People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Abd Elhafid Boussouf University Center– Mila
Institute of Letters and Languages
Department of Foreign Languages
Branch: English

A Course Handout for: Second-Year BA Students of English

First and Second Term

Subject Field: English Phonetics and Phonology

Dr Djalal Mansour (MCA)

March 2023

Table of Contents

Introduction 01

Course Handout Overall Objectives 03

First Semester's Lessons: On Segmental Phonetics end Phonology 06

Unit One: A Brief Overview on the Scope of Phonetics and Phonology 06

Unit One: A Brief Overview on the Scope of Phonetics and Phonology 16

Unit Three: Vowels and Consonants: 25

Unit Five: The Parameters According to Which Vowel Sounds are Described 45

Unit Six: English Diphthongs and Triphthongs 56

Second-Term Lessons: Above the Segment Level 67

Introduction 67
Unit One: The Syllable 68

2.2 Unit Two: English Stress 72

Unit Three: Weak (Reduced) and Strong (Full) Forms 89

Unit Four: Aspects of Connected Speech 99

List of Works Cited 109

Introduction

English Phonetics and Phonology has come to be viewed as a nerve-racking module by most Algerian freshmen and sophomores reading for a BA whether it be in Applied Language Studies or in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Given the nature of the various *abstract* components the module comprises, students find it immensely difficult to come to full grips with even the basics. English Phonetics and Phonology is, in actual reality, far from being an abstract module. Only because students run into a plethora of terms and definitionsthey are not attuned to that they frame the faulty assumption that it is abstract, thereby tough to absorb into their minds. The following chapters will try to eliminate, amongst other things, why this assumption is groundless.

The book will look at the definition of both phonetics and phonology, attempting to pinpoint the inherent differences between the two linguistic fields which our students often fail to observe. The discussion will then shift into looking in some more detail at the three primary branches of phonetics, viz. articulatory, acoustic and auditory. As most of what will be considered in most parts of this book bears on articulatory phonetics, a sufficiently prolonged description of articulators will be the subject matter of the ensuing chapter.

The third chapter will be devoted to looking at the English sound inventory. The discussion will look at the definition of vowels and consonants. The criteria according to which vowels and consonants could be told apart will be sketched out. A more in-depth account on the English consonantal inventory will ensue in the fourth chapter: therein the various parameters according to which consonants are described, classified and distinguished will be looked at. It is the business of chapter five to take the readers through a lengthy discussion on the vocalic system of English: how the many and varied vowels are

described, classified and set apart. The last chapter will look at the other two categories of vowels English uses: diphthongs and triphthongs.

Herein, I have solely enumerated the principal components of each of the six chapters. In each of the chapters I have imbedded a minor heading tackling one or more concepts bearing unambiguously on the main topic. In the first chapter, for instance, I look at the smallest distinctive unit of phonology: in the second at received pronunciation, etc.

Course Handout Overall Objectives

Incredibly dithery ought to be the expression to hint at theeccentric feeling that kept my intellect stagnant, as it were, for quite a longish while before I altered my tune for good and went for the better of two equally baffling alternatives. The first idea that would spring to the mind of the potential readership would predictably be: Why ever has this booklet been written? After all, there is indeed a wealth of bookson English phonetics and phonology ranging from colossal volumes intended for fully-fledged scholars to reader-friendly, smallish ones written predominantly for people with no or little rudiments about the field. The world libraries, by the same token, pride themselves on the countless research articles, old and new, into phonetics. Does not this seem to entail that writing another book would have no payoffs? Had that been felt to hold legitimate, I would not have ventured into bringing the writing of this book onto completion and, it is my hope, fruition. As language teachers, albeit not seasoned, we fervently believe in the claim that no matter how similar the needs of learners appear on the face of it, beneath the surface, a great deal of differences is concealed, differences that have to be explored, accounted for and paid sufficient heed to when laying down the teaching syllabus.

Having spent a span of time poring over the realm of English phonetics and phonology, I have discerned that most course books would predictably engender a great deal of confusion to our learners for a host of prolific reasons. Their linguistic aptitude betrays them day in, day out. They come to university with inadequate grasp on English morpho-syntax and the English lexical system,let alone its notoriously overwhelming phonology. This makes it well-nigh impossible for them to get to full grips with the rules and the definitions delineated in most books. The way the various components are ordered does not seem to lend sufficient help to our learners in their laborious attempts at figuring out the ABC of phonetics. The overlap I have perceived in how the various notions, basic

though they are, seem to be, at best distractive and daunting to the novice, and at worst harmful and worth avoiding. Quite a few of these students came to me loaded with all sorts of inquiries as to how to go about reading the books and gain sufficient understandings on the subject. Presumably the authors of most of the books I happened to read have not put into serious consideration that their books would fall between the hands of people who are unarmed phonetics-wise and, to render things more intractable, language-wise. These reasons have kindled my keen interest for writing the book you are now reading. I very much hope that my book would contribute to enlightening our students about some of the prerequisite basics of phonetics which would ultimately empower them to gain deeper insights into the intriguing richness of the field out of reading other books which are far richer and more comprehensive than mine. I have made every attempt to impart a reader-friendly trait to the text seeing that, as pointed out earlier on, our students have very patchy knowledge about English. In what follows, I will look at the inherent layout of each of the chapters the book encompasses. I have, in actual reality, striven to make sure that the components of each chapter are set in a conspicuous order which would enable the readers to go smoothly from one element onto another without having to spout, 'How on earth does this element relate to the foregoing and the subsequent ones?

Each chapter is made up of four main headings. The first heading will look at the topic of main concern to the chapter proper. It will, likewise, provide illustrative examples to back up understanding and render the potentially abstract ideas a bit more tangible. The second heading will enumerate the paramount points addressed in the previous heading. They are the unmissable bits (though not figuring in all the chapters) as I opted for labelling them. I have rated the inclusion of this heading important because I am fully cognizant of our students' keenness on swift tips to take away. It could have another role to play;it consolidates the interpretations students might have gleaned out of the first heading.

The third heading will be devoted to exercises. It is my contention that exercises are all too invaluable tuition devices as they enable students to test how close to their goals they have come. As this is going to be used as a course book, some of the exercises will be treated as in-class assignments whilst others will be for extra-curricular training. The exercises will be of increasing levels of intricacy. We believe that the initial phase would be fraught with hurdles and having students do tough exercises would utterly defeat the pedagogical purpose. However, as they read along and delve deeper into the subject matter, the sophistication and intricacy of the exercises would be gradually augmented. This would be manifested in the exercises that occupy the endings, the coda, as it were, of the book.The last heading is tailored to play the indispensable role of an insight-deepener guide. Under this heading, I will suggest one or more other phonetics books out of which avid readers (genuine book-aholics, as the neologism goes), who are keen on gaining more profundity into the subject matter, can delve deeper into what other authors have to offer. I will endeavour to facilitate matters even further through providing not solely the book title; I will adduce the chapter(s) number(s) as well. At the end of the day, this book is crafted to function as, amongst numerous other things, a convenient, time-saving shortcut to the all too scary land of phonetics and phonology.

First Semester's Lessons: On Segmental Phonetics end Phonology

Unit One: A Brief Overview on the Scope of Phonetics and Phonology

As mentioned earlier on in the introduction, it is the business of this chapter to elucidate to the readers the scope of each of the two intimately related fields into a portion of whose realm the remainder of the book will take the readers. A word of caution should be sounded at this very juncture, it is pivotal that a thorough understanding of the scope of both fields is arrived at for the simple reason that as discussions progress and intensify, readers may not find it easy nor wholesome to read on as the words phonetics and phonology will abound in the remainder of the book.

1.1.What is Phonetics

Phonetics is the scientific study of the speech sounds that the human speech organs are capable of producing and are equally meaningful in a language or languages. That is, phoneticians, experts on phonetics, carry out very intricate and detailed experiments in order that they can provide a full description of speech sounds that we utter and perceive and play significant roles in our day-to-day usage of language. Random sounds which escape the vocal tract are, hence, not investigated by phonetics. Phoneticians, to put it in plainer English, concern themselves with the sounds that combine together to form words and other longer stretches of language, not the sounds that do not get into the lexical make-up of language.

A word of caution is in place here: phoneticians are exclusively interested in three main aspects of speech sounds:

How they are produced at the level of the speech producing apparatus;

Their physical and acoustic properties after they have left the speakers' speech organs; and

How the produced sounds are perceived by the listeners' ears and other parts of their auditory and perceptual mechanism, including the ear and the chain of nerves connecting up the ear to the brain.

Phonetics, thereby, could be viewed as a tiny camera that secretly follows the speech sound ever since it embarks on its journey from the speakers' articulatory organs up till its termination juncture, the listeners' auditory organs. The tiny camera tries to provide us with full account, accurate along with fine-grained and clear descriptions of the various traits of the speech sounds during their journey.

The spoken mode of language is all too multi-faceted and wide-scoped that there are two complementary fields of inquiry that make of spoken language their area of expertise. We have heretofore looked in brief at one of the two: phonetics; in what follows a pithy account as to the scope of the second field, phonology, is dwelt upon.

1.2.What is Phonology

Surprisingly enough, phonology is also concerned with the study of speech sounds; however, quite unlike phonetics, phonology is interested not in the articulatory, acoustic and auditory features of sounds. Rather, it is concerned with the investigation of the functionality of every single speech sound in a language or languages. Phonology studies, then, the sound pattern of language. It studies, by way of example, which combinations of sounds are possible in a given linguistic system, which sounds can occur at the beginnings of words, which can in the middle, and which at the end. Another aspect of sounds phonology strives to account for pertains to which sounds play distinctive roles and which are non-distinctive. I am acutely aware that this last sentence does not make

much sense to most readers; however, nothing daunted. I will revisit the notion embodied herein in a while.

It is, indeed, by virtue of studies conducted in English phonology that we now know that the following speech sounds never occur in word-final positions in English words: /h/, /y/ and/r/. No known English word terminates in one of these sounds. This ,however, does not imply that you are bound to stumble across words not adhering to this rule; far from it.Languages, live languages, borrow unceasingly from one another for filling up lexical slots inherentin them, thereby rendering themselves more useable and equally importantly warding off any communicative failures their users might find themselves.

After this digression we go back to the point made a bit earlier: some of you are now wondering why the /r/ is in the cluster of consonants in question. Some are now saying this is grossly untrue: I am perfectly certain that I heard many native speakers, highly educated ones of course, pronounce it in words, such as **bird**, **father**, **lure** and an array of others. Do not forget that in this volume from beginning to end we are describing the sounds produced by educated British speakers. The people whom you have heard repeatedly use pronunciations at odds with the one described herein are by no means using this educated British accent. They probably use American, Canadian, Scottish Irish or some other uneducated British accents, to enumerate just a few. Others might, likewise, be reluctant to take in this view but for a different reason; they argue that the /r/ sound is there to be seen figuring finally in a huge number of words, like **here**, **where**, **wore**, etc. Some indeed have voiced their incredulity to me. The answer is forthcoming.You should bear in mind that whenever we are talking about studies in English phonetics and phonology, we are by no means still within the territories of the orthographic system: we are actually in the realm of pronunciation, in the province of how words are *pronounced*, not how they are

spelt. If a given letter exists in the orthographic make-up of a given word, then, this does not entail that that particular letter is perforce pronounced. The English dictionary is undoubtedly brimful of words wherein many letters are unpronounced. I reiterate: you should invariably remember that the unit of both phonetics and phonology is *the sound* in lieu of *the letter*.

1.3.The Inconsistency of English Spelling

This lack of concurrence between letters and sounds is one of the bafflingly confusing trappings of the English language. Native speakers themselves have been reported to fall short of getting the pronunciation of some arguably unfamiliar words right. A hugely vitalpiece of advice, so to speak, I would confide to beginning learners,is that they should make sure when they meet a given word for the first time in their reading, they should not blindly fall back on the linguistic knowledge already internalised; learning by means of analogy is truly perilous and potentially catastrophic. The only remedy for this routine difficulty I can prescribe is very affordable; whenever you encounter a word for the first time irrespective of how certain you are of the potential accuracy of your pronunciation, consult the dictionary for help. It might sound a lot of work at first blush, but as you compel yourself to practise this as often as the need arises, you will as time wears on start to discern how immensely helpful this easy gesture could be in your learning experience. Accordingly, you will realise the indispensably necessary contributions regular dictionary usage could bring to learners' ultimate success and how much it alleviates their learning tension all along the phases that they go through.

1.4.1. The Smallest Distinctive Unit of Phonology

Any phonological study has as its starting point to find out all the sounds that a given linguistic system possesses. Put in strictly phonological terms, it strives to identify all **the phonemes** of the code under scrutiny.

Before getting any further into our explanation, it behoves me to define what a phoneme is. We will assuredly have many meetings with this term throughout our subsequent discussion. Hence, not understanding what it stands for might well make it well-nigh impossible for you to get to full grips with other ensuing terms and concepts tightly linked to it. A phoneme is simply the smallest unit of phonology which serves to distinguish meaning. (Pike: 1947; Gimson: 1970; Roach: 2002) Put differently, a phoneme is a speech sound which functions to change the meanings of words. For example, /k/ and /l/ enjoy the status of phonemes in the English consonantal inventory. Why? The reason is very conspicuous: if we use /l/ instead of /k/ in **kick**, we would generate a completely different word with an utterly divergent meaning: **lick**. The same holds true for /k/ and /m/ in the words **mat** and **cat**. Does not the usage of /k/ instead of /m/ bring about a word that has a totally different identity? To readily grasp the notion of phoneme it is plausibleand wise to compare it with the numbers. For a given figure (such as, **1**,**7**) to have the status of a number it has to contribute to altering the numerical value of the word following it. Adhering to this line of thought, **2** and **8** are treated as different numbers because **2 laptops** and **8 laptops** are radically different in value, in size, in price, etc. Another equally legitimate insightful analogy could be drawn between the phoneme and the letter. Take the Roman alphabet as an example. It is said to incorporate twenty six letters. Now that you are cognizant of the reason why this example has been adduced, you can come up with the reasoning underpinning this number of letters. It is because of the glaringly obvious fact that if we use one letter instead of another, we generate different words. The following

pairs of words are differentiated by virtue of the existence of different letters therein: **p**in, **b**in; **b**eep, **w**eep; **t**oy, **b**oy; **b**et, **b**it; **s**lap, **s**lip. (The letters setting members of each pair apart are bolded).I very much hope this analogy has helped you to understand more fully what the notion that will prevail in the remainder of this book, the phoneme, is.

1.4.2. Allophonic Variants

Speech sounds, or phonemes, are not pronounced similarly in all phonological environments by different speakers, or even by the selfsame speakers in different conditions for different purposes or under different physical and/or psychological statuses. It is indeed an indisputable trait of sounds that they acquire different, not radically different, identities for a variety of factors, whether they be linguistic or otherwise. That is why it is believed by many phoneticians that a single phoneme should not be viewed as one single sound. Rather, the argument runs, it should be viewed as an umbrella heading, a cover label, of a whole sound family.

To take the argumentation a bit farther from abstract arenas, let us consider some examples. A very salient one that readily springs to mind is the phoneme /l/. You might have noticed thanks to your exposure to native speakers' parole that they do not pronounce this sound in the same way. In word-initial positions and when preceded or/and followed by vowels they produce what is called a clear /l/; in word or sentence final positions or when followed by other consonants, they produce a dark /l/. The two pronunciations of this phoneme are labelled its**allophonic variants** or simply **allophones** of the phoneme /l/. The dark and clear /l/ are merely variants of this phoneme because they inherently do not have any power to bring about differences between words, whether you pronounce the /l/ in **lap** or **lick** as **clear** or **dark**, the words' lexical significance will not be altered. None the less,

using the dark in lieu of the clear (which is the accurate, native pronunciation) will impart a foreign taste, as it were, to the accent of the speaker.

To render the idea of allophonic variant far easier to grasp, it seems prudent that I take recourse to the learners' first academic language, Standard Modern Arabic. The /l/ phoneme in this educated variety of Arabic seems to behave similarly to its English counterpart; it has the same allophones both the clear and the dark. Take the Arabic word for God, Allah; in this very word, it is clear in some environments and dark in others. However, the phonological rules governing which is licit and which is otherwise are at odds with the English ones.

1.4.3. Minimal Pairs

Now that the two concepts have been defined, the time is ripe to introduce you to another notion that is inextricably related to the phoneme: **minimal pairs**. What does minimal pair denote and why is it considered vital to imbed in this introductory book to phonetics and phonology?

A minimal pair refers to a pair of words the constituents of which are made different from one another by one, and only one, phoneme. The pairs, **pit**, **bit**; **set**, **wet**; **hit**, **fit**; **book**, **look**; **see**, **bee**; **think**, **wink**are just illustrative examples. Can you perceive that the members of each pair are different from one another because of only one phoneme. Is not *book* different from *look* because of the fact that the first phoneme is the /b/ in book, whereas in look it is /k/. Irrespective of this one difference the two words would be identical. This procedure, that is minimal pairs analysis, is deployed by phonologists to establish the phonemes used in the sound inventory of a hitherto unstudied language (languages that have never been studied, predominantly those without any writing system).

1.5.Segmental Phonology

What we have discussed so far as topics within the general scope of phonology constitute, in fact, only one broad branch of phonology, **segmental phonology**. It is called segmental because it is exclusively concerned with the systematic study of individual sounds.(Chalker and Weiner: 1994) The adjective segmental is derived from the noun segment which simply means speech sound, either phoneme or allophone. The other broad branch of phonology is termed **suprasegmental phonology**. It bears this name because it studies aspects of spoken language extending beyond the level of individual sounds. It studies, more clearly, the properties of sounds in combination. It is this branch which studies, stress and intonation, amongst other things.

1.6.Top Tips to Take Away

There are scientific fields that concern themselves with the study of speech sounds, phonetics and phonology;

Whilst phonetics is exclusively interested in the articulatory, acoustic and auditory properties of sounds, phonology is solely interested in the functionality of speech sounds in a given language or languages;

Phonetics, in turn, incorporates three main sub-branches, namely articulatory, acoustic and auditory;

The smallest distinctive unit in any phonological system of any language in the world is labelled phoneme;

A phoneme is simply a speech sound, a unit of spoken language, that serves to bring about lexical differences between words;

To arrive at the exact number and nature of the phonemes existent in a given tongue, phonologists utilise a procedure called minimal pair analysis;

Phonology is split into two principal branches, segmental and suprasegmental;

While segmental phonology takes as its subject of inquiry the properties of separate phonemes, how each individual phoneme is used in a certain code, suprasegmental phonology looks at the properties that sounds acquire when in combination;

Stress and intonation are indeed two salient aspects of speech sounds in combination that constitute inevitabilities for any suprasegmental phonology scholar.

1.7 Exercises

17.1 Exercise One: set, if any, the errors figuring in the statements below right:

Phonetics are the non-scientific field of inquiry that studies just some of the few sounds that human beings produce.

Phonetics is made up of four main sub-fields, namely articulatory, combinatory, sensational, and acoustic.

Articulated phonology is interested chiefly in how humans deploy their speech organs for generating sounds.

Phonology is a non-scientific study of the sound patterns of a language or languages.It studies, likewise, the combinations of speech sounds as well as their distributional patterns.

Phonology comprises two main branches: supplementary and non-supplementary phonology.

1.7.2 Exercise Two: give four examples of minimal pairs the constituents of which are made different by means of vocalic elements.

Give four examples of minimal pairs the constituents of which are made different owing to a consonantal element.

1.6.1. **Exercise Three**: define the following three notions in brief and consolidate your definitions by illustrative examples other than the ones used above:

The phoneme, the allophone and minimal pairs.

1.8 **Recommendations for more insightful readings**

The phonetics and phonology literature is replete with books allotting much space to addressing what the scope of each of the two fields discussed above incorporates. Some reader-friendly books to recommend are the following: An Introduction of Phonetics and Phonology (2009), by Davenport and Hannahs, chapter one; A Manual of English Phonetics and Phonology (2005) by, Skandera and Burleigh, chapter one;Phonetics (2000) by Roach, chapters one and two; Gimson's Pronunciation of English (1972) by Cruttenden, chapter one, and The Pronunciation of English (2004) by Kreidler, chapter one.

Unit Two: The Speech-Producing Apparatus

We pointed out when looking at phonetics above that amongst the aspects of speech of major concern to phoneticians are articulatory features of sounds. First and foremost, it would not be wise to get into talking about articulatory trappings of sounds and using illusive terms such as *palate-alveolar*, *uvular*, *glottal* and so forth without first gaining a general overview of the organs responsible for the task of generating the fascinatingly big and varied number of speech sounds. Those organs in our bodies which are responsible for speech production are labelled**speech organs**,**thespeech producingapparatus**, or alternatively **articulators**. In the ensuing discussion we will be using the three terms synonymously, unless the argumentation calls for finer details.

Another equally important label that should be mentioned at this juncture is the **vocal tract**. This is a name that is used to refer to the articulators and the passage way through which air moves and which are located above the larynx, to be looked at below. Additionally, as we will address in what follows, as comprehensively as space and purposes behind the writing of the book allow, the organs that are immediately concerned with imparting to the speech organs their individual traits that sets them apart, we will herein look at the first two phases air goes through before it starts accumulating properties and turning into speech sounds. Because speech is, asis often referred to, modified breathing. Prior to starting its journey towards becoming a speech sound, air has first to be generated. The first organ to talk about then whenever when embark on discusses speech sounds is **the lungs** because they are the producers of air indispensable for sound production. Lungs, then, provide the other upper organs with the air which they turn into speech sounds. However, the lungs are not of themselves involved in this process.

We first inhale air into the lungs through our noses and/or mouths. Before it reaches the lungs, the rib cage has to be pushed upwards and outwards thanks to some muscles attached to them. The raising of the rib cage will leave sufficient space in the chest for the lungs to take in the inhaled air. Afterwards, and for the air to be sent back again into the upper organs (this time to be used for sound production), the rib cage will be brought into its former position. The lowering of the rib-cage will push the lungs downwards, by which process the inhaled air is forced out of them into the *trachea*.

The trachea is the anatomical name given to the tube-shaped organ made of cartilages that is lying immediately above the lungs through which air passes before it reaches the larynx (where the first modification will take place). The trachea is also used for taking the inhaled air into the lungs after it has gone through the larynx.

The speech producing apparatus is made up of a number of organs each of which is responsible together with another organ at least for the production of a given speech sound or sounds. *Together with another organ* is hugely important here: hardly ever at all can we produce one sound using one and only one speech organ. For a given sound to be pronounced, two or more organs have to articulate against one another. (Roach: 2009)

For ease of explanation, I would split the speech organs, as is done in some phonetics books (by no means all), into two clear-cut sets: active articulators and passive articulators.

2.1. The Active Articulators

Asthe name might suggest,the label refers to the speech organs which are capable of moving and assuming different positions while sounds are being produced. (Odgen: 2009) They can legitimately be labelled *mobile articulators*. They are the following: the tongue, the lower lip, the lower teeth, the lower jaw the soft palate, and the vocal folds.

2.1.1. The tongue: is by far the most mobile of all articulators. Its agility and versatility is borne witness to by the fact that it is involved in the production of almost all speech sounds produced. It is involved in the generation of vowels and consonants alike. Its vital importance in the worlds' languages is also plain in the fact that in many languages of the world, English, Arabic and French included, the same word, tongue, is used to refer to both language and organ. To take English as an illustration, we can equally accurately say the Anglo-Saxon tongue or the Anglo-Saxon language.

2.1.2. The lower lip: is also involved in the production of many sounds. In English, for instance, it is one of the organs used for producing /m/, /p/, /f/, and so forth. It either comes in contact with the upper lip or the upper teeth. The lips are, likewise, indispensable organs for the generation of vowel sounds.

2.1.3. The lower teeth: are amongst the active articulators because they can be brought into firm contact with the upper teeth or the upper lips. The lower teeth can,likewise, articulate with the tongue for the production of some sounds.

2.1.4. The soft palate:refers to that part of the roof of the mouth, the upper surface of the mouth, which is made of soft fleshy material, hence the name. It lies immediately behind that part of the tongue which is a complete contrast to it because it is bony and hard, the hard palate (to be defined later). The soft palate has another name which is used a great deal in the phonetics literature, **the velum**. Whilst the soft palate is an Anglo-Saxon term, velum is a Greek label. None the less, the Anglo-Saxon name enjoys a higher density of occurrence than its Latin counterpart.

2.1.5. The vocal folds: in some other books an alternative name is used, the vocal cords. I have opted herein to use the vocal folds because one of the authorities in the phonetics realm, Roach, dubs the name as being old-fashioned. They refer to the two elastic cord-like

organs that are situated in the larynx. Their elasticity enables them to be brought together and pushed apart as the lung-air reaches them. The opening that is generated when the folds are apart is called the **glottis**.

2.2. The Passive Articulators

It bears this name because they are organs that have either very slight movement, or are utterly immobile in the process of sound production. They are, in different wordings, the part of the speech producing apparatus towards which mobile organs move or articulate against for the production of sounds. This category of sounds, then, incorporates: the upper lip, the upper teeth, the alveolar ridge and the hard palate.

2.2.1. The upper lip: may articulate against the lower lip for the production of sounds like /m/, /p/.

2.2.2. The upper teeth: they articulate mainly against the lower teeth for the production of sounds like the ones at the beginning of think, thorn, this and those: the /T/ and /D/ sound.

2.2.3. The alveolar ridge (the tooth ridge): it is the organ that is situated behind the upper front teeth. To make matters easer to grasp, the tooth ridge is the anatomical name given to the part of the mouth the tip of the tongue articulates against in the production of sounds, such as the ones that figure bolded in the following words: a**dd**uce, a**tt**une, a**nn**ounce.

2.2.4. The hard palate: refers to that part of the roof of the mouth, or the ceiling of the mouth as some would prefer to dub it, which lies immediately behind the alveolar ridge. It is made of very hard bone-like material; it is a glar contrast to its adjacent organ, the soft palate (looked at above). The only organ with which the hard palate comes into full contact or merely approximates is the tongue. It is the organ involved in the generation of sounds like /r/, /j/.This last rubric has brought discussions on the active and passive articulators to

a close. A word of caution is in order here, however. We have not described all the components of the speech producing apparatus; we confined ourselves to the ones deployed by English speakers for the generation of the English sound.

2.3. Are Speech Organs Exclusively So?

In other, less opaque wording: Are those organs which we have been scrutinising heretofore and which are labelled organs of speech used solely for the generation of sounds. In other words, is the only biological function these organs have the production of speech sounds? The answer is indubitably a categorical no; far from it. Every and each of the organs deployed by homo-sapiens irrespective of which tongue they happen to speak is used for one or more other biological functions. (O'Connor: 1973)

Take, for example, the tongue, the most versatile organ of speech. It is used, amongst other things, in the process of food mastication. It is deemed as one of the first organs in the food-digesting chain at which food undergoes changes before it reachesone of its final phases, viz, the stomach. It helps to move the food around in the mouth. It, by the same token, helps by virtue of its muscles to push food downwards into the throat. We should not forget that without the tongue we would not be able to tell savoury food from bitter,salty and sour.

The teeth, upper and lower, are indeed irreplaceable organs in the digestion of food. They help, amongst other roles, to shred food into smaller pieces capable of being transported, as it were, by the tongue and other organs, into other chambers in the body where it undergoes finer digestion.

Now that a succinct account regarding the articulators was sketched, we will launch in the following chapter onto another discussion which is intimately tied to this, a general, introductory overview on two of the terms that will prevail in the forthcoming

parts of the book: vowels and consonants and which constitute two of the building blocks of spoken language.

2.4. Top Tips to Take Away

The tongue is, without doubt, the most active, vigorous speech organ of all: if one were to have, God forbid, his tongue removed, one would not be able to produce the overwhelming majority of sounds irrespective of which tongue they happen to be using.

There are some other phoneticians who deploy a different dichotomy to the one discussed above for differentiating between the two major sets of articulators: they use points of articulation to refer to passive articulators and articulators to refer to their active counterparts.

Not all the articulators are used in all the world's living languages, though most are used. To take a very good case in point, nowhere in the lexicon of Standard British English can we find in the generation of which the uvula is amongst the articulators. Some might come up with a counterargument to ours; they might say that in Scotland people use words like the second one in the Loch Ness Monster (a name given to a massive monster believed by some to live or at least had lived in Loch Ness, a lake in Scotland). To defend our argument, we would just say: are all the varieties of English spoken in British Isles identical. By no means yes. There some minor and major differences between them. Some them being pronunciation differences and graphological ones. Hence, the existence in phonetics and phonology books of labels used to refer to the various varieties of British English, like English English (spoken in England), Irish English (spoken in Ireland) and Scottish English spoken in Scotland. Intriguingly, there are other sub-varieties coming under these and other varieties. Londoners, by way of example, talk differently from people dwelling in Kent. Noticeable, though not necessarily many differences, can be spot

between Kentish speakers and people living in Hertfordshire, in Yorkshire in Northampton, etc.

2.5 Practical Assignments

2.5.1. Exercise One: say whether the following definitions are error-free as well as comprehensive. Try to come up with accurate completions to the patchy ones and set right what is erroneous.

The organs which we use for sound production are generically called phoneme-producing device;

There are five organs whereby homo-sapiens are able to produce all the sounds that they produce for a comfortable flow of their daily interactions;

Articulators fall into three clear-cut categories; passive, active and pseudo active;

The tongue is doubtless the least agile of all the organs of speech; in reality, it is involved in the production of but a tiny minority of the whole range of sounds capable of being produced by humans.

The upper teeth, the lower lip and the velum all fall into the category of passive articulators.

The tongue can never come into contact with the alveolar ridge and the hard palate.

The tongue is solely used for the generation of consonant sounds.

The English language does not have in its sound inventory sounds produced by means of the soft palate aided by another organ.

The soft palate is made of very hard, coarse material and this is the reason why it has been given this name.

Active articulators are called as such because they tend to do the most work in the all two labour-intensive enterprise of sound manufacturing.

On the other hand, passive articulators have been allotted this name owing to the fact that they have conspired to put the all the more weighty burden of sound production on their adjacent counterparts.

2.5.2. Exercise Two: define in brief wording the following terms trying as best you could to distance both your structures and the words you choose from the ones used in the body of the text.

The speech-producing apparatus;

The tongue; the hard and soft palate together with alveolar ridge;

The upper and lower front teeth and lips;

Active and passive articulators.

2.5.3. Exercise Three: answer the following question in light of the insight you have got from the foregoing discussion:

How is the massive articulatory role the tongue entertains manifested in many of the world's languages?

Is it true that the apparently exhausting job of speech production comes at the periphery of the range of responsibilities these organs are assigned? In either case, back up you answer with illustrative examples, most preferably of your own reasoning.

2.6. Recommendations for More Insightful Readings

Where better to find more extensive and equally illuminating account on articulators, their various names and function than in a book which is predominantly, if not exclusively, about them. To dispel some myths this chapter has fallen short of doing and/or to gain a wide range of insights only touched on or not mentioned altogether in this book due to its being aimed at less advanced students, read Articulatory Phonetics (2006) by Bickford and Floyd. You might also want to read Better English Pronunciation (1980) by O'Connor, chapter two.

Unit Three: Vowels and Consonants:

Two words have figured many a time in the foregoing discussion without it being made clear what each denotes. Before I get further in my discussion, I recommend that you go back to the previous chapter and try to comprehend more fully what phonetics and phonology study sound-wise: failure to understand these two definitions will doubtless engender failure to understand most of what will ensue herein.

To the heart of the matter now: phoneticians and phonologists for the sake of making manageable the study of sounds, split the sounds of speech into two broad often clear-cut categories: vowels and consonants. As vowels and consonants are vital for both phonetics and phonology, and as each field is interested in properties of speech sounds that fall outside the realm of the other field, we note that vowels and consonants have two different definitions one is phonetic; the other phonological

3.1. What are Vowels and Consonants from a Phonetic Perspective

From a phonetic perspective, vowels are speech sounds in the production of which no or a negligibly small obstruction is made to lung-air. In other words, in the production of vowels, the journey lung air makes ever since it is pushed upwards by lung pressure is not blocked by any organ of speech: its upward movement is free. We can potentially safely compare the movement of the air while vowels are produced to a bus driver going along a road where no other vehicle is allowed to be and where there is no checkpoint to bring it to a mandatory halt, will not the bus make its journey without unceacingly?

On the other hand, a consonant is a speech sound in the production of which the air coming up from the lungs is not allowed to make its journey unobstructed. In the generation of any consonant, then, there are two or more speech organs which move towards each other to obstruct the free movement of the airflow. The obstruction to the air

could be made at different points in the speech chain. It could happen at the level of the vocal folds, at the level of the lips, the teeth, and the list goes on. It must have been manifestly obvious by now that the sole criterion phoneticians deploy to differentiate vowels from consonants is **the presence or absence of obstruction to the pulmonic air**, **lung-air**. (Gimson: 1970)

3.2. What are Vowels and Consonants from a Phonological Perspective

Now that the two terms have been defined from a phonetic vantagepoint, we will proceed into how phonologists go about putting sounds into the two broad categories. Recall that phonology is not interested in how speech sounds are produced. Rather, as it has been pointed out above, phonological studies concern themselves with the properties of sounds in system, the sound pattern of a language or languages.

Consonants, then, are those segments that have a syllable-marginal role; they are those sounds that are typically seen occupying the edges, the fringes of syllables. The term consonant, accordingly, designates a speech sound that does not occur in the centre of any syllable. /t/, /d/, /f/ etcetera are labelled consonants because they do not occur in the middle, the centre of words like, **table**, **bat**, **attire**; **dolphin**, **dodo bird**, **beard**; **fragile**, **half**, **fabulous**. Notice that they occur solely at the edges of this bunch of words. The centre of the syllable is left to another category of sounds, vowels. Vowels, then, refer to the variety of speech sounds that has a syllable-central position. They are the peak, the nucleus of syllables as some phonologists would opt for calling them. All the vowels in the following words occupy the centre of the syllables, **alone**, **father**, **breath**, **shambles**, etc.

3.3. Semi vowels or semi consonants

Rules and exceptions go hand in hand. Hardly ever at all are we likely to come across rules which are exceptionless even in the realm of phonetics and phonology. We have been looking at vowels and consonants above as if the distinction between them is invariably clear-cut and unproblematic. Though the overwhelming majority of sounds fall legitimately neatly into one of the major categories; there are some sounds which defy this classificatory framework. It is noteworthy that,globally speaking, whenever a speech sound is said to be belonging to one of the categories by phonologists then phoneticians accounts will not be at odds with the phonologists. By way of example, the sound bolded in **b**elly is said to be a consonant by phoneticians and phonologists alike.Intriguingly enough, there two consonants in English which do not abide by this maxim. /w/ and /j/ are from a phonetic point of view vowel-like and from a phonological point of view consonants-like. What explains this? They are deemed vowels or vowel-like sounds because in their production there is no stricture or narrowing needed to obstruct air-flow, which is an inherent feature of vowels. For a sound to be licitly called a consonant some degree of obstruction has to be made to air flow. Hence, because this feature is absent in /w/ and /j/, it would not be fair to call them true consonants. Froma phonological perspective, however, they function as consonants in the sense that they appear marginally in syllables. Another reason which asserts their being consonant is the behaviour of the indefinite article when followed by words whose initial sounds are either /w/ or /j/. For instance, we say a **w**edding-ring, a **w**ise wife and a **y**oung groom, a **u**nique husband.

These sounds are, in a nutshell, vowels from a phonetic point of view and consonants from a phonological point of view. To sort things out and come up with a label that will fit their peculiar traits, phoneticians term them **semivowels** or **semiconsonants**.

3.4. Received Pronunciation

It is pivotally important that I introduce a name that figures extensively almost whenever pronunciation is the topic under scrutiny. The word **received pronunciation** or its initialism **RP** are used to refer to the accent spoken mainly in the British Isles and deemed by many to be the accent of educated people. Hence, this accent is used mainly by people who have had some former decent schooling because it is highly unlikely to run into laymen in Britain abiding by all the rules of pronunciation this accent requires of its speakers.

In a nut shell, we can safely accurately call this name, though through using a lengthy construction, the **schooled people's accent which they use in formal contexts**. The last part of this sentence is key. Even those people who are purported to use RP do not necessarily use it whenever they are called upon to use language: they do not typically use it in their daily interactions which operate outside formal milieus. They use the accent of the surrounding community in its stead. This, nonetheless, does not imply that the accent used outside formal context has to be markedly different from RP. There are many accents in the British Isles which share many affinities with RP.

Back to the make-up of the word *per se*: so many of the Algerian learners are led astray, so to speak, by this name. They seem to know only one of the primary meanings of the word *received*, like the one it conveys in: *she received a daunting reply from the company.* However, the meaning it carries here is far removed from this: interestingly enough, it means *accepted*. Then, RP is used to refer to the accent that has been deemed to be the only accent accepted in schools and universities and other institutions. Because RP has not emerged only comparatively recently; it dates back to the nineteenth century. It was the accent used by students and teachers who studied and taught at prestigious

universities mainly Oxford and/or Cambridge. It was also the accent used and taught to the privileged few at public schools. In order that you will not gain faulty understanding fuelled by the word public: *public* does not mean the meaning that you might have already thought of: people irrespective of their socio-economic status can attend: far from it. Public is the British English (henceforth BE) word for private. The word BE uses to refer to schools that the poor as well as the rich can go to is state school.

Nowadays, however, contemporary phoneticians, by no means all, prefer to use other terms which are less confusing to foreign learners because in some countries in the world teachers require of their students to try their hardest to imitate speakers of this posh accent. Many students (you were possibly one of them prior to reading these hopefully enlightening paragraphs) find it hard to imitate an accent whose speakers are non-existent. The immense spread of the television and the World Wide Web have made of using some of the terms introduced below a tangible reality.

The term that most phoneticians that have welcomed the shift is **BBC Accent**. In other words, it is the accent that news readers on the BBC channels be they radio or TV use. However, even this second label is not entirely without problems. Not all the news readers and programme presenters use RP; some use American accents; others use Scottish accents, etc. Other labels which are less contentious are the **queen accent**, **the king accent**.

For the purposes of this book, I surmise that knowing the term BBC accent will be of much help because as you know the characteristics of this accent (as the discussion unfolds) you will be able to identify who on the BBC programmes uses RP and who uses a different accent. You will ultimately be able to find people to imitate because ours happened to be amongst the countries that require of English students to acquire RP.

3.5. Exercise: are the following definitions in line with information presented in this chapter? Come up with accurate amendments when necessar.

Speech sounds are divided into two categories from a phonological point of view; phoneticians distinguish four main classes of sounds.

Vowels and consonants are phonological units that never crop upin any phonetic discussion.

To differentiate between vowels and consonants from a phonetic point of view we draw on the following parameter, the lowering or raising of the velum.

From a phonological vantage point, vowels and consonants are set apart on the basis of how frequently they occur in the middle and end of prepositions and articles.

A vowel, phonetic-wise, is a speech sound in the production of which colossal obstruction to the air flow is made. On the other hand, consonants are produced with the least obstruction to the airflow.

3.6. Recommendations for More Insightful Readings

Being the building blocks of spoken language, vowels and consonants figure abundantly in all books of phonetics and phonology. None the less, not all books on offer address the thorny issue (thorny for beginners) of what the two terms are, what characterises them and how they behave. For some of the ABC around vowels and consonants, read An Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology (1995) by Clark and Yallop, chapter two; An Introduction of Phonetics and Phonology (2005) by Davenport and Hannahs, chapter two and A Manual of English Phonetics and Phonology (2005) by Skandera and Burleigh, chapters three and four.

Unit Four: The Parameters According to which Consonants are Classified

For the sake of making possible and exhaustive the description, classification and differentiation amongst consonant sounds, phoneticians typically use a set of four criteria. The following paragraphs will look at each in turn.

4.1. The Airstream Mechanism

Itrefers to how the air is used in the production of speech sounds. More specifically, in the production of consonants, is the air sucked inwards (that is, into the lungs), or forced outwards (that is, by and out of the lungs)? Secondly, is the air used for consonant production lung-generated or does it come out of different sources? (Laver: 1994)

Taking the first question first, if the air is forced outwards, then the resultant consonant is labelled **eggressive**. All usual English consonants fall neatly into this category: all English consonants are eggressive. On the other hand, if the air involved in the production of consonants is sucked inwards, then the resultant speech sound is labelled **ingressive**. Two salient examples of ingressives in English are the sounds we produce to signal irritation and the sound produced to encourage horses to go faster.

To recapitulate then, all English sounds recurring in common parlance are eggressives: only a minute proportion of consonants are ingressive. The latter are, none the less, not considered phonemes owing to the fact that they entertain no contrastive weight whatsoever.

To the second question now; if the generator of the air used in the production of a given consonant are the lungs, then the resulting consonant is said to be **pulmonic**. By contrast, if lungs are not in charge of the needed air, then the resulting sound is **non-**

pulmonic. All normal English consonant phonemes fall neatly into the former category. Blending the answers of our two questions together would lead us to conclude that all normal English consonant phonemes are eggressive, pulmonic sounds. It is noteworthy that if we are to use this criterion only, we would not be able by any means to differentiate the big number of consonants the English sound inventory possesses in abundance. Our discussion will now be devoted to the second criterion, namely the place of articulation.

4.2. Place of Articulation

As we have alluded earlier on, if the air speech mechanism were the only criterion deployed, our descriptive, classificatory framework would fall short of portraying the many differences amongst consonants. This second criterion is then invoked by phoneticians to contribute to a more detailed account on the properties of consonants.

It means at which place in the speech chain and by which organs consonants are produced. We said earlier when considering the speech chain that forany speech sound to be made, two or more organs have to come into contact. As there are many organs of speech which can be brought into contact with one another for speech generation, we can identify many places of articulation. Note that the place of articulation derives its name from the very organs involved in the articulation procedure proper.Some of the names, however, are not English ones, they are Greek names.

4.2.1. Bilabials: a bilabial sound, as the name might lead you to conjecture, is made by pressing the upper and the lower lips together. **Bi** means involving two things, herein the two lips; and **labium** is the Latin name for lips. English has a number of bilabials. They occur at the beginnings of the following words: **papa**, **mama**, **bull**, **wool**. They are written in phonemic symbols as follows: /p/, /m/, / b/ and /w/. Bilabials are a set of sounds which, due to their being easy to produce, are amongst the very first sounds babies irrespective of

the languages that they are exposed to produce or attempt to. English youngish kids, for instance, use the sound at the beginning of **wet** (the /w/ sound) instead of the /r/ sound in words, such as **rabbit**, **very**, because the making of /w/ gives rise to no articulatory difficulty, while it is truly troublesome for a two-year old to get its organs to produce the /r/ sound.

4.2.2. Labiodentals: they are produced thanks to the bringing together of the upper front teeth and the lower lip. The English tongue possesses two labiodentals, /f/ and /v/. They figure, by way of example, at the beginnings of the words **five**, **van**, etcetera.

4.2.3. Dentals: a dental sound is produced thanks to the firm contact the tip of the tongue makes against the upper and lower front teeth simultaneously. English uses two dental sounds, /T/ and /D/.They occur, for example, in words such as **thy** and **this**.

Some phoneticians argue that the usage of the term dental is a bit imprecise; they suggest and use as an alternative, more precise term:**inter-dental**. Inter-dental truly signifies that the teeth, upper and lower, are not the only organs involved in the production of these two sounds. Indeed, the two sets of teeth are not capable of producing any speech sounds without the backing of the tip of the tongue. Inter-dentals are quite unlike bilabials in their being terribly difficult to produce not only for children but even for grown-ups. In a number of dialects in the British Isles the /f/ and /v/ are used instead of /T/ and /D/. This substitution results in neutralising the difference between, for example, **three** and **free** because they would simple pronounce the two words **free**. In the dialect spoken in New-York, the word *this* is pronounce *dis*. This phenomenon of substituting the /f/ for /T/ and likewise the /v/ for /D/ is not exclusive to the English language *per se*; in some dialects spoken in Algeria, notably those of Skikda and Constantine, the selfsame rule applies. A very good example readily springs to mind, the Arabic word for three (transliterated

thalathaten) is pronounced *talataten*; in all the demonstrative pronouns whether they be singular or plural, such as *hatha (this)*, the /d/ sound is invariably used instead of the /T/.

4.2.4. Alveolars: an alveolar consonant is produced when the tip of the tongue comes in partial or full contact with the alveolar ridge (the tooth ridge). Unlike the other types of articulation discussed so far, the number of alveolar consonants English uses is fairly large. I will look at each one individually below. Please note that the targeted sound, the alveolar one, is bolded for ease of assimilation:

The /d/ sound as figuring in the following example words: **d**onkey, a**dd**itive, abroa**d**, sa**d**;

The /t/ sound as figuring in the following the words; **t**u**t**or, a**tt**ire, wha**t**;

The /n/ sound as figuring in: **n**ormality, a**nn**ul, so**n**;

The /s/ sound figuring in words such as, **s**ister, a**s**leep, bu**s**; and

The /z/ sound figuring in words, such as **z**ealous, ba**z**ooka, **v**ase.

4.2.5. Alveolar-palatals or palato-alveolars: it designates a category of sounds which is produced not only through the bringing together of two organs. Rather, for the production of palato-alveolar consonants, four organs are deployed. Put more clearly, the tip of the tongue articulates against the tooth ridge, at the very same time the front of the tongue moves towards the hard palate. The English sound inventory encompasses merely two such sounds: /Í/ and /dZ/. The first one figures at the beginning and end of **church**; the second one at the beginning and end of **judge**.

4.2.6. Palatals: it refers to a set of consonants in the production of which the front of the tongue articulates against the hard palate. The only sound produced by this type of contact is the one beginning words such as **y**awn, **y**ucky, **u**niversity, etc, the /j/ sound.

4.2.7. Velars: a velar sound is produced thanks to the contact that takes place between the back of the tongue and the soft palate (the velum). Existing in the store of English consonants are three such sounds:

The first one, the /g/, is produced in words, such as: **g**allop, **g**uitar, etc;

The second, the /N/,one is found in words, such as ha**ng**, fi**ng**er, etc; and

The third one, the /k/,figures in words, such as **k**ing, a**k**in, bar**k**, etc.

4.2.8. Glottals: this category includes sounds that are generated at the level of the glottis. To jog your memory up, the glottis refers to the opening between the vocal folds. A glottal sound is made when the vocal folds articulate against one another either lightly or tightly. The English language uses two glottal sounds:

The /h/ sound figures at the beginning and in the middle of **h**aste and a**h**ead; and

The second one, the /?/is the sound pronounced by some people in London (called cockneys) in words such as **that and what**, instead of the usual /t/ sound. Unlike all the other sounds looked at so far, this one is not a phoneme in its own right because it does not serve to bring about differences between words if it is used instead of another sound.(Revisit the sections on phoneme and allophonic variants). The word **it** would remain a personal pronoun and function as such whether the last sound is the /t/ or the glottal stop, as this second glottal came to be labelled in the phonetics literature.

4.3. Manner of Articulation

For a more refined description of consonants, phonetics uses yet a third classificatory framework, manner of articulation or as some prefer to call it '**manner ofobstruction'**. In the production of consonants, the upward movement of lung air is restrained at some level in the vocal tract depending on the sound being produced. However, the obstruction is not only of one type. It could be full, that is when the flow of air is momentarily blocked, partial where a portion of lung air is blocked whilst the remainder is left to travel freely in its upward journey towards the endings of the speech chain and entirely out of the body. Now that these introductory notes have been touched on, I hope that some little understanding about the meaning of 'manner of articulation' has started to take shape.

Without further ado, manner of articulation refers to the type and degree of obstruction that is made to the lung air. To recapitulate, for the production of consonants there has to be some obstruction made to the air stream. Different labels, then, are used to designate the various types and degrees of obstruction. They are elucidated in what follows.

4.3.1. Plosives (Stops): it refers to a class of sounds in the production of which there is a complete closure made by two or more organs behind which the air coming up from the lungs is stopped for a little while. Afterwards the organs making the closure separate quickly from one another letting all the amount of air that has built up behind them to pass freely through the wide gap their separation generates. There are six plosive consonant phonemes in English: /p/, /t/, /k/, /b/, /d/, /g/.

4.3.1.1. Aspiration: very important is the feature common to the three plosives in this set; aspiration. In some environments most particularly at the beginning of words and of

stressed syllables, /p/, /t/ and /k/ undergo a process called aspiration. It very simply means that at the end of their production, the release stage, an h-like sound is produced.

It is hugely important for learners to familiarise themselves with an accurate production of this feature. Phoneticians maintain that if native speakers of English will hear the /p/ sound in words such as **palm**, **park**, **apart** as **balm, bark** and **abart** respectively if aspiration is left out.

4.3.2. Fricatives: this term designates a category of sounds in the production of which the organs in charge of sound generation approximate one another in such a way that a narrow passive through which air escapes is formed. Due to the narrowness of the resultant gap, when the air makes its way through it, it produces a friction, hence the name 'fricatives'. The number of fricative consonants in the English consonantal inventory is relatively big. The letters standing for our targeted sounds (fricatives) is bolded for the sake of both brevity and clarity; **f**ive, **v**ase; **th**ink, **th**is; sei**z**e, **z**ip.

4.3.3. Affricates: it refers to a set of sounds that, surprisingly enough, holds the manner of articulation of two independent classes of consonants, namely plosives and fricatives. That is the reason why I prefer to call them compound sounds in terms of their manner of articulation. **An affricate** is a speech sound in the production of which there is a complete closure at some point in the vocal tract behind which the entirety of lung air is blocked. So far, affricates are identical to plosives. However, unlike plosives, the separation of the organs is slow and gradual; the compressed air is not released all at once. Rather, it goes through the narrow passage the slow separation of the organs in charge produces. Hence, it is quite legitimate to say that affricates start like plosives and end like fricatives. English employs only two such sounds, the first one opening and closing **church**; the second **judge**.

4.3.4. Laterals: it designates a group of sounds in the production of which lung air escapes over the edges of the place of articulation. That is, in the production of laterals, only the central parts of the organs in charge come into close contact; the edges thereof are left loose. It is, in fact, over the edges that the air escapes, hence the label **lateral**. English uses solely one such sounds: it figures in words such as **l**ap, **l**ousy, etc. To elucidate further, in the production of the /l/ sound, the air escapes over the rims of the tongue, because the centre of the tongue is in a tight contact with the tooth-ridge.

4.3.5. Approximants: refers to a set of sounds in the production of which the sound-producing organs, as their generic might imply, come sufficiently close to one another without genuinely getting into contact with one another. The upward movement of lung-air, hence, is not halted nor does it undergo slowing down whatsoever: it goes out relatively freely. Approximants deployed by English figure bolded in the following words, **w**ither, **u**niversity, **r**ed.

4.4. Voicing or Phonation

A fourth criterion of classification phoneticians utilise is phonation. It refers simply to the vibration of the vocal folds, an older name thereof is vocal cords which is still used in quite a number of recently published books.

The vocal folds is the anatomical name given to the elastic cords in the throat. They are made to move thanks to other muscles in the throat. To make matters plainer, in the production of consonants, vocal folds can take one of the following positions:

Wide apart: this position results when the vocal folds are held apart from one another. When they take this position, the sub-glottal air is left to travel through them freely. This is the position they assume in normal breathing, when no sound is being uttered; and in the production of voiceless consonants. Hence, **a voiceless consonant** refers to a category of

consonants in the generation of which the vocal folds do not vibrate, or rather they are not made to vibrate because they are not approaching one another in the process of sound-production for air to draw them apart, and induce them to vibrate.

Lightly touching the edges of one another: this is the second position typical of the vocal folds in the production of consonants, more specifically voiced consonants. **A voiced consonant**is, then, produced with the vocal folds vibrating because in the production of such a category of consonants the vocal folds are touching the edges of one another and consequently when the air reaches them, it forces them apart to continue its journey towards the upper chambers. The forcing apart of the folds causes them to vibrate. Hardly surprisingly, in the production of such a category there are over a hundred vibrations that take place during the production of one single consonant. How is it feasible for this to happen? When the air reaches them, it draws them apart, immediately afterwards, they resume their earlier position, they go back to touching the edges of one another anew. In the space of a second or so, the opening and closing happens over a hundred times in adult male speakers; in adult females it happens far more than that.

4.5. The Position of the Velum

This is the last classificatory criterion deployed to set consonantal phonemes apart. It refers to the status of the soft palate during sound production. In fact, there are two positions the soft palate can take: *raised* and *lowered*. If it is raised, the air goes through its usual route, the mouth (the oral cavity), because the nasal cavity is shut down. On the other hand, if it is lowered, the air goes through the nasal cavity owing to the closure of the oral cavity. By virtue of this criterion, consonants are split into two clear-cut classes: **oral** and **nasal**. As the names proper might mean, during the production of an oral sound (most

sounds in English are oral) the air goes through the mouth; in the production of a nasal sound it goes through the nose.

The foregoing are, we would argue, the four mandatory criteria any comprehensive description of consonants has to incorporate. However, some phoneticians surmise that it is not entirely invariably true. This group of scholars put forth another criterion, **force of articulation**, for reasons that will be outlined as this discussion unfolds.

4.6. Force of Articulation

It refers to how much muscular tension is exerted during the production of consonants. On no account are consonants produced by virtue of the same muscular energy and breath efforts, some consonants call for far more articulatory agility, so to speak, than do others. Those consonants in whose production the vocal organs tend to be much more under articulatory strain or tension are labelled **fortis consonants**. On the other hand, consonants which do not necessitate the same amount of tension are called **lenis consonants**. All English voiced consonants fall into the latter category, all voiceless ones into the former. Now we come to accounting for the reason behind some phoneticians' use of this last criterion. It is argued that the consonants which are said to be voiced are not invariably voiced in all the phonological environments where they occur. In some environments, they are only partially voiced, in some other environments they lose this feature altogether. In initial and final positions, voiced consonants, such as the /b/ in **beak** and /d/ in **dud** are only partly voiced. They behave virtually identically in final positions. It is argued that they retain this feature in its entirety solely when they are enclosed by voiced consonants or vowels, as in **about**, **abide**, **adding**.

Now that we have attained a full coverage of the four criteria used for the classification, description and distinction of consonants, it seems convenient that we blend all the criteria

together so that a full portrayal of all the articulatory features of each single consonant phoneme could be gleaned. I have opted for displaying this in a tabular form for ease of comprehension.

BBC Accent's Consonants

Consonant	Description	Example Words
p	voiceless, bilabial, plosive	pear, appoint, up
t	voiceless, alveolar, plosive	teacher, attain, at
k	voiceless, velar plosive	kingdom, okay, seek
b	voiced, bilabial, plosive	bank, abound, ebb
d	voiced, alveolar, plosive	darling, adduce, add
g	voiced, velar, plosive	gear, agitation, sage
f	voiceless, labio-dental, fricative	father, after, safe
s	voiceless, alveolar, fricative	sister, assist, sage
T	voiceless, dental, fricative	thy, bathroom, wrath
h	voiceless, glottal, fricative	hay, behind
v	voiced, labio-dental, fricative	van, avoid, love
z	voiced, alveolar, fricative	zip, buzz
D	voiced, dental, fricative	that, worthy
Z	voiced, palato-alveolar, fricative	measure, treasure
S	voiceless, palato-alveolar, fricative	show, ashes
dZ	voiceless, palato-alveolar, affricate	judge, arrange, ajar
Í	voiced, palato-alveolar, affricate	church, batch, researcher
m	voiced, bilabial, nasal	mice, amend, swam
n	voiced, alveolar, nasal	nice, announce, one
N	voiced, velar, nasal	language, finger, hang
l	voiced, alveolar, lateral	lap, allow, pull
r	voiced, palatal, approximant	ring, arrive
j	voiced, velar, approximant	year, tune
w	voiced, bilabial, approximant	water, inward

4.7. Phonemic Transcription

Enclosed by the two forward slashes (//) are peculiar letters which together are used for rendering feasible as well as manageable what has come to be labelled **phonemictranscription**. As you might have gleaned out of the context where the word occurred, phonemic transcription refers to a type of graphological representations

phonologists use to encode the speech sounds used in languages. While a portion of the symbols making up the system of transcription are akin to the normal alphabet letters, some are totally non-existent therein. The reason why there is this divergence between the phonological symbols and the letters of the alphabet is that there are far many sounds then letters. As the discussions in this booklet unfold, you will start to realise that English sounds significantly outnumber the letters. The vocalic system of English is a better spot for truly appreciating the inherently important role of the phonological symbols. Whilst there are five vowel letters, the English sound inventory incorporates a whole set of twenty vowel sounds.

4.7.1. The International Phonetic Alphabet and Association

We have been using the word phonological symbols so far though it is not really the word that you are bound to encounter in books of phonology and phonetics. The phonological symbols are generically called the **International Phonetic Alphabet**. This alphabet incorporates a large number of symbols standing for individual sounds and other symbols deployed to add extra information about how a given sound is articulated in given phonological environment. These are called **diacritics**.

It is called international because its symbols have been tailored in such a way that they could be used to represent sounds produced in all the languages of the world. The first attempt at constructing the alphabet was launched in 1886 by a committee called the **International Phonetic Association** made up of a number of scholars coming from an array of first language backgrounds.

4.8. Exercise: the foregoing discussion has dwelt on the parameters according to which the consonants of the English sound inventory are described, classified and distinguished.

Would you be able in light of this to wade through the following statements and provide afterwards a fine-grained account on how accurate or otherwise they are:

To arrive at an exhaustive classificatory framework of consonantal segments it suffices to draw on two parameters, place of obstruction and manner of obstruction.

Place of articulation refers to the degree and type of obstruction airflow undergoes during sound production.

We can safely dispense with place of articulation for the description of quite a number of consonant phonemes in English.

Manner of obstruction is solely used to describe two out of the twenty fourconsonants in English, namely /l/ and /h/.

Regarding manner of articulation, /s/, /p/ and /n/ all come under the umbrella heading, plosives or stops, as some phoneticians would rather label them.

In the production of stops, the air flows over the rims, hence their name.

In terms of phonation or voicing, all English consonants without the faintest exception, are voiceless. In other words, English does not have in its sound inventory sounds with the vocal folds vibrating.

In the production of voiced consonants, the vocal folds are lightly articulating with each other in such a way that when air reaches them it draws them apart to continue its upward journey. This action on the part of lung air induces them to vibrate because it happens, intriguingly enough, a hundred times in the production of one single consonant.

4.9. Recommendations for more insightful readings

Consonants are one of the major categories into which sounds fall, the other one being vowels. Hence, the wealth of introductory phonetics and phonology books dwell substantially on these sounds. The following are a flavour of the many books on offer which will potentially ease matters up for the utterly confused: English Phonetics and Phonology (2009), by Roach, chapters one up to seven; A Course in Phonetics (2001) by Ladefoged, chapters one, two and three; A Critical Introduction to Phonetics (2009) by Lodge, chapter two.

Unit Five: The Parameters According to Which Vowel Sounds are Described

Interestingly, the English vocalic system is much richer than that of its consonantal one. None the less, the number of criteria by virtue of which vowels are described and classified is smaller. Phoneticians use three chief criteria to arrive at a comprehensive, all-inclusive account of English vowels. They are outlined thus,

The Position of the tongue;

The height of the tongue; and

The configuration of the lips. (Laver: 1994)

We will in what follows look at each one in turn trying to elucidate how it serves to differentiate vowels. Usageof only one criterion individually will fall short of enabling us to differentiate all the vowels of English and, indeed, of any other language no matter how small the number of vowels exploited therein.

5.1. The Position of the Tongue

It refers to which part of the tongue is raised highest in the mouth. A bit of background seems in place, namely what is it that we mean by the part of the tongue? The tongue has been conventionally divided into three main parts for purposes of vowel description, the front, the centre and the back.

5.1.1. Front vowels: If the frontal part of the tongue is the one raised highest during vowel production, then, that vowel is labelled front vowel. English uses quite a number of such vowels. They figure in boldface in the ensuing example words:

/I/ as in:**E**nglish, **e**rase, **i**nkpot;

/I;/ as in: bl**ea**k, s**ee**k, alb**e**it;

/E/ as in: **e**nvy, br**ea**d, w**e**dding; **a**nd

/&/ as in: fr**a**ction, br**a**ckets, b**a**ttery.

5.1.2. Central vowels: they are vowels in the production of which the centre of the tongue is raised highest in the mouth. The vowels that fall neatly into this category are portrayed in the following example words:

/3;/ as in:b**ir**d, abs**ur**d, dist**ur**b;

/@/as in:**a**bout, fath**e**r, p**e**rhaps; and

/V/as in:**u**ncle, ab**o**ve, **u**pon.

5.1.3. Back vowels: this is a set of vowels in the production of which the part of the tongue that is raised highest in the mouth is, as the name might have induced you to deduce by now, the back part. The back vowels the vocalic system of English deploys are outlined as follows:

/U/ as in: b**oo**k, l**oo**k, sh**oo**k;

/u;/ as in: swimming-p**oo**l, al**oo**f, f**u**ll;

/Q/ as in:G**o**d, l**o**ck, sh**o**ck;

/O;/ as in: ab**or**t, l**or**d, l**au**nch; and

/A;/ as in: b**ar**k, sh**ar**k, **a**nswer.

The back vowels cluster has brought discussion on this first parameter to a close; in what follows, I will be looking at the second criterion, the height of the tongue.

5.2. Height of the Tongue

Itrefers, as mentioned earlier on, to the distance lying between the upper surface of the tongue and the roof of the mouth during vowel production. Taking this criterion into consideration, the English vowels would fall into the classes sketched out in what ensues.

5.2.1 Close vowels: it refers to a category of vowels in the production of which the distance separating the upper surface of the tongue and the ceiling of the mouth is relatively small. During the production of such a set of sounds the mouth is almost closed. The vowels that come under this umbrella term are the following:

/I;/ as in: wh**ee**ze, b**ee**s, c**ea**se;

/I/ as in: **i**tch, sw**i**tch, **i**t; and

/u;/ as in: **oo**ze, bl**ou**se, h**oo**fs;

/U/ as in: p**u**sh, amb**u**sh,

5.2.2. Mid vowels: designates a set of sounds in the production of which the tongue occupies the middle of the tongue. That is, the distance lying between the upper surface of the tongue and the roof of the mouth is virtually identical to that lying between the lower surface of the tongue and the floor of the mouth (the base of the mouth). English mid vowels are:

/@/ as in: barb**e**r, **a**way, peril**ou**s;

/E/ as in: w**e**dded, emb**e**d, l**ea**d; and

/3;/ as in: w**or**d, al**er**t, s**ur**f.

5.2.3. Half open: when the tongue is said to be half open it means that it is occupying a position between the centre of the mouth and the floor of the mouth. Precisely speaking, in

the production of such a category of vowels the tongue is closer to the floor of themouth than the centre. English uses the following half open vowels:

/V/ as in: l**u**ll, p**u**ff, sh**a**ll;

/&/ as in: b**a**t, p**a**rasite, p**a**ncake;

/Q/ as in: hyp**o**crite, pr**o**mise, flip-fl**o**p; and

/O;/as in: c**ou**rtyard, sister-in-l**aw**, sh**or**ts.

5.2.4. Open vowels: it refers to a category of vowels in the production of which the tongue is very distant from the roof of the mouth. It is ,infact, in close proximity with the floor of the mouth. The English sound inventory uses only one such sounds. It figures boldfaced in the following example words:

/A;/ as in: l**au**ghable, l**a**rd, aj**a**r.

The last category coming under this heading has been addressed, the notion which brings the discussion of this heading to a close. The following rubric will concern itself with how the third and last classificatory framework is utilised.

5.3. The Shape (Configuration) of the Lips

It designates the positions the upper and lower lip jointly assume during sound production. It might strike some readers as a bit weird why lip configuration has not been deployed in consonant description. The reason lying underneath this is that the number of parameters used in consonant description suffices to draw unmistakeable distinctions between the consonants in use; however, some phoneticians do use lip configuration to impart a more fine-grained description to consonants. After all, this manual has as its targeted readership Algerian sophomores who are for the second time being introduced

into matters of this unprecedented level of abstractness and overwhelming subtlety. Hence, inclusion of more descriptive accounts would well and truly defeat the purpose. The targeted learners are, likewise, not majors of phonetics as such. This implies that the curricular time-portion allotted to them is too diminutive to accommodate multifaceted accounts of this type.

We turn our attention now to the crux of this heading. Taking this criterion into account, we would find three main types of vowels, each set incorporating more than one single vowel. This does not entail, however, that members of each set are identical; they are set apart by means of one or two of the above mentioned factors, viz, the position of the tongue and/or the height of the tongue.

5.3.1. Spread-lips: a vowel in whose production the lips take this position is called a spread-lipped vowel. Lips are said to be spread when the corners thereof are pushed out away from another and the lips proper assume a flat-like posture. This is the position that lips typically take when we smile.

5.3.2. Round lips: a vowel in the production of which the upper and lower lips take a round position is called a lip-rounded vowel. The lips are said to have a rounded posture when their corners are brought towards one another and the lips proper are pushed forward and upward.

5.3.3. Neutral lips: vowels in the production of which the upper and lower lip take a neutral shape are labelled neutral-lipped vowels. The lips are said to be in this position simply when they are neither conspicuously spread nor conspicuously round. (O'Connor: 1980)

Prior to closing the discussion about this third criterion, it is prudent to draw your attention to a very important fact pertaining to how it is deployed by some phoneticians. Though we

have portrayed above that vowels fall into three clear-cut classes depending on the shape the lips take during their production, a number of phoneticians, presumably for ease of description, surmise that two categories would suffice, namely, they suggest that the vowels which are made with lips noticeably rounded be called **rounded vowels** whilst those which are made with the lips noticeably unrounded be called **unrounded vowels**. (Gimson: 1970) Following this line of reasoning, in the table below you will notice that vowels are either rounded or unrounded.

5.4. Vowel Duration

In addition to the three classificatory parameters portrayed above, another vitally important parameter, or should it be more conveniently called a quasi-parameter, is **vowel duration**. Before we embark any further on this point, a word of caution seems in place. While the first three parameters are all articulatory, they pertain to how vowels are articulated, theypertains to what speakers do, this last one is auditory, it pertains to what people at the other end of the communication spectrum do, how the listeners perceive the vowels that get into their ears. Taking this parameter into consideration, accordingly, vowels are compartmentalised into two basic categories: **long** and **short** vowels. English short vowels are: /@/, /I/, /E/, /&/, /V/, /Q/ and /U/.Thelong vowel category incorporates: /I;/, /A;/, /O;/, /3;/ and /u;/.

BBC Accent's Pure Vowels

Vowel	Description	Example Words
I	close, front, unrounded	lip, lit
E	half-open, front, unrounded	let, wet
&	open, front, unrounded	pat, syllable
V	half-open, central, unrounded	but, enough
Q	half-open, back, rounded	pot, consonant

U	**close, back, rounded**	**put, book**
I;	**close, front, unrounded**	**peel, seed**
A;	**open, back, unrounded**	**ask, car**
O;	**half-open, back, rounded**	**sought, cordial**
u;	**close, back, unrounded**	**coo, food**
3;	**mid, central, unrounded**	**bird, cur**
@	**mid, central, unrounded**	**about, upper**

5.5. Voiced Sounds and the Clipped Vowels

Before we close up this discussion, it behoves me to append another bit of insight that is really worth knowing if foreign learners are aiming in their linguistic-oriented endeavours to arrive at a less-accented pronunciation. Although we have argued that there are solely two main classes of vowels duration-wise, there is one factor that would have to be pinpointed. The English voiced consonants and their voiceless counterparts tend to have a glaringly noticeable influence on the perceived duration of long vowels. First off, recall that though we have been looking at each sound in isolation, whether it be a vowel or a consonant, this does not entail that this is the manner after which they behave in people's day-to-day usage of language. We cannot, only exceptionally, utter meaningful linguistic things without gluing sounds together. More often than not, whenever we speak we tend to have units of speech made up of an alternation, though not strictly regular, between vowels and consonants. The combinations, or phonological environments, where sounds occur might alter the properties they have in isolation.

When long vowels are followed (either word-internally or across word boundaries) by a voiceless consonant, their usual length gets remarkably clipped, they become duration-wise much akin to their short counterparts. This means that the duration is not a static thing, it changes in accordance with the phonological context of the vowel.

By way of example, the vowel /I;/ though it is said to be long, it is of varying length in the following environments:

In **bee, see, sea, key, she**, it keeps its inherent length unaltered because it comes at the end of the word;

In **beat, weak, sleep, weep, niece**, its length is significantly altered for the above-stated reasons; it is followed by a voiceless consonant. Refer back to the chapter on English consonants if you have not yet got the hang of what a voiceless consonant is.

In **weave, bean, beam, please, cheese**, its duration is unaltered, it is similar to the /I;/ in the first set for the reasons mentioned above, when voiced consonants follow long vowels they do not interfere with their duration, it remains intact, as it were. (Kelly: 2000)

To round off, if a long vowel appears in an environment where its length is clipped, and a short vowel appears in a phonological environment that does notinterfere with its length, the two vowels would end up having virtually equal length. For instance, phoneticians argue that the long vowel in **beat** and the short one in **bid** are of pretty much identical length due the divergent environments wherein they occur.

5.6. Laxness and Tenseness

While a number of phoneticians concur that the usage of the above-outlined parameters would suffice for a thorough description of vowels, others contend that deploying another criterion cannot be other than vital. This criterion pertains to the articulatory force accompanying the production of vowels. While some vowels do not take a great amount of breath effort and muscular energy, others do.This criterion came to be labelled**'laxness or tenseness of articulation'**. By virtue of this criterion, vowels are split into two major categories: **lax vowels** and **tense vowels**.

5.6.1. Lax vowels: in the production of lax vowels, articulators are not, so to speak, exhausted. The vowels coming under this category are produced with minimal amount of muscular energy and breath effort. All English short vowels fall neatly under this category.

5.6.2. Tense vowels, on the other hand, as their very name might imply, are produced with greater breath effort and muscular energy than their lax counterparts. All English long vowels come under this category.

This last heading marks our discussion as to a type of vowels called **pure vowels** or **monophthongs**. They bear this name because in their production there is no perceptibly noticeable change in vowel quality from beginning to end. By way of example, the vowel /e/ which is close, central and neutral retains these articulatory traits during all the production phase. It does not, for instance, become close, front, rounded or close, back, spread at the end of the articulation process: it is a constant vowel. The English vowel inventory, none the less, does not possess only this type of vowels. The following chapter will unveil what other types of vocalic phonemes English uses and how they differ from this first broad category. Notice that the other two types of vowels do not radically differ from pure vowels. They differ in some particulars that will be highlighted in the ensuing chapter.

5.7.1. Exercise One: the following are some accounts, by no means thorough, about the articulatory properties of English vowels. Go through them carefully, of course after you have read the entirety of this chapter, and try to gauge the truth and falsity thereof.

Phoneticians suffice with using two out of the three criteria often deployed for the classification of vowels when describing and classifying front, open, rounded vowels;

The position of the tongue refers to the distance lying between the tip of the tongue and the uvula during the production of front vowels;

In the production of front vowels, it is the back of the tongue that raises towards the hard-palate;

Open vowels are produced when the tongue is low in the mouth;

The configuration of the lips refers to the shape the upper and lower lips take in the production of central vowels;

When lax vowels are being generated, the articulators rest in peace;

The English sound inventory does not possess any tense vowel.

5.7.2. Exercise Two: answer the following question without being prolix and trying not to adhere to the linguistic framework in which their answers figure in the body of the text:

How many parameters do phoneticians use to arrive at a comprehensive descriptive and classificatory framework of English vowels?

Do all phoneticians agree on the same number of parameters?

Why have scholars picked the term ‘pure vowels’ to refer to monophthongs?

5.8. Recommendations for More Insightful Readings

To glean further insights into the articulatory traits of vowels, I refer you to the following books. Note that a constellation of other phonetics book can fulfil the same purpose. I have just picked these for you because they, I surmise, would not give rise to many comprehension pitfalls. English Phonetics and Phonology (2009) by Roach is truly such an indispensable tool, as it were, which will help the novice to travel safely through the all too puzzling territory of phonetics. Chapters one up till seven look at vowels along with other concepts key to the understanding of phonetics. You may, likewise, wish to read

An Outline of English Phonetics (1962) by Jones, the pioneer of English phonetics as Roach calls him, chapters six up to thirteen.

Unit Six: English Diphthongs and Triphthongs

The English language uses a second category of vowel sounds that are other than constant. This category bears the name of **diphthongs**. A diphthong, quite dissimilar from pure vowel or monophthong, is produced with a perceptibly noticeable change in vowel quality. This remarkable change in quality happens solely because diphthongs are compound vowels: they are made up of two vowels blended together. The diphthongs' beginnings and endings are glaringly dissimilar sounds. The following discussion will dwell extensively on these compound sounds.

6.1. Some Key Features Common to All English Diphthongs

Diphthongs constitute a big proportion of the vowel inventory of English. They are vowel sounds in the production of which there is a glide, a slight and smooth movement from one vowel quality to another (Gimson, 1970: 126). They are, in a sense, analogous to compound words as they are made up of two phonological units each of which can exist independently of the other. The constituent elements are qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from each other. Roach (2009), ladefoged (2001) maintain that the most salient feature of all English diphthongs which should be borne in mind and paid due attention to by foreigners is the prominence of the first element .That is, the first element is much more noticeable, hence far more easily recognised by the listener's perceptual mechanism than the second. There exist two main factors contributing to this trait; first, loudness in the sense that the 1st element is remarkably louder than the second. Second, length (duration), the second element is noticeably longer than the first. Perhaps the very label *falling* that Gimson (1970) uses gives sufficient allusion about these features. Besides this feature, Gimson (1970) enumerates a set of other features common to all diphthongs. They are summarised as follows:

They have the same length as long pure vowels do. Likewise, they undergo the same quantitative changes long vowels do. Perhaps the discussion calls for a bit of a background: knowledge pertaining to English contoids (a term coined by the American phonetician Pike (1943) to be used exclusively in lieu of consonants when the latter are looked at as units of phonetics). As is well known, one of the phonetic traits of English fortis consonants (discussed earlier in this chapter) is that when they close a syllable the peak of which is a long vowel or a diphthong, the length of the latter is noticeably reduced. By contrast, if a syllable is closed by a lenis consonant, the length of the vowel that precedes it is not interfered with.

No diphthong occurs in a syllable closed by the voiced velar nasal /N/ unless the velar nasal /N/ assimilates (becomes similar in quality) to /n/ in connected speech. It is wise to point out that the first trait is phonetic whilst the second is phonological as it concerns the phonotactics of English diphthongs.

Owing to their importance which, we assume, emanates from their big number coupled with their frequency of occurrence, English diphthongs have received a great deal of attention in both books of phonetics and pronunciation teaching. Lewis (1977: 14) seems to be at odds, at least partly, with Gimson, Roach, and O'Connor. He assumes that English diphthongs are inherently long 'diphthongs may be taken to be of the same inherent length as the unchecked vowels'. Unchecked vowels being vowels that figure in accented syllables. Although he concedes that English diphthongs' length behaves differently in different phonological environments, he holds that no matter what the extent of the variations is, diphthongs never lose their prominence. Additionally, he holds that as regards length, diphthongs along with long monophthongs can be compartmentalised into six categories: 'normal, very clipped or ultra clipped; long, very long or extra long.' (ibid.17)

6.2. Classes of Diphthongs

Diphthongs fall into two main classes depending on what constitutes the end point: centring diphthongs and closing diphthongs.

A centring diphthong is a diphthong that glides towards the mid central vowel, schwa. English has three centring diphthongs. They appear respectively in the following monosyllabic words: *bear*, *here* and *sure*.

A closing diphthong bears this name because it glides towards a close vowel. Within this category there are two sub-categories: closing diphthongs that glide towards the close front vowel /I/ and closing diphthongs which glide towards the close back vowel /U/. Nowthat we have looked at some of the key characteristics of English diphthongs, we will turn our attention to describing each one individually. The discussion will predominantly revolve around how articulatory phonetics deals with them.

6.3. The Description of English Diphthongs

We have opted for the descriptive framework and analytic accounts used by Gimson (1970). Our choice fell on this because it is, in our view, much more exhaustive than all the ones provided by other books of phonetics of which we managed to get hold. However, this does not preclude the inclusion of some bits of insights from other authors, which we believed would make the discussion a bit richer. Hence, unless otherwise indicated, all the descriptions are those delineated by Gimson (1970:126-46). The upcoming discussion will address each diphthong in turn. It is initiated by providing example words wherein the diphthong in question figures. It goes on to provide a full description of the diphthong. The discussion ends by considering some recommendations to foreign learners. Please note that, due to space constraints, we have not reproduced Gimson's discussion in toto. We

have not reproduced the cardinal vowel quadrilateral, diphthongs' variants, along with chief sources.

/eI/

Examples._*a*_ape, late, make, lady, waste, bass *ai, ay*_day, may, waist, rail, aim, rain *ei, ey*_eight, veil, weigh, rein, they, whey *ea*_great, steak, break

(*Note*: 'halfpenny' /heIpnI/, 'gauge' /geIdZ/, 'gaol' /dZeIl/.)

Long [e;I]_day, made, game, gaze *Reduced* [eI]_eight, late, face, safe, ache.

Description

The starting point is the half close front vowel /e/. Then, the glide goes in the direction of the close front vowel /I/. The lips are spread.

/aI/

*Examples._i, y*_time, write, bite, climb, cry, dry, bye *igh, eigh*_high, light, fight, might, height

*ie,ye*_die,lie, pie, tried,dye*ei, ai*_either, eider, aisle

(*Note*: /aI/ in 'eye, buy'.)

Long [a;I]_fly, die, mine, hide, eyes *Reduced* [aI]_fight, like, ice, ripe

Description

The first element is the front vowel /a/. It then glides in the direction of the close front vowel /I/. The lips turn from a neutral to a loosely spread position. As will almost all the other monophthongs and diphthongs, he underlines the importance of abiding by the rules pertaining to length reduction as well as prominence

/OI/

*Examples._oi,oy_*boy, toy, noise, voice, boil, point

(*Note*: 'buoy' /bOI/.)

Long [O;I]_boy, noise, void, coin *Reduced* [OI]_voice, joist, joint, choice

Description

The glide begins at the half open back vowel /O/. Then, the tongue moves in the direction of the close front vowel /I/. The lips are open and rounded for the first element, becoming slightly spread towards the end of the glide.

/@U/

Examples._o_so, old, home, both, folk

*oa*_oak, road, foal, toast, soap *oe*_toe, doe, sloe, foe, hoe

*ou, ow*_soul, though, shoulder, know, blow

(*Note*: /@U/ in 'mauve, brooch, beau, sew, shew,_variant spelling of schwa'_(don't won't')

Long [@;U]_go, toe, home, road, pose *Reduced* [@U]_goat, rope, oak, post, both

Description

The starting point is the half open front vowel /@/. Then, the tongue glides towards the close back vowel /U/. The lips are neutral for the first element; they are rounded in the second.

/aU/

*Examples._ou, ow_*house, sound, out, cow, town, allow

(*Note*: 'Mecleod' /m@klAUd/.)

Long [A;U]_how, loud, town, cows *Reduced* [AU]_shout, about, mouse, mouth

Description

The glide for /aU/ starts at the open back vowel /a;/. Then, it moves towards the close back /U/. As regards lips' configuration, they are neutral at the beginning, and then they turn slightly rounded as the glide moves towards the second element.

/I@/

*Examples:_eer, ear,ere_*deer, dear, tear, (*drop of liquid*), here *eir, ier, ir_*weird, fierce, fakin

*ea, ia, eu, eo_*idea, Ian, museum, theological

(*Note*: 'hero' /hI@r@U/, 'year' /jI@/ or /j@;/.)

Long [I;@]_dear, here, cheer, beard *Reduced* [I@]_pierce, fierce

Description

The starting point of /I@/ is the front close vowel /I/ and the end point is a more open variety of schwa /@/. As regards the lips' configuration, they are neutral throughout. It was pointed out by Daniel Jones (1962) that this diphthong does not always have the same traits as the other diphthongs: it is not always falling. In other words, in stressed syllables it is the second element rather than the first which tends to be prominent. As such, Gimson suggested that /I@/ be exceptionally called a rising diphthong.

/e@/

*Example._are*_care, rare, share, mare*air*_air, fair, pair, chair

*ear*_bear, pear, wear, tear (v.)

(*Note*: with /e@/, 'heir, there, their, mary, sarah, scarce, aorit'.)

Long [e;@]_pair, there, chairs, cared *Reduced* [e@]_scarce

Description

The first element of this vowel glide is the half open front vowel /e/. The glide then moves in the direction of the mid central vowel /@/. The lips tend to be neutral throughout the production of this sound.

/U@/

*Examples:_oor*_poor, moor

*ure*_pure, endure, cure, sure*ur*_curious, spurious, during, security

*ewer*_sewer*our*_tour, dour, gourd

(Note: /U@/ usually occurs in 'jewel, fluent, truant'.)

Description

The starting point is the close back vowel /U/. The glide then moves in the direction of the mid central vowel schwa /@/. The lips are slightly rounded at the beginning of the glide and then they become neutrally spread.

BBC Accent's Diphthongs

Diphthong	**Example words**
eI	**say, way, great**

Ai	**buy, night, why**
OI	**boy, avoid, moil**
I@	**here, beer, year**
e@	**air, snare, heir**
U@	**poor, sure**
@U	**go, snow, woeful**
Au	**cow, foul, fowl**

As we have alluded to earlier, the vocalic inventory of English is much richer and more diversifies than the consonantal one. We have heretofore looked at two main classes of sounds, monophthongs, or as they are alternatively labelled pure vowels and diphthongs. English exploits yet a third set of sounds called in phonetic terms tripthongs.

6.4. English Triphthongs

As the name might suggest, a triphthong is simply a vowel sound made by the production of three successive vowels of different types. (Crystal: 1980) English uses five triphthongs: they are simply the closing diphthongs, the diphthongs gliding towards a close vowel, attached to the schwa vowel. (Roach: 2009) So long as both the diphthongs and the schwa vowel have been looked at above, we will confine ourselves, for the sake of warding off redundancy, to giving solely example words where the targeted sounds figure:

/eI@/as in: layer; /Ai@/as in: hire; /Au@/as in: hour, our; /@U@/ as in: lower; /OI@/as in: lawyer.

6.5.1. Exercise One: all the following statements pertaining to diphthongs and triphthongs contain wrong accounts on the sounds under discussion. Read them carefully. Afterwards,

drawing on the insights you have gleaned from the foregoing chapter try to come up with accurate statements:

English diphthongs do not figure a lot in the lexicon of the language;

English uses three diphthongs and five triphthongs;

Triphthongs is merely another alternative name some phoneticians prefer to use instead of diphthongs;

Diphthongs and monophthongs do not have any articulatory feature in common;

A diphthong is made up of one of the English short vowels followed by an approximant;

A glide is a haltingly slow movement involved in the production of diphthongs;

In the production of diphthongs, the articulators concerned pause for a little while immediately after the first element has been produced;

The second element of any diphthong is noticeably longer in duration than the first one. In fact, the first element is only touched on;

Rising cannot be the property of any of the English diphthongs;

Some phoneticians use the term falling to refer to the diphthongs whose last elements are voiced consonants;

A triphthong is a compound sound made by a glide from one vowel into another followed by a very slow movement into a fricative consonant;

English closing diphthongs bear this name because they figure solely at the end of words; and

Centring diphthongs are hallmarked by a glide from a central vowel towards a less central one.

6.5.2. Exercise Two: read through the preceding three pages and transcribe phonemically the entirety of the ones figuring in one of them.

6.6. Recommendations for More Insightful Readings

To gain more insights on English diphthongs and triphthongs, read English Phonetics and Phonology (2009), by Peter Roach, chapter three.

List of Works Cited

Crystal, David. (1980). *A First Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gimson, A. C. (1970). *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English.* London:Edward

Jones, D. (1962). *An Outline of English Phonetics (9th edition)*. Cambridge: Haffer.

Kelly, G. (2000). *How to Teach Pronunciation*. England: Pearson Education.

Laver, J. (1994). *Principles of Phonetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Connor, J. D. (1973). *Phonetics*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.

O'Connor, J. D. (1980). *Better English Pronunciation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ogden, R. (2009). *An Introduction to English Phonetics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Pike, K. L. (1943). *Phonetics: A Critical Analysis of Phonetic Theory and a Technic forthe Practical Description of Sounds*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Roach, P. (1991). *English Phonetics and Phonology (2nd edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roach, P. (2001). *Phonetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roach, P. (2002). *A Little Encyclopedia of Phonetics*. Retrieved from <http:/www.personal.reading.ac.uk/~llsroach:peter/ >

Roach, P. (2009). *English Phonetics and Phonology (4th edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sylvia, Chalker and Weiner, Edmund. (1994). *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Widdowson, H. G. (1996). *Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Second-Term Lessons: Above the Segment Level

Introduction

Lectures of the first semester revolved virtually entirely round one broad topic: segmental phonetics. Some topics within the general framework of segmental phonology were touched on, however.

The entirety of the lectures of this second semester will take you through an array of issues, some of them controversial, within the general framework of suprasegmental phonetics and phonology. The first lecture will look at the syllable, its definition and its three types. The second one will look at a notion which is both truly intriguing and infinitely baffling to most English learners irrespective of their maternal language: English stress. We will a priori look at the various defining hallmarks of stress. That is, what is it that renders a given syllable stressed? Afterwards, discussions will shift into the very core of this notion: the accentual pattern of English words. We will consider stress placement in simple words, in complex words and ultimately compound words.

Another hugely important feature of English connected speech inextricably linked to English stress will be dwelt upon thereafter: weak and strong forms. The following lecture will look at yet other aspects of English connected speech. I will start by looking at the various types of elision. Then I will move on onto assimilation. I will consider this process from a number of perspectives, each perspective serving the indispensable role of deepening your understanding of such a process. This rubric will mark the end of the last unit and of the handbook as a whole.

Unit One: The Syllable

Languages of the world do not typically deploy sounds in isolation. To be able to communicate effectively in a wide spectrum of contexts and for a wide range of purposes, homo-sapiens blend the sounds their languages possess into an intricate and highly sophisticated number of varying units. Of the smallest units and admittedly intrinsic ones is the syllable.

2.1.1 What Defines a Syllable?

The first thing to be born in mind is that the syllable is one of the phonological units sounds can get into. It could be made up of two components: a vowel and a consonant. However, these components are not of equal weight in the syllable, namely, vowels are obligatory for the identity of the syllable, whilst consonants are optional. This denotes that it is possible that we can find a syllable where there is solely a vowel present, but the reverse is by no means so. The English language possesses a number of words where there is only the vowel without no consonant to its left or to its right, such as *I, eye, ear, our, hour, heir, air, oh,* etc.

There are three crucial labels that you got to know at this juncture of the lecture: the onset, the peak and the coda. These terms are used to refer to each of the constituents of syllables.

2.1.1.1 The Onset

It refers to the consonant or set of consonants that precede the vowel in an English syllable. This, however, does not entail that all English vowels have onsets: the rule we talked about earlier on always holds true (consonants are optional). Hence, the first consonant or cluster of consonants figuring before vowels are all called ‘onsets’: **h**im,

treat, **br**eed, **spr**ing (all the onsets appear in boldface). Notice that in the first word, there is only one consonant, in the second two consonants and in the third three.

Do we have English words where the onset incorporates four or five consonants? The answer is a categorical no. The English language does not allow more than three consonants to precede vowels: three is the maximal number. We used the word 'cluster' above without any qualification. A cluster of consonants simply means two or more consonants in a row.

The account on English onsets would be utterly incomplete, if we were to leave the discussion at this level of progression immaturity. That English onsets can incorporate up to three consonants does not denote that any string of consonants irrespective of its combinatory properties is legal. English phonotactics makes use of only a limited sequence of consonants to form onsets. We will discuss below but a number of the plausible sequences consonants might get into:

One-consonant onsets: almost all consonants can occupy this phonological environment with the exception of / **N** / and of a bit lesser extent / **Z** / because we do not have any words where the voiced, velar nasal is the onset and words where / **Z** / takes word-initial positions are rare(Roach 2009).

Two-consonant onsets: here we might have a big number of possible combinations, and I am in no way trying to cover them all here. Only a few instances are mentioned. We can have onsets with one of the following sounds at the end: /w/, /j/, /l/, /r/, as in: quarter, huge, ply and brail respectively. Other plausible combinations have the /s/ sound followed by one of the English voiceless plosives, as /st/ in sting; /sp/ in /spy/ and /sk/ in ski.

Three consonant onsets: this phonotactics pattern seems to be possible to be exhaustively accounted for here as combinations, at least those figuring in commonly used lexemes, are few. The first consonant in such sequences is the /s/, the second is one of the

English voiceless plosives /p/, /t/ and /k/ and the third is one of the English liquids, namely /l/, /j/, /w/and /r/. Here are examples: splash, spray, stupid, squander.

2.1.1.2 The Peak

It unequivocally refers to the vowels. They are called either the peak, the nucleus or the centre of syllables. The word peak implies that vowels are the sounds for the production of which speakers exert greater amounts of energy. Nucleus and centre are both synonymous. They are called the nucleus of syllables owing to the fact that their absence parallels the absence of the syllable per se. Peak is thereby the label given by phoneticians, whilst both nucleus and centre are phonological naming. All English vowels whether they be monophthongs, diphthongs or triphthongs can fulfill this central role.

2.1.1.3 The Coda

It refers to the consonant or cluster of consonants that follows vowels in English syllables. They are alternatively called the 'termination'. The termination is truly far more indicative of their position then is coda. English codas are likely to be longer sound strings than onsets, as English allows the consecutive occurrence of up to four consonants after vowels. Here again, not all sequences are acceptable. Precisely like onsets, codas do not permit all combinations of consonants.

One consonant codas: almost all consonants can take this position. There are four ones, however, that never feature in a such an environment: /h/, /j/, /r/ and /w/. Here are a couple of examples about the other consonants: it, irk, heap, bid, bib, lag, kiss, buzz, fish, rouge, laugh, love, hearth, him, hen, hang, bull.

Two-consonant codas: quite a large number of sequences are possible for this cluster. Here are examples: limp, link, lisp, complex, almost, walks, worms, wolf, ails.

Three-consonant codas: it is noteworthy that this cluster does not have a high density of occurrence in the English lexemes. In the same vein, for reasons mainly bearing

on ease of articulation such strings of consonants are bound to be reduced via the deletion of one of the constituents and in some exceptionally scarce words two consonants are left out. The third element in such sequences is one the following /t/ /s/ /z/ and / **T** /. The middle one can be /p/ /k/ /f/, whilst the first can be /l /n/ /m/. Here are examples: links, limps, hangs.

Four-consonant clusters: this cluster is virtually identical to the first one. The fourth element is indeed one of the third elements in the above pattern, all the rest are replicable here.

2.2 Unit Two: English Stress

One of the components of the English sound system that second language acquirers, Algerians constitute no exception, ought to have their fair share of exposure to their underlying rules is 'English stress'. In this second heading, we will look at some of the defining features of stress, viz, what makes syllables stressed along with a number of handy rules about some of regularity perceived in the accentual pattern of the Germanic tongue.

2.2.1 Definition of Stress

First off, stress is a feature of syllables. Individual sounds are never assigned stress to. It can be defined from two perspectives: the speaker's perspective and the listener's one.

2.2.2 Stress from the Speakers' Perspective: from the producer's vantage point, that is, what speakers do when stressed syllables are being produced, in the production of stressed syllables, speakers use a greater amount of breath energy and muscular efforts. There is much greater articulatory tension invoked in the production of stressed syllables than the unstressed ones.

In a nutshell, we can legitimately say that it is the presence or absence of force of articulation that renders some syllables stressed and others unstressed.

2.2.3 Stress from the Listeners' perspective: from the listeners' perspective, namely, what goes on when stressed syllables have reached the listener's ear and ultimately their brain, stressed syllables are easier to hear than their unstressed counterparts. Hence, for the listener, all what is easier to hear is stressed and all what is difficult is naturally unstressed.

Now that we have defined what stress is, we will proceed into looking at the traits that stressed syllables inherently have, because English possesses stressed and unstressed

syllables and each category bears a number of properties that make it dissimilar to the other. There are, in fact, four main parameters by virtue of which unstressed and stressed syllables could be told part.

Roach (2009) argues that for a syllable to be perceived as stressed a number of factors, as it were, enter the equation, namely quality, quantity, loudness, and pitch. He points out that this is not easy to make, but thanks to experimental studies this can be carried out by means of very sophisticated tools.

Loudness: most people sense that stressed syllables are louder than their unstressed counterparts. This is the reason why loudness is deemed one of the components of stress. In a sequence of identical syllables (e.g. bA;bA;bA;), if one syllable is made louder than the others, it will be heard as stressed. However, loudness alone is not enough to impart prominence to syllables.

Length: another factor contributing to the prominence of stressed syllables is length. If one syllable is longer than its adjoining syllable(s), then, it will be perceived as stressed.

Pitch: pitch is, likewise, regarded as a very important factor in setting stressed and unstressed syllable apart. It would not be easy to grasp this discussion if we were to carry on our account without defining pitch. Pitch is closely connected with the vibration of the vocal folds: the more the vibration of the vocal folds, the higher is the pitch, the less the vibration of the vocal folds, the lower is the pitch. It is 'essentially a perceptual characteristic of speech.' (Roach, 2009: 74)

If one syllable in a string of speech is produced with a pitch level dissimilar to that of the adjacent ones, it is perceived as prominent. For example, if in a sequence of three syllables, two are said with level pitch and the third is said with a high pitch, then the high-pitched syllable is bound to stand out in its adjoining environment.

Quality: another factor which contributes in making syllables stressed is quality. A syllable that contains a monophthong that is different in quality from its adjacent vowels is likely to gain prominence. For example, the second syllable in *aside* is more prominent than the first syllable because the nucleus of this syllable is a diphthong; the nucleus of the first syllable is the mid-central vowel, schwa; a vowel that never occurs in stressed syllables.

Roach (2009) contends that the aforementioned factors generally work in tandem and combine to make syllables prominent. Nevertheless, syllables may sometimes be made prominent by virtue of only one or two of them. Otherwise stated, scientific studies have uncovered that the former factors are not always of equal importance.

2.2.4 Placement of Stress

It is not difficult to account for the defining features of stressed syllables; what is genuinely tough and mind-boggling is to decide which syllable in a string of syllables bears stress. Gimson (1970) argues that English stress is, weirdly enough, both fixed and free. What does this apparently faultystatement mean?

Stress is fixed in the sense that if a given syllable in a stretch of syllables making up a word receives stress, then stress will not go on other syllables, it will invariably be assigned to that very syllable. By way of example, the first syllable in *lovely and* the second in *alarm* are invariably stressed and stress will never fall on the second syllable in the former or the first in the latter.

Secondly, **stress is free** in the sense that any syllable out of the range of syllables making up a word could receive stress. In English, the first, second, third, fourth syllable, etc can receive stress. Consider the following (the stressed syllables appear in boldface): **fa**ther, al**low**, enter**tain**, product**i**vity, mountai**neer**.

Stress in other languages does not behave as in English. In French, for instance, it is the last syllable that is stressed, in Polish, it is the penultimate one (the syllable before the last) and in Czech, it is the first syllable. As regards the teachability of stress, Roach (2009) seems to hold that it is no easy task. He looks at a number of rules pertaining to stress placement. Nonetheless, he maintains that these rules are highly inadequate and are, at times, misleading particularly if one thinks they are applicable to all English words. He argues that stress should be treated as a property of individual words. He pens: 'practically the rules have exceptions and readers may find that the rules are so complex that it would be easier to go back to the idea of learning the stress for each word individually.'(76) However, it is important to consider here that there is a principle with respect to stress the validity of which has not been questioned by phoneticians. It is the strong syllables which receive stress not the weak ones. Due to space constraints, we will confine ourselves to a relatively cursory account of this and refer the reader to Roach (2009). He devotes a whole illuminating chapter (64-72) to this notion. A weak syllable, to begin with, is a syllable the peak of which is one of the following sounds.

2.2.4.1 The Nuclei of Unstressable Syllables

1. The mid-central unrounded vowel, schwa: it is at times referred to as the neutral vowel as most vowels change to it when unstressed.
2. The close-front unrounded vowel: it lies in the general area of the short and long /i/ in the cardinal vowel quadrilateral.
3. The close-back rounded vowel: it lies in the general area of the short and long /u/.
4. Syllabic consonants.

A strong syllable, by contrast, is a syllable the peak of which is none of these sounds.

2.2.5 Levels of Stress

The first thing that springs to mind when this heading is seen is that: there are two levels, namely, stressed and unstressed syllables. Phoneticians would claim otherwise, however. In some practices, mainly British, there are three levels of stress:

Primary stress: syllables produced with primary stress are stronger and far more salient than all the other syllables embedded in the word in question, for instance, in 'understand', the last syllable is said to carry primary stress on account of its being stronger than the first and the last.

Secondary stress: syllables generated with this level of stress are less strong, hence less salient than the first category, hence their name. Taking the same word (understand), the first syllable bears secondary stress.

Unstress: this is the term allocated to the weakest level of stress. In the production of such syllables, speakers use the least amount of energy. Such syllables can equally correctly be labeled 'weak syllables'. The middle syllable in understand is utterly unstressed.

2.2.6 Types of Stress

The discussion above might have induced you to infer that stress is a single-faceted phenomenon. This is just untrue. There are two types for stress: lexical stress and sentence stress.

2.2.7 Lexical Stress

Refers to stress assigned to syllables featuring in individual words. In words, such as, pa**the**tic, a**bide**, devo**tee**, all the bolded syllables bear lexical stress. One important hallmark of this category of stress is that it is typically immovable (fixed), as discussed above. Under some conditions, very rare indeed, stress might shift into a different syllable.

There is an equally prevalent label in the stress literature to designate this type of stress: word stress.

2.2.8 Sentence Stress

It refers to the extra amount of energy a given syllable or a set of syllables is allotted in connected speech at a level above that of the word. This type of stress is also alternatively labeled ‘nuclear stress or contrastive stress’. Some other scholars prefer a totally different name for this type of stress: ‘utterance stress’. An utterance, they claim, is a better and more appropriate label to use because it is the utterance which is the unit of speech not the sentence. Indeed, an utterance is a unit of speech marked by two pauses, one before the production and the other signaling completion. The utterance, being a spoken language unit, does not invariably abide for its formation on the syntactical and lexical norms the sentence abides by.

The one most important factor that makes speakers choose one syllable over another in a stretch of syllables is ‘clarity of meaning’. The discussion seems to be crying out for examples. The italicised words in each of the following sentences bear sentence stress:

Tom is holding the book.

I gave the letter to **her**.

I saw her mother at the **railway station**.

Before analyzing the sentences, it is worthy of mention that the syllables that bear sentence stress are those which already possess, as it were, lexical stress. Put in clearer wordings, sentence stress assignment is fully dependent on the accentual patterns of individual words. Hence, if we want to allocate stress to the word **charming** in a given stretch of discourse, what we ought to do is articulate the first syllable more emphatically; it is illicit to shift the focus forward. This rule of thumb is exceptionless.

The word ‘Tom’ in the first sentence has been stressed by the speaker probably because his/her interlocutor(s) thought they said when hearing this sentence uttered the first time, ‘Oh, I see, Ted is holding the book.’ In other words, that word has been stressed as a corrective device to what the listener has misheard. The same obtains in the second and in the third. That is, the second means, ‘I gave the book to her, not to him or to them or indeed to any other individual or group of individuals the addressee might have erroneously visualized.’ The third means that, ‘I did not see her mother at the bus station. It was at the railway station where I saw her mother.’

2.2.9 Rules of Stress Placement

Now that we have talked about the different levels of stress, we come to addressing the all too intriguing issue of stress assignment. Put differently, according to what principles can non-native learners procure some understanding about how to stress the words that they use and accordingly understand more readily native speakers. Admittedly, stress assignment is not as easy to grasp as are the various properties of the individual sounds. As is pointed out earlier on, some phoneticians have settled to the daunting claim that there is no better or, worse, other way of coming to full grips with stress placement than learning where stress falls in a given word at the very same time that particular word’s graphological, syntactical, semantic, pragmatic properties are being internalized. That is, stress-placement-learning should be treated as an integral, inseparable part of the learning of that word proper, because, at the end of the day, the accentual pattern of the word is an intrinsic constituent of the word’s very identity (as will be shown in the upcoming discussions) and the rules on offer are much more likely to induce learners to making errors than eradicate some learning hindrances. We are content, however, that teaching learners a number of rules that truly underpin native speakers’ stress assignment would be

more helpful than telling them outright that English stress is a phenomenon that would wreck their minds uselessly because you would never come to terms with its ABCs.

Prior to embarking on any such rules, then, it is prudent that you wade through them armed with the following two bits of insight:

1. These rules are indubitably going to be a big asset in that they will tell you a great deal about the accentual pattern underpinning principles of a wide range of lexical items enjoying notable frequency in the English language.
2. If you depend blindly on solely these rules assuming that they are applicable to all the English words or even to a large cohort of frequently-occurring words, then, you will potentially end up generating quite a few words or sentences having idiosyncratic, un-English stress patterns, which would, accordingly, engender a defacing alteration to the words identity as such.

The first inevitable step to take should be finding accurate statements about each of the following features for the word in question:

2.2.9.1 The Morphological Make-up of the Word

This means that you should look at whether the word is simple, complex or compound because this might be an asset in deciding which syllable to assign stress to.

Simple word is a word that is made up of only one morpheme: it contains no affixes be they prefixes or suffixes. A simple word, hence, cannot be broken down into two or more morphemes, such as offend, category, library, animal.

Complex word is a word that is made up of more than one morphological unit. They are alternatively called ‘affix words’. An affix word contains minimally the root attached to one suffix or prefix, such as effective, daunting, dreadful, infantile, brimful, etc.

Compound word is made up of two words each of which can exist in total independence of the other while retaining lexical significance. Constituents of compound

words can be joined by a hyphen as hyper-sensitive, by space as, hot dog or else blended together to form one unified whole, as in blackbird, greenhouse.

2.2.9.2 The Grammatical Category of the Word

Knowing the grammatical class of the word will help you, as explained below, to decide on firmer grounds which syllable to stress. Nouns, verbs and adjectives may have differing stress patterns.

2.2.9.3 The Number of Syllables of the Word

Here again, the number of syllables may give further light into how to go about picking the right syllable. Stress-wise, two-syllable words may behave differently to three-syllable words, which, in turn, may behave differently to four-syllable words and so on.

2.2.9.4 The Phonological Make-up of the Syllables Making up the Word

It designates, as the name implies, what are the vowels and the consonants the word contains. Earlier on, we said that some vowels are never stressed because they are weak. Additionally, there are some vowels which are a likelier site for stress than others.

Now that we have sketched out these four hints which have proven to offer substantial clues to foreigners in settling for the right syllable to stress, hence, accumulating a more refined phonological interlanguage, we will turn our attention in what follows into stress placement in simple words.

2.2.Stress Placement in Simple Words

Simple Two-Syllable Words

They are alternatively called di-syllabic words. Under this rubric, the discussion will go through the following organization pattern: it will kick off by looking at stress assignment in verbs and adjectives, adverbs and propositions. Nouns will be the parts of speech in the ensuing last paragraph.

Verbs: if the second syllable's centre is a long monophthong or a diphthong or if it ends with more than one consonant, then it is this second syllable that bears stress:

Allow, announce, believe, embark, alert, perform, construct, produce, annoy, assist, arrive, seduce, attempt, beseech, belie, transform, proclaim, explain, induce, seduce, enhance, empower, etc.

If the second syllable contains a short vowel and one or no consonant, then it is the first syllable that bears stress:

Enter, open, equal, etc.

If the second syllable contains the closing diphthong, **/@U/,** then it is the first syllable that receives stress. As in, borrow, follow.

Two syllable adjectives seem to abide by the same rules as verbs:

Lovely, even, divine, correct, corrupt.

Disyllabic adverbs and even their preposition counterparts obey the selfsame rule discussed above.

Nouns, however, should be treated as a glaringly distinct category because they call for divergent stress-assignment rules. Here again, we go straight to the phonological make-up of the second syllable. If the second syllable's centre is a short monophthong, then it is the first syllable that receives stress. If this pattern does not obtain, then stress falls on the second syllable proper:

Monkey, product, syllable, pattern, second.

Machine, marine, receipt, design, raccoon, balloon.

Three-Syllable Words

They are otherwise labeled tri-syllabic words. It is worthy of mention here that as the category of words discussed above, there is an extricable link holding between the grammatical category and stress placements.

Verbs: if the last syllable contains a short vowel and ends with not more than one consonant, then it is the middle syllable that bears stress.

If the last syllable contains a long monophthong, a diphthong or ends with more than one consonant, then it is this syllable to which stress is assigned.

Nouns: if the final syllable contains a short vowel or /**@U**/, then stress is not allocated to this syllable. If the middle syllable contains a long vowel, diphthong or ends with more than one consonant, then stress falls on this syllable proper.

If the final syllable contains a short vowel and the middle syllable a short vowel and not more than one consonant, then it is the first that bears stress.

If the last syllable contains a long vowel, diphthong or ends with more than one consonant, then, the first one is the stress-bearer.

Stress Placement in Complex Words

Stress-Bearing Suffixes

They are a set of suffixes in English, some of them used a lot in complex-words formation which are the recipient to stress themselves. If seen in a word, then the most probable site for stress is the suffix proper.

Ain, as in entertain and ascertain;

Eer: as in voluntary: volunteer; mountain: mountaineer, engineer;

Ee: as in refuge: refugee; address: addressee, refer: referee;

Ese: as in China, Chinese, Vietnam: vietnamse;

Esque as in picture: picturesque.

Stress-Shifting Suffixes

These suffixes, as their name demonstrates, serve to shift the position of stress. What does mean, however? How does this shift happen? Because suffixes are added for the formation of new words, their addition might necessitate changes, some of them purely graphological. The suffix ‘ly’ when used to form adverbs and very rarely adjectives brings about the following changes to adjectives that end in ‘y’: the ‘y’ has to be substituted by ‘i’ before the addition of the suffix.

To the nitty gritty now, there are some other suffices which impart a different change to words, accentual pattern change (to do with stress placement). In other words, the simple word and the same word attached to a suffix do not share identical stress pattern due the insertion of the suffix. These suffixes, to put it more conspicuously, make stress shift forward. That is, if in the simple word stress falls on the second syllable, then in the same word made complex stress falls on the third. The following are those suffixes:

Eous: courage: courageous;

Iuos: injury: injurious;

Ive: product: productive, seduce seductive;

Ity: immune: immunity, person: personality;

Graphy: photo: photography;

Ial: adverb: adverbial; proverb, proverbial;

Ion: anticipate: anticipation; violate: violation;

Ty: as in centralcentrality,marginal marginality;

Ic: embryo: embryonic; horror horrific, terror terrific.

Suffixes That Do not Influence Stress Placement

The overwhelming bulk of the most productive of English suffixes, much to the learner's academic relief, do not interfere with the stress pattern of the word where they appear. That is, there presence though it might alter the grammatical category of the word and/or its lexical significance, it does not impact its accentual pattern:

Able: love: loveable, predict: predictable;

Age: link: linkage;

Al; identity identical, deny denial;

En: danger, endanger; worse: worsen;

Ful: delight: delightful; tact: tactful;

Ing: rage: enraging; lend: lending;

Ish: fever: feverish; long: longish: child: childish;

Like: child, childlike;

Less: firendless, friendless: internet, internetless, help, helpless;

Ment: manage; management; harass: harassment;

Ness: soft: softness; deaf deafness;

Ous: fame, famous, hilarity hilarious;

Fy: beauty beautify, magnitude magnify;

Wise: like: likewise;

Y: luck, lucky sun sunny;

Ish; as in long, longish, grey grayish;

Ing: as in smoke smoking, love, loving;

Er, or, ar: as in teach, teacher act actor tract tractor.

Stress Placement in Compound Words

To jog your memory up, a compound word is a word is made up of two other words each of which can exist fully independently of the other while retaining its individual identity.

It is prudent to point out at the outset that in compound words, stress is assigned to only one of the components, not both. Of course, when we say only one component receives stress, we do not mean that the other one is robbed of prominence altogether. Rather, the other element is made noticeably less salient than the other. Do not forget, that each of the members of the compounds is a word in its right before being blended with another one to form one whole. This entails that when used separately, each of which has its distinct stress pattern, which would not be left out completely when forming a compound with another lexical entity. Plus, when we talk about stress-placement in compound words, this does not denote that stress falls on utterly new syllables. That is, we allocate stress to a syllable that is unstressed in one of the words of the compound when they are used in isolation of each other. The story is thankfully just not the right one. The same syllable that receives stress in one of the words in the compound is the selfsame syllable that is stressed in the compound.

Which word in the compound receives stress is largely dependent on the grammatical category of the compound and/or its grammatical make-up. The general tendency for stress in compound words is that it falls on the first word in the compound if the compound functions as a noun. Here are examples:

Internet-café, Facebook, schoolbag, bookworm, bulldog, waiting-room, chat-room, flat-mate, song-bird and the list goes on.

Compounds that are structured as follows: an adjective followed by a hyphen then a noun attached to ‘ed’ which are used extensively in English for the articulatory effort they spare us. In such compounds, stress falls on the second element. The following are examples:

Red-haired, white-skinned, heavy-handed, green-eyed, flat-footed, slow-witted, large-hipped, etc.

Some other compounds that seem to abide by the same accentual pattern are those the first element of which is a number. Such as:

Three-legged chair, four-tailed insect, three-volumed book.

Another category of compound that has the same stress pattern is that functioning as adverbial. Such as, head-first, down-stream.

Yet another set of compound which abides by the same pattern exists. Namely, compounds whose first element is an adverb and second element a verb and function as verbs. Such as, backfire, ill-use, up-grade.

Word Stress Pairs

This last heading will mark our discussion on stress assignment in English. There are a number of English words which have the same graphological patterns, but belong to different word classes. To set them apart in speech, native speakers deploy different stress patterns depending on the grammatical category of the word in question in the sentence. It

is noteworthy that, surprising enough, quite a few of these words have predictable and rule-governed stress assignment. The hard and fast rule that is observed in many of them is that it is the first syllable that is stressed when the word functions as a noun or an adjective. On the other hand, if the word functions as a verb, stress shifts forward into the second syllable.

‘abstract’ 'æbstrækt (A), æb'strækt (V)
‘conduct’ 'kɒndʌkt (N), kən'dʌkt (V)
‘contract’ 'kɒntrækt (N), kən'trækt (V)
‘contrast’ 'kɒntrɑ:st (N), kən'trɑ:st (V)
‘desert’ 'dezət (N), dɪ'zɜ:t (V)
‘escort’ 'eskɔ:t (N), ɪ'skɔ:t (V)
‘export’ 'ekspɔ:t (N), ɪk'spɔ:t (V)
‘import’ 'ɪmpɔ:t (N), ɪm'pɔ:t (V)
‘insult’ 'ɪnsʌlt (N), ɪn'sʌlt (V)
‘object’ 'ɒbdʒɪkt (N), əb'dʒekt (V)
‘perfect’ 'pɜ:fɪkt (A), pə'fekt (V)
‘permit’ 'pɜ:mɪt (N), pə'mɪt (V)
‘present’ 'prezn̩t (N, A), prɪ'zent (V)
‘produce’ 'prɒdju:s (N), prə'dju:s (V)
‘protest’ 'prəʊtest (N), prə'test (V)
‘rebel’ 'rebl̩ (N), rɪ'bel (V)
‘record’ 'rekɔ:d (N), rɪ'kɔ:d (V)
‘subject’ 'sʌbdʒɪkt (N), səb'dʒekt (V)

(Roach 1991: 101)

A very glaring fact inextricably linked with stress placement in the above words must have stared you in the eye: because stress is assigned to different syllables depending on the grammatical category of the word, the phonological make-up of the word has not been immune against this change. Hence, it is worthwhile to point out that these so-called word-class pairs are not solely different in their accentual pattern; they are, likewise, different in the make-up of the nucleus of the first and the second syllable.

The English language sound system has undergone variable changes. One of the changes concerns the pronunciation of a few words in this list. The word ‘process’ is a

good case in point. A number of speakers now use identical pronunciation for both the verb and the noun, with the diphthong being the nucleus of the first syllable.

Unit Three: Weak (Reduced) and Strong (Full) Forms

Two words you have certainly bumped into or read about are weak forms. Under this heading, we will elucidate the notion portrayed by the label means and why I deem it immensely important that you pay sufficient heed to every insight the heading has to offer.

The English language exploits two major classes of words: grammatical and content words. The former refers to the category of words used mainly for grammatical purposes and do not contribute considerably to the lexical significance of utterances. These are: pronouns, article, prepositions, conjunctions, copula and auxiliary verbs.

Content words, on the other hand, are called as such because they are the words out of which the utterance derives its meaning, or lexical significance. This category incorporates: nouns, adjectives, adverbs.

The difference in meaning-contribution weight is also accompanied by a no less weight difference: pronunciation weight. Grammatical words do not invariably cost speakers much articulatory tension, muscular energy and breath effort because they do not always retain their strong vowels. Put differently and more plainly, grammatical words have more than one possible peak. The peak can either incorporate a strong vowel or a weak vowel. While content words invariably call for greater amounts of muscular energy and breath effort. That is, content words do not typically have one pronunciation that is weak and another one that is strong. The overwhelming bulk of content words possess only one possible phonological shape or identity.

We now can draw the following conclusion: the notion of weak and strong forms pertains exclusively to grammatical words. They are alternatively called function words, or (a label that I strongly disapprove of) empty words.

Function words, hence, can have two or more possible pronunciations: one strong and the other(s) weak.

A word of caution is in place here, the existence of these two possible ways of pronouncing these words does not entail that it is entirely up to us to choose any pronunciation as we please. There are some conventions which stipulate where to use the strong and where usage of the weak is frowned upon by native speakers or even completely rejected. The rule of thumb that should be borne in mind is that usage of the weak form is, oddly enough, the norm. The strong form is used only under few specified conditions to be looked at below.

Roach (2009) maintains that knowledge of the very hallmarks of weak forms is vitally important for foreigners. The underlying reason of his claim is manifold:

Using only the strong forms and being in the dark about how, where and why weak forms are used would heap great strain on learners whenattempting to comprehend the natives because, the argument runs, the natives use weak forms far more often than their strong counterparts.

It adds more to the foreign accentedness of learners and native speakers deem utter non-usage of weak forms stilted.

Under What Conditions are Strong Forms Used

The conditions that necessitate using strong forms are the following:

When function words appear at the end of the sentence before a pause asin:

He is the spouse she has been for years waiting for.

What on earth are you looking at?

When the grammatical word is being cited:

'For and at' are amongst the many words in the English language that undergo weakening.

When the grammatical word is emphasized, as in:

I purchased the finger sandwich for him not for her.

For auxiliary or copula verbs when used as the only verb of the sentence:

Most auxiliary and copula verbs retain their strong, unreduced forms when they are not used to fulfill their routine grammatical role: enabling other full verbs to express a variety of meanings. The exception to this is the verb ‘to be’. Oddly enough, even when used as the full verb of the sentence, the verb to be can still be weakened.

I have a note of five thousand dinars.

He is the oldest member of our class.

To the crux of the matter now, English deploys quite a big number of weak form words. In the forthcoming succinct account, I will try and outline the most commonly used ones. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that all the strong and weak form pronunciations were reproduced verbatim from Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2010, 08th edition.

Articles

Both English definite article and indefinite articles are reduced in connected speech.

A (strong form /eɪ/; weak form /ə/), an (strong form /æn/; weak form /ən/) and the (strong form /ðiː/; weak form /ði/ in pre-vocalic positions and /ðə/ in pre-consonantal positions): the vowels in all of these three articles shift to the schwa when weakened with the sole exception of ‘the’ which has another weak variant used in pre-vocalic positions:

Julie has accepted a friend request from a complete stranger on facebook;

The mayor’s inability to convincingly answer the question put him in an awkward position;

The closure of that factory has sparked off large-scale unemployment in that little town.

Prepositions

Prepositions are amongst those little words that undergo weakening. This, however, does not entail that all the members belonging to this word class are susceptible to change. In fact, only a smallish set of them does get reduced. It so happens that the ones that are

weakened are much more common than those which are not. The following are those prepositions that should get their fair share of weakening:

Of (strong form /ɒv/; weak form /əv/): this word features most of the time in its weal form unless it appears word finally:

I have bumped into a number of intriguing books while paging through the library catalogue.

From (strong form /frɒm/; weak form /frəm/): only in final positions and when being under emphasis, it typically retains its clipped form:

I am striving to read the book from cover to cover.

At (strong form /æt/; weak form /ət/): only in utterance-final positions is it pronounced in its full form:

The innocent girl has been staring at the picture of her deceased young brother for a long while.

For (strong form /fɔ:(r)/; weak form /fə(r)/): only in utterance final positions before a pause and when being contrasted does it keep its unreduced form intact:

I have not cracked a joke for donkey's years;

My tutor of Phonetics has at long last bumped into the devoted student he has been fishing for.

To (strong form /tu:/; weak form /tə/ in pre-consonantal positions; /tu/ in pre-vocalic positions): both when used in pre-verbal environments when indicating direction, only one featuring in pre-pausal positions and when under emphasis is it strengthened:

She does not profess to know the ins and outs of the theory but she knows a great deal more than anyone around;

Strawberry farmers will soon be heading to their field to carry on their afternoon duties.

Pronouns

Most of the English pronouns have two forms: weak and strong. It is, however, not invariably accurate to use the weak form. The following explains this more sufficiently.

He (strong form /hiː/; weak form /hi/; /i/), him (strong form /hɪm/; weak form /ɪm/), his (strong form /hɪz/; weak form /ɪz/), she (strong form /ʃiː/; weak form /ʃi/) and her (strong form /hɜː(r)/; weak form /hə(r)/; /ə(r)/;/ɜː(r)/): these two pronouns retain their reduced form almost in all phonological environments. The two exceptions to this are that when they are used in utterance-initial positions or when used contrastively, the strong form is evoked. Mind you, unlike a number of other words, even in final positions usage of the weak form of 'he, his, him, her' is not deemed illicit.

He is a decent bloke, is he not?

I fully understand what he is after;

The letter I gave him was sent by his furious boss;

Peter has fallen head over heels with her ever since their second encounter at the post office;

You (strong form /juː/; weak form /ju/) and your (strong form /jɔː(r)/; weak form /jə(r)/): in most cases the long, tense monophthong in the first word is the weak vowel in the general region of long and short discussed above; in the second word the schwa is used instead of the long monophthong:

You are the only one here who has been groundlessly huffing and puffing about the pros of the plan;

The factory manager will send you your parcel soon.

We (strong form /wiː/; weak form /wi/), us (strong form /ʌs/; weak form /əs/) and them (strong form /ðem/; weak form /ðəm/): these words, though grouped together, do not display the same type of weakening. 'We' is weakened by virtue of replacing the long

monophthong by the short vowel in the general region of /**I;**/ and /**I**/, while ‘us’ and ‘them’ are weakened through the substitution of their nuclei by the schwa vowel:

We were unable to abate their pain due to colossal magnitude of the injury;

The ambulance driver informed us that they are better now;

We were wrongly accused of not looking responsibly after them.

Conjunctions and Adverbs

This category of words also goes through changes when in connected speech. Here again, it is noteworthy that not all the adverbs and conjunctions in the English language are prone to be reduced. Only the ones mentioned below are the ones you got to strive to weaken when the grammatical environment and the meaning you want to get across grant you the green light, as it were.

There (strong form /ðeə(r)/; weak form /ðə/): when used at the beginnings of sentences. when used as a demonstrative pronoun, its full form is left intact:

There must be a verily sage counsel my granny can offer to help me come to some resolutions for the upcoming year;

The boss foresaw that there would be a great deal of row about the newly installed software.

But (strong form /bʌt/; weak form /bət/): when used contrastively or when the speaker wants to underscore the discourse that ensues does it retain its full form:

The party was awesome but Peter did not seem to enjoy it one bit.

And (strong form /ænd/; weak form /ənd/, /ən/, /n/): it is almost always used in its weak from:

Charles dickens and Nancy Farmer are amongst the best authors the English language prides itself on.

As (strong form /æz/; weak form /əz/): this conjunction is used almost always in its weak from. Of course, you should not lose sight of the exceptions outlined above:

I am helping as much as I could.

That (strong form /ðæt/;weak form /ðət/): that can serve a range of grammatical purposes. It can be used as a determiner as in 'Give me that dress on the sofa.', as a pronoun as in 'That is a thorny issue, indeed.' It can, likewise, be used as a relative pronoun, as in 'The bartender said that he would be here in twenty five minutes.'

Only when used as a relative pronoun to introduce relative clauses is it weakened. When used for the fulfillment of other syntactical purposes, it retains its full form:

The bus conductor hoped that he would come across her at the next bus-stop.

Not (strong form /nɒt/; weak form /nt/): this conjunction is most of the time reduced in the parole of native speakers:

That is not the right color of shoe-lace your niece wanted you to buy.

Than (strong form /ðæn/; weak form /ðən/): it is virtually invariably used in its weakened form. The weak form is almost non-existent in the overwhelming bulk of the word's occurrences:

The anti-virus on my laptop is much more robust than the one on yours.

Auxiliaries and Modals

Prior to embarking on any discussion, it is wise to point out that some of the following verbs, viz, to be, to have and to do, can have dual grammatical functions: helping verbs preceding other verbs for the fulfillment of a number of semantic and/or grammatical roles and the only verbs in the sentence, called full verbs. Only when used for

carrying out the former function are they weakened. When used as the full verbs of the sentence, they retain their citation form and any reduction is deemed a violation to pronunciation rules. I have noticed that some Algerian learners have stepped into what is labeled hypercorrection, that is, the production of non-native strings of language owing to their excessive obsession with accurateness, meanwhile not knowing the exceptions to the rules they have internalized.

Am (strong form /æm/; weak form /əm/), are (strong form /ɑːr/; weak form /ə(r)/), been (strong form /biːn/; weak form /bɪn/), was (strong form/wɒz /; weak form /wəz/), were (strong form /wɜː(r)/; weak form /wə(r)/, is: (strong form /ɪz/; weak form /s/ /z/): These various variants of the verb to be are weakened in the overwhelming bulk of their occurrences regardless of whether they are used as the only verbs of the sentence or fulfilling their auxiliary functions:

I am going to turn down their proposal;

I am not here to voice any queries on behalf of the other members of the committee;

You are wholeheartedly welcome to attend all my classes provided that you do not stir up any noise;

You are endeavoring to achieve the impossible;

The little boy was entranced to behold the fancy performance of the players;

Most of Facebook-aholics were commenting tirelessly on my recent post on the dramatically falling education standards.

The pediatrician's here to look into her baffling medical state;

Susan has been for a long time trying to grab hold of that book, Jim.

Has (strong form /hæz/ weak form /həz/; /əz/) have (strong form /hæv/weak form /əv/; /həv/), had (strong form /hæd/ weak form /həd/; /əd/): only when used as the only verb of the sentence are they not weakened:

The government should have devoted a much bigger portion of the budget to childcare;

Computer-technology has rendered quite a few people unable to keep pace with the swift and over-night changes the world witnesses;

It had been a fairly affluent area prior to the outbreak of a number of social ills.

Do (strong form /du:/, weak forms /du/ in prevocalic positions; /də/ in pre-consonantal positions), does (strong form /dʌz/ weak form /dəz/ or even /s/): here again the long monophthong in 'do' and the short one in 'does' are both converted, as it were, into the neutral vowel, the schwa. In highly rapid speech delivery the 'do' is realized as only 'd'. That is to say, it is rendered into a phoneme instead of a syllable. By the same token, 'does' can be realized as 's'. In pre-vocalic environments, the strong form is retained or the weak vowel that lies in the general region of the short /**U**/ and long /**u;**/ is deployed. The strong form is also retained when 'do' or 'does' are used as a morphologic al emphasis-signaling device, as in 'She does know where to go next.'

What do you on a typical Sunday?

Why does the price of meat peak in winter?

Shall (strong form /ʃæl/; weak form /ʃəl/), will (strong form /wɪl/; weak form /l/), should (strong form /ʃʊd/; weak form /ʃəd/), would (strong form /wʊd/; weak form /əd/), can (strong form /kæn/;weak form /kən/) and could (strong form /kʊd/;weak form /kəd/): these modal verbs are weakened almost always. There is an exception to this worth knowing: when they come under emphasis, the strong form is deployed:

You should visit the dentist's shortly, Mike;

It would be far cheaper, if we were to go by train;

The schedule could well be the wrong one to tailor.

Must (strong form /mʌst/; weak form /məst/): this grammatical word has two possible weak forms. One features in pre-consonantal positions, whilst the other features in pre-

vocalic ones. The former does not have the /t/ when weakened, while the latter contains the /t/.

The advisory committee must hold a meeting on Thursday;

Algerian children must eat far more vegetables and fruits if they wanted a healthy diet.

Nouns

Even though we pointed out above that only grammatical words are prone to undergo weakening, there are two words in the English language which seem to violate this rule, and render our aforementioned statement not fully accurate. We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that exceptions are inevitabilities, particularly if the phenomenon under scrutiny is as elusive as multi-dimensional as is language.

Sir (strong form /sɜː(r)/; weak form /sə(r)/) and saint (strong form /seɪnt/; weak from /snt/): These are the only nouns that undergo weakening. The following our examples:

Have you ever visited Saint Louis cathedral?

Sir Boris Johnson is the current mayor of London, is he not?

Unit Four: Aspects of Connected Speech

The foregoing units looked in some depth at the phonological properties of syllables. In other words, we have not heretofore addressed the all-too crucial issue of the properties of speech sounds, of syllables and indeed of entire words in the most typical of language levels: connected speech. It goes without saying that we set about segmenting language into its smallest units because it is our hope that by so doing it is more readily understandable. We know deep down that those accounts we lay down on the individual properties of distinct speech sounds and even of larger sound chunks, such as syllables, is a bit of an abstract, idealized portrayal of what truly goes on in the phonic medium. The phonic medium is far removed from the traits depicted by segmental phonologists predominantly because those individual properties reported by phonologists are hardly fully present when sounds are blended together in that fascinatingly baffling way humans so instinctively use.

The following will take you along a number of properties, doubtless tangible and far more representative, of English connected speech. Connected speech simply designates language units above the level of words. In other words, connected speech can stand for phrases of varying form and length, clauses of different grammatical make-up and sentences, be they simple, complex or compound-complex sentences, to mention but a few instances. We will in what follows talk about three main aspects of connected speech, namely, elision, assimilation and liking.

Elision

It refers to the deletion or removal of a segment, whether it be a vowel, a consonant or a syllable in its entirety. (Roach 2002) Elision manifests itself at the phrasal, clausal or sentential level. We do not typically see elision operating at the level of individual words. Because, after all, like any other features of connected speech, elision can be legitimately

viewed as a facilitative device speakers deploy for the sake of easing up articulatory strain whenever they feel that this will not interfere with the comprehensibility of their messages. This, nonetheless, does not connote that it is entirely up to the individual speakers to go for the patterns that suits them as there are socially acceptable speaking conventions they have to bow to. That is why foreigners are strongly advised to abide only by the patterns of elision described in books if they want to elide at all. Using patterns that are against native norms would render their accents foreign-sounding if not un-intelligible altogether.

A fallacy that some foreigners hold locally is that elision is a feature of sloppy speech. They claim that elision is used solely by native speakers in very informal contexts. Do not be under any elusion, this is far from the truth. Even the most highly educated of native speakers at the most prestigious universities use it. Mind you, they do not overuse it. Now we will look at each of the three types of elision in turn.

Elision of Vowels

The vowel that often undergoes elision is, hardly surprisingly, the schwa vowel. At the beginning of a number of frequently used words, the schwa is often dropped, such as tonight, police, today, perhaps.

Elision of Consonants

Consonant number one that undergoes elision is /f/ or /v/ in the word of. The /t/ and /d/ and even /k/ and /**T**/ often undergo elision when they appear in the middle of a three consonant cluster. In all the following words, the middle consonant in the coda generally has zero realization: linked, asked, acts, months.

Elision of Entire Syllables

As mentioned above, even syllables are prone to be elided. A word of caution should be sounded here: only weak syllables undergo elision. The penultimate syllable ‘ra’ in a

number of English words is often removed, as in, particularly, probably, February, library, temporary.

Linking

Another feature of connected speech worth making it into the Algerian learners' linguistic conscious is linking. It simply means the transitions we make when passing from one word into another one. We do not pronounce a string of words as if we are merely listing them. This, accordingly, requires that we make very smooth transitions when going from one word into the ensuing one in a given chunk.

Our utterances are marked by pre-pauses and post-pauses. In between the two pauses, the words are glued together to form a highly harmonic whole. This fluid holding together of words makes us feel as if the speaker is not stepping from one word onto another. Verily, if rule-governed linking is fully complied with, listeners would feel that the speaker is uttering a very giant multi-syllabic word. Now we come to the kernel of this issue: how is it that speakers go about linking words together? What are the processes invoked?

There are in fact myriad processes at work for rendering speech into the unified, pauses-uncluttered entity it typically is.

When two words come in a succession, the first of which is a vowel sound and the second starts in yet another vowel sounds, it is considered over-careful and stilted if a pause is made between the two words, unless you have no air left in your lungs to carry on. One other possibility is the usage of the glottal stop between the two vowels. Though it is used and deemed equally correct by some native speakers, the overwhelming bulk of them frown upon this usage. To link two words of this type together the following tips will be useful:

Look at the nature of the vocalic element at the end of the first word;

Look at the vocalic nature of the element at the beginning of the second word;

If the first and the second elements are the long /**I;/** or short /**I**/, then produce a prolonged one without making any interruption. Here are examples:

You got to furnish many examples;

He is a talented writer.

If the second element is a back vowel, then after the production of the first word put your lips ready for the production of a very brief light /w/ sound before you get into the production of the second word. This process might sound cumbersome and counter-productive (you might think you will end up stuttering and stammering to get this pronunciation right). Indeed, you might experience some oddity at first, but cling onto it. You will come to make it more easily and in a native-like fashion if you try it over a number of times. You will feel self-conscious at first, but after coming in terms with it, it will flow as naturally as the routine production of other stretches of sounds. Here are illustrative examples:

The law in this country is quite chaotic.

Another way of linking words together is the sounding of the post-vocalic /r/. The /r/ sound in all rhotic accents has zero realizations in pre-consonantal, pre-pausal and post-vocalic positions. The only position where it is pronounced is pre-vocalic environments. In connected speech, then, the pronunciation of /r/ in the last environments is a linking device, pronunciation-wise. Below are examples:

Her father-in-law is quite indignant at the way she was treated;

The mayor promised to look more seriously into public transport later on.

The Intrusive /r/

Another way for achieving cohesion as it were in pronunciation is through the usage of the intrusive /r/. The intrusive /r/, as is so called, is a /r/ sound that is present in phonic form of the English language without it being present in its graphic form. (Chalker and Weiner 1994) For instance, in the utterance, 'I saw a film yesterday.' Some native speaker insert a /r/ sound between 'saw' and 'a'.

This usage of the /r/, though highly frequent in the speech of a great many schooled native speakers, some of them deem it inappropriate. It seems that even those who disapprove of it when hearing others use it, actually use themselves in their own colloquial speech. Although I am in no way saying that Algerian learners ought to use, I am fairly sure that knowing of the existence of such a pronunciation would be a true boon for them when listening to native speakers.

The intrusive /r/ is generally used to link words the first of which ends in a vowel (mainly /**@/, /3;/, /A;/ and /O;/)** and the second starts in a vowel. Here are examples:

The charity's idea is fabulous;

The toddler saw a nice peacock in the picture-book;

This milieu is quite perilous for teens;

My grandma is eighty.

It could, likewise, be used within the boundary of one word. The same rule applies, though. The word drawing is a very good case in point.

Assimilation

Of the other pervasive aspects of connected speech is arguably assimilation. Assimilatory processes are much more present, diverse and above all intricate than elision.

Assimilation refers to the influence adjacent speech sounds make on each other. Because the various sound features we talked about above do not stay intact when sounds get into contact with each other. Assimilation also is one of the tools whereby speakers attain fluency. If speakers were to produce each single sound in connected speech as if the sound is in total isolation, their utterances would look completely unnatural and disfluency would naturally ensue..

Assimilation could be of a number of types depending of the parameter of classification we choose to deploy.

Directionality of Influence

This simply denotes whether a given sound is influenced by the following or the preceding ones. Under this heading, we can notice the existence of two types, progressive assimilation and regressive assimilation.

Progressive assimilation means that a given sound comes under the articulatory influence of the following one. The most talked about quintessence of this type is the various pronunciations of the ‘s’. As you already know, the ‘s’ behaves differently depending on the nature of the ensuing sound. To break this notion down for the sake of clarity, it is pronounced /z/ when followed by voiced sounds as in cars, lives. On the other hand, when the following sound is voiceless, it is pronounced /s/ as in, hearts, whelps. Some other phoneticians use different names to refer to this type of assimilation: perseverative and left-to-right assimilation.

Regressive assimilation: it is a perfect opposite of the former type. It means that a given sound is exerted influence upon by the one preceding it. A good example of this second type is the pronunciation of English voiced consonants when preceded by voiced or voiceless one. Here again, some scholars use different labels: anticipatory and right-to-left

assimilation. It is worthwhile to note, however, that by far the two names topping the two types are the most commonly used ones in the literature. (Crystal 2008)

Degree of Influence

If the parameter used is degree of influence, we would come up with two types: partial and full assimilation.

Partial assimilation: if assimilation is said to be partial, then the realization of one sound is not wholly readjusted due to the differing features its neighbour has. In other words, the speech sound keeps part of its inherent identity and acquires some other features of the adjacent sound(s). The following is a good case in point:

Ten pieces: the /t/ sound becomes identical to /p/ in place. It becomes bilabial instead of alveolar.

Complete assimilation: it takes place when one of the sounds loses all its features and becomes identical in every respect to another neighboring sound, as in, ten markets. The /n/ becomes fully identical to the /m/ in markets. In that pair also the same process happens: the /t/ in that becomes identical to the /p/ in person.

Which Sound Feature is the Recipient of Assimilation

In other words, is it the place of articulation, the manner of articulation, the position of the velum or the vibration of the vocal folds which comes under influence (which gets altered). Taking this parameter to compartmentalize assimilation would enable us to come up with a whole range of other assimilatory processes.

Assimilation of Place

As the name points out, it designates that the influence adjacent sounds have on each other operates at the place of articulation level. The sound receiving this type shifts its

inherent place and adopts the place of the influence-inducer. There are almost as many types falling under this category as there are places of articulation. Nonetheless, I will confine myself here to looking at just a few instances. The overarching aim is not really to provide an all-inclusive account on all the assimilatory processes in action in the English language. The objective is rather to pinpoint the mechanism underpinning the materialization of these processes per se.

Palatalisation: when a given sound which in isolation is palatal or palato-alveolar acquires one of these two features of course, after having lost its inherent feature. The following are examples cited from Odgen (2009)

[mis ju] [mifju] miss you

[wgzJArj] [w93 JArj] was young

[hitju] [hitfju] hit you

[wud ju] [wud3 ju] would you

I will attach some illustrative accounts on the first example only because the same mechanism governs the ensuing three ones. The first transcription above is that of unassimilated /s/ normally typical of over-careful speech. Hence, the site of our attention is the second one where the alveolar /s/ becomes a palato-alveolar sound. This pronunciation emerges because the /s/ is followed by the palatal /j/. For ease and swiftness of production, the /s/ is produced farther forward in the mouth because the articulators get themselves ready for the production of the palatal sound.

Assimilation of Manner

When the manner of articulation of a given speech sound shift to that of the neighbouring one. It could also be either progressive or regressive.

Lateral release: this is one of the commonest types of assimilation under this category. First off, lateral release is typical of English plosive consonants. In the production of individual plosives, the air is released all at once stirring an audible plosion. However, when plosives are followed by the lateral, they tend to pick up the lateralness and lose their otherwise inherent trait: plosive release. instead of the usual sudden and full release of the airflow, it is released laterally. This process happens–as all other assimilatory processes-because the speech organs towards the end of any sound production start getting themselves ready for the generation of the new sound in the string, hence resulting in a mandatory change in the shape of the oral cavity. Speech-production would be an unbearably cumbersome activity if full attention, as it were, is given to every speech sound produced.

Assimilation of Voice

Here we can only find two types: either a voiceless sound becoming voiced or alternatively a voiced sound losing voice.

Devoicing: is the most prevalent type of assimilation of voice. It means that a voiced sound becomes voiceless owing to it being preceded by a voiceless sound. All the voiced sounds in the onsets of the following words become voiceless because of the preceding voiceless sounds: play, pry, quarter.

Conclusion

I have endeavoured in this handy manual to cover a number of aspects of English syllable, stress, weak and strong form and two intrinsic aspects of English connected speech. My discussion is by no means all-inclusive. I confined myself to the main hallmarks of the various topics under scrutiny, partly because sophomores at Mila University Centre, at least, most of them are meeting these notions for the first time; they would not be able to know intricate particulars simply and purely because they do not, I

would presume, have at their disposal the barest rudiments of the concepts I tackle in the handbook. The other reason is that this manual is meant to incorporate the elements of the syllabus of the second semester. Though I have invested much effort to present the most abridged account coverable in the second-term span, I am sure this is just beyond our grasp.

Pronunciation-fanatics, however, would not feel remotely content with the introductory portrayal the manual has to offer. For this category of students, I would recommend that they poke over the lengthy discussions given by Odgen (2009), to mention but a representative book

List of Works Cited

Crystal, David. (2008). *A First Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gimson, A. C. (1970). *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*.London:Edward

Ogden, R. (2009). *An Introduction to English Phonetics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Roach, P. (2002). *A Little Encyclopedia of Phonetics*. Retrieved from <http:/www.personal.reading.ac.uk/~llsroach:peter/ >

Roach, P. (2009). *English Phonetics and Phonology (4th edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roach, P. (1991). *English Phonetics and Phonology (2nd edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sylvia, Chalker and Weiner, Edmund. (1994). *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.