

Università di Cagliari



Corso di Laurea in

Lingue e Culture per la Mediazione Linguistica

Lingua Inglese 2

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THE SOUNDS OF ENGLISH



Instructions

- ◆ This file explains what Phonetics is and the basic information for you to learn how to pronounce words.
- ◆ Therefore, this is an introduction which will help you understand how we hear words and how we can produce them.
- ◆ Phonetics will be a tool to improve your English pronunciation and to teach you how to pronounce new words through the phonetic transcription.

The Sounds of English

PHONETICS

The study of speech sounds and their production.

Articulatory phonetics studies the way vocal organs are used to produce speech sounds

PHONOLOGY

The study of the sound system of a particular language and the general properties displayed by such a system.

In contrast with phonetics, phonology only studies those contrasts in sound (the phonemes) which make different of meaning within languages

WORDS CAN BE BROKEN DOWN
(DIVIDED) INTO MORPHEMES - THEIR
STRUCTURAL CONSTITUENTS

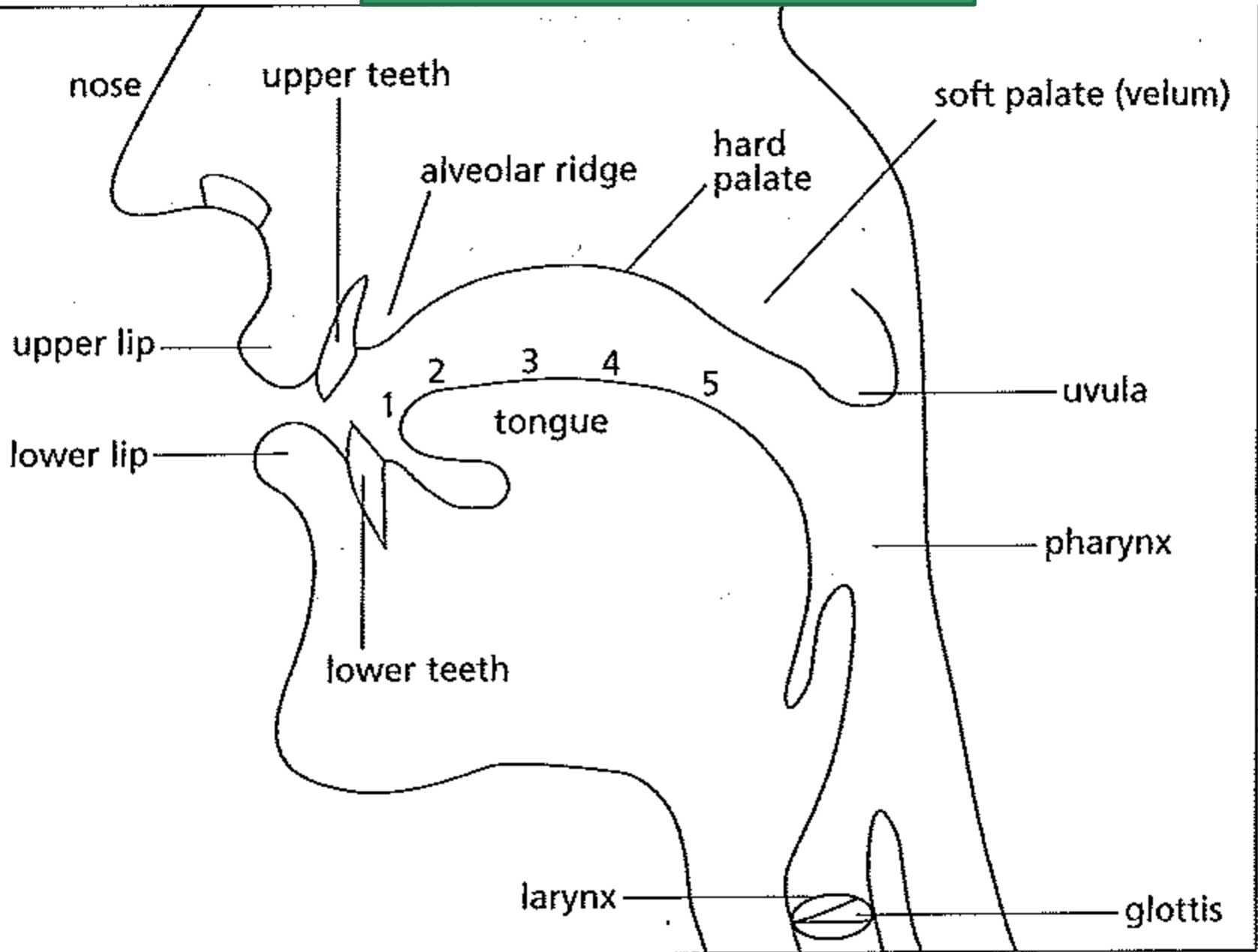
un-employ-ment

THEY CAN ALSO BE BROKEN DOWN INTO
THEIR CONSTITUENT SOUNDS,
PHONEMES

A PHONEME is the smallest unit of sounds
which constitute a change of meaning.

Seat / beat / meat /

The organs of articulation



The sounds of English

- ◆ English has 44 phonemes, 24 consonant and 20 vowel sounds
- ◆ Drammatical differrence between the written alphabet and most English accents.

- ◆ **CONSONANT**

- A sound made with a certain amount of temporary block of the airflow through the mouth.

Consonants

They are articulated in two ways: partial or total blockage of one of the vocal organs. The closing movement may involve the lips, the tongue, or the throat.

From a phonological point of view they occupy the edges or margins of a syllable. They may also appear in clusters or sequences: play [pleɪ]; jump [dʒʌmp]; twelfth [twelfθ].

Some consonants involve the vibration of the vocal cords: they are **voiced** consonants, others have no vocal cord vibration. They are called **voiceless**.

Table 1.1 The place of articulation of English Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Voiceless Plosive	p			t			k	
voiced	b			d			g	
Voiceless Affricate					tʃ			
voiced					dʒ			
Voiceless Fricative		f	θ	s	ʃ			h
voiced		v	ð	z	ʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral				l				
Vibrantless continuant	w			r		j		

Consonants

Some sounds may be confused, as they are articulated in the same way as vowels, but function in the language as consonants:

/j/ in YES and /w/ in WE.

These two consonants are sometimes described as semi-vowels

The sounds of English

◆ VOWEL

A sound made without any such restrictions in the airflow.

The 20 vowel sounds may be divided into 12 'pure' vowel sounds or monothongs, and 8 diphthongs.

<i>The vowels in</i>	<i>Gimson</i>	<i>Jones</i>	<i>F&R</i>	<i>Variants</i>
sea, feet, me, field	i:	i:	i	
him, big, village, women	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ
get, fetch, head, Thames	e	e	ɛ	
sat, hand, ban, plait	æ	æ	æ	a
sun, son, blood, does	ʌ	ʌ	ʌ	
calm, are, father, car	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɑ	
dog, lock, swan, cough	ɒ	ɒ	ɑ	
all, saw, cord, more	ɔ:	ɔ:	ɔ	
put, wolf, good, look	ʊ	u	ʊ	ʊ
soon, do, soup, shoe	u:	u:	u	
bird, her, turn, learn	ɜ:	ɜ:	ʌ (+ r)	ɜ~ (+ r)
the, butter, sofa, about	ə	ə	ə	ə~ (+ r)
ape, waist, they, say	eɪ	eɪ	e	
time, cry, die, high	aɪ	aɪ	ay	
boy, toy, noise, voice	ɔɪ	ɔɪ	ɔy	
so, road, toe, know	əʊ	ou	o	
out, how, house, found	aʊ, ɑʊ	au	aw, æw	
deer, here, fierce, near	ɪə	ɪə	(i + r)	
care, air, bare, bear	eə	ɛə	(ɛ + r)	
poor, sure, tour, lure	ʊə	uə	(u + r)	

Describing vowels

From a phonetic point of view, vowels are articulated with a relatively open configuration of the vocal tract: no part of the mouth is closed and no audible friction is made.

From a phonological point of view, vowels occupy the middle of the syllable. Consonants, by contrast, are found at the edges or margins of syllables.

BIG [bɪg]; CAP [kæp].

The letter Y can be described as either a consonant when it occupies the edges (YET), and as a vowel when it acts as a vowel (MY).

Vowels involve the vibration of the vocal cords (voicing), and their distinctive resonances are made by varying the shape of the mouth.

Figure 1.2 Table showing place of articulation of English vowels

	Front	Centre	Back
Close	i		u
Half-close	ɪ		ʊ
Half-open	e	ə ɜ	ɔ
Open	æ	ʌ	ɑ ɒ

Describing vowels

Length is a very important factor, symbolized by
/:/

SIT [sit] SEAT [si:t]

From the point of view of length, diphthongs are like long vowels, but the first part of a diphthong in English is much longer and louder than the second.

The sounds of English

THE PHONETIC ALPHABET DISTINGUISHES ALL PHONEMES IN WRITING.

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) provides a writing symbol for any linguistic sound of any world language.

The International Phonetic Alphabet

Enables students and linguists to learn and record the pronunciation of languages accurately, thereby avoiding the confusion of inconsistent, conventional spellings.

One aim of the IPA was to provide a unique symbol for each distinctive sound in a language--that is, every sound, or phoneme, that serves to distinguish one word from another.

PROSODY

THE STUDY OF THE PATTERNS OF SOUNDS AND RHYTHMS IN POETRY AND SPEECH

STRESS (ACCENT)

AN EXTRA FORCE USED WHEN PRONOUNCING A PARTICULAR WORD OR SYLLABLE:

In 'strategic' the stress is/falls on the second syllable

ACCENT

A NATIONAL, LOCAL, INDIVIDUAL WAY OF PRONOUNCING WORDS.

A Southern accent, a Northern accent, a Scottish accent,

“To speak with an accent”

The Sounds of English

In English, stressed syllables occur generally at regular intervals.

The stress pattern can sometimes indicate a word's class, for example 'conduct' can be pronounced /' /, a noun, or / ' /, a verb.

Also 'contest', 'contact', ecc.

- ◆ A STRESSED SYLLABLE IS MARKED BY PLACING A HIGH VERTICAL MARK /' / BEFORE IT. A stressed syllable is relatively loud, long in duration, said clearly and distinctly.
- ◆ LONGER WORDS may have one or more secondary stresses coming before the main stress. These are marked with /, /

Laboratory, ceremony, monastery

The Sounds of English

INTONATION MAY BE RISING OR FALLING

In English declarative sentences - statements - are spoken with FALLING intonation.

Interrogative sentences - questions - with RISING intonation.

The Sounds of English

THE FIRST PRONUNCIATION GIVEN IN A
DICTIONARY IS THAT OF GENERAL
BRITISH - British English

Received Pronunciation - RP - plus similar
accents not strongly regional

The Sounds of English

OFTEN THE SAME PHONETIC REPRESENTATION OF A WORD IS ALSO APPROPRIATE FOR AMERICAN SPEECH , WITH SIMPLE AUTOMATIC CHANGES (F.E. TO INSERT /r/ IN SUCH WORDS AS FARM).

If the word is pronounced differently in the US, the dictionary will give its pronunciation separately with the **label US:**

HOT, BUTTER, BETTER, FAST, PAST, PASS, CEMETERY, MONASTERY, MONETARY.