rt – <u>v</u>eil</b>                                |
| 47 <b>z<u>i</u>p</b>                | 63 <b>z<u>i</u>nc – s<u>i</u>nk – s<u>i</u>ng</b>                               |
| 48 <b>f<u>a</u>il</b>               | 64 <b>v<u>i</u>ne – f<u>i</u>ne – z<u>e</u>al – s<u>e</u>al</b>                 |
| 49 <b>s<u>i</u>p</b>                | 65 <b>s<u>o</u>ot – v<u>i</u>sit – f<u>a</u>ult – f<u>a</u>iry</b>              |
| 50 <b>z<u>e</u>e</b>                | 66 <b>vege<u>t</u>arian – v<u>a</u>in – f<u>e</u>ign</b>                        |
| 51 <b>s<u>e</u>e</b>                | 67 <b>f<u>e</u>ign – v<u>e</u>ry – f<u>e</u>rry – z<u>e</u>ro</b>               |
| 52 <b>s<u>a</u>y</b>                | 68 <b>v<u>e</u>ry – f<u>e</u>rry – v<u>a</u>ult – f<u>a</u>ult</b>              |
| 53 <b>z<u>a</u>p</b>                | 69 <b>v<u>e</u>hicle – z<u>i</u>t – s<u>i</u>t – v<u>i</u>siting</b>            |
| 54 <b>s<u>a</u>p</b>                | 70 <b>v<u>a</u>ult – v<u>o</u>ice – v<u>i</u>deo – v<u>a</u>in</b>              |
| 55 <b>z<u>o</u>o</b>                | 71 <b>His z<u>e</u>al is v<u>e</u>ry impressive</b>                             |
| 56 <b>s<u>i</u>te</b>               | 72 <b>f<u>a</u>llible – z<u>i</u>p – s<u>i</u>p – v<u>a</u>riable</b>           |
| 57 <b>v<u>i</u>ne – f<u>i</u>ne</b> | 73 <b>The v<u>i</u>siting scholar v<u>o</u>ted no</b>                           |
| 58 <b>z<u>e</u>al – s<u>i</u>ng</b> | 74 <b>v<u>a</u>luable – z<u>e</u>e – s<u>e</u>e – z<u>a</u>p – s<u>a</u>p</b>   |
| 59 <b>s<u>e</u>al – z<u>i</u>nc</b> | 75 <b>v<u>i</u>sion – v<u>i</u>sual – r<u>e</u>vive – v<u>i</u>ctim</b>         |
| 60 <b>s<u>i</u>nk – z<u>i</u>ng</b> | 76 <b>r<u>e</u>s<u>o</u>rt – v<u>i</u>sitor – v<u>e</u>lvet – v<u>e</u>rbal</b> |
- 77 **zoo – sue – vale – fail – zoom – site**  
 78 **zero – see row – zipping – sipping**  
 79 **The zoo's no place for vegetarians**

**Task 18.8**

Redo Tasks 18.2 and 18.3.



## Key

### *Key to Task 18.3*

The speaker pronounces the following words: **fault, zeal, zoo, this zeal, zit, fowl, sits, fan, this feels good, Veet.**

# Choosing rhotacisation

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### What could go wrong?

In the large group of native and non-native speakers of English in the world, there is a rather salient two-fold distinction. Some of these speakers pronounce the letter *r* at the ends of syllables (i.e. they ‘rhotacise’) and others do not. An example is the word *board*, which can be pronounced with and without the *r*-sound; both options are fine. The problem for learners is twofold. First of all, learners are sometimes inconsistent in their own pronunciation; sometimes, they pronounce this *r* when they know it is in the spelling, sometimes they don’t. Although this is not necessarily a major issue, it may in some cases confuse listeners and make learners insecure. If a listener first hears the learner say the word *first* with a pronounced *r* and later on the same word without such a pronounced *r*, then the listener may feel that a different word is meant the second time, like *fast*. The other problem for learners who are not aware of this distinction is their own recognition of other people’s accents. An unpronounced *r* may be interpreted as a non-existent sound; *darn* may be interpreted as *done*, as a result, for instance, even if the vowel in such words is different.

#### **Task 19.1**

Listen to the speakers below. All except the speakers of items 4, 8, and 9 are pronouncing *r* at the end of syllables. So, these three are non-rhotic.

- 1 when businesses are using Nordic letters or creating random Scandinavian-sounding words
- 2 their own air conditioner in their house
- 3 So it is the most fortunate thing to be born a human in this world.
- 4 However, some of us are just not built for the wild; and that is perfectly fine.
- 5 Don’t leave the food inside your mouth for too long.
- 6 Act normal because then you’re already weird enough.

- 7 In the UK, this issue is firmly ignored, of course.
- 8 Cars are cars, all over the world.
- 9 They were strolling down Christopher Street when they stopped in a men's store.
- 10 And then now, we're waiting for until four fifteen, because we're not allowed to go, like, before four fifteen.

### Is this your problem?

It is difficult to test whether your *r* at the ends of syllables is confusing or consistent. You would need to be recorded on several occasions while speaking English spontaneously for that, and this consistency would need to be analysed. Your natural tendency to rhotacise could be tested, though; this is done in Task 19.2. Your skill of recognising rhotic and non-rhotic accents can also be tested, and this is done through Task 19.3. Irrespective of the outcome of these tasks, it is advisable to read through this chapter, so that you understand the variation amongst speakers better and can make sure that you become as consistent as possible.

#### Task 19.2

Read out the items below in your preferred style. Ask listeners to tell you whether you rhotacise or not. It may also be that you are not consistent.

- Look before you leap.
- Still waters run deep.
- better late than never

#### Task 19.3

Write down whether the accent you hear is rhotic or not. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in recognising rhoticity.

- 11 Look before you leap.
- 12 better late than never
- 13 Still waters run deep.
- 14 better late than never
- 15 Look before you leap.
- 16 Still waters run deep.

### Explanation and practice

Rhotacisation, i.e. pronouncing the *r* at the ends of syllables, is stereotypically associated with the English of many native speakers of English in North America, Ireland, Scotland, and other places. A lack of rhotacisation is

associated with the English as spoken in England and Australia, amongst others. Within these areas, rhotacisation varies per region and social group. The same variation is true for rhotacisation in the speech of mother-tongue speakers of English in Asia and Africa. Their native English is commonly influenced by exposure to languages in the place where they grew up.

What understandable speakers of English have in common is that they are consistently rhotic or non-rhotic. This means that you need to decide whether you wish to pronounce *r* at the end of syllables or not, and you'll need to stick to your decision. There are advantages to adopting a rhotic accent if you are a learner: amongst others, understandability (because your pronunciation would be more in line with the spelling of words). A problem connected to a non-rhotic accent is that speakers of such an accent do not distinguish between certain words. The words *sort* and *sought* sound identical in Standard British English, for instance, and so do *father* and *farther*.

#### Task 19.4

Listen to the items below. Each word is pronounced in a rhotic and non-rhotic way. Decide for yourself which option is most convenient and natural for you.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 17 <b>for</b> (rhotic)                        | 24 <b>glitter</b> (non-rhotic)              |
| 18 <b>for</b> (non-rhotic)                    | 25 <b>rather</b> (rhotic)                   |
| 19 <b>car</b> (non-rhotic)                    | 26 <b>rather</b> (non-rhotic)               |
| 20 <b>car</b> (rhotic)                        | 27 <b>like father like son</b> (non-rhotic) |
| 21 <b>over</b> (rhotic)                       | 28 <b>like father like son</b> (rhotic)     |
| 22 <b>over</b> (non-rhotic)                   | 29 <b>Still waters run deep.</b> (rhotic)   |
| 23 <b>glitter</b> (rhotic)                    |   |
| 30 <b>Still waters run deep.</b> (non-rhotic) |   |
| 31 <b>Look before you leap.</b> (non-rhotic)  |   |
| 32 <b>Look before you leap.</b> (rhotic)      |   |
| 33 <b>better late than never</b> (non-rhotic) |   |
| 34 <b>better late than never</b> (rhotic)     |   |

You can probably hear that in rhotic realisations the vowel that precedes the syllable-final *r* cannot always be separated from the *r* that follows. In a way, the *r* can be heard throughout that vowel. This principle comes down to a word like *nurse* sounding like 'nrrs'. This is fine if listeners can hear which vowel is meant.

Syllable-final *rs* that would normally remain unpronounced by non-rhotic speakers may be pronounced as what is called a 'schwa', [ə] (as in the first vowel in the word *agree*), while in other cases there is no sound at all. The items below illustrate this (personal) variation.

- |    |             |                           |    |             |                           |
|----|-------------|---------------------------|----|-------------|---------------------------|
| 35 | <b>fear</b> | (non-rhotic; with [ə])    | 44 | <b>beer</b> | (non-rhotic; without [ə]) |
| 36 | <b>fear</b> | (rhotic)                  | 45 | <b>beer</b> | (rhotic)                  |
| 37 | <b>bear</b> | (rhotic)                  | 46 | <b>sour</b> | (non-rhotic; with [ə])    |
| 38 | <b>bear</b> | (non-rhotic; without [ə]) | 47 | <b>sour</b> | (rhotic)                  |
| 39 | <b>rear</b> | (rhotic)                  | 48 | <b>tour</b> | (rhotic)                  |
| 40 | <b>rear</b> | (non-rhotic; with [ə])    | 49 | <b>tour</b> | (non-rhotic; without [ə]) |
| 41 | <b>cure</b> | (rhotic)                  | 50 | <b>fire</b> | (non-rhotic; without [ə]) |
| 42 | <b>cure</b> | (non-rhotic; without [ə]) | 51 | <b>fire</b> | (rhotic)                  |
| 43 | <b>beer</b> | (non-rhotic; with [ə])    | 52 | <b>fire</b> | (non-rhotic; without [ə]) |
- 53 **Oh dear, there's the Lair.** (non-rhotic; with [ə])
- 54 **Oh dear, there's the Lair.** (rhotic)

Note that non-rhotic accents usually do contain *r* when it is followed by a vowel in the subsequent syllable. This is called a 'linking *r*'. Non-rhotic speakers sometimes do not pronounce *r* in these places, especially if there is a silence between the *r* and the following vowel.

#### Task 19.5

Listen to the speakers linking (or not) syllables by pronouncing *r*.

- 55 **Here again?** (*r* pronounced)
- 56 **Here, I think.** (*r* not pronounced)
- 57 **here and there** (*r* not pronounced)
- 58 **master and mistress** (*r* pronounced)

Some speakers, rhotic or not, insert an *r* when one word ends in a vowel and the next one starts with a certain vowel, but this is not very common. Try not to imitate this but just learn to recognise it.

#### Task 19.6

Listen to the items below, in which the insertion of *r* becomes apparent.

- 59 **My papa and mama are awesome.**
- 60 **India and Pakistan**
- 61 **law and order**

**Task 19.7**

Listen to the items. Repeat only the sentences that are rhotic or non-rhotic, depending on whether you want to be rhotic or non-rhotic.

- 62 **for** (rhotic)
- 63 **for** (non-rhotic)
- 64 **car** (non-rhotic)
- 65 **car** (rhotic)
- 66 **over** (rhotic)
- 67 **over** (non-rhotic)
- 68 **It never rains but it pours** (rhotic)
- 69 **Home is where the heart is** (rhotic)
- 70 **Learn to walk before you run** (rhotic)
- 71 **It never rains but it pours** (non-rhotic)
- 72 **Home is where the heart is** (non-rhotic)
- 73 **Learn to walk before you run** (non-rhotic)
- 74 **Where there's a will, there's a way** (rhotic)
- 75 **Where there's a will, there's a way** (non-rhotic)
- 76 **Fear is not a good guide** (non-rhotic; linking 'r' pronounced)
- 77 **Over there? Or how about here?** (non-rhotic;)
- 78 **here, there and everywhere** (non-rhotic; linking 'r' pronounced)
- 79 **Nevermore were there heard darn hard to discard syllable-final rs.** (rhotic)
- 80 **Nevermore were there heard darn hard to discard syllable-final rs.** (non-rhotic)

**Key**

**Key to Task 19.3**

Items 11, 13, and 16 are pronounced by rhotic speakers.

## Pronouncing *right* and *light* [ɹ, l]

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### What could go wrong?

The *r* is one of the more challenging sounds in English, because it can take on many shapes. Because of this versatility, it might articulatorily overlap with the sound usually represented by *l*, especially at the beginning of the syllable. Some learners pronounce an *r* in this position that to many listeners will sound like an *l*. Equally commonly, some learners pronounce both sounds in the same way, so that the listener needs to decipher sounds logically rather than articulatorily. Listeners might hear *These rice are killing me*, but they understand that *These lice are killing me* is meant, because that makes more sense. This confusion between *r* and *l* is quite a serious problem, because these two sounds very often appear at the beginning of syllables, and there are many word pairs that contain two words that are not only highly frequent but that are also distinguishable only on the basis of these two sounds: *lead/read*, *low/row*, and, for instance, *light/right*. Another issue is that *r* has a particularly broad range of possible articulations, some of which are internationally more understandable than others.

#### Task 20.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English pronouncing *r* or *l* unclearly.

- 1 fair influence
- 2 They absolutely love folreigners.
- 3 folr me to lolok upon
- 4 I tell them the whole stolry.
- 5 O unhappy clreature! Why should you thus, of your own accord, incur destrluction?

## Is this your problem?

### Task 20.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- ring – Ling
- crass – class
- rally – Larry
- loom – room
- belly – berry
- wry – lie
- liver – river
- crone – clone
- fly – fry
- broom – bloom

### Task 20.3

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the consonants.

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| 6 ring – Ling    | 11 wry – lie     |
| 7 crass – class  | 12 liver – river |
| 8 rally – Larry  | 13 crone – clone |
| 9 loom – room    | 14 fly – fry     |
| 10 belly – berry | 15 broom – bloom |

## Explanation and practice

To pronounce the letter *l* clearly in English, it should be pronounced as [l]; press the tip of the tongue against the alveolar ridge, which is the hump just behind your teeth. While pronouncing it, let the air pass freely past the sides of the tongue. Avoid turning the [l] into a vowel-like sound by making sure your tongue-tip actually touches the alveolar ridge, and also by making sure that the sides of your tongue are not touching the teeth too much. Make sure that you do not tap the alveolar ridge but press your tongue against it, so that you produce a prolonged sound.

English *r* is usually transcribed as [ɹ]. This refers to an alveolar approximant pronunciation, whereby the area near the alveolar ridge and the hard palate is approached by the tongue. The fact that [l] is so similar in its pronunciation is an important reason for confusion between [ɹ] and [l]. In running speech, in particular, a very short [l] may sound like an [ɹ]. The difference between the two consonants is that for [ɹ] the tongue tip does not touch the roof of the mouth but



only gets close to it (that's why it is called an approximant; it only approaches the alveolar ridge), whereas for [l] the alveolar ridge is audibly touched. From an articulatory point of view, [ɹ] is close to being a vowel. The pictures below show the difference between [l] and [ɹ]. If you pronounce these sounds this way, they become very clearly distinguishable.

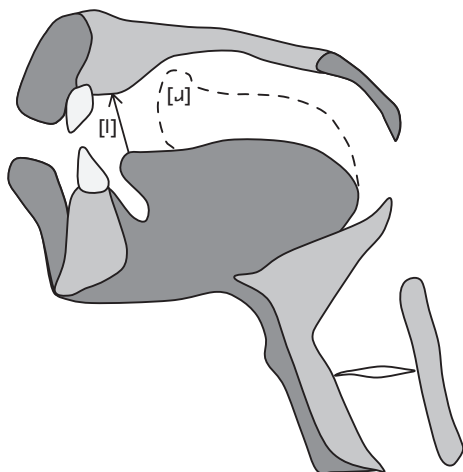


Figure 20.1 Place of articulation of [ɹ] and [l].

#### **Task 20.4**

Pronounce the items below, and feel the place and manner of articulation of the consonants.

### **16 [ɹ ɹ ɹ | l l l | ɹ ɹ ɹ | l l l]**

There are many understandable ways to say *r*. Even native speakers do not always pronounce this sound as an approximant. They may produce it by touching the alveolar ridge once, for instance. Besides this ‘tapped’ *r*, there are all kinds of rolling *rs*, and even a *w*-like pronunciation between the lips. Such realisations of *r* can be very clear on the one hand, but they are sometimes also considered a little distracting.

#### **Task 20.5**

Listen to the various ways to pronounce *r*. Learn to recognise all but pronounce your own *r* like the fourth version in each set, especially if you are among the learners who find it hard to distinguish between [l] and [ɹ].

- |    |              |           |    |                |           |
|----|--------------|-----------|----|----------------|-----------|
| 17 | drink*       | (rolling) | 23 | three trees*   | (tapped)  |
| 18 | drink*       | [w]       | 24 | three trees    | [ɹ]       |
| 19 | drink*       | (tapped)  | 25 | really wicked* | (rolling) |
| 20 | drink        | [ɹ]       | 26 | really wicked* | [w]       |
| 21 | three trees* | (rolling) | 27 | really wicked* | (tapped)  |
| 22 | three trees* | [w]       | 28 | really wicked  | [ɹ]       |

**Task 20.6**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Only the approximant realisation of r is used by the speaker.

- |    |          |    |                                 |
|----|----------|----|---------------------------------|
| 29 | r        | 49 | syllable                        |
| 30 | l        | 50 | the Ritz                        |
| 31 | r - l    | 51 | concrete                        |
| 32 | l - r    | 52 | conclude                        |
| 33 | real     | 53 | cerebral                        |
| 34 | liver    | 54 | lice - rice                     |
| 35 | class    | 55 | three trees                     |
| 36 | sleet    | 56 | right - light                   |
| 37 | bury     | 57 | crass - class                   |
| 38 | crash    | 58 | crash course                    |
| 39 | lever    | 59 | belly - berry                   |
| 40 | river    | 60 | roam - loom                     |
| 41 | Rally    | 61 | bereavement                     |
| 42 | unruly   | 62 | really wicked                   |
| 43 | crude    | 63 | English classes                 |
| 44 | roots    | 64 | raving reviews                  |
| 45 | drink    | 65 | room - Clooney                  |
| 46 | Larry    | 66 | charity for the rich            |
| 47 | 'lalala' | 67 | Ring Ling when you're ready.    |
| 48 | 'rarara' | 68 | Rilda won the first real rally. |

**Task 20.7**

Redo Tasks 20.2 and 20.3.

## Key

### *Key to Task 20.3*

The following words are pronounced: **Ling**, **class**, **Larry**, **loom**, **berry**, **wry**, **river**, **crone**, **fry**, **bloom**,

# Unpronounced consonants

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### What could go wrong?

If you pronounce certain letters that are present in the spelling but that should not actually be pronounced (this usually refers to consonants), then that may confuse listeners. They might not know which word is meant or they might hear a different word. For instance, if you pronounce *p* in *psychology* or *receipt*, the second *b* in *bombing*, or the *p* in *coup*, then listeners may get confused, because these consonants should not be pronounced. More seriously, if you pronounce *t* in *rapport*, then that is very confusing, because that makes the word sound like *report*. Fortunately, such confusion between two words is less common.

#### Task 21.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English inserting sounds unnecessarily. The unnecessarily pronounced letters are boxed.

- 1 were I able to pay my de**b**t
- 2 I like to wa**l**k over there; wa**l**k in the mountains.
- 3 when you have to clim**b**
- 4 You shou**l**d never, you shou**l**d never go near them.
- 5 We went into the famous cast**l**e.

### Is this your problem?

#### Task 21.2

Pronounce the 20 words below and underline the consonants you did not pronounce. Not all words contain silent consonants. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you were, and listen to the recording of the speaker who pronounces the words.

6	doubt	16	foreigner
7	rapport	17	exhibition
8	lamb	18	receipt
9	distinctive	19	hasten
10	dumbing down	20	knee
11	pseudo	21	folks
12	often	22	salmon
13	exhale	23	report
14	talk	24	sword
15	answer	25	muscle

### Explanation and practice

Sometimes, certain consonants that are in the spelling of English words are not pronounced. Most of these generally do not cause any problems for learners, because these learners have come across them so often. For example, few learners will pronounce the boxed letters in *sign*, *science*, *hour*, *design*, *know*, *daughter*, *answer*, and *who*. Whether a word has an unpronounced consonant depends on the nature and length of its history, particularly whether and how the word was borrowed from another language.

There are a number of common words that are sometimes mispronounced because of their unexpected spelling. Below are some well-known examples. You'll see that silent letters can occur in every part of a word, so in that respect they are less predictable. The predictability lies in the fact that not all letters in the alphabet are equally likely to be silent. Typically disappearing letters are *b*, *c*, *d*, *g*, *h*, *k*, *l*, *p*, and *t*.

#### Task 21.3

Listen to the words below being pronounced. The unpronounced consonants are boxed.

26	debt	36	crumb	46	gnome
27	limb	37	thumb	47	foreigner
28	doubt	38	discern	48	vehicle
29	lamb	39	muscle	49	exhibition
30	tomb	40	science	50	knit
31	comb	41	scissors	51	knee
32	bomb	42	fascinating	52	knife
33	subtle	43	sandwich	53	knock
34	dumb	44	Wednesday	54	knight
35	womb	45	handkerchief	55	folk

56 talk	67 condemn	78 castle
57 half	68 coup	79 ballet
58 calm	69 receipt	80 fasten
59 walk	70 pseudo	81 hasten
60 could	71 psychic	82 whistle
61 psalm	72 cupboard	83 wrestle
62 would	73 raspberry	84 rapport
63 should	74 psychology	85 moisten
64 salmon	75 pneumonia	86 gourmet
65 hymn	76 corps	87 Christmas
66 solemn	77 island	88 sword

There are patterns when it comes to disappearing consonants, as the above list shows, but these should not be treated as rules. As an illustration, *c* is not pronounced in *scissors* and *sceptre*, but it is pronounced in *sceptic*, and although *t* is not pronounced in *rappor*, it is pronounced in *repor*. The *l* in *talk* is not pronounced but this letter is pronounced in the words *tal* and *calque*. The *s* is pronounced in *corpse*, but not in *corps*.

Sometimes, letters in the spelling are not pronounced because the speaker speaks fast. This happens often with *h* in the pronouns *her*, *he*, *him*, *his* and in forms of the verb *have*.

#### Task 21.4

Listen to the items below. They show how in fast speech the [h] may disappear.

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 89 not hers                                       | 91 I like him, not hate him. |
| 90 Nikoloz has done it now!                       | 92 Who has he been seeing?   |
| 93 Amazake has never been his favourite beverage. |                              |

Another issue concerning [h] is that besides leaving it out, learners sometimes pronounce it when it doesn't need to be pronounced

#### Task 21.5

Listen to the items below. They show how [h] can be both inserted and left out incorrectly. The words in which this issue arises are boxed.

- 94 with each new breath of air
- 95 the ash that I had entered

96 **Hope** that your journey is a long one.

97 What wind would bring it **her**?

98 She **hoped** it would come that day

In a small number of words, **th** is not usually pronounced, for articulatory convenience.

**Task 21.6**

Listen to the two best-known examples of words in which **th** is not usually pronounced

99 **Asthma**

100 **clothes**

**Task 21.7**

Read out each item below and listen to the recording afterwards. You will hear a voice saying 'speak' indicating that you can start (with **port**). Then, listen to the pronunciation of the item by the speaker, and read out the next item. Highlight words that you pronounce incorrectly and practise them again.

101 **port**

102 **coup**

103 **scoop – half**

104 **debt – sceptic**

105 **corpse – knee – calm**

106 **tomb – ballet – comb**

107 **pallet – castle – ballet**

108 **corps – psalm – fasten**

109 **report – sword – hasten**

110 **thumb – gnome – corpse**

111 **pallet – ballet – escargot**

112 **septic – report – rapport**

113 **vehicle – muscle – muscular**

114 **discern – disco – discard**

115 **solemn – condemn – corps**

116 **wrestle – rapport – moisten**

117 **scissors – gourmet – escargot**

118 **foreigner – sandwich – exhibition**

119 **Wednesday – pneumonia – psychology**

**Task 21.8**

Redo Task 21.2.

**Key*****Key to Task 21.2***

The boxed sounds are not pronounced: **doub**t, **rappor**t, **lamb**, **distinctive**, **dumb**ing down, **p**seudo, **off**en (you may pronounce t in this word or not, so both options are correct), **ex**hale, **f**alk, **answ**er, **foreig**ner, **ex**hibition, **recei**pt, **has**ten, **k**nee, **fol**ks, **sal**mon, **repor**t, **s**word, **muscl**e.



## Consonant tests

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### Test 1

Paying attention in particular to the boxed letters, each student records themselves reading out the words in the ‘Dictation item’ columns below and posts this recording in an online forum. Each student then listens to three other students’ recordings and analyses which boxed consonants are problematic. They post their analysis online, for all other students to see. The teacher analyses all the recordings and posts their own analysis for all to see as well. The results should give each student a good impression which chapters they should study again and which problems other students suffer from. Check whether you have problems pronouncing consonants at the beginnings or ends of syllables/words. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the various chapters where sounds are discussed and practised.

<i>Dictation item</i>	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Dictation item</i>	<i>Sound</i>
1 <b>l</b> ost	[l]	18 <b>t</b> oe	[t]
2 <b>K</b> ong	[ŋ]	19 <b>y</b> earling	[j]
3 <b>b</b> ecause	[k]	20 <b>c</b> ry	[ɹ]
4 <b>ch</b> ives	[tʃ]	21 <b>b</b> adge	[dʒ]
5 <b>b</b> edding	[d]	22 <b>d</b> eserve	[z]
6 <b>g</b> oody	[g]	23 <b>r</b> age	[dʒ]
7 <b>p</b> liers	[p]	24 <b>M</b> ahika	[m]
8 <b>s</b> inging	[ŋ]	25 <b>N</b> ilima	[n]
9 <b>f</b> east	[f]	26 <b>a</b> viation	[v]
10 <b>g</b> luten	[t]	27 <b>s</b> oot	[s]
11 <b>b</b> erate	[ɹ]	28 <b>th</b> ree	[θ]
12 <b>m</b> oon	[m]	29 <b>h</b> opeful	[h]
13 <b>t</b> edious	[d]	30 <b>d</b> evice	[v]
14 <b>b</b> eige	[ʒ]	31 <b>e</b> dge	[dʒ]
15 <b>b</b> atch	[tʃ]	32 <b>cl</b> utch	[tʃ]
16 <b>M</b> itali	[m]	33 <b>c</b> outh	[θ]
17 <b>N</b> aira	[n]	34 <b>b</b> liss	[s]

<i>Dictation item</i>	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Dictation item</i>	<i>Sound</i>
35 disappear	[p]	54 hit	[h]
36 gluten	[g]	55 that	[ð]
37 Nidra	[n]	56 song	[s]
38 rough	[f]	57 hot	[h]
39 bright	[j]	58 the	[ð]
40 shoddy	[ʃ]	59 abound	[b]
41 beckon	[k]	60 things	[θ]
42 careful	[f]	61 this	[ð]
43 Tootsie	[t]	62 dove	[v]
44 boar	[b]	63 boom	[b]
45 where	[w]	64 woosh	[w]
46 lot	[l]	65 beyond	[j]
47 aware	[w]	66 shy	[ʃ]
48 bourgeois	[ʒ]	67 leave	[l]
49 King	[ŋ]	68 shove	[ʃ]
50 becoming	[k]	69 busy	[z]
51 Bedouin	[d]	70 yard	[j]
52 goodness	[g]	71 usually	[ʒ]
53 plight	[p]	72 busy	[z]

## Test 2

Do the same as you did for Test 1, but this time pay attention to the boxed letters in the text below. Below the text are the symbols for the boxed sounds.

1 This is the story of calm baby Roxana, zorse Shakespeare, and  
 2 Rumanian babysitter Vladislav. Wearing a very light striped and  
 3 fetching vest, the teething knee-high three-month-old toddler had a hot  
 4 beverage with its toast. It's just not right, thought Vlad. But, he also  
 5 believed that, unlike its scent, the infant's zeal was pretty impressive.  
 6 He himself would never have one cuppa for breakfast. "Oh, shoot,"  
 7 thought Shakespeare the pet zorse, "I think they're on to Rox." "An  
 8 enthusiastic authority is needed to raise me, a wilful child, and my poor  
 9 half-zebra, half-horse," babbled Rox, "Soothe and jostle us gently,  
 10 chum, but don't kick, shake or stir us!" "Righto, Rox" said Vlad the  
 11 sitter, but I'm sure that silly-name half-striped disco-loving herbivore's  
 12 at it again, not chill little you. Rox agreed Shakes was the likely culprit,  
 13 having access to a certain fridge. There must be places free in the zoo  
 14 for this naughty gnome. "Don't look at me," said Vlad; "I'm only here  
 15 to sit." "Okay," said Rox, "I hope we still have a good rapport?  
 16 Anyway, I'll lure him onto the back of my brakeless tricycle and  
 17 push him down the hill when dawn breaks.

**Sounds**

- |          |                             |           |                      |
|----------|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| <b>1</b> | [ð, unpronounced, z]        | <b>10</b> | [tʃ, k, ɪ]           |
| <b>2</b> | [ɪ, w, l]                   | <b>11</b> | [s, v]               |
| <b>3</b> | [tʃ, v, ð, unpronounced, θ] | <b>12</b> | [tʃ, ɪ, ʃ]           |
| <b>4</b> | [b]                         | <b>13</b> | [s, dʒ, ð, z]        |
| <b>5</b> | [unpronounced, z, t, p]     | <b>14</b> | [unpronounced]       |
| <b>6</b> | [v, k, ʃ]                   | <b>15</b> | [k, s, unpronounced] |
| <b>7</b> | [ʃ, z, θ]                   | <b>16</b> | [w, ɪ, t]            |
| <b>8</b> | [θ, ɪ, w]                   | <b>17</b> | [w]                  |
| <b>9</b> | [dʒ, unpronounced, dʒ]      |           |                      |

## Part D

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# Difficult vowels

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Part D teaches you to distinguish between vowels that are articulatorily similar, which will help you produce distinctive vowels and not revert to unclear vowels. The first nine chapters deal with combinations of vowels. Chapter 23 (*Pronouncing **dark** and **Dirk** [ɑ:, ɜ:]*) and Chapter 24 (*Pronouncing **Dirk** and **dork** [ɜ:, ɔ:]*) provide practice to distinguish between some commonly confused long vowels. Chapter 25 (*Pronouncing **dork** and **Doke** [ɔ:, oɔ]*) and Chapter 26 (*Pronouncing **Doke** and **dock** [oɔ, ɒ]*) introduce the distinction between vowels that consist of one singular sound and those that consist of two consecutive different sounds. Chapter 27 (*Pronouncing **dock** and **duck** [ɒ, ʌ]*) discusses a distinction between two shorter vowels that are often confused. Chapter 28 (*Pronouncing **look** and **Luke** [ʊ, u:]*) and Chapter 29 (*Pronouncing **lick** and **leek** [ɪ, i:]*) discuss vowel pairs that can be pronounced mainly through length distinctions. Chapter 30 (*Pronouncing **marry** and **merry** [æ, ɛ]*) deals with distinguishing two vowels by moving the lower jaw up and down, while Chapter 31 (*Pronouncing **merry** and **Mary** [ɛ, ɛ:]*) tries to solve a widely felt pronunciation problem with a simple solution, namely lengthening a vowel. The next two chapters – Chapter 32 (*Avoiding vowel rhotacisation*) and Chapter 33 (*Avoiding vowel nasalisation*) – teach you to not colour certain vowels unnecessarily strongly. The final chapter of Part D, Chapter 34 (*Vowel tests*), tries to put to the test whether you can distinguish between the vowel pairs discussed in this part.



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# Pronouncing *dark* and *Dirk* [ɑː, ɜː]

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### What could go wrong?

In fast speech in particular, the vowel in the word *Dirk*, [ɜː], may be confused with the *dark* vowel, [ɑː]. What sometimes happens is that very short vowels that are pronounced in the middle of the mouth (like [ə] or [ʌ], the first vowels in the words *abyss* and *nutty*) replace either of these two long vowels and that it is tricky for the hearer to decide which one is meant. This problem is mostly true for non-rhotic speakers (see Chapter 19). Rhotic speakers not only naturally distinguish between words like *palm* and *perm*, the *r* that they pronounce in the latter word often also gives more length and clarity to the preceding vowel, making the vowel easier to perceive correctly.

#### *Task 23.1*

Listen to the examples of learners of English pronouncing [ɜː] unclearly.

- 1 the **f**irst day of elementary school
- 2 sounds like a d**i**rge
- 3 Just g**u**rgle with water.
- 4 He h**e**ard a voice.
- 5 **D**irk the n**u**rse is here; the fastest n**u**rse in town.

### Is this your problem?

#### *Task 23.2*

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- park – perk
- occur – a car
- dart – dirt
- further – father
- hurt – heart
- bird – barred
- fur – far
- girth – Garth
- hard – herd
- lark – lurk

### Task 23.3

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the two vowels.

- |                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 6 park – perk      | 11 bird – barred |
| 7 occur – a car    | 12 fur – far     |
| 8 dart – dirt      | 13 girth – Garth |
| 9 further – father | 14 hard – herd   |
| 10 hurt – heart    | 15 lark – lurk   |

## Explanation and practice

The easiest way to distinguish between *Dirk* [ɜ:] and *dark* [ɑ:] is to open your mouth more when pronouncing [ɑ:], because it is amongst the most open of vowels (see Chapter 3). Drop your jaw when you pronounce this sound, and give a more central, [ə]-like pronunciation to [ɜ:]. The problem for some speakers is that they do distinguish between the sound of the vowels but do not pronounce either of them long enough, although both of these vowels are long vowels. Make these vowels long, so that the hearer is given the time to determine which one is meant.

Spelling may give you some idea as to which of the two vowels should be pronounced. The vowel [ɜ:] is almost always followed by the letter *r* in the spelling. Examples of syllables with this vowel are: *er*, *ur*, *ir*, *our*, *ear*, *or*. The spelling of the vowel [ɑ:] is more predictable, because it usually has the letter *a* in it. It is more likely to be followed by consonants other than *r*.

### Task 23.4

Repeat the words below while paying attention to spelling.

[ɑ:]

- 16 regard  
17 garden  
18 market  
19 calm  
20 palm  
21 balm  
22 psalm  
23 spa  
24 father  
25 drama

[ɜ:]

- 26 herb  
27 serve  
28 curtain  
29 furnish  
30 girl  
31 bird  
32 journey  
33 journal  
34 rehearse  
35 work

**Task 23.5**

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

36 [ɑ: ɑ: ɑ: ɜ: ɜ: ɜ: ɑ: ɑ: ɑ: ɜ: ɜ: ɜ:]

**Task 23.6**

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

- 37 a car – occur  
38 dart – dirt  
39 father – further  
40 heart – hurt  
41 barred – bird  
42 lark – lurk  
43 far – fur  
44 Garth – girth  
45 hard – herd

[ɑ:] → [ɜ:]

- 46 occur – a car  
47 dirt – dart  
48 perm – palm  
49 skirt – scar  
50 stir – star  
51 returned – retarded  
52 girth – Garth  
53 fur – far  
54 lurk – lark

[ɜ:] → [ɑ:]



**Task 23.7**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Distinguish clearly between [ɑ:] and [ɜ:].

55 first [ɜ:]

56 cast [ɑ:]

57 dirt [ɜ:]

58 dart [ɑ:]

59 hurt [ɜ:]

60 Sean [ɑ:]

61 yard [ɑ:]

62 bird [ɜ:]

63 bard [ɑ:]

64 girth [ɜ:]

65 Garth [ɑ:]

66 curse [ɜ:]

67 heart [ɑ:]

68 yearn [ɜ:]

69 dart – dirt [ɑ:, ɜ:]

70 bird – bard [ɜ:, ɑ:]

71 girth – Garth [ɜ:, ɑ:]

72 heart – hurt [ɑ:, ɜ:]

73 yearn – yard [ɜ:, ɑ:]

74 turn the car [ɜ:, ɑ:]

75 cursed – cast [ɜ:, ɑ:]

76 a courteous card [ɜ:, ɑ:]

77 the turn of a friendly card [ɜ:, ɑ:]

78 Freddie Mercury was a star [ɜ:, ɑ:]

79 Birthday cards are marvellous [ɜ:, ɑ:, ɑ:, ɑ:]

**Task 23.8**

Redo Tasks 23.2 and 23.3.

**Key****Key to Task 23.3**

The speaker pronounces the following words: **perk, a car, dirt, further, heart, bird, far, girth, herd, lurk.**

# Pronouncing *Dirk* and *dork* [ɜ:, ɔ:]

---

## What could go wrong?

It is very important not to inadvertently call *Dirk* a *dork*. The vowels [ɜ:] (*Dirk*, *work*, *turn*) and [ɔ:] (*dork*, *stork*, *pork*) are not always clearly pronounced, and in practice they may sound like each other or like several other vowels. The vowel in *work* in particular is often pronounced in such a way that it sounds confusing; this word may come out as *wɔk* [ɒ], and the word *turn* may sound like *ten* [ɛ], for instance, especially if the speaker speaks quickly. The pronunciation of non-rhotic speakers (see Chapter 19) who do not pronounce these vowels clearly in particular is subject to potential confusion.

### Task 24.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English making [ɜ:] sound a little bit like [ɔ:].

- 1 people from all over the world
- 2 for my work or career
- 3 I am a Kurd; the population of Kurdish people is about fifty million in the world.
- 4 because last Thursday after work we have this
- 5 eat fish, birds, animals

## Is this your problem?

### Task 24.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- **P**ersia – **P**ortia
  - **C**ork – **K**irk
  - **l**earner – **L**orna
  - **K**urds – **ch**ords
  - **n**urse – **N**orse
- **b**irth – **B**orth
  - **T**urks – **t**alks
  - **e**rr – **o**r
  - **h**urt – **H**oart
  - **ca**ught – **K**urt

### Task 24.3

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the vowels.

- 6 **P**ersia – **P**ortia
  - 7 **C**ork – **K**irk
  - 8 **l**earner – **L**orna
  - 9 **K**urds – **ch**ords
  - 10 **n**urse – **N**orse
- 11 **b**irth – **B**orth
  - 12 **T**urks – **t**alks
  - 13 **e**rr – **o**r
  - 14 **h**urt – **H**oart
  - 15 **ca**ught – **K**urt

## Explanation and practice

The vowels [ɜ:] and [ɔ:] behave the same when it comes to length; they are both relatively long (hence the length-symbol ‘:’ in their transcription). They are also the same in that they are both usually a single sound (monophthong). Speaking rhotically solves part of the problem because that way the distinction between the words in pairs like *work/walk* becomes clear. Unfortunately, turning rhotic from one day to the next is not realistic for every learner. An easier solution is to not make the vowels too short. Making them long distinguishes these two vowels from shorter vowels like [æ, ə, ʌ]. The difference between [ɜ:] and [ɔ:] lies in lip rounding and the place in which the tongue is lowered. The *work* vowel, [ɜ:], is usually pronounced without rounded lips, while the *walk* vowel, [ɔ:], is usually pronounced with rounded lips. The latter is pronounced more deeply in the mouth, which comes down to the back of the tongue being slightly raised while pronouncing it.

The [ɔ:] vowel can take on a plethora of shapes in spelling. It is usually spelled as *a* or *o*, and these are followed by a specific set of letters, so that *a* or *o* are part of clusters like *au, aw, ou, ore, or, all, al,* and *or*. In words whose pronunciation includes an [ɜ:] sound, the syllable in question usually has the letter *r* after a vowel. The vowel preceding the *r* is less predictable. The *r* is preceded by a vowel that is not *a*, and the syllable with [ɜ:] will look like *or, er, ur, ir, our,* or perhaps *ear*.

**Task 24.4**

Repeat the words below while paying attention to spelling.

[ɜ:]

- 16 **w**ork  
 17 **h**erb  
 18 **s**erve  
 19 **c**urtain  
 20 **f**urnish  
 21 **g**irl  
 22 **b**ird  
 23 **j**ourney  
 24 **j**ournal  
 25 **r**eh**e**arse

[ɔ:]

- 26 **c**aught  
 27 **n**aught  
 28 **d**ist**r**au**g**ht  
 29 **a**wful  
 30 **l**aw  
 31 **t**hou**g**ht  
 32 **c**our**s**e  
 33 **n**or**t**h  
 34 **N**or**s**e  
 35 **b**o**a**rd

**Task 24.5**

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

36 [ɜ: ɜ: ɜ: ɔ: ɔ: ɔ: ɜ: ɜ: ɜ: ɜ: ɔ: ɔ:]

**Task 24.6**

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

- 37 **K**irk – **C**ork  
 38 **P**ersia – **P**ortia  
 39 **w**ork – **w**alk  
 40 **n**urse – **N**orse  
 41 **b**irth – **B**orth  
 42 **T**urks – **t**alks  
 43 **err** – **or**  
 44 **hurt** – **halt**  
 45 **Kurt** – **caught**

[ɜ:] → [ɔ:]

- 46 Cork – Kirk  
 47 Portia – Persia  
 48 walk – work  
 49 Nurse – nurse [ɔ:] → [ɜ:]  
 50 Borth – birth  
 51 talks – Turks  
 52 or – err  
 53 halt – hurt  
 54 caught – Kurt

**Task 24.7**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Avoid pronouncing [ɜ:] as [ɔ:] or as an unclear and/or short vowel.

- 55 Sir [ɜ:]  
 56 first [ɜ:]  
 57 refer [ɜ:]  
 58 forks [ɔ:]  
 59 firm [ɜ:]  
 60 bird [ɜ:]  
 61 Kirk [ɜ:]  
 62 form [ɔ:]  
 63 Cork [ɔ:]  
 64 stork [ɔ:]  
 65 dawn [ɔ:]  
 66 yawn [ɔ:]  
 67 walk [ɔ:]  
 68 learn [ɜ:]  
 69 work [ɜ:]  
 70 nurse [ɜ:]  
 71 yearn [ɜ:]  
 72 Nurse [ɔ:]  
 73 revert [ɜ:]  
 74 Lorna [ɔ:]  
 75 board [ɔ:]  
 76 Portia [ɔ:]  
 77 Persia [ɜ:]  
 78 hauling [ɔ:]  
 79 learner [ɜ:]  
 80 walking [ɔ:]  
 81 hawking [ɔ:]  
 82 returned [ɜ:]  
 83 universally [ɜ:]  
 84 Captain Cork [ɔ:]  
 85 Captain Kirk [ɜ:]  
 86 for our girls [ɔ:, ɜ:]  
 87 his servants [ɜ:]  
 88 Get the door [ɔ:]  
 89 first and third [ɜ:, ɜ:]  
 90 Flirts like skirts [ɜ:, ɜ:]  
 91 Birds get thirsty [ɜ:, ɜ:]  
 92 walking to work [ɔ:, ɜ:]  
 93 Walk on, walk on [ɔ:, ɔ:]  
 94 Talking to a Turk [ɔ:, ɜ:]  
 95 Dirk is such a dork [ɜ:, ɔ:]  
 96 That's a dirty word [ɜ:, ɜ:]  
 97 Courteous girls first [ɜ:, ɜ:, ɜ:]  
 98 Jersey and Guernsey [ɜ:, ɜ:]
- 99 First come, first served [ɜ:, ɜ:, ɜ:]  
 100 walk the walk, talk the talk [ɔ:, ɔ:, ɔ:, ɔ:]  
 101 Learn to walk before you run [ɜ:, ɔ:, ɔ:]  
 102 The early bird catches the worm [ɜ:, ɜ:, ɜ:]

***Task 24.8***

Redo Tasks 24.2 and 24.3.

**Key**

***Key to Task 24.3***

The speaker pronounces the following words: **Portia**, **Cork**, **learner**, **chords**, **Norse**, **birth**, **talks**, **err**, **hurt**, **Kurt**.

## Pronouncing *dork* and *Doke* [ɔ:, oʊ]

---

### What could go wrong?

Confusion between the [ɔ:] vowel (*dork*) and the [oʊ] vowel (*Doke*; an informal way to refer to a Diet Coke) is common amongst some learners, but it is restricted to occasional words, fortunately. For some words, this problem is more serious for non-rhotic speakers; if pronounced, then ‘r’ in *dork* clearly distinguishes this word from *Doke*, for instance. There are only a few word pairs in which a lack of distinction between [ɔ:] and [oʊ] causes confusion, like *ought/oat* and *bought/boat*. Besides word pairs, individual words may also be misunderstood. The word *awful* is a common one, as it is sometimes pronounced with [oʊ] for *aw*, which is confusing.

#### Task 25.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English pronouncing [oʊ] unclearly.

- 1 like h<sup>o</sup>sts welcoming guests to a party
- 2 But each morning, as she aw<sup>o</sup>ke, she h<sup>o</sup>ped it would come that day.
- 3 that it’s the m<sup>o</sup>st beautiful country in the continent
- 4 when you stay in the l<sup>o</sup>cal h<sup>o</sup>tel
- 5 one of th<sup>o</sup>se days

### Is this your problem?

#### Task 25.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- **boat** – **bought**
- **for** – **foe**
- **door eel** – **doe reel**
- **bore real** – **bow real**
- **author real** – **oath a real**
- **ball** – **bowl**
- **Doke** – **dork**
- **corn** – **cone**
- **load** – **laud**
- **law** – **low**

**Task 25.3**

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the vowels.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 <b>boat</b> – <b>bought</b></li> <li>7 <b>for</b> – <b>foe</b></li> <li>8 <b>door eel</b> – <b>doe reel</b></li> <li>9 <b>bore real</b> – <b>bow real</b></li> <li>10 <b>author real</b> – <b>oath a real</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11 <b>ball</b> – <b>bowl</b></li> <li>12 <b>Doke</b> – <b>dork</b></li> <li>13 <b>corn</b> – <b>cone</b></li> <li>14 <b>load</b> – <b>laud</b></li> <li>15 <b>law</b> – <b>low</b></li> </ul> |
|---|--|

**Explanation and practice**

The mouth shape at the beginning of these two vowels (rounded lips) is similar, usually, and so it is easy to confuse them in fast speech. The difference is in the fact that the vowel in *ought* is a single sound, whereas the vowel in *out* is two consecutive vowels, namely [o] and [ʊ]. The latter sound, [ʊ], is pronounced less prominently, but it is necessary to pronounce it nevertheless. The first vowel in [oʊ] often also resembles a ‘schwa’ [ə], and the second part of this diphthong may resemble [w].

The main problem with these two vowels is that speakers take the spelling too literally, which is never advisable when it comes to English. If a speaker reads out the first two letters in the word *awful* or *ought*, then they may mistakenly feel that it should be pronounced as [oʊ]. Spelling does provide a handle to pronounce these sounds, though, and learners also need to learn exceptions (the word *ought* is one of those exceptions, because the sound [oʊ] is most usually spelled as *ou* or *ow*). Another rule is that vowels representing [oʊ] cannot usually be followed by *r*. The spelling of [ɔ:] is much more varied, as the two lists below show.

**Task 25.4**

Repeat the words below while paying attention to spelling.



[ɔ:]

- 16 caught  
17 distraught  
18 naught  
19 awful  
20 law  
21 thought  
22 course  
23 north  
24 Norse  
25 board

[oʊ]

- 26 bro  
27 dose  
28 prone  
29 roller coaster  
30 cone  
31 no  
32 don't  
33 boat  
34 slow  
35 low

**Task 25.5**

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

36 [ɔ: ɔ: ɔ: oʊ oʊ oʊ ɔ: ɔ: ɔ: oʊ oʊ oʊ]

**Task 25.6**

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

- 37 bought – boat  
38 for – foe  
39 door – doe  
40 bore – bow  
41 author – oath  
42 ball – bowl  
43 awful – oval  
44 laud – load  
45 law – low

[ɔ:] → [oʊ]

- 46 boat – bought  
47 foe – for  
48 doe – door  
49 bow – bore  
50 oath – author  
51 bowl – ball  
52 oval – awful  
53 load – laud  
54 low – law

[oʊ] → [ɔ:]

This is a good place to look at the (usually unproblematic) diphthong [ɔɪ]. The spelling of this diphthong is usually *oi* or *oy*. The first part of this diphthong more or less coincides with [ɔ:], as you can tell from the transcription. The second part of this diphthong should be pronounced as [ɪ], and that way the two sounds can be distinguished.

### Task 25.7

Listen to the items below and do what the speaker does with the word in the middle: pronounce the diphthong as two separate vowels.

- 55 **ball** – **boil** – **boil** [ɔ:] – [ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ]  
 56 **a law** – **alloy** – **alloy** [ɔ:] – [ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ]  
 57 **Grow** – **groin** – **groin** [ɔ:] – [ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ]  
 58 **core** – **coin** – **coin** [ɔ:] – [ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ]  
 59 **bore** – **boy** – **boy** [ɔ:] – [ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ]  
 60 **core** – **coy** – **coy** [ɔ:] – [ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ]  
 61 **call** – **coil** – **coil** [ɔ:] – [ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ]  
 62 **dork** – **doink** – **doink** [ɔ:] – [ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ]  
 63 **calling Ork** – **oink oink** – **oink oink** [ɔ:, ɔ:] – [ɔ, ɪ, ɔ, ɪ] – [ɔɪ, ɔɪ]

### Task 25.8

Listen to the items and repeat them. Focus on pronouncing each diphthong clearly.

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 64 <b>for</b> [ɔ:]   | 81 <b>author</b> [ɔ:]                        |
| 65 <b>foe</b> [ɒ]    | 82 <b>bought</b> [ɔ:]                        |
| 66 <b>oat</b> [ɒ]    | 83 <b>ought to</b> [ɔ:]                      |
| 67 <b>law</b> [ɔ:]   | 84 <b>applause</b> [ɔ:]                      |
| 68 <b>ball</b> [ɔ:]  | 85 <b>doe</b> – <b>door</b> [ɒ, ɔ:]          |
| 69 <b>low</b> [ɒ]    | 86 <b>bow</b> – <b>bore</b> [ɒ, ɔ:]          |
| 70 <b>doe</b> [ɒ]    | 87 <b>okey dokey</b> [ɒ, ɒ]                  |
| 71 <b>oval</b> [ɒ]   | 88 <b>for real</b> – <b>foe real</b> [ɔ:, ɒ] |
| 72 <b>oath</b> [ɒ]   | 89 <b>coy</b> [ɔɪ]                           |
| 73 <b>boat</b> [ɒ]   | 90 <b>call</b> [ɔ:]                          |
| 74 <b>corn</b> [ɔ:]  | 91 <b>coil</b> [ɔɪ]                          |
| 75 <b>cone</b> [ɒ]   | 92 <b>Ork</b> [ɔ:]                           |
| 76 <b>bore</b> [ɔ:]  | 93 <b>boil</b> [ɔɪ]                          |
| 77 <b>bowl</b> [ɒ]   | 94 <b>ball</b> [ɔ:]                          |
| 78 <b>door</b> [ɔ:]  | 95 <b>coin</b> [ɔɪ]                          |
| 79 <b>awful</b> [ɔ:] | 96 <b>oink</b> [ɔɪ]                          |
| 80 <b>Laura</b> [ɔ:] | 97 <b>a law</b> [ɔ:]                         |

98 ahoy [ɔɪ]

99 alloy [ɔɪ]

100 groin [ɔɪ]

101 doink [ɔɪ]

102 ball – boil [ɔ:, ɔɪ]

103 coin – ball [ɔɪ, ɔ:]

104 Ork – oink [ɔ:, ɔɪ]

105 oink oink [ɔɪ, ɔɪ]

106 a law – alloy [ɔ:, ɔɪ]

107 ahoy – a call [ɔɪ, ɔ:]

108 oink oink oak [ɔɪ, ɔɪ, ɔʊ]

109 coy – core – call – coil [ɔɪ, ɔ:, ɔ:, ɔɪ]

110 okey dokey – doink [oʊ, oʊ, ɔɪ]

### *Task 25.9*

Redo Tasks 25.2 and 25.3.

## **Key**

### *Key to Task 25.3*

The speaker pronounces the following words: **bought, for, doe reel, bow real, author real, ball, Doke, corn, laud, law.**

# Pronouncing *Doke and dock* [oʊ, ɒ]

---

## What could go wrong?

Not distinguishing clearly between [oʊ] and [ɒ] will occasionally lead to confusion as to which word is meant. There are some word pairs that are distinguishable only on the basis of these two vowels, like *joke/Jock* and *code/cod*. Although high-frequency words may be involved in such confusion, the problem is likely to lead to minor rather than major confusion.

### Task 26.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English pronouncing [oʊ] or [ɒ] unclearly.

- 1 So, we often say that you can live without anything.
- 2 The ost I like about my country is culture.
- 3 stay in the local hotels, odges, camps and any other place
- 4 on't leave the food inside your mouth for too long.
- 5 So, I oke up early.

## Is this your problem?

### Task 26.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • <u>c</u> ot – <u>c</u> oat    | • <u>J</u> ohn – <u>J</u> oan   |
| • <u>C</u> ola – <u>c</u> ollar | • <u>n</u> ote – <u>n</u> ot    |
| • <u>d</u> ole – <u>d</u> oll   | • <u>C</u> ox – <u>c</u> oax    |
| • <u>h</u> op – <u>h</u> ope    | • <u>c</u> lock – <u>c</u> loak |
| • <u>J</u> ock – <u>j</u> oke   | • <u>c</u> od – <u>c</u> ode    |

**Task 26.3**

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the vowels.

- |    |               |    |               |
|----|---------------|----|---------------|
| 6  | cot – coat    | 11 | John – Joan   |
| 7  | Cola – collar | 12 | note – not    |
| 8  | dole – doll   | 13 | Cox – coax    |
| 9  | hop – hope    | 14 | clock – cloak |
| 10 | Jock – joke   | 15 | cod – code    |

**Explanation and practice**

The main difference between [ɒ] and [oʊ] is that the vowel in [ɒ] (*collar*) is one steady vowel that starts and ends as the same sound while the vowel [oʊ] (*cola*) starts with one sound and ends with another. This distinction is not always made by learners, and the vowels in both *collar* and *cola* could both come out as steady-state vowels in running speech. Another difference is length. The [ɒ] in *collar* is shorter than the [oʊ] in *cola* because the latter has two consecutive vowels, which both need to be pronounced. A tip for those who find it difficult to distinguish these vowels is turning [oʊ] into a long vowel whose ending tends towards a [w]-like sound. It should be noted that the vowel [ɒ] is known for being subject to much variation in its articulation. This is explained further in Chapter 9.

The sound [oʊ] is usually spelled as *ou* or *ow*. The most common spelling of [ɒ] is *o*. The other very common spelling of the latter vowel is with an *a* that is preceded by a *w* (as in *want*) or *qu* (as in *qualify*).

**Task 26.4**

Repeat the words below while paying attention to spelling.

[oʊ]

- 16 mouse
- 17 proud
- 18 about
- 19 Slough
- 20 roundabout
- 21 brown
- 22 cow
- 23 how
- 24 now
- 25 down

[ɒ]

- 26 cops
- 27 sorry
- 28 conference
- 29 ponder
- 30 prompt
- 31 Whopper
- 32 allotment
- 33 wander
- 34 quality
- 35 wash

**Task 26.5**

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

**36 [ɒ ɒ ɒ oʊ oʊ oʊ ɒ ɒ ɒ oʊ oʊ oʊ]****Task 26.6**

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

37 **dole** – **doll**38 **hope** – **hop**39 **coax** – **Cox**40 **mopping** – **mopping**41 **note** – **not**

[oʊ] → [ɒ]

42 **Joan** – **John**43 **copest** – **cops**44 **Poland** – **pollen**45 **robot** – **rob it**46 **John** – **Joan**47 **rob it** – **robot**48 **cops** – **copest**49 **mopping** – **mopping**50 **pollen** – **Poland**

[ɒ] → [oʊ]

51 **not** – **note**52 **doll** – **dole**53 **Cox** – **coax**54 **want** – **won't****Task 26.7**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Pronounce [oʊ] clearly as a diphthong.

55 **not** [ɒ]56 **cot** [ɒ]57 **doll** [ɒ]58 **cola** [oʊ]59 **dole** [oʊ]60 **note** [oʊ]61 **hop** [ɒ]62 **Joan** [oʊ]63 **John** [ɒ]64 **cold** [oʊ]

- 65 **Jock** [ɒ]  
 66 **joke** [oʊ]  
 67 **coat** [oʊ]  
 68 **cone** [oʊ]  
 69 **coax** [oʊ]  
 70 **hope** [oʊ]  
 71 **shone** [ɒ]  
 72 **collar** [ɒ]  
 73 **cod – code** [ɒ, oʊ]
- 74 **note – not** [oʊ, ɒ]  
 75 **con – cone** [ɒ, oʊ]  
 76 **Cox – coax** [ɒ, oʊ]  
 77 **con – cone** [ɒ, oʊ]  
 78 **clock – cloak** [ɒ, oʊ]  
 79 **what a con artist!** [ɒ, ɒ]  
 80 **set the clock right** [ɒ]  
 81 **John is a cold person** [ɒ, oʊ]
- 82 **coats go in the cloak room** [oʊ, oʊ, oʊ]

**Task 26.8**

Redo Tasks 26.2 and 26.3.

**Key****Key to Task 26.3**

The speaker pronounces the following words: **cot, collar, dole, hope, Jock, Joan, not, Cox, cloak, code.**

# Pronouncing *dock* and *duck* [ɒ, ʌ]

---

### What could go wrong?

The distinction between the vowels in *dock* and *duck* in some people's system of pronouncing English is very subtle. Even some native speakers sometimes hardly distinguish between [ɒ] and [ʌ]. Native speakers who do distinguish between them control this distinction well and can still be understandable, but learners who make this distinction are more likely to mix the vowels up irregularly. These learners face the challenge of developing their own system of distinction in the considerable variation that these sounds are subject to amongst both native and non-native speakers. Learners often avoid the distinction and revert to an unclear vowel that is neither [ʌ] or [ɒ] and stop distinguishing between *duck* and *dock* by just pronouncing both words as [dɒk] ('*duhk*') or perhaps as [dɑ:k] ('*dahk*'). The vowel [ɑ:] in particular may become part of the confusion if you are a non-rhotic learner (see Chapter 19). These learners may confuse the golf term *putt* [ʌ] with *part* [ɑ:]. Any learner, rhotic or not, may confuse *bum* [ʌ] with *balm* [ɑ:]. An added challenge is distinguishing all these vowels from the diphthongs [aɪ] (*bye*) and [aʊ] (*how*), whose first element is close to some of the above-named vowels.

#### *Task 27.1*

Listen to the examples of learners of English pronouncing [ɒ] or [ʌ] unclearly.

- 1 as a **country**
- 2 About Paris; did you know that **up** **until** 2012 we had only one **stop** sign?
- 3 when work will come **up**
- 4 the seat of the **g**overnment
- 5 Utrecht is a market traffic **hub** of the country.



## Is this your problem?

### Task 27.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| • gosh – gush   | • lull – LOL  |
| • cups – cops   | • dock – duck |
| • bum – bomb    | • com – come  |
| • putty – potty | • gut – got   |
| • cuff – cough  | • bus – boss  |

### Task 27.3

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the vowels.

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 6 gosh – gush   | 11 lull – LOL  |
| 7 cups – cops   | 12 dock – duck |
| 8 bum – bomb    | 13 com – come  |
| 9 putty – potty | 14 gut – got   |
| 10 cuff – cough | 15 bus – boss  |

## Explanation and practice

Both vowels are short, which poses a challenge when distinguishing between them. The shape of the mouth during the vowel [ʌ] (as in *hut*) is between that of the vowel [ə] (as in *about*) and [ɑ:] (as in *dart*). You can distinguish [ʌ] from [ɒ] (as in *stor*) by making the latter more open (back of the tongue lowered) and rounded (pouted lips). Spelling is a good clue to determine whether [ɒ] or [ʌ] should be pronounced.

The [ʌ] is usually represented in the spelling as *o* or *u*. The spelling of [ɒ] is most commonly *o*. The other very common spelling is with an *a* that is preceded by a *w* (*want*) or *qu* (*qualify*).

### Task 27.4

Repeat the words below while paying attention to spelling.

[ɒ]

- 16 slot  
 17 cops  
 18 potty  
 19 bomb  
 20 common  
 21 allotment  
 22 chop-chop  
 23 wander  
 24 codswallop  
 25 quantify

[ʌ]

- 26 cut  
 27 fun  
 28 one  
 29 front  
 30 some  
 31 come  
 32 dozen  
 33 sunny  
 34 mummy  
 35 country

**Task 27.5**

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

36 [ɒ ɒ ʌ ʌ ʌ ɒ ɒ ʌ ʌ ʌ]

**Task 27.6**

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

- 37 pot – put  
 38 got – gut  
 39 potluck  
 40 dotcom – come  
 41 gosh – gush  
 42 wander – wonder  
 43 shone – shun  
 44 onto – unto  
 45 LOL – lull

[ɒ] → [ʌ]

- 46 put – pot  
 47 gut – got  
 48 rut – rot  
 49 come – dotcom  
 50 gush – gosh  
 51 wonder – wander  
 52 shun – shone  
 53 unto – onto  
 54 lull – LOL

[ʌ] → [ɒ]

Another common problematic vowel distinction is between [ʌ] (this chapter) and [ɑ:] (Chapter 23). The vowel [ɑ:] (*calm*) is much longer than [ʌ] (*come*), and it is pronounced with your mouth more open (lower jaw dropped).

### Task 27.7

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

## 55 [ʌ ʌ ʌ ɑ: ɑ: ɑ: ʌ ʌ ʌ ɑ: ɑ:]

### Task 27.8

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

- 56 hut – heart  
 57 come – calm  
 58 bum – balm  
 59 cutter – Carter  
 60 done – darn  
 61 come – calm  
 62 fun – farm  
 63 Cuddy – card  
 64 numb – palm

[ʌ] → [ɑ:]

- 65 heart – hut  
 66 calm – come  
 67 balm – bum  
 68 Carter – cutter  
 69 darn – done  
 70 calm – come  
 71 farm – fun  
 72 card – Cuddy  
 73 palm – numb

[ɑ:] → [ʌ]

This is a good place to introduce the diphthongs [aɪ] (*bite*) and [aʊ] (*out*). The [aɪ] can often be recognised in the spelling as *i* (*spice, client*), *y* (*sky, nylon*), and various other letter combinations that contain either *i* or *y* (*height, rye, die*). The [aʊ] is often spelled as *ou* (*about, doubt*) or *ow* (*fowl, browser*). In running speech, the first part of these two diphthongs may have much in common with both [ʌ] and [ɑ:]. The words *gut* [ʌ] and *gout* [aʊ] may start to sound similar if you don't distinguish between these phonemes, and the same is true for the word

pairs *but* [ʌ] and *bite* [aɪ], and for some speakers even *cart* [ɑ:] and *kite* [aɪ] and *stout* [aʊ] and *start* [ɑ:] may sound alike. Make sure that the second parts of these diphthongs are pronounced audibly as [ɪ] and [ʊ].

### Task 27.9

Listen to the items below and do what the speaker does: first pronounce the vowel in the second word in each item as two separate vowels.

- 74 **putting** (the golf term) – **pouting** – **pouting** [ʌ] – [a, ʊ] – [aʊ]  
 75 **gun** – **gown** – **gown** [ʌ] – [a, ʊ] – [aʊ]  
 76 **fun** – **fine** – **fine** [ʌ] – [a, ɪ] – [aɪ]  
 77 **dumb** – **dime** – **dime** [ʌ] – [a, ɪ] – [aɪ]  
 78 **Saami** – **Simey** – **Simey** [ɑ:] – [a, ɪ] – [aɪ]  
 79 **barn** – **combine** – **combine** [ɑ:] – [a, ɪ] – [aɪ]  
 80 **father** – **voucher** – **voucher** [ɑ:] – [a, ʊ] – [aʊ]  
 81 **Rah!** – **row** – **row** [ɑ:] – [a, ʊ] – [aʊ]

### Task 27.10

Listen to the items and repeat them. Distinguish clearly between [ɒ] and [ʌ].

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 82 <b>on</b> [ɒ]                              | 99 <b>on your tod</b> [ɒ]                 |
| 83 <b>top</b> [ɒ]                             | 100 <b>corroborate</b> [ɒ]                |
| 84 <b>gosh</b> [ɒ]                            | 101 <b>motley crew</b> [ɒ]                |
| 85 <b>gush</b> [ʌ]                            | 102 <b>Son of a gun!</b> [ʌ, ʌ]           |
| 86 <b>Dutch</b> [ʌ]                           | 103 <b>Want a mug?</b> [ɒ, ʌ]             |
| 87 <b>colour</b> [ʌ]                          | 104 <b>mumbo jumbo</b> [ʌ, ʌ]             |
| 88 <b>tongue</b> [ʌ]                          | 105 <b>The Full Monty</b> [ɒ]             |
| 89 <b>London</b> [ʌ]                          | 106 <b>mother country</b> [ʌ, ʌ]          |
| 90 <b>brother</b> [ʌ]                         | 107 <b>Mum's the word</b> [ʌ]             |
| 91 <b>wonder</b> [ʌ]                          | 108 <b>the putting green</b> [ʌ]          |
| 92 <b>wander</b> [ɒ]                          | 109 <b>He's done a runner</b> [ʌ, ʌ]      |
| 93 <b>country</b> [ʌ]                         | 110 <b>My guts got injured</b> [ʌ, ɒ]     |
| 94 <b>monkey</b> [ʌ]                          | 111 <b>My cup runneth over</b> [ʌ, ʌ]     |
| 95 <b>Come on!</b> [ʌ, ɒ]                     | 112 <b>lock, stock and barrel</b> [ɒ, ɒ]  |
| 96 <b>someone</b> [ʌ, ʌ]                      | 113 <b>It's not rocket science</b> [ɒ, ɒ] |
| 97 <b>Come off it!</b> [ʌ, ɒ]                 | 114 <b>Live long and prosper</b> [ɒ, ɒ]   |
| 98 <b>the Antibes</b> [ɒ]                     | 115 <b>The guard is on my side</b> [ɑ:]   |
| 116 <b>Someone cited a Psalm 1</b> [ʌ, ʌ, ɑ:] |   |
| 117 <b>Much ado about nothing</b> [ʌ, ʌ]      |   |

118 Rong's got to go on the potty [v, v, v, v]

119 part [ɑ:]

120 calm [ɑ:]

121 balm [ɑ:]

122 cot – cart [v, ɑ:]

123 cut – cart [Λ, ɑ:]

124 Psalm One [ɑ:, Λ]

125 dots – darts [v, ɑ:]

126 cut the card [Λ, ɑ:]

127 ma'am – mom [ɑ:, Λ]

128 mom – ma'am [Λ, ɑ:]

129 pot – put – part [v, Λ, ɑ:]

130 bomb – bum – balm [v, Λ, ɑ:]

131 someone – Psalm One  
[Λ, Λ, ɑ: Λ]

132 Darn; he's done a  
runner! [ɑ:, Λ, Λ]

133 fun – fine [Λ, aɪ]

134 rah! – row [ɑ:, aʊ]

135 gun – gown [Λ, aʊ]

136 dumb – dime [Λ, aɪ]

137 Saami – Simey [ɑ:, aɪ]

138 barn – combine [ɑ:, aɪ]

139 father – voucher [ɑ:, aʊ]

### Task 27.11

Redo Tasks 27.2 and 27.3.

## Key

### Key to Task 27.3

The speaker pronounces the following words: **gush**, **cops**, **bomb**, **potty**, **cuff**, **LOL**, **duck**, **com**, **gut**, **bus**.

# Pronouncing *look* and *Luke* [ʊ, u:]

---

## What could go wrong?

Some words with the vowels [ʊ] (*book*) or [u:] (*smooth*) may be misunderstood if the vowel is not pronounced clearly. There are also word pairs that require a distinction between these two vowel sounds: *Luke/look*, *pull/pool*, and *soot/suit*. Fortunately, there are not many of such pairs, and for a few words, like *hurray!* and *oops!*, both vowels are acceptable. Some native speakers don't make a distinction between [u:] and [ʊ] and are nevertheless understandable, but it is not advisable for learners to try this approach, if intelligibility is their aim. Pronouncing [ʊ] is the bigger challenge for most learners, while the pronunciation of [u:] is usually less problematic. The good news is that words with [u:] are much more common than are words with [ʊ].

### Task 28.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English mispronouncing [ʊ] or [u:].

- 1 always terrific **f**oo**d**
- 2 outside a sch**oo**l
- 3 the dream of setting **f**oo**t** on Mars for us
- 4 I love to read **bo**o**k**s and knowledge of English gives me an opportunity to read English **bo**o**k**s, too.
- 5 a study of English **bo**o**k**s

## Is this your problem?

### Task 28.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- good eh? – goo day?
- would – wooed
- Luke – look
- could – cooed
- pull – pool
- suit – soot
- pulling – pooling
- fool – full
- should – shoood
- who'd – hood

**Task 28.3**

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the vowels.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>6 good eh? – goo day?</p> <p>7 would – wooed</p> <p>8 Luke – look</p> <p>9 could – cooed</p> <p>10 pull – pool</p> | <p>11 suit – soot</p> <p>12 pulling – pooling</p> <p>13 fool – full</p> <p>14 should – shoood</p> <p>15 who'd – hood</p> |
|---|--|

**Explanation and practice**

The [u:] is longer than the [ʊ], as the length symbol ‘:’ shows. While [u:] (*who*) is generally easy to pronounce, only advanced learners can pronounce [ʊ] well (*hood*). To pronounce [ʊ], aim for a sound close to [ə] (the first vowel in *about*) and pout your lips more than with [ə]. In running speech, [u:] may have a [w]-like sound at the end [u:w], and for [ʊ] this change in vowel sound should be avoided.

The vowel [u:] often appears as *oo* in the spelling, but several other letter combinations are common, like *ou*, *oe*, *ue*, *ui*, and *ew*. The sound [ʊ] may also be written as *oo*. Other common spellings for this vowel are *ou*, *u*, or *o*.

**Task 28.4**

Repeat the words below while paying attention to spelling.

[ʊ]

- 16 foot  
17 good  
18 rookie  
19 could  
20 would  
21 should  
22 bush  
23 butcher  
24 pull  
25 woman  
26 wolf

[u:]

- 27 shampoo  
28 kangaroo  
29 soup  
30 group  
31 canoe  
32 shoe  
33 true  
34 blue  
35 juice  
36 cruise  
37 flew

**Task 28.5**

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

38 [ʊ ʊ ʊ u: u: u: ʊ ʊ ʊ u: u: u:]

**Task 28.6**

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

- 39 good – gooed  
40 couold – couoed  
41 puoll – puoll  
42 shoold – shooed  
43 look – Luoke  
44 soot – suoit  
45 puolling – puolling  
46 fuoll – fuoll  
47 hood – who'd

[ʊ] → [u:]

- 48 gooed – good  
49 couoed – couold  
50 puoll – puoll  
51 shooed – shoold  
52 Luoke – look  
53 suoit – soot  
54 puolling – puolling  
55 fuoll – fuoll  
56 who'd – hood

[u:] → [ʊ]



**Task 28.7**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Distinguish clearly between [ʊ] and [u:], amongst others, by making the latter long.

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 57 <b>f</b> oo <b>t</b> [ʊ]     | 63 <b>s</b> cho <b>o</b> l [u:]                                       |
| 58 <b>f</b> oo <b>d</b> [u:]    | 64 <b>f</b> oo <b>t</b> st <b>oo</b> l [ʊ, u:]                        |
| 59 <b>s</b> to <b>o</b> l [u:]  | 65 <b>b</b> u <b>l</b> le <b>t</b> pr <b>oo</b> f [ʊ, u:]             |
| 60 <b>s</b> to <b>o</b> d [ʊ]   | 66 <b>s</b> cho <b>o</b> l <b>bo</b> o <b>k</b> [u:, ʊ]               |
| 61 <b>b</b> oo <b>k</b> s [ʊ]   | 67 <b>p</b> oo <b>h</b> - <b>p</b> oo <b>h</b> ing [u:, u:]           |
| 62 <b>pr</b> oo <b>f</b> s [u:] | 68 <b>the</b> <b>bo</b> o <b>t</b> ed <b>bo</b> ny <b>th</b> ing [u:] |
- 69 **the** **so**ldier **wh**o **p**oo**h**-**p**oo**h**ed **hi**m [u:, u:, u:]
- 70 **wh**o **p**oo**h**-**p**oo**h**ed **the**ir **p**oo**h**-**p**oo**h**s! [u:, u:, u:, u:, u:]
- 71 **We**'re **do**omed to **fl**oat **th**rough **ti**me, **fo**r **al**l **ti**me! [u:, u:]
- 72 **Once**, **it** was **I** **wh**o **st**ood **in** **the** **bi**g, **co**ld **sch**oo**l**r**oo**m [u:, ʊ, u:, u:]
- 73 **No** **o**ne **ev**er **ma**de **mo**ney **o**ut **of** **go**od **lo**o**k**s **and** **cha**rm! [ʊ, ʊ]
- 74 **tr**aditional **mi**x **of** **go**od **fo**od **and** **vi**olent **sto**mach **cr**amp [ʊ, u:]
- 75 **a** **sm**all **wo**o**d**en **ro**o**m** **with** **tw**o **to**ilets **and** **the** **st**u**pi**d**e**st **ma**n [ʊ, u:, u:, u:]
- 76 **B**esh**re**w **me**, **Bl**ack**ad**der! **You**'re **in** **go**od **fo**o**l**ing **this** **mo**rning [u:, ʊ, u:]

**Task 28.8**

Redo Tasks 28.2 and 28.3.

**Key****Key to Task 28.3**

The speaker pronounces the following words: **goo** day?, **would**, **Luke**, **could**, **pull**, **suit**, **pooling**, **fool**, **shoed**, **who'd**.

# Pronouncing lick and leek [ɪ, i:]

### What could go wrong?

If there is confusion in a learner's pronunciation between [ɪ] (*lick*) and [i:] (*leek*), then it will be very frequent, because there are many pairs of words that could be part of the confusion: *bit/beat*, *fit/feet*, *sit/seat*, *his/he's*, *list/least*, *live/leave*, *lick/leek*, *pick/peak*, *bin/bean*, *ship/sheep*, *chip/cheap*, *hit/heat*, *it/eat*. The problem described here is often one-directional: both [ɪ] and [i:] are sometimes pronounced as [i:]. The word *fit* will then sound like *feet*, but *feet* is less likely to sound like *fit*. Alternatively, some kind of intermediate vague vowel is produced that requires listeners to guess.

#### Task 29.1

Listen to the examples of learners of English pronouncing [ɪ] as [i:] or vice versa.

- 1 there **ɪ**s more people **lɪ**vɪŋ **ɪ**n my city, Mexico City, than **ɪ**n the whole of the Netherlands
- 2 full of **bɪ**ss to the portholes
- 3 I have been **lɪ**vɪŋ and work**ɪ**ng in Qatar since 2010
- 4 for **ɪ**these people
- 5 a fest**ɪ**ve meal

### Is this your problem?

#### Task 29.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- lick – leek
- fit – feet
- Mlick – meek
- feast – fist
- his – he's
- least – list
- relieve – relive
- diaper sieve – dye perceive
- licking – leaking
- eat – it

### Task 29.3

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the vowels.

- |                |                                |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 6 lick – leek  | 11 least – list                |
| 7 fit – feet   | 12 relieve – relive            |
| 8 Mlick – meek | 13 diaper sieve – dye perceive |
| 9 feast – fist | 14 licking – leaking           |
| 10 his – he's  | 15 eat – it                    |

## Explanation and practice

If you know how to pronounce [i:], as in *beat*, then you can make the [ɪ], as in *bit*, by slightly pulling back the tip of your tongue, or relaxing it, because the [i:] is produced with the front part of the tongue raised more than is the case with [ɪ]. Remember that [i:] is slightly longer than [ɪ].

The spelling of [ɪ] is almost always *i*, but it may be spelled as *y* or *e* as well in some cases, or even *u*. The spelling of [i:] is more varied and can be *ee*, *ea*, *ie*, or one letter, like *y*, *e*, or *i*. Despite this spelling inconsistency, determining whether a vowel should sound like [i:] or [ɪ] is not generally considered a great problem for learners. Perceiving and producing the difference between them is the most common problem.

### Task 29.4

Repeat the words below while paying attention to spelling.

[ɪ]

- 16 imminent
- 17 ignorant
- 18 inefficient
- 19 film
- 20 trim
- 21 symbol
- 22 myth
- 23 English
- 24 busy
- 25 pretty

[i:]

- 26 keep
- 27 beetle
- 28 settee
- 29 Beatles
- 30 elite
- 31 police
- 32 seize
- 33 perceive
- 34 key
- 35 equal

**Task 29.5**

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

36 [ɪiiiiiiiiiii]

**Task 29.6**

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

- 37 Rick – reek
- 38 kill – keel
- 39 relieve – relieve
- 40 will – wheel
- 41 fit – feet
- 42 sieve – receive
- 43 bit – beat
- 44 rip – reap
- 45 hills – heels

[ɪ] → [i:]

- 46 reek – Rick
- 47 keel – kill
- 48 relieve – relieve
- 49 wheel – will
- 50 feet – fit
- 51 receive – sieve
- 52 beat – bit
- 53 reap – rip
- 54 heels – hills

[i:] → [ɪ]

It should be noted that in running speech, the first part of the diphthong [eɪ] is often reduced to a sound resembling [ɪ]. The [eɪ] is often spelled as an *a* (*race*), *ai* (*paint*), or *ei* (*weight*), so for some words the fact that it is a diphthong is suggested by the spelling (*paint*, *weight*) while for others this is not the case (*race*). All are equally diphthongal though. The words *kick* and *cake* will sound alike when these words are pronounced quickly and if [eɪ] is not fully pronounced. To make the vowels [eɪ] and [ɪ] more distinctive, make sure that the first part of the diphthong is clearly pronounced as [e] (*bed*, *zen*) and the second part audibly as [ɪ] (*bid*, *akin*).

### Task 29.7

Listen to the items below and do what the speaker does: first pronounce the diphthong as two separate vowels and then these two vowels merged together.

55 *cake* – *cake* [e, ɪ] – [eɪ]

56 *bay* – *bay* [e, ɪ] – [eɪ]

57 *may* – *may* [e, ɪ] – [eɪ]

58 *remake* – *remake* [e, ɪ] – [eɪ]

59 *Elaine* – *Elaine* [e, ɪ] – [eɪ]

### Task 29.8

Listen to the items and repeat them. Distinguish clearly between [ɪ] (short monophthong), [i:] (long monophthong), and [eɪ] (diphthong).

60 *it* [ɪ]

61 *fit* [ɪ]

62 *fate* [eɪ]

63 *tin* [ɪ]

64 *sit* [ɪ]

65 *hit* [ɪ]

66 *hate* [eɪ]

67 *chase* [eɪ]

68 *cheap* [i:]

69 *beat it!* [i:, ɪ]

70 *keel* – *feast* [i:, i:]

71 *be defeated* [i:, i:]

72 *bean* – *peak* [i:, i:]

73 *Mick* – *meech* [ɪ, i:]

74 *peek* – *deem* [i:, i:]

75 *bit* – *nit* – *fit* [ɪ, ɪ, ɪ]

76 *the least milk* [i:, ɪ]

77 *meech* – *sheep* [i:, i:]

78 *list* – *his* – *bin* [ɪ, ɪ, ɪ]

79 *shaving sheep* [eɪ, i:]

80 *eat* – *kill* – *dim* [i:, ɪ, ɪ]

81 *They fit my feet* [eɪ, ɪ, i:]

82 *Read out the list* [i:, ɪ]

83 *lick* – *beet* – *teet* [ɪ, i:, i:]

84 *your feet look fit* [ɪ, ɪ]

85 *Live your own life* [ɪ]

86 *chip* – *leek* – *leak* [ɪ, i:, i:]

87 *He reads the least* [i:, i:]

88 *heat* – *beat* – *neat* [i:, i:, i:]

89 *I don't like leaking* [i:]

90 *eat, sleep, and chill* [i:, i:, ɪ]

91 *leave your own wife* [i:]

92 *he picked* – *he peaked* [ɪ, i:]

93 *eats shoots and leaves* [i:, i:]

94 *She made me a key chain* [i:, eɪ, i:, eɪ]

- 95 many a **sh**ip – **l**ive your **l**ife [ɪ, ɪ]  
 96 No one wants to **b**e **d**efeated [i:, i:]  
 97 the **l**east **m**ilk – **h**e's **i**n **h**is **c**ar [i:, ɪ, :i, ɪ, ɪ]  
 98 **sh**ip – **h**e's **i**n **h**is **c**ar – **s**eat – **kn**it [ɪ, i:, ɪ, ɪ, i:, ɪ]

**Task 29.9**

Redo Tasks 29.2 and 29.3.

**Key****Key to Task 29.3**

The speaker pronounces the following words: **lick**, **feet**, **Mick**, **feast**, **he's**, **least**, **relive**, **diaper** **sieve**, **leaking**, **eat**.

## Pronouncing *marry* and *merry* [æ, ε]

---

### What could go wrong?

A lack of distinction between [ε] (*bet*) and [æ] (*bat*) commonly leads to misunderstandings. The following pairs of very common words will sound alike if you don't distinguish enough: *bed/bad*, *Ken/can*, *letter/latter*. Another problem is that even if a word is not a member of such a pair of easily confused words, the wrong vowel may still cause confusion. The word *lemon* is an example of such a word; it may sound like the non-existent word '*lammon*'. Learners often try and distinguish between these vowels by lengthening and shortening them, but length is not the most prominent difference between them.

#### *Task 30.1*

Listen to the examples of learners of English targeting [æ] but in fact pronouncing [ε].

- 1 and how many un<sup>h</sup>appy dreams it keeps warm
- 2 stopping only when the water beg<sup>a</sup>n to well up from the bottom
- 3 I sa<sup>t</sup> on a long bench outside a school.
- 4 I am from Ha<sup>n</sup>nover.
- 5 She did not know what this cha<sup>n</sup>ce would be.

### Is this your problem?

#### *Task 30.2*

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- letter – latter
  - better – batter
  - Kerry – carry
  - men – man
  - tally – telly
- Ben – ban
  - belly – Bally
  - ten – tan
  - bag – beg
  - bat – bet

**Task 30.3**

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the vowels.

- 6 letter – latter
  - 7 better – batter
  - 8 Kerry – carry
  - 9 men – man
  - 10 tally – telly
- 11 Ben – ban
  - 12 belly – Bally
  - 13 ten – tan
  - 14 bag – beg
  - 15 bat – bet

**Explanation and practice**

The vowel [ɛ] (*bet*) is pronounced near the front of the mouth, where the tongue will be slightly raised, while [æ] (*bat*) is produced slightly more centrally in the mouth. Some scholars say that [æ] is often slightly longer than [ɛ]. Making the distinction is actually quite simple, because the jaw position of these vowels is very different: lower your lower jaw (open your mouth) more for [æ] than for [ɛ].

Spelling is a useful tool to help you decide which of the two vowels should be pronounced. The vowel [æ] is represented as *a* in by far most cases, while the sound [ɛ] is often represented as *e* in the spelling. In addition, [ɛ] has a string of unexpected spellings that learners simply need to learn. Examples of these unexpected spellings are: *ai*, *ea*, *u*, *ay*, *eo*, and, for example, *ie*. In a few cases, this vowel sound is even spelled as *a*, which explains why the first vowels in words like *any*, *many*, and *anyone* are often mispronounced as [æ].

**Task 30.4**

Repeat the words below while paying attention to spelling.



[æ]

- 16 **bad**  
 17 **wrap**  
 18 **camp**  
 19 **rabbi**  
 20 **latter**  
 21 **flashy**  
 22 **happy**  
 23 **batter**  
 24 **fantasy**  
 25 **rapping**  
 26 **retaliate**  
 27 **radicalism**

[ɛ]

- 28 **terrible**  
 29 **petrified**  
 30 **again**  
 31 **said**  
 32 **dealt**  
 33 **dreamt**  
 34 **bury**  
 35 **says**  
 36 **leopard**  
 37 **friend**  
 38 **anyone**  
 39 **haemorrhage**

*Task 30.5*

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

40 [æ æ æ ɛ ɛ ɛ æ æ æ ɛ ɛ ɛ]

*Task 30.6*

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

- 41 **bat – bet**  
 42 **tan – ten**  
 43 **Bally – belly**  
 44 **can – Ken**  
 45 **DAT – debt**  
 46 **ban – Ben**  
 47 **tally – telly**  
 48 **Annie – any**  
 49 **carry – Kerry**

[æ] → [ɛ]

- 50 **bet – bat**  
 51 **ten – tan**  
 52 **belly – Bally**  
 53 **Ken – can**  
 54 **debt – DAT**  
 55 **Ben – ban**  
 56 **telly – tally**  
 57 **any – Annie**  
 58 **Kerry – carry**

[ɛ] → [æ]

**Task 30.7**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Make sure you make the [æ] open enough (drop your lower jaw), so that its pronunciation is clearly different from [ε].

- |    |                        |    |                                  |
|----|------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| 59 | al fresco [æ, ε]       | 74 | man's best friend [æ, ε, ε]      |
| 60 | bell – pal [ε, æ]      | 75 | as mad as a hatter [æ, æ]        |
| 61 | beg – bag [ε, æ]       | 76 | beckoning Baxter [ε, æ]          |
| 62 | pen – pan [ε, æ]       | 77 | the fat of the land [æ, æ]       |
| 63 | yada yada [æ, æ]       | 78 | as happy as a clam [æ, æ]        |
| 64 | belly – Bally [ε, æ]   | 79 | a feather in my cap [ε, æ]       |
| 65 | bury – Barry [ε, æ]    | 80 | Try to sell it to Sally [ε, æ]   |
| 66 | an acid test [æ, ε]    | 81 | Bengali – Bangladesh [ε, æ, ε]   |
| 67 | Zen – Frank [ε, æ]     | 82 | bell, book and candle [ε, æ]     |
| 68 | neck – knack [ε, æ]    | 83 | Let's bury the hatchet [ε, ε, æ] |
| 69 | ready – rascal [ε, æ]  | 84 | a petrified pan [ε, æ]           |
| 70 | ashes to ashes [æ, æ]  | 85 | like a red rag to a bull [ε, æ]  |
| 71 | beget – tobacco [ε, æ] | 86 | Accidents will happen [æ, æ]     |
| 72 | The Big Apple [æ]      | 87 | The ants are my friends [æ, ε]   |
| 73 | angry young men [æ, ε] |    |                                  |
- 88 the Big Ben – the Big Bang [ε, æ]  
89 Let's let the poop hit the fan [ε, ε, æ]

**Task 30.8**

Redo Tasks 30.2 and 30.3.

**Key****Key to Task 30.3**

The speaker pronounces the following words: **latter**, **batter**, **carry**, **man**, **tally**, **Ben**, **Bally**, **ten**, **beg**, **bet**.

# Pronouncing *merry* and *Mary* [ɛ, ɛ:]

---

### What could go wrong?

The two vowels in the title often sound the same in learners' pronunciation, which makes it difficult to say *merry Mary* understandably. Many native speakers do not make the distinction between these two vowels very clearly, and they seem to rely on very subtle length and other differences. However, such subtleties are hard to control for learners. The first vowel in the word *Mary* [ɛ:] in particular sometimes poses problems. This vowel is often pronounced as (and mistaken for) [ɛ]. It occurs in many highly common words, like *various* and *sharing*, so it is problematic in daily discourse if it is not pronounced clearly. If the distinction between [ɛ] and [ɛ:] can be made by learners, then sometimes the problem of distinguishing them from [æ] (see Chapter 30) may still present itself. If spelled as *a*, then both vowels may be mispronounced as [æ]. The problem with all of these vowels is different for rhotic and non-rhotic speakers.

#### *Task 31.1*

Listen to the examples of learners of English mispronouncing [ɛ] or [ɛ:].

- 1 The Netherlands is **v**ery mild about soft drugs.
- 2 She turned **d**espairing eyes upon the solitude of her life.
- 3 I was interested in that **a**rea of the world.
- 4 but be **c**areful
- 5 the **v**arious different types of wine

### Is this your problem?

#### *Task 31.2*

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- merry – Mary
  - dared – dead
  - fared – fed
  - Kerry – Carey
  - ferry – fairy
- vary – very
  - dairy – Derry
  - Derry – dairy
  - bared – bed
  - fared – fed

**Task 31.3**

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the vowels.

- 6 merry – Mary
- 7 dared – dead
- 8 fared – fed
- 9 Kerry – Carey
- 10 ferry – fairy
- 11 vary – very
- 12 dairy – Derry
- 13 Derry – dairy
- 14 bared – bed
- 15 fared – fed

**Explanation and practice**

Most of all, the distinction between vowels [ɛ] (*merry*) and [ɛ:] (*Mary*) can be made through a difference in length, as the symbol ‘:’ in [ɛ:] suggests. The word *Mary* can be made simply by making the first vowel long, which distinguishes this word from *merry*. Although the vowel in *Mary* is often transcribed as a diphthong [ɛə], in running speech the second part of this vowel, [ə], is not always fully pronounced. Nevertheless, [ɛ:] may naturally turn into two sounds, especially if an *r* follows; for instance in words ending with *re* (like *there* and *care*), and this is okay.

With some exceptions, the vowel [ɛ] is spelled as *e*. Other ways in which this vowel is spelled are *ai* and *ea*. A common spelling for [ɛ:] is *ai*. There is also a category of words that end with an *r* between two vowels, and in these cases the vowel in front of *r* is often pronounced as [ɛ:]. Examples of this are: *ere*, *are*, *ari*, or *ary*.

**Task 31.4**

Repeat the words below while paying attention to spelling.

[ɛ]

- 16 terrible  
 17 petrified  
 18 again  
 19 said  
 20 dealt  
 21 dreamt  
 22 bury  
 23 says  
 24 leopard  
 25 friend  
 26 anyone  
 27 haemorrhage

[ɛ:]

- 28 lair  
 29 chair  
 30 pair  
 31 there  
 32 where  
 33 careful  
 34 sharing  
 35 sparingly  
 36 vary  
 37 scare  
 38 bare  
 39 bear

**Task 31.5**

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel the difference in length.

40 [ɛ ɛ ɛ ɛ: ɛ: ɛ: ɛ ɛ ɛ ɛ: ɛ:]

**Task 31.6**

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

- 41 merry – Mary  
 42 Kerry – Carey  
 43 dead – dared  
 44 Derry – dairy  
 45 ferry – fairy  
 46 very – vary  
 47 bed – bared  
 48 bury – baring  
 49 sherry – sharing

[ɛ] → [ɛ:]

- 50 Mary – merry  
 51 Carey – Kerry  
 52 dared – dead  
 53 dairy – Derry  
 54 fairy – ferry  
 55 vary – very  
 56 bared – bed  
 57 baring – bury  
 58 sharing – sherry

[ɛ:] → [ɛ]

If you can make and perceive the distinction between [ɛ] and [ɛ:] (*merry/Mary*; this chapter) and between [ɛ] and [æ] (*merry/marry*; Chapter [30]), then your final hurdle is the distinction between [ɛ]/[ɛ:] and [æ], i.e. between *merry/Mary* and *marry*. The easiest way to make the distinction is by lowering your jaw a little for [æ].

### Task 31.7

Repeat the phonetic symbols below. Feel how your vocal tract changes shape going from one vowel to the next and back.

## 59 [æ æ æ ɛ: ɛ: æ æ æ ɛ ɛ ɛ]

### Task 31.8

Pronounce the sets of words below. Try and become aware of the difference in the shape of your vocal tract while pronouncing the two vowels.

60 d<sup>æ</sup>red – d<sup>æ</sup>d

61 f<sup>æ</sup>ta – f<sup>æ</sup>tter

62 g<sup>æ</sup>rish – g<sup>æ</sup>gs

[ɛ:] → [æ]

63 M<sup>æ</sup>ry – m<sup>æ</sup>rry

64 h<sup>æ</sup>irdo – h<sup>æ</sup>d

65 d<sup>æ</sup>d – d<sup>æ</sup>red

66 f<sup>æ</sup>tter – f<sup>æ</sup>ta

67 g<sup>æ</sup>gs – g<sup>æ</sup>rish

[æ] → [ɛ:]

68 m<sup>æ</sup>rry – M<sup>æ</sup>ry

69 h<sup>æ</sup>d – h<sup>æ</sup>irdo

70 b<sup>æ</sup>d – b<sup>æ</sup>d

71 k<sup>æ</sup>pt – c<sup>æ</sup>pp<sup>æ</sup>d

72 So r<sup>æ</sup>d! – So r<sup>æ</sup>d!

[ɛ] → [æ]

73 E<sup>æ</sup>sther – A<sup>æ</sup>ster

74 b<sup>æ</sup>lly – B<sup>æ</sup>lly

75 b<sup>æ</sup>d – b<sup>æ</sup>d

76 c<sup>æ</sup>pp<sup>æ</sup>d – k<sup>æ</sup>pt

77 So r<sup>æ</sup>d! – So r<sup>æ</sup>d!

[æ] → [ɛ]

78 A<sup>æ</sup>ster – E<sup>æ</sup>sther

79 B<sup>æ</sup>lly – b<sup>æ</sup>lly

**Task 31.9**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Distinguish between the three focus vowels by making [ɛ:] clearly longer than [ɛ] and [æ] and producing [æ] with a slightly lowered jaw.

- 80 **lair** [ɛ:]  
 84 **then** [ɛ]  
 85 **care** [ɛ:]  
 86 **very** [ɛ]  
 87 **vary** [ɛ:]  
 88 **ferry** [ɛ]  
 89 **chair** [ɛ:]  
 90 **Mary** [ɛ:]  
 91 **there** [ɛ:]  
 92 **share** [ɛ:]  
 93 **Carey** [ɛ:]  
 94 **Kerry** [ɛ]
- 95 **garish** [ɛ:]  
 96 **merry** [ɛ]  
 97 **sherry** [ɛ]  
 98 **sharing** [ɛ:]  
 99 **variation** [ɛ:]  
 100 **variables** [ɛ:]  
 101 **daredevil** [ɛ:, ɛ]  
 102 **deckchair** [ɛ, ɛ:]  
 103 **John Kerry** [ɛ]  
 104 **sharing Feng** [ɛ:, ɛ]  
 105 **Mariah Carey** [ɛ:]  
 106 **You Daredevil!** [ɛ:, ɛ]
- 107 **many of Feng's friends** [ɛ, ɛ, ɛ]  
 108 **I care for Mary and Feng** [ɛ:, ɛ:, ɛ]  
 109 **They're sharing many variables** [ɛ:, ɛ:, ɛ, ɛ:]  
 110 **Take care of their hair like the lair!** [ɛ:, ɛ:, ɛ:, ɛ:]  
 111 **that** [æ]  
 112 **marry** [æ]  
 113 **carry** [æ]  
 114 **Jim Carrey** [æ]  
 115 **That there!** [æ, ɛ:]  
 116 **sharing Sharon** [ɛ:, æ]  
 117 **Absalon's garish dress** [æ, ɛ:, ɛ]  
 118 **Evren – carry – care** [ɛ, æ, ɛ:]  
 119 **carry – care – Kerry** [æ, ɛ:, ɛ]  
 120 **sharing – Nessie – carries** [ɛ:, ɛ, æ]  
 121 **caring for Bennu's badge** [ɛ:, ɛ, æ]  
 122 **merry – marry – Mary** [ɛ, æ, ɛ:]  
 123 **merry – Mary – marry** [ɛ, ɛ:, æ]  
 124 **Mary – merry – marry** [ɛ:, ɛ, æ]  
 125 **various cherries for charity** [ɛ:, ɛ, æ]  
 126 **Merry Mary marries men like Feng** [ɛ, ɛ:, æ, ɛ, ɛ]  
 127 **Carry Ken to the ferry carefully** [æ, ɛ, ɛ, ɛ:]

***Task 31.10***

Redo Tasks 31.2 and 31.3.

**Key**

***Key to Task 31.3***

The speaker pronounces the following words: **merry, dared, fed, Kerry, fairy, vary, dairy, Derry, bed, fed.**



## Avoiding vowel rhotacisation

---

### What could go wrong?

At the end of syllables, confusing *r*-colouring ('rhotacisation') of vowels could take place, even if these vowels are not followed by an [ɹ] (the first sound in **red**). This means that those vowels sound as if they were followed by an [ɹ] sound. If this happens, then the difference between **calls** and **cores** becomes blurred if the speaker has a rhotic style (see Chapter 19). The words **doll** and **door** may also sound similar when both have a rhotacised vowel. Stressed syllables that are not followed by *l* may also be rhotacised; for example, the vowels in **coffee** and **law**. Unstressed vowels are sometimes also rhotacised. The word **method** may sound like '**methord**' if this happens, and, **China** may come out as '**chinar**'. To some ears, the colouring may sound like *l*-colouring. This is a reasonable perception, as the pronunciation of these two sounds is close in some speakers' speech.

#### Task 32.1

Listen to the speakers. They rhotacise the boxed vowels unnecessarily.

- 1 is **culture** and food
- 2 **there's** no music in the **nightingale**
- 3 **This** **China** dish is **famous**.
- 4 **He** **called** her up.
- 5 **I** need my **coffee** hot.

### Is this your problem?

#### Task 32.2

Read out the words below. Your fellow students and teacher can decide whether you rhotacise the boxed vowels unnecessarily. Use the recordings for Task 32.3 for determining this, if necessary.

- method
  - walk
  - coffee
  - called
  - China
- purpose
  - famous
  - Christmas
  - delicious
  - idea

### Task 32.3

Listen to the recording of the speaker who pronounces each of the words below with and without rhotacisation. Can you hear the difference?

- |                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 6 method – method | 11 purpose – purpose     |
| 7 walk – walk     | 12 famous – famous       |
| 8 coffee – coffee | 13 Christmas – Christmas |
| 9 called – called | 14 delicious – delicious |
| 10 China – China  | 15 idea – idea           |

## Explanation and practice

In some learners' native tongues, rhotacisation occurs but it patterns differently from rhotacisation in the English of rhotic speakers of English. In English, rhotacisation usually denotes the existence of an actual *r* in the spelling and is not optional in contexts where there is no *r* in the spelling. The *l* after a vowel (as in *collid*) in particular causes rhotacisation. Also, specific words (without an *l* after a vowel) may be subject to rhotacisation, like *coffee* and *law*. The rhotacised vowels are in stressed syllables in these words. Reduced vowels are also commonly subject to this phenomenon: *famous*, *Christmas*, *delicious*, *idea*, *method*, *methodology*, *media*, *breakfast*, *purpose*, *modern*, *area*, *China*. Besides interference from the native tongue, a reason for rhotacisation may be the impression of some speakers that many native speakers of English rhotacise a lot and that this is just part of good English. Reduced vowels may be confused with rhotacised vowels, perhaps. It may also be that a learner speaks a language that tends not to have consonants at the ends of syllables, and this causes confusion as to how a consonant in that position needs to be pronounced. In general, speakers who have issues distinguishing between syllable-initial *r* and *l* (see Chapter 20) will be more likely to tend towards vowel rhotacisation. The main tip to give to learners is a simple one: stop doing that! More specifically; do not pronounce a rhotacised vowel if there is no *r* behind it in the spelling.

Treating the vowels that may be unnecessarily rhotacised as being independent of the following sound is a way to practise avoiding rhotacisation. You can practise this by inserting silences after vowels, especially before *l* or *r*. Sometimes, it also works if you treat the consonant after the vowel as the beginning of the next syllable.

**Task 32.4**

Repeat the items below the way the speaker does. Try not to rhotacise the boxed vowels.

- |    |                               |    |                               |
|----|-------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 16 | metho <u>u</u> d              | 25 | delicio <u>u</u> *silence* s  |
| 17 | metho <u>o</u> *silence* d    | 26 | breakfast                     |
| 18 | method <u>i</u> s             | 27 | breakfa <u>a</u> *silence* st |
| 19 | metho <u>o</u> *silence* d is | 28 | 'breakfa <u>h</u> st'         |
| 20 | ca <u>l</u>                   | 29 | idea <u>a</u>                 |
| 21 | ca <u>a</u> *silence* ll      | 30 | 'idea <u>h</u> '              |
| 22 | famou <u>s</u>                | 31 | China <u>a</u>                |
| 23 | famou <u>o</u> *silence* s    | 32 | 'China <u>h</u> '             |
| 24 | delicio <u>u</u> s            |    |                               |

**Task 32.5**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Avoid giving a rhotacised quality to the vowels not followed by r.

- |    |                               |    |                                |
|----|-------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 33 | all (no rhotacisation)        | 54 | more (rhotacisation allowed)   |
| 34 | law (no rhotacisation)        | 55 | dears (rhotacisation allowed)  |
| 35 | hall (no rhotacisation)       | 56 | China (no rhotacisation)       |
| 36 | ball (no rhotacisation)       | 57 | ballot (no rhotacisation)      |
| 37 | seal (no rhotacisation)       | 58 | a port (rhotacisation allowed) |
| 38 | curl (rhotacisation allowed)  | 59 | called (no rhotacisation)      |
| 39 | also (no rhotacisation)       | 60 | father (no rhotacisation)      |
| 40 | or so (rhotacisation allowed) | 61 | media (no rhotacisation)       |
| 41 | sole (no rhotacisation)       | 62 | they'll (no rhotacisation)     |
| 42 | cool (no rhotacisation)       | 63 | reveal (no rhotacisation)      |
| 43 | acid (no rhotacisation)       | 64 | revere (rhotacisation allowed) |
| 44 | sore (rhotacisation allowed)  | 65 | caught (no rhotacisation)      |
| 45 | pole (no rhotacisation)       | 66 | course (rhotacisation allowed) |
| 46 | cure (rhotacisation allowed)  | 67 | cannot (no rhotacisation)      |
| 47 | area (no rhotacisation)       | 68 | supply (no rhotacisation)      |
| 48 | pore (rhotacisation allowed)  | 69 | hoarse (rhotacisation allowed) |
| 49 | mall (no rhotacisation)       | 70 | modern (no rhotacisation)      |
| 50 | walk (no rhotacisation)       | 71 | method (no rhotacisation)      |
| 51 | dolls (no rhotacisation)      | 72 | purpose (no rhotacisation)     |
| 52 | there (rhotacisation allowed) | 73 | innovate (no rhotacisation)    |
| 53 | deals (no rhotacisation)      | 74 | appalled (no rhotacisation)    |

75 eloquent (no rhotacisation)

77 Could you? (no rhotacisation)

76 breakfast (no rhotacisation)

78 methodology (no rhotacisation)

79 alms for the needy (no rhotacisation)

80 in the arms of the needy (rhotacisation allowed)

***Task 32.6***

Redo Tasks 32.2 and 32.3.

## Avoiding vowel nasalisation

---

### What could go wrong?

Chapter 32 discussed giving an *r*-like or *l*-like ring to vowels. A similar phenomenon is nasalisation, which comes down to giving a prominent nasal quality to vowels preceding nasal sounds [m], [n], and [ŋ], which are usually written as *m*, *n*, and *ng*. Nasalisation before these sounds is natural and inevitable, but it should not be too strong. Besides nasalisation of the vowel, the combination of vowel and nasal is often shortened in the process, which makes it even more difficult to distinguish the sounds that are intended. It may even happen that speakers nasalise vowels that are followed by *n*, *m*, and *ng*, without actually pronouncing the consonant. If speakers do this, then a final nasal may be misinterpreted, and *man* may sound like the non-existent ‘*mang*’. In a way, this nasalised vowel that is not followed by a nasal consonant already contains the nasal consonant, but this is not possible for English.

#### *Task 33.1*

Listen to the speakers. Listen to how they nasalise the boxed vowels unnecessarily.

- 1 This was not the order in **a**ncient times.
- 2 There is no day for me to look up**o**n.
- 3 The king's s**o**n ascended.
- 4 You will never see her ag**a**in; the king's s**o**n was beside himself with pain.
- 5 I remembered the saying of the great Solom**o**n.

## Is this your problem?

### Task 33.2

Choose one of the two items from each item pair below. Read out each of the ten selected items once. For each pair, the other students circle the item that they hear you say. Check with your audience if your pronunciation was clear.

- **S**am – s**a**ng
- r**a**ng – r**a**n
- th**i**n – th**i**ng
- c**o**n – K**o**ng
- s**u**n – s**u**ng
- b**e** g**a**ng – b**e**g**a**n
- u**o**ng – a p**o**ng
- T**i**m – T**i**n
- K**i**m – k**i**ng
- P**i**ng – p**i**n

### Task 33.3

Listen to the recording. The speaker pronounces one of the two words in each of the word pairs below. Write down which one the speaker pronounces. Check the key at the end of this chapter to find out how successful you are in hearing the difference between the vowels.

- 6 **b**an – b**a**ng
- 7 r**a**ng – r**a**n
- 8 th**i**n – th**i**ng
- 9 c**o**n – K**o**ng
- 10 s**u**n – s**u**ng
- 11 b**e** g**a**ng – b**e**g**a**n
- 12 u**o**ng – a p**o**ng
- 13 T**i**m – T**i**n
- 14 K**i**m – k**i**ng
- 15 P**i**ng – p**i**n

## Explanation and practice

Vowel nasalisation involves redirecting the airflow from the lungs so that relatively much air escapes through the nose during the production of the vowel. A lowering of the velum is involved. When a syllable ends with a nasal sound, then you are advised to not anticipate the pronunciation of this nasal consonant but pronounce a clear, non-nasal vowel and only make the subsequent consonant truly nasal. Sometimes, it also works if you treat the nasal consonant as the beginning of the next syllable.

### Task 33.4

Listen and repeat. Nasalise the boxed vowels as little as possible. Some words that do not end in a nasal have been added for comparison.

- 16 **banning**  
 17 **ba** \*silence\* **nni** \*silence\* ng  
 18 **café**  
 19 **ca** \*silence\* **fé**  
 20 **ca** \*silence\* **n I**  
 21 **can I**  
 22 **after**  
 23 **a** \*silence\* **fter**  
 24 **au** \*silence\* **ntie**  
 25 **auntie**
- 26 **onto**  
 27 **o** \*silence\* **nto**  
 28 **longer**  
 29 **lo** \*silence\* **nger**  
 30 **leftovers**  
 31 **le** \*silence\* **ftovers**  
 32 **le** \*silence\* **nt to**  
 33 **lent to**  
 34 **coming, dearest!**
- 35 **co** \*silence\* **mji** \*silence\* **ng, dearest!**

**Task 33.5**

Listen to the items and repeat them. Avoid giving a nasal quality to the vowels.

- 36 **can I**  
 37 **canon**  
 38 **thingy**  
 39 **thing is**  
 40 **coming**  
 41 **ban on**  
 42 **banning**  
 43 **canonical**  
 44 **Tim – Tin**  
 45 **Ping – pin**  
 46 **sun – sung**  
 47 **come over**  
 48 **Kim – king**
- 49 **rang – ran**  
 50 **con – Kong**  
 51 **ban – bang**  
 52 **thin – thing**  
 53 **café – can I**  
 54 **after – auntie**  
 55 **off to – onto**  
 56 **can overcome**  
 57 **left to – lent to**  
 58 **be gang – began**  
 59 **laughter – lamb to**  
 60 **upon – a pong – a Pom**

**Task 33.6**

Redo Tasks 33.2 and 33.3.

**Key****Key to Task 33.3**

The speaker pronounces the following words: **Sam, rang, thing, con, sun, be gang, upon, Tim, Kim, Ping.**

# Vowel tests

---

## Test 1

Paying attention in particular to the boxed letters, each student records themselves reading out the words in the ‘Dictation item’ columns below and posts this recording in an online forum. Each student then listens to three other students’ recordings and analyses which boxed vowels are problematic. They post their analysis online, for all other students to see. The teacher analyses all the recordings and posts their own analysis for all to see as well. The results should give each student a good impression which chapters they should study again and which problems other students suffer from. Check whether you have problems pronouncing vowels at the beginnings or ends of syllables/words. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the various chapters where sounds are discussed and practised.

<i>Dictation item</i>	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Dictation item</i>	<i>Sound</i>
1 eat	[i:]	18 tick	[ɪ]
2 buzz	[ʌ]	19 daze	[eɪ]
3 about	[ə]	20 pizza	[ə]
4 dead	[ɛ]	21 boss	[ɒ]
5 teet	[i:]	22 soot	[ʊ]
6 suit	[u:]	23 boat	[oʊ]
7 south	[aʊ]	24 pound	[aʊ]
8 work	[ɜ:]	25 take	[eɪ]
9 bowl	[oʊ]	26 Kim	[ɪ]
10 Norse	[ɔ:]	27 roots	[u:]
11 gate	[eɪ]	28 herd	[ɜ:]
12 toil	[ɔɪ]	29 put	[ʊ]
13 cloak	[oʊ]	30 pea	[i:]
14 gut	[ʌ]	31 back	[æ]
15 better	[ɛ]	32 father	[ɑ:]
16 tall	[ɔ:]	33 clock	[ɒ]
17 dare	[ɛ:]	34 buys	[aɪ]



<i>Dictation item</i>	<i>Sound</i>	<i>Dictation item</i>	<i>Sound</i>
35 Luke	[u:]	45 bought	[ɔ:]
36 gut	[ʌ]	46 hard	[ɑ:]
37 look	[ʊ]	47 cot	[ɒ]
38 nurse	[ɜ:]	48 Mary	[ɛ:]
39 gout	[aʊ]	49 sigh	[aɪ]
40 latter	[æ]	50 coy	[ɔɪ]
41 merry	[ɛ]	51 batter	[æ]
42 dare	[ɛ:]	52 pin	[ɪ]
43 cry	[aɪ]	53 toy	[ɔɪ]
44 lark	[ɑ:]	54 gonna	[ə]

## Test 2

Do the same as you did for Test 1, but this time pay attention to the boxed letters in the text below. Below the text are the symbols for the boxed sounds.

1 The bed of the good fairy was covered with coy Ms Carey's belongings.  
 2 There were cups, notes, and letters too, and pieces of knitting. This all  
 3 made for a stout merry collection of stuff. Did Abrisham, the boy  
 4 dairyman play a joke again? The bush cops soon caught the ferry to  
 5 lock up Mary the flirty Fairy. She ran from the heat, but almost opted  
 6 out by hopping on her potty. "Outch," so her calm thoughts went, "this  
 7 seat has got to be cleaned by the third Jock or another bad  
 8 loser." After this gush of deep mental side notes, she got up from the  
 9 cone-like bowl and ate her oat. She vouched that a boat would help her  
 10 escape from the con artist who did this to her. "Oy, he's back," so it hit  
 11 her, "Fall Man!". The law never hit his conscience. He's pushing 20  
 12 and bans all men that cross him. He's unable to face the latter. Boy,  
 13 does he need a nurse to put his mind at ease! His father would have  
 14 had half a bite by now.

## Sounds

1	[ɛ, ʊ, ɛ:, ɔɪ, ɛ:]	8	[u:, ʌ, i:, aɪ, ɒ]
2	[ɜ:, ʌ, ʊ, ɛ, u:, ɪ]	9	[ʊ, ɛɪ, ʊ, aʊ]
3	[eɪ, aʊ, ɛ, ʌ, ɔɪ]	10	[ɒ, ɑ:, u:, ɔɪ, ɪ]
4	[ɛ:, eɪ, ʊ, ɔ, u:, ɔ:]	11	[ɔ:, ɔ:, ɪ, ɪ, ʊ]
5	[ɛ:, ɜ:, æ, i:]	12	[æ, ɛ, i:, ʌ, eɪ, æ, ɔɪ]
6	[aʊ, ɒ, aʊ, ɑ:, ɔ:]	13	[ɜ:, ʊ, aɪ, ɑ:]
7	[i:, aɪ, ɜ:, ɒ, æ]	14	[ɑ:, aɪ]

## Your pronunciation after the course

---

To measure your pronunciation progress, let's record you speaking English and ask fellow students again to evaluate the recording.

### *Task 35.1*

Study and then read out the text below. Record yourself while reading. After reading out the text, talk about a random topic (something that interests you) for two more minutes in the same recording.

My suffering left me sad and gloomy. Academic study and the steady, mindful practice of religion slowly brought me back to life. I have kept up what some people would consider my strange religious practices. After one year of high school, I attended the University of Toronto and took a double-major Bachelor's degree. My majors were Religious Studies and zoology. My fourth-year thesis for Religious Studies concerned certain aspects of the cosmogony theory of Isaac Luria, the great sixteenth-century Kabbalist from Safed. My zoology thesis was a functional analysis of the thyroid gland of the three-toed sloth. I chose the sloth because its demeanour – quiet, calm and introspective – did something to soothe my shattered self. There are two-toed sloths and there are three-toed sloths, the case being determined by the fore-paws of the animals, since all sloths have three claws on their hind-paws. I had the great luck one summer of studying the three-toed sloth in situ in the equatorial jungles of Brazil. It is a highly intriguing creature. Its only real habit is indolence. It sleeps or rests on average 20 hours a day. Our team tested the sleep habits of five wild three-toed sloths by placing on their heads, in the early evening after they had fallen asleep, bright red plastic dishes filled with water. We found them still in place late the next morning, the water of the dishes swarming with insects. The sloth is at its busiest at sunset, using the word 'busy' here in a most relaxed sense. It moves along the bough of a tree in its characteristic upside-down position at the speed of roughly 400 metres an hour. On the ground, it crawls to its

**next tree at the rate of 250 metres an hour, when motivated, which is 440 times slower than a motivated cheetah. Unmotivated, it covers four to five metres in an hour.**

***Task 35.2***

Post your recording in a closed online forum of which the students in this course are members. Have three of your fellow students listen to your recording, and listen to three recordings of fellow students. While listening, write down what you think of the following aspects of each recording:

- voice quality (warm voice, breathy voice, etc.)
- clarity of pronunciation (clear or less clear) and why
- striking vowels or consonants (perhaps a specific sound is very unclear)
- intonation (lively or monotonous)
- speed (rushed or not)

Share your findings with the speakers you have evaluated.

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