



THE MAIN FEATURES OF PRONUNCIATION FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF VOWEL AND CONSONANT SOUNDS

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Annotation: Pronunciation is one of the most important elements of effective spoken communication. No matter how strong a learner's grammar or vocabulary may be, unclear pronunciation can lead to misunderstanding and communication breakdown. For this reason, understanding the main features of pronunciation is essential, especially in foreign language learning contexts. This study focuses on the key aspects of pronunciation that contribute to successful communication, with particular attention to the characteristics of vowel and consonant sounds.

Keywords: English Phonetics, Effective Communication, Vowel Sounds, Consonant Sounds.

In today's world, English is widely used as a global language in education, business, science, and international communication. Because of this, clear pronunciation is becoming more and more important. Many language learners usually focus on grammar and vocabulary, thinking that these are the most important parts of learning a language. However, even if a speaker uses correct grammar, communication may still fail if the pronunciation is unclear.

Pronunciation is not only about saying individual sounds correctly. It also includes features such as word stress, sentence rhythm, and intonation. These elements help speech sound more natural and easier to understand. If stress or intonation is used incorrectly, the listener may misunderstand the message.

Vowel and consonant sounds are the basic elements of pronunciation. Vowels are especially important because they form the center of syllables. They differ in length, tongue position, and lip shape. Consonants are produced when the airflow is blocked or restricted in the mouth, and they can be voiced or voiceless depending on whether the vocal cords vibrate. Understanding these characteristics helps learners improve their speaking skills step by step.

In any language we can identify a small number of regularly used sounds (vowels and consonants) that call phonemes; for example, the vowels in the words "pin" and "pen" are different phonemes and so are the consonants at the



beginning of the words “pet and bet”. Because of the notoriously confusing nature of English spelling, it is particularly important to learn to think of English pronunciation in terms of phonemes rather than letters of the alphabet.¹³

The compound word and its main characteristic is that it can be analysed into two words, both of which can exist independently as English words. (“English Phonetics and Phonology” Peter Roach page 94 2013). A speaker’s speech habits are a significant factor in the study of speech sounds. Spectrograms of a person’s voice are sometimes referred to as “voice prints,” and they are often said to be as unique as fingerprints. However, this comparison is not entirely accurate. It is still unclear how many individuals may share similar acoustic characteristics. Individual variation plays an important role not only in forensic contexts but also from a general phonetic perspective¹⁴. One more technical term needs to be introduced when we talk about different realizations of phonemes, we sometimes call these realizations allophones¹⁵.

They can be described as a result of applying the phonological rules to the underlying phonemes. We have now discussed some of the rules for different allophones of the phoneme /t/. For example, we know that in most varieties of American English, / t / has a voiced allophone when it occurs between a stressed vowel and an unstressed vowel. We have also illustrated rules that make /r/ and /l/ voiceless when they occur after /p, t, k/. (These rules need more refinement before they can be considered to be generally applicable)¹⁶. A good way of summarizing (and slightly extending) all that we have said about English consonants so far is to list a set of formal statements or rules describing the allophones. These rules are simply descriptions of language behavior. They are not the kind of rules that prescribe what people ought to do. Like most phoneticians, we would not presume to be arbiters of fashion who can declare

¹³ (“English Phonetics and Phonology” Peter Roach page 12 2013).

¹⁴ A course in Phonetics “by Peter Ladefoged page 14 6
edition

¹⁵ “English Phonetics and Phonology” Peter Roach page 43 2013).

¹⁶ “English Phonetics and Phonology” Peter Roach page 43 2013).



what constitutes “good” speech. But phonetics is part of an exact scientific discipline, and that means we should be able to formalize descriptions of speech in terms of a set of precise statement.

Consonants are longer when at the end of a phrase. You can see the application of this statement by comparing the consonants in words such as bib, did, don, nod. Use WaveSurfer (on the CD) to make Copyright 2010 Cengage Learning, Inc. All Rights Reserved. May not be copied, scanned, or duplicated, in whole or in part. Rules for English Consonant Allophones 73 a recording of these words, and then play the recording backward. Are the first two words the same backward and forward? Do the third and fourth words sound like each other when played in reverse? Most of the allophonic rules apply to only selected groups of consonants. (2) Voiceless stops (i.e., / p, t, k /) are aspirated when they are syllable initial, as in words such as pip, test, kick [-p^hIp, t^hst, k^hIk-]. (3) Obstruents—stops and fricatives—classified as voiced (that is, / b, d, g, v, D, z, Z-/) are voiced through only a small part of the articulation when they occur at the end of an utterance or before a voiceless sound. Listen to the / v / when you say try to improve, and the / d / when you say add two. (4) So-called voiced stops and affricates / b, d, g, dZ / are voiceless when syllable initial, except when immediately preceded by a voiced sound (as in a day as compared with this day. Use WaveSurfer to listen to the sday part of this day. Does it sound like stay? (5) Voiceless stops / p, t, k / are unaspirated after / s / in words such as spew, stew, skew. (6) Voiceless obstruents / p, t, k, tS, f, T, s, S / are longer than the corresponding voiced obstruents / b, d, g, dZ, v, D, z, Z / when at the end of a syllable. Words exemplifying this rule are cap as opposed to cab and back as opposed to bag. Try contrasting these words in sentences, and you may be able to hear the differences more clearly. (7) The approximants /w, r, j, l / are at least partially voiceless when they occur after initial / p, t, k /, as in play, twin, cue [pl^heI, tw^hIn, kj^hu]. This is due to the overlapping of the gesture required for aspiration with the voicing gesture required for the approximants. (Note that the formal statement says at least partially voiceless, but the transcription marks the approximants as being completely voiceless. Conflicts between statements and transcriptions of this kind will be discussed further below.) (8) The gestures for consecutive stops overlap, so that stops are unexploded when they occur before another stop in words such as apt [æp } t] and rubbed [rØb } d]. (9) In many accents of English, syllable final / p, t, k / are accompanied by an overlapping glottal stop gesture, as in pronunciations of tip, pit, kick as [tI /^o p, pI /^o t, kI /^o k]. (This is another case where transcription cannot fully describe what is going on.) This rule does not apply to all varieties of English. Some people do not have any glottal stops in these circumstances, and others have glottal stops completely replacing some or all of the voiceless stops.



In any case, even for those who simply add a glottal stop, the statement is not completely accurate.

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