

The Sound Structure of English (McCully)

CHAPTER 3: Website

CHAPTER 3: CONSONANTS (CLASSIFICATION)

COMMENT ON IN-CHAPTER EXERCISES

3.1, PAGE 35

You'll find in-text commentary on this one.

3.1, PAGE 36: Can you work out what such pairs of consonants are [ie. consonants that show voiceless/voiced distinctions]? It might help to begin to make a list, something like the following. I've helped you by filling in the first terms.

I included ...

Voiceless	Voiced
/s/	/z/
/f/	/v/

We might add

/p/	/b/
/t/	/d/
/k/	/g/
/ʃ/ ('sh')	/ʒ/ (the sound found in <i>leisure</i> and <i>rouge</i>)

Further pairs of consonants are added in-text.

3.3, PAGE 40: Before we match English consonants to their appropriate places of articulation it might help to try another small experiment. Purse your lips into an 'O' shape (don't actually close your lips), and breathe normally. On an out-breath, lightly flick your middle finger against your right cheek, and at the same time, modify the 'O' shape of your lips into an 'OR' shape, into an 'AH' shape, and then back again. What do you hear?

This is answered in-text.

CHAPTER 3: SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO END-OF-CHAPTER

EXERCISES

Exercise 3.A. This is an exercise concerning what we have symbolised so far as /r/. There's no need at this stage to make transcriptions, but study the following list of words, pronounce each one as neutrally and normally as possible, and note where, and to what extent, /r/ is present in your variety of English:

<i>rip</i>	<i>reap</i>	<i>ripe</i>
<i>bring</i>	<i>pray</i>	<i>try</i>
<i>hard</i>	<i>burp</i>	<i>blurt</i>
<i>fear</i>	<i>lure</i>	<i>fair</i>

Now study - and pronounce – the following list of words and phrases, and once again, note the presence or absence of /r/:

<i>fairies</i>	<i>fear is</i>
<i>car</i>	<i>car is</i>
<i>Armada</i>	<i>Armada is</i>
<i>never</i>	<i>never in</i>
<i>beater in</i>	<i>beta in</i>

What can you observe about the distribution and deployment of /r/, as this occurs in your own variety of English? If you detect an /r/ in your pronunciation of eg. *–mada is* or *beta in*, where might this /r/ come from? (Note: this problem will be revisited in chapters 9 and 10.)

This exercise introduces to you to a diagnostic which will turn out to be useful in identifying English accents. Some speakers of some accents, that is, pronounce 'r' where it occurs after vowels, and do so irrespective of whether the pronounced 'r' is followed by another consonant ('hard', 'burp', 'blurt') or whether it occurs in final position of the word ('fear' etc.)

Other speakers (of different accents) do NOT pronounce these 'r's, though they pronounce 'r' where this occurs initially in words and syllables. I speak an accent of this type myself. However, such speakers DO pronounce word-final 'r's where they are followed by *another word beginning with a vowel*. Therefore, though I do not pronounce 'r' in the word 'car' (spoken in isolation), I DO pronounce 'r' in the phrase 'car is'.

To make life even more interestingly complicated, speakers like me even sometimes pronounce 'r' in phrases such as 'Armada (r) is' – even though no 'r' is present in the written signal, and no 'r' could ever have been present

historically. You may like to revisit this topic again in Chapters 9 and 10, and on the web-pages relevant to those Chapters.

Exercise 2.B. More transcription. Study the following list of words and phrases, and then make a *simple phonemic* transcription of them. Your transcription should reflect the structure underlying your own accent. Remember that transcriptions of this kind *do not contain capital letters, nor marks of punctuation, nor diacritic marks*. They have the now-familiar slash mark (‘/’) at the beginning and end of the word or phrase being transcribed, *not* after each phoneme. In what follows I shall again use the very restricted set of vowels we’ve mentioned in this book to date, so there’s no need to learn new symbols for the transcription of vowels: the vowel in each case will either be /i/ (as in the word *bid* or *pitch*) or /e/ (as in *bed* or *bet*). If you encounter difficulties (and you may), then simply make a note of them, and bear them in mind as you read the next chapter. Here’s the list (I’ve again completed the first couple of problems for you):

wedding	/wedɪŋ/
intent	/ɪntent/
Yes!	/jes/
when it’s wet	/wen ɪts wet/
betting	/betɪŋ/
it’s jelly	/ɪts dʒeli/
This gin is red!	/ðɪs dʒɪn ɪz red/
any wrecked men	/eni rekt men/
this pitch end	/ðɪs pɪtʃ end/
Is Fred dead, then?	/ɪz fred ded ðen/
Is Chris willing?	/ɪz kris wɪlɪŋ/
mend his knitting	/mend hɪz nɪtɪŋ/

Exercise 3.C. The list of consonants above seems simple enough, but there are some difficult conceptual problems still lurking within it. To anticipate one of these problems, make a further list. On the new list, state for each consonant whether it can occur at the beginnings of words/syllables, and whether it can occur at the end. You’ll find that many of the consonants can readily occur in both positions (an example would be /t/, which can occur readily in word-initial position – *tin* – and equally readily in word-final position – *nit*). But some consonants can’t and don’t. What are they?

Here’s the list of consonants from Chapter 3 again. From the list, I’ve picked out those consonants which have a restricted distribution:

CONSONANT PHONEMES. AN INVENTORY AND DIAGNOSTIC

Consonant	Voice	Manner	Place
/p/	-	Plosive	Bilabial
/b/	+	Plosive	Bilabial
/f/	-	Fricative	Labio-dental
/v/	+	Fricative	Labio-dental
/θ/	-	Fricative	Dental
/ð/	+	Fricative	Dental
/t/	-	Plosive	Alveolar
/d/	+	Plosive	Alveolar
/s/	-	Fricative	Alveolar
/z/	+	Fricative	Alveolar
/tʃ/	-	Affricate	Palato-alveolar
/dʒ/	+	Affricate	Palato-alveolar
/ʃ/	-	Fricative	Palatal

/ʒ/ + **Fricative** **Palatal**

[only ever occurs between vowels – *leisure, measure* – or word-finally – *rouge, beige*; is never followed by another consonant]

/k/	-	Plosive	Velar
/g/	+	Plosive	Velar
/n/	+	Nasal (stop)	Alveolar
/m/	+	Nasal (stop)	Bilabial
/ŋ/	+	Nasal (stop)	Velar

[cannot begin words/syllables when it stands on its own; cannot follow other consonants in that position, either]

/l/ + Lateral (approximant) Alveolar

/r/ + **Approximant Post-alveolar**

[some accents allow /r/ to occur freely both before and after vowels, others do not allow post-vocalic ‘r’; ‘r’ cannot usually follow /s/ in the openings of words/syllables]

/j/ + **Approximant Palatal**

[only ever occurs initially in a syllable]

/w/ + **Approximant Labio-velar**

[only ever occurs initially in a syllable]

/h/	-	Glottal	Fricative
/ʍ/	-	Labio-velar	Fricative

[these last two only ever occur initially in a syllable]

Links to other sites

<http://www.phonetics.ucla.edu/vowels/chapter6/consonants1.aiff>

This is (again) a page from Peter Ladefoged's work. By clicking on the link you access a list of consonants, a written list of example-words in which those consonants appear, and can click to hear a recording of those same words being pronounced.

A further site of interest, which includes an interactive chart of IPA consonants (and much else) is

<http://www.paulmeier.com/ipa/consonants.html>

On this site you can click on IPA symbols for individual consonants and hear them being pronounced.