

ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION I Marko Laakkonen

The IPA - International Phonetic Association – phonetic transcription - The phonemes

CONSONANTS voiceless (vocal folds do not vibrate) – voiced (vocal folds vibrate)

a) STOPS (PLOSIVES)

[p] (voiceless labial) **aspirated** → puff of air

pit Peter campaign wrapping complain prefer pledge

- ❖ **word-boundaries:** scrap **p**aper top people (held as in Finnish)
- ❖ preceded by [s] → **unaspirated** : **s**piral speculate spleen explicit spruce
- ❖ **not pronounced:** receipt, cupboard, **p**sychology

[b] (voiced labial) (unaspirated)

rib better stab probe fibrous compatible palpable hybrid breathe

- ❖ **word-boundaries:** the club **b**ar (held as in Finnish)
- ❖ **not pronounced in /mb/ , /bt/ :** lamb, thumb, debt, subtle
- ❖ **pairs:** bride – pride bear – pair bee – pea

[t] (voiceless alveolar = tongue on the hard ridge behind the top teeth - don't touch the teeth)

aspirated → puff of air textile attain hat-trick transit attach

- ❖ preceded by [s] -**unaspirated** steam stool **lasts costs**
- ❖ **word-boundaries:** not to go light tool (held as in Finnish)
- ❖ **when followed by – on/-en** → often a glottal stop [ʔ]: **Clinton button Brighton eaten flatten**
- ❖ in American English between other vowels → [d] : **latter writer attitude lottery**
(so **rider – writer, ladder – latter, wading – waiting** can be indistinguishable)
and sometimes after n: **winter twenty (winter – winner** indistinguishable)
- ❖ in Scots and Cockney [ʔ] between vowels: a lot of **butter**

[d] (voiced alveolar) unaspirated

decline absurd deter demote Detroit drizzle drastic draughtsman

- ❖ **word-boundaries:** **bad debt** scored double (held as in Finnish)
- ❖ **with –en** → air through the nose: **widen modern burden**

[k] (voiceless velar formed at the back of the mouth) **aspirated** → puff of air

Connecticut cure cucumber consider carton Cairo Cleveland enquire crucial quote closure

- ❖ preceded by [s] **-unaspirated** scheme discussion scale squander mixture texture
- ❖ **word-boundaries:** cubic capacity dark carpet black car (held as in Finnish)
- ❖ **not pronounced:** knee knight muscle

[g] (voiced velar formed at the back of the mouth) unaspirated

negligence Gloucestershire cargo vogue gadget gather aggregate Niagara

- ❖ **word-boundaries:** big gamble (held as in Finnish)
- ❖ As both [k] and [g] are pronounced at the same place, **voicing is a crucial distinctive feature:**
gore - core ghost - coast great - crate girl - curl gap - cap glass - class gram - cram
the Grand Canyon Potter's Bar the backpacker's bag's in his back

b) FRICATIVES

[V] (voiced labiodental) lower lip against the upper teeth - **much stronger than the Finnish one**

Vermont varnish visit vehicle give lived prove advice revolve available convey invest
sever severe

- ❖ **word-boundaries:** a naive view state of Vermont (a pause in between)
- ❖ **difficulty in unstressed syllables for Finns:** invoice advert several preview oven vowel

[f] (voiceless labiodental) stronger than the Finnish one, not voiced

Pharaoh coffee cough coffin Philosophy

- ❖ **word-boundaries:** What if Frank phones? (a pause in between)

[f] versus [V] both are strong but only [V] has voicing

- ❖ **pairs:** fat - vat fast - vast off - of
- ❖ **note proper nouns:** the letters ph: [v] → Stephen King [f] → Stephanie

The [v] / [w] distinction – a reading problem for Finns

❖ in Finnish the letters v and w represent the same sound – in English two different sounds

[W] (voiced labial-velar approximant) lips rounded, pushed out, back of tongue raised

wet – vet wine - vine wheel – veal worse – verse why – vie west – vest wiper - viper whicker – vicar
very well votes for women well-versed wise -advice a wave of violence viewers everywhere
West Virginia Warwick Avenue twenty-five wives Wayne’s vain Vienna Woods
We were quite aware that there was a wide variety of Vanity Fair awards available.

❖ **Not pronounced in wr** : wreck wrench write wrest wrap wrist

[θ] (Voiceless dental) **a long and strong, voiceless sound**

❖ the tip of tongue in front of the top teeth with **almost unobstructed airflow** out of the narrow gap

thick theme thief thumb thorough theater thermal thesis third thousand
threat thrive throat through teeth death earth eighth breath breadth filth wealth width cloth
method pathology sympathy Catherine lethal authority lengthy Heathrow nothing synthetic

❖ **word-boundaries:** the fourth **Thursday** (a pause in between)

❖ The commonest **mistake** is to keep the **tip of the tongue back** at the ridge behind the upper teeth → [t]
three trees thrust – trust third – turd thank – tank thought – taught thinker – tinker thread – tread
torn – thorn

❖ Note the letters **th** in some proper names → [t]: Thomas, Thompson

[ð] (Voiced dental) **the same place as [θ]** but **obstruct the flow of air** → **short, soft and voiced**

the this that them there though they these thus with breathe loathe clothe
rather either bother rhythm clothing clothes

❖ **difference between the singular [θ] and the plural [ð] forms:** bath - baths mouth – mouths

❖ **word-boundaries:** I went with **them** you can’t breathe **there** (a pause in between)

❖ The commonest **mistake** is to keep the **tip of the tongue back** at the ridge behind the upper teeth
→ the result is a [d] (this is ok in broad Black American Vernacular: Dat man over dere)

READING PASSAGE: [ð] and [θ] read the passage aloud

The health conference at Southampton was held on the third Thursday of the month. Though the theme (Theory and Methods of Therapy) was thoroughly thought out beforehand, and there was enthusiasm for the general program, Thomas Thatcher from the local authority gave a lengthy synthesis on finance, which some delegates thought had nothing to do with the field of operation. The talk went on through the whole of the morning - three hours, which they would rather have spent on something other than the mathematics of local authority budgets.

c) SIBILANTS → four hissing sounds

[S] (voiceless alveolar) **stronger and longer** than the Finnish one

- ❖ the front part of the tongue pressed against the back of the bottom front teeth

service sip seriousness success spray strict strand swindle switch pay-offs Swiss release
loss addicts embarrass harass whistle pessimist prospect

- ❖ **word-boundaries:** less suitable (double length) **Not pronounced:** island aisle answer listen

[Z] (voiced alveolar) **strong, soft and voiced** the same place as [s] but **pressed harder** → voicing (ZZZ)

zero zone zip zebra xenophobia Zambia amaze craze breeze goes because doors wires pleased
leaves gains drizzle hazard busy lazy razor wiser pheasant exam Arizona Brazil visa

- ❖ The common **mistake** is overdoing it and **placing the tongue too far back** → then it resembles [ʒ]

[ʒ] (voiced palato-alveolar) **short, soft, and voiced** tongue **further back, curled** towards the ridge

- ❖ usually between vowels in the middle of words, often French loans

usual vision leisure erasure closure measure conclusion intrusion television beige garage

[ʃ] (voiceless palato-alveolar) **long and strong, and voiceless**, airflow almost unobstructed

- ❖ the tip of the tongue **pointing upwards**, almost touching the ridge

show shirt shrimp shred shroud shrivel cash rush Finnish wish
fishing tissue pressure brochure ocean patient dictionary ambitious efficient

social special seashell session sachet recession succession exhibition precious niche

❖ **word-boundaries:** fresh shrimps Polish ship (double length)

❖ luxury: BrE [ʃ]; AE [ʃ] and [ʒ]

PAIRS: (s - z) surprise scissors exercises (z - s) possess exist business
(ʃ - z) rationalize shares fashions finishes (z - ʃ) position desertion privatization
(s - ʒ) decision prestige massage

❖ **MINIMAL PAIRS IN SIBILANTS (CHANGES IN MEANING)**

sort - short sue - shoe - zoo price - prize ceased - seized parcel - partial

saw - shore gross - grows sip - ship - zip racing - raising loose - lose

❖ **Different sibilants, word-boundaries:** these shares Finnish seamen's mission (second one doubled)

READING PASSAGE:

These sorts of figures seem impressive, but we mustn't expect this sort of expansion, except on a strictly short-term basis. Firstly, setting aside the orders placed as spin-offs from the fashion-show, less than sixty per cent remain as representing sources, which our sales force could realistically focus on as a nucleus of purchasers. After this initial phase, when conditions have somewhat normalized once more, we must be realistic about the prospects, say, for the first two years at least, and not assume that these extraordinary sales figures will stay as high as they have so far. Our shop received, unexpectedly and gratis, some extremely positive publicity as a result of the television series broadcast last spring: but it would be foolish to expect such publicity to occur again. We must accept that success will be ours strictly in proportion to the efforts we sustain, especially over the next six months, which will be crucial.

d) AFFRICATES - COMPLETE CLOSURE WITH FRICTION

[tʃ] (voiceless palato-alveolar) **long, strong and voiceless**

❖ the tip of the tongue **in complete contact with the hard ridge**, then **released and tip lowered**

chair chopstick cherry chapel chance China charter Chichester watch spinach Norwich Greenwich
rich sandwich purchase actual question ancient franchise merchandise fortunate fluctuate furniture
departure adventurous Massachusetts watched matched sketched

- ❖ **Contrastive pairs:** watts – watch coats – coach mats – match
- ❖ **word-boundaries:** which **child**? Dutch cheese (broken in the middle)
- ❖ **Not all** words beginning **ch** are pronounced [tʃ]
 - imports from French: [ʃ] chic moustache champagne Chicago cache
 - imports from Greek: [k] chorus chameleon charisma technique chlorine

[dʒ] (voiced palato-alveolar) **short, soft and voiced, like [tʃ] but not released**

just jar genius jersey gentlemen Japan Geneva Jerusalem age large huge ledge message carriage
 spillage percentage privilege Cambridge hinge sponge bulge arrange revenge object Belgium
 stringent adjourn adjacent allergy digital rigid margin major procedure urgency ranged diverged

- ❖ **Beware of assimilation (two neighboring similar sounds becoming identical):**
 charge challenge exchange junction gesture digestion suggestion changed charged challenged
- ❖ **word-boundaries:** change jobs huge joke (broken in the middle)
- ❖ **Contrastive pairs:** batch – badge rich – ridge chin – gin

READING PASSAGE:

The percentage of merchandise lost through spillage is negligible; even so, the margin we allow is generous, large enough to cover just about all contingencies. At the actual place of manufacture, a general check is made as part of normal procedure; this is to the advantage of the purchaser who won't want to challenge each and every batch without justification.

Fortunately, there are few other potential hitches. Fluctuations in the exchange rate, of course, cannot be judged beforehand, but our agent keeps a vigilant watch on the financial markets, and a small jump or plunge can generally be hedged. A major adjustment, however, would oblige us to take urgent measures.

e) LIGHT AND DARK Ls

[l] (voiced alveolar lateral approximant) **voiced**

- ❖ **“light” [l]** at the beginning of words and between vowels **in BrE** (similar to the Finnish one)

lean loose shallow palace (**in AE “dark” also here**)

- ❖ **“dark” [l]** elsewhere → retroflex: the tip of the tongue against the toothridge, curled, sides relaxed

hill well Liverpool girl goal gulf bulk mail while meal loyal

❖ **Not pronounced:** salmon

f) DIFFERENT Rs

BrE (Standard (southern) British English)

[ɾ] (voiced alveolar trill/flap) tongue begins half curled up then flattens itself, a short flap

real rope root Reading barrack virus Europe

❖ in southern England /r/ is not pronounced at the end of words or before consonants

car fair steer farm search part large

❖ between vowels /r/ is pronounced both within words and linking two words

rear end either eight or eleven rare appearance

❖ Intrusive [ɾ]: the majority of native BrE speakers will pronounce words ending in /ɔ:/ but spelt /-aw/ with an [ɾ] if followed by a vowel

law and order ['lɔ:ɾ n 'ɔ:də]

AE (General American)

[ɹ] (voiced retroflex flap) tongue curled up back, behind the ridge, changes the color of the preceding vowel

❖ **always pronounced;**(in the south-east and north-east, [ɹ] pronounced in the same places as in BrE)

rash rain car more part heard bird farm barrack boring Europe

❖ when not the final sound, the [ɹ] is often not as strong (and just adds color to the preceding vowel)

mothers however sad nevertheless

g) NASALS (not much to discuss there but a few things)

[m] , [n] (voiced)

❖ **word-boundaries:** home-market I'm meeting Jack when needed (double length)

[n] vs. [ŋ] foreignn reign feign vs. ring swimming

SENTENCE STRESS & RHYTHM

As we saw earlier, many short, unstressed words lose their full vowels in English when spoken at speed, and are pronounced with the unstressed neutral sound /ə/ (the schwa). So it is also with unstressed syllables in longer words. This is closely related to the basic rhythm of English phrases and sentences, which is very different from Finnish.

Compare:

Sää-tie-do-tus o-do-tet-ta-vis-sa huo-mis-il-taan as-ti.

Each syllable lasts about the same length of time

HERE is the WEATher foreCAST for SATurday theeLEventhofjuLY.

The STRESSED syllables come at approximately even intervals of time. When their number varies, the unstressed syllables are spoken at varying speeds, in order to maintain this even spacing of stressed syllables.

Practise with the following short pairs:

for TWENTy YEARS

to TRY aGAIN

unTIL he COMES

MEANS of TRANSport

HALF a PINT of LAger at the END of the DAY

for as LONG as it TAKES

Peter will SEND you a NOTE of it

NONE of the oRiginal reQUIREments he was in Paris at the TIME of the colLAPSE

Read the following as naturally as possible, taking into account rhythm and stress:

This was the first time they had arranged a meeting for the entire team.

A shortage of skilled labor can be as detrimental as underfunding to the well-being of an enterprise.

The site for the new factory was chosen only after an exhaustive study of all possible locations.

Be sure to ask for an invoice to show the accountant.

READ THE PASSAGE ALOUD:

Remember that the more unstressed syllables between each stress, the faster they must be spoken.

The NOtion that a GOOD PROduct SELLS ITSELF / would be a FACT of LIFE in an iDEAL WORLD. / In SUCH a WORLD, the PUBlic would NOT ONLY CHOOSE the BEST PROduct for the BEST REAsons, / they would ALSO KNOW about it withOUT being TOLD: / In the WORLD we LIVE in, however, / the OPeRAtions of PUBlic reLAtions and MARket reSEARCH are INdisPENsable. / a PROduct has NOT Only to be BEST, / or to be SEEN to be BEST, / it FIRST has to be SEEN at ALL, / and THEN in the SORT of LIGHT that will perSUADE conSUMers to BUY it. / ALL THIS we could say is SELF-EVident, / but it's surPRIing HOW MANY GOOD PROducts FAIL to GAIN a FOOThold in the MARket / for LACK of WELL-PLANNED and iMAGinative MARketing. / THIS may be DUE NOT ONLY to a CERTain deGREE of NEGLigence and OVerSight, / but ALSO to a KIND of PRIDE on the PART of CERTain MANuFACTurers, / which inHIBits them from CRYing their WARES in the MOST effEctive MANner. / They HAVE, to say it BRIEFly, an ATtitude PROBLEM, / and ONE that NEEDS SWIFT and deCIusive COMing to TERMS with, / if comMERcial surVival and sucCESS is the NAME of the GAME./