

# **The Phonetics of English Pronunciation - Week 5**

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1. What are the place and manner of articulation and the "voicing" status of the initial consonant in the following words?

	<i>Place</i>	<i>Manner</i>	<i>Voicing</i>
<b><u>R</u>adio</b>	Post-alveolar	approximant	voiced
<b><u>T</u>hought</b>	Dental	fricative	voiceless
<b><u>S</u>unset</b>	Alveolar	fricative	voiceless
<b><u>T</u>hough</b>	Dental	fricative	voiced
<b><u>V</u>ase</b>	Labio-dental	fricative	voiced
<b><u>S</u>hoes</b>	Post-alveolar	fricative	voiceless
<b><u>T</u>ornado</b>	Alveolar	plosive	voiceless
<b><u>S</u>ure</b>	Post-alveolar	fricative	voiceless
<b><u>P</u>hoto<u>g</u>raph</b>	Labio-dental	fricative	voiceless
<b><u>P</u>arasite</b>	Bilabial	plosive	voiceless

Here we are using the traditional terms for classifying sounds phonetically, based on the articulatory dimensions of place, manner and voicing.

The traditional order of adjectives when talking about sounds is:

Voicing, Place, Manner; i.e. "Thought" starts with

*a voiceless dental fricative.*

2. *What is the phonetic difference (i.e. what do you have to do to pronounce them correctly) between the following word pairs?*

- Bend – bent            longer /n/ before /d/ and weaker /d/ than /t/
- Hard – heart           longer vowel before /d/ and weaker /d/ than /t/
- Bug – buck            longer vowel before /g/ and weaker /g/ than /k/
- Cold – colt            longer /l/ before /d/ and weaker /d/ than /t/
- Lived – lift            longer vowel before /vd/ and weaker /vd/ than /ft/

It is NOT enough to say: There is a /d/ in *bend* and a /t/ in *bent*!

Last week, we heard that the vowel is longer before final-voiced obstruents (i.e. before fricatives, affricates and plosives). If a sonorant consonant (i.e., a nasal or lateral consonant) comes between the vowel and the obstruent, it is the sonorant consonant that gets lengthened, NOT the vowel.

The misleading case here is the pair lived – lift, where there are also two consonants in the coda. However, they are both obstruents (a fricative and a plosive in a cluster), so the vowel gets lengthened in the normal way.

3 a) What problem for German learners of English is there in the following expressions and how is incorrect pronunciation avoided?

Down **n** there    All **t** hat    Good **th**inking!    Fight **th**e good fig

**Answer:** The /n/ in “down”, the /l/ in “all”, the /d/ in “good”, the /t/ in “fight” are all articulated as **dental consonants** preceding the interdental fricatives.    /...**n̪** ð/; /...**l̪** ð/; /...**d̪** θ/; /...**t̪** ð/;

3 b) Why is the same strategy not possible in the following expression?

Wise **th**ought.

**Answer:** The /z/ in “wise” **must** be pronounced as an *alveolar* fricative. It would become a different sound if it was pronounced as a *dental* fricative.

*(extra info:* It is therefore necessary to pronounce the /s/ as a *laminal* (tongue-blade) rather than an *apical* (tongue-tip) /s/, so that the tongue tip is free to move up onto the teeth for the /θ/.

4. What are the phonetic difference between the following sounds?

/u:/                      /w/                      /v/

**Answer:** The first two are articulated in the same position (as an [u], with **rounded** lips). The /w/ immediately glides from the [u] position towards the following vowel and is thus heard as a “consonantal” onset  
/v/ is a **labio-dental** fricative (upper teeth close to bottom lip) and is **not** produced with **rounded lips**.

5. What is the biggest difference in the use of the /r/ in British and American English?

**Answer:** In American English the /r/ is also pronounced post-vocally

6. In which context is the /r/ usually pronounced as an apical flap?

**Answer:** Following the dental fricative /θ/ (e.g., **throw**, **thrifty**, **through** etc.).

7. a) In which contexts does the British English /l/ differ from Standard German /l/ and what is the difference?

*Answer:* Post-vocalically, either syllable-finally or in a syllable-final consonant cluster (e.g., **tell**; **seldom**; **felt** ).

In these positions /l/ is "dark" (i.e., is pronounced with a raised tongue dorsum to produce an accompanying [ʊ] colouring)

b) Does /l/ behave the same in American English as in Standard British English?

No. American English /l/ tends to be pronounced more darkly pre-vocalically than British English /l/.

8. Why and how does the letter sequence <ng> sometimes cause pronunciation problems?

Because under certain morphological conditions, it is pronounced as /ŋg/ (even before schwa (/ə/), which is NOT possible in German)

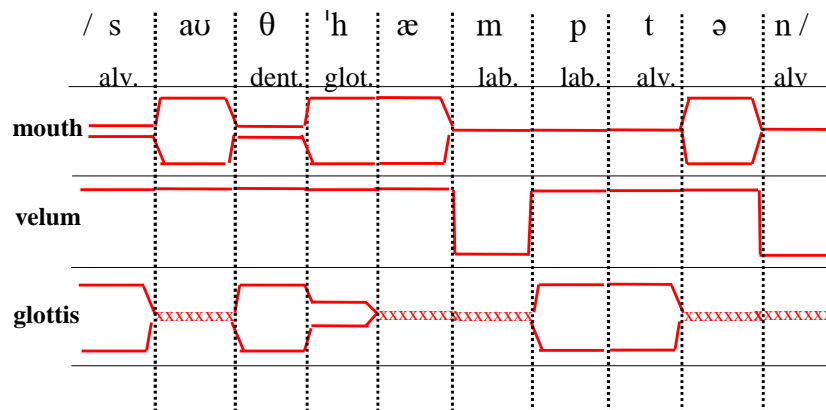
## English (and German) consonants .... yet again (a practice run)

- Can you identify the problems?
- Can you describe them phonetically?
  
- Homework: a) Analyse consonantal problems in text.  
b) Draw articulogram

(You DON'T need to hand the homework in this week!)

## Now – to help you think about sounds

The “articulogram” example: Southampton



Here we show the synchronized activity (for the word „*Southampton*“) of the **three articulatory sub-systems** which are sub-consciously controlled all the time when we speak:

**The mouth (oral cavity)** which can be open, or constricted (either full closure or a narrowing to create friction) at different places.

(so don't just pay attention to your lips. Your mouth can be closed or the opening narrowed to a fricative position even if your lips are open!).

The **velum** controlling the **aperture to the nasal cavity**. It is lowered for nasal sounds and raised for oral sounds.

The **glottis** (the **opening between the vocal folds**). When the vocal folds are adducted, they can vibrate, if they are opened, they result in voiceless sounds.

(Note if they are adducted a bit and kept fairly stiff, they allow friction to arise at the glottis. This is necessary for /h/ - a glottal fricative).



Here's one for you to do at home:

- Draw an articuloqram of the expression

### Index finger

- 1) Make a transcription (symbols and explanation in the book p. 289) .... Don't forget the final /r/ if you speak American English.
- 2) Follow the conventions of the articuloqram you have just seen (see notes for an explanation).

## Take a text ...

George was the tenth person to walk past the playground and wonder what the three piles of sand were doing in front of the school. But the others walked on, while he lingered a while, worried by a half-remembered comment from one of his colleagues in the Council offices.

After our treatment of consonantal problems, we need to develop an awareness of their occurrence in utterances we produce.

As a first step, take any arbitrary text (see above), and read it through to yourself.

How many problem consonants can you identify?

## How many “danger points”?

Sentence 1:

George was the tenth person to walk past the

playground and wonder what the three piles of

sand were doing in front of the school.

How many can *you* find?    8?    12?    16?    20?    more?

Look at the first of the two sentences and count up the problems that you find.

## How many < th > -related points?

*Sentence 1:*

George **was** **the** **tenth** person to walk **past** **the**

playground and wonder what **the** **three** piles of

sand were doing in front of **the** school.

Sub-total: 6

We must distinguish:

- 1) plain < th > cases (either voiced or voiceless), where it is just a matter of getting your dental fricative in place,
- 2) < th > following alveolar stops (/t/, /d/) and sonorants (/l/ & /n/), where the preparation for < th > with a dental articulation of the preceding sound is important, and
- 3) and < th > following (or preceding) /s/, where there are different solutions to the problem:
  - a) unstressed /ð/ (in function words) can be pronounced like a [z]
  - b) /θ/ must be pronounced clearly as /θ/. This is done by articulating the preceding /s/ or /z/ with the blade rather than the tip of the tongue .... quite a challenging change to undertake!

The /s/ or /z/ **following** a < th > (no examples in this text) is produced as a normal alveolar fricative by sliding the tongue backwards off the teeth.

This also needs quite a bit of practice and should be worked at using the „fixed-expression“ strategy.

## How many FVC-related points?

*Sentence 1:*

Georgeg was the tenth person to walk past the  
playgroundd and wonder what the three piless of  
sandd were doing in front of the school.

Sub-total: 6 + 7

Here we must distinguish FVCs after vowels (here in *George, was* and *of*), and those following sonorants (here /l/ in *piles*, and /n/ *playground & sand* and *and*).

The patterns you have to acquire are the *lengthened vowel* in the vowel + FVC case, and the *lengthened sonorant* in the sonorant + FVC case.

However, the function words *was, and & of* are so short and weak (see lecture 9) that it would be wrong to lengthen the vowel or the sonorant. **JUST KEEP THE CONSONANTS WEAK!**

## How many /l/-related points?

*Sentence 1:*

George was the tenth person to walk past the

playground and wonder what the three ples of  
US

sand were doing in front of the school.

Sub-total: 6 + 7 + 3(US)/2(Br)

Remember that post-vocalic (non pre-vocalic) /l/s are pronounced as if they are accompanied by a simultaneous /ʌ/ or /ɔ/ vowel (as in *hut* or *caught*).

This applies to both Southern Standard British and Mid-Western US English

The choice between the darker or slightly lighter colouring of the „dark L“ is a matter of regional and/or social identity.

Remember too, if you are aiming at a US-English accent that even in the „clear-L“ position, American English (and – for your information – Scottish and Australian English) tends to have a „dark L“. Hence our marking of the /l/ in „playground“.

## How many R-related points?

*Sentence 1:*

George was the tenth person to walk past the  
US US

playground and wonder what the three piles of  
US

sand were doing in front of the school.  
US

Sub-total: 6 + 7 + 3(US)/2(Br) + 7(US)/3(Br)

With the Rs we have included the cases where the choice between non-rhotic (no post-vocalic Rs) and rhotic pronunciation (American, Irish, S.W. British English) is possible (*George, person, wonder, were*).

The other cases are consonant clusters with R: two with the normal post-alveolar approximant R (*playground* and *front*) and one with the flapped R after < th > (*three*).

## How many /w/-related points?

*Sentence 1:*

George **w**as the tenth person to **w**alk past the  
playground and **w**onder **wh**at the three piles of  
sand **w**ere doing in front of the school.

Total: 6 + 7 + 3(US)/2(Br) + 7(US)/3(Br) + 5 = 28(US)/ 23(UK)

The five cases of /w/ includes two examples of unstressed auxiliary verbs (**was** and **were**), which can cause problems because they tend to be overlooked, and the [v] error can slip in through the back door!

There is also a < wh > example in **what** for those who wish to maintain the /w/ - /v/ distinction.



## How many “danger points”?

*Sentence 2:*

But the others walked on, while he lingered a

while, worried by a half-remembered comment

from one of his colleagues in the Council offices.

How many can you find *here*?      7?    14?    21?

## How many < th > -related points?

*Sentence 2:*

But the others walked on, while he lingered a

while, worried by a half-remembered comment

from one of his colleagues in the Council offices.

Sub-total: 3

## How many FVC-related points?

*Sentence 2:*

But the otherss walked on, while he lingered a

while, worried by a half-remembered comment

from one of his colleagues in the Council offices.

Sub-total: 3 + 8

## How many /l/-related points?

*Sentence 2:*

But the others walked on, while he lingered a  
US

while, worried by a half-remembered comment

from one of his colleagues in the Councill offices.  
US

Sub-total: 3 + 8 + 5(US)/3(UK)

## How many R-related points?

*Sentence 2:*

But the other<sub>US</sub>s walked on, while he linger<sub>US</sub>ed

while, worr<sub>US</sub>ied by a half-rememb<sub>US</sub>ered comment

fr<sub>US</sub>om one of his colleagues in the Council offices.

Sub-total:  $3 + 8 + 5(\text{US})/3(\text{UK}) + 6(\text{US})/3(\text{UK})$

## How many /w/-related points?

*Sentence 2:*

But the others walked on, while he lingered a

while, worried by a half-remembered comment

from one of his colleagues in the Council offices.

Sub-total: 3 + 8 + 5(US)/3(UK) + 6(US)/3(UK) + 5

## And what about < ng >?

*Sentence 2:*

But the others walked on, while he lingered a

while, worried by a half-remembered comment

from one of his colleagues in the Council offices.

Total:  $3 + 8 + 5(\text{US})/3(\text{UK}) + 6(\text{US})/3(\text{UK}) + 5 + 1 = 28(\text{US})/23(\text{UK})$

In this text there is just one example of the /ŋg/ sequence, here in the verb *linger*, which complies with the basic “mono-morphemic” rule.

## You try at home with the sequel!

*Sentence 3 & 4:*

One of the secretaries had whispered rather loudly to her friend that there were plans being hatched to close the local primary school and bus the children to the neighbouring village. The doors and windows would then be bricked up to discourage vandals, pending a decision on the future use of the building.