

- Voiced fricatives /v, z/ connote speed better than voiceless fricatives /f, s/.
- Stops /b, p, t, d/ connote dependability better than fricatives /v, f, s, z/.
- Alveolars /t, d, s, z/ connote speed better than labials /p, b, f, v/.

Lexicon Branding (Sausalito, California) has a team of fifty-five linguists working in thirty-eight countries. They conduct research and ensure that the names are acceptable to speakers of languages in countries where the products might be sold. Catchword (Oakland, California, and New York City), another branding company, also recognizes the importance of knowledge of sounds. "When developing names . . . for the global market, we're keenly aware of pronunciation issues, such as consonant clusters, which are difficult for Japanese speakers, and vowel sounds that don't exist in Arabic. Our names generally do not require translation; they're pronounceable, if not meaningful, in every required language" (<http://www.catchwordbranding.com/>).

Factors other than *sound symbolism*—images, qualities, and emotions unconsciously

associated with sounds—enter into product naming, too. Will Leben, director of linguistics at Lexicon and professor of linguistics at Stanford University, describes the process of naming the BlackBerry PDA. Someone at the company noted that all the buttons on the PDA were like seeds, so they began brainstorming fruit words. Someone suggested *strawberry*, but the sounds in *straw-* didn't convey the right message and seemed too 'slow'; *berry* was good, though, with the /b/ connoting both speed and dependability. Also, there is the 'friendliness' of the fruit word, good in a technical product so as not to make it intimidating, the 'lightheartedness' of the alliteration, the symmetry of the two /b/s, and the diminutive quality provided by the final <y>, suggesting compactness.

For more information

Lexicon. <http://www.lexicon-branding.com/index.html>.

Catchword. <http://www.catchwordbranding.com/>.

Summary

In this chapter, you have learned how linguists describe and categorize speech sounds—sounds that we produce effortlessly, without even thinking about it. You have learned a system of transcribing speech using a version of the International Phonetic Alphabet, and you have learned how speech sounds are made and how we can distinguish among sounds based on their phonetic features, distinguishing them by natural class. We have discussed how sounds change over time (the Great Vowel Shift), how they are changing right now (the Northern Cities Vowel Shift), and how these shifts and other sound changes happen in systematic and patterned ways. We have also glimpsed some of the ways in which these English sounds differ from those of other languages. In the next chapter, when we begin our study of phonology, we will see how the phonemes introduced in this chapter are combined into larger units by systematic rules.

Sources and Resources

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Review, Practice, and Explore

RPE 3.1 Describing Consonant Sounds

Using Table 3.1, describe the following sounds in terms of voicing, place of articulation, and manner of articulation. Example: /p/ is a voiceless bilabial stop.

- | | |
|--------|---------|
| 1. /f/ | 7. /ŋ/ |
| 2. /h/ | 8. /b/ |
| 3. /g/ | 9. /š/ |
| 4. /θ/ | 10. /č/ |
| 5. /n/ | 11. /t/ |
| 6. /r/ | 12. /m/ |

RPE 3.2 Voiced or Voiceless?

Come up with four minimal pairs of words in which a sound differs only in voicing status; for example: *pin* /pm/ and *bin* /bm/. Refer to the vowel chart in Tables 3.4 and 3.5 for help with transcribing vowels.

RPE 3.3 Different Places of Articulation

Looking at the consonant chart in Table 3.1, come up with three sets of three words, the words in each set differing only in the place of articulation of one of the sounds in the same position. For example, in the words *pit*, *tit*, *kit*, /pɪt/ /tɪt/ /kɪt/, the initial sounds are all voiceless stops, but /p/ is bilabial, /t/ is alveolar, and /k/ is velar.

RPE 3.4 Different Manners of Articulation

Looking at the consonant chart in Table 3.1, come up with three sets of two words each that differ only in the manner of articulation of one of the sounds in the same position. For example, in the words *ship* and *chip*, /ʃɪp/ /tʃɪp/, the initial sounds are a voiceless palatal fricative /ʃ/ and a voiceless palatal affricate /tʃ/. The differing sounds do not have to occur at the beginning of the word.

RPE 3.5

Place and Manner Natural Classes

For each group of words, write a three-part description (voicing, place of articulation, and manner of articulation) for the underlined sound in each word. Then determine which single natural class of sounds describes the underlined sounds in each group.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
<u>p</u> izza	<u>t</u> hink	<u>f</u> avorite	<u>s</u> ing
<u>m</u> alice	<u>th</u> ough	<u>s</u> oap	<u>b</u> ark
<u>b</u> ashful	<u>thr</u> ash	<u>v</u> aporize	<u>g</u> et
<u>w</u> ash	<u>th</u> istle	<u>z</u> enith	
<u>f</u> ather	<u>th</u> ere	<u>sh</u> ape	
<u>v</u> alise		<u>th</u> atch	

RPE 3.6

Oops! That's Not What I Meant!

Slips of the tongue involve accidental manipulation of the building blocks of language. The slips can be phonetic, phonological, morphological, or syntactic. In the following phonetic slips, either a whole phoneme or only a piece—a feature—of each sound is involved. Describe what happens from the intended utterance to the actual utterance and why you think each slip occurs.

Example: Intended Utterance

black cat

Actual Utterance

plack gat

The voicing from /b/ moves to the /k/ of *cat*, resulting in /g/. Removing the voicing from /b/ results in /p/. This switch provides evidence for the features of these phonemes and for a speaker's ability to manipulate those features unconsciously.

Intended Utterance

- pity the new teacher
- mismatched

Actual Utterance

mity the dew teacher
mitchmashed

(Before attempting an analysis, transcribe this one to see the correct phonemic representation.)

- bad, naughty kitten
- coin toss

mad, daughty kitten
toin coss

RPE 3.7

Fiddle-Faddle!

Why do you think we say *fiddle-faddle* and not *faddle-fiddle*? Why is it *ping-pong* and *pitter-patter* and not *pong-ping* and *patter-pitter*? Here are some more:

dribs and drabs, spic and span, riffraff, zigzag, singsong, mishmash, ding-dong, crisscross, see-saw, hee-haw, flip-flop, hippity-hop, ticktock, eeny-meeny-miney-moe, bric-a-brac, clickety-clack, splish splash, dillydally, blither blather, tip-top, chitter chatter, shim sham, flimflam

Come up with more examples of similar kinds of singsong (there's one!) phrases. In the examples given and in your own, which vowel sounds seem to come first? Why do you think these vowels come before others? Is this pattern likely to hold for other languages? Why or why not?

RPE 3.8 Mono or Di?

Recall that whether vowels are diphthongs or monophthongs varies quite a bit across English dialects. Write the following words in phonemic transcription of your pronunciation. (It might be easier to listen to someone else's pronunciation, since it can be difficult to reflect on your own.)

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| a. foul | f. tine |
| b. bawdy | g. frame |
| c. coffee | h. fire |
| d. toil | i. taught |
| e. reign | |

RPE 3.9 Syllabic Consonants

The transcription of words with syllabic consonants can cause some trouble when you are just learning to transcribe. Transcribe the following words phonemically, using syllabic consonants where relevant. Remember that not all instances of /r/, /l/, /m/, and /n/ are syllabic consonants.

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| a. purple | e. bottom |
| b. bludgeon | f. cycle |
| c. furtive | g. cursive |
| d. kittens | |

RPE 3.10 Phonemic Transcription

A. Transcribe the following words using phonemic transcription:

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. monkey | 7. badger | 13. shaved |
| 2. though | 8. think | 14. wiggle |
| 3. crabs | 9. useful | 15. huge |
| 4. fangs | 10. uncle | 16. prestige |
| 5. physics | 11. measure | 17. cured |
| 6. thanks | 12. pinch | 18. wart |

B.

- Write your name in phonemic transcription.
- Write a sentence in phonemic transcription.

RPE 3.11 Reverse Phonemic Transcription

Write the following sentences in regular English orthography. Keep in mind that this transcription may not match your pronunciation of some of the words. Also keep in mind that some of these sentences might not actually make a whole lot of sense—we don't want context to give away the words, so some of them are a bit, well, wacky.

- /ə maws slept θru may lekʃər əbawt bəkəts ʃʌmpɪŋ mtu ðə læps əv bebz/
- /ðə mʌnθ əv eprɪl wəz pɹɪkylərli lʌvli dont yu θɪŋk/
- /ɪməʃnəri kričərz lept tɔrd ʌs frəm al dɪrɛkʃənz/
- /gʊlz ænd wɪçəz mayt rɒmp ðru rɛd skwɛr ɔn sʌnde/
- /mɪsəz bizli wakt kwɪkli dawn ðə krʊkɪd bɔrdwʌk/
- /ðɪs ɛgzæmpəl ɪz ɛntendɪd tu bi mɔr kənfyuzɪŋ/

RPE 3.12 Who Has “Creaky Voice”?

In a phonetic feature of voicing known as *creaky voice* (also called *laryngealization* and *vocal fry*), only the front part of the vocal folds are vibrating, giving a very low frequency of vibration. Sometimes you can even hear vibration of individual vocal folds. This feature seems to be on the rise in American English speakers; some researchers suggest that it happens more frequently in young people. It also appears to happen more at the end of an utterance. Look up ‘creaky voice’ online and listen to an audio recording of it. (There’s one at http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/225139_nwspeak20.html.)

In some languages, creaky and noncreaky sounds are distinctive; Mazatec, a language of Mexico, has consonants and vowels that can be creaky or noncreaky (laryngealized or not) and that can make a difference in the meaning of a word. Hear this contrast at the following link: <http://hctv.humnet.ucla.edu/departments/linguistics/VowelsandConsonants/vowels/chapter12/mazatec.html>.

Do you think you or any of your friends use creaky voice? If so, do you do it all the time or more often in particular circumstances? Do you agree that it happens more with young people than with older people? Consider these questions and any others this leads you to. Summarize your discussion.

RPE 3.13 The Great Vowel Shift

Consider the following words reflecting Middle English pronunciation before the Great Vowel Shift took place. Determine the Present-Day English pronunciation of these words after the Great Vowel Shift. (The symbol : indicates a long vowel and can be ignored for this exercise.)

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| a. /lu:s/ | e. /gɔ:t/ |
| b. /me:d/ | f. /ro:t/ |
| c. /kni:xt/ | g. /du:n/ |
| d. /bla:mə/ | |

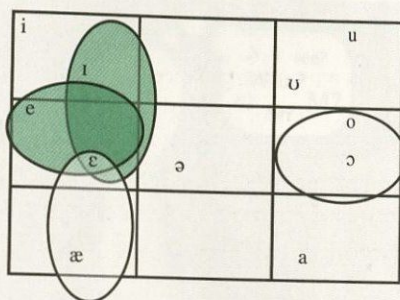
RPE 3.14 Northern California Vowel Shift

Read about the Northern California Vowel Shift at <http://www.stanford.edu/~eckert/vowels.html>. This project also focuses on the adolescent peer social order in order to understand how it emerges from a child social order, how gender differences in phonology come about, how adolescent linguistic styles emerge from kid talk, and how to theorize style as social practice. Read about this research and write a one-paragraph response to it.

RPE 3.15 Perceptions Based on Pronunciation

Consider the following common pronunciations among varieties of North American English.

agate	/ɛgət/—Northwest and Midwest /ægət/—elsewhere
both	/bɔθ/—Northwest and Midwest /boθ/—elsewhere
can’t	/kent/—South /kænt/ or /kənt/—elsewhere
pen	/pɪn/—South /pen/—elsewhere



Discuss the variations, and determine which is most noticeable. What are your perceptions of people who pronounce these words either one way or the other?

The variation in the vowel sounds is only one step on the vowel chart, as indicated by the ovals, but we nevertheless find some distinctions more noticeable than others, and these are typically more stigmatized. Are your opinions about each variant linguistically or socially determined? Explain.

RPE 3.16 Is There a "Right" Way to Say It?

Think of some words that have more than one common pronunciation (*coupon*, *pajamas*, *apricot*, *economic*). Practice transcribing by writing each pronunciation in phonemic transcription. After you have done the transcription, discuss the varying pronunciations and the characteristics you associate with each pronunciation. What factors (age, race, gender, class, ethnicity, education, etc.) correlate with each pronunciation, and why do you think you have those associations? Are there some words for which you do not have a preferred pronunciation? Are there some words for which you adopt the pronunciation of the person you're speaking with?