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Competent and Confident: Empowering English Language Learners Through Pronunciation Instruction

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Empowering English Language Learners Through Pronunciation Instruction

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Faith Pellas
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Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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ABSTRACT

Compared to other language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, pronunciation is often neglected in ESL and TESOL curriculum planning and material design. Moreover, many English language teachers lack training in pronunciation instruction, therefore these techniques are not often addressed in class. Learning pronunciation is a top priority for many English language students because it enables them to communicate clearly, have better opportunities, and integrate well into Anglophone communities. The literature review discusses second language acquisition and the determining factors of accented and non-accented speech. It also addresses accent discrimination and the obstacles English language learners (ELLs) face in their personal and professional lives. Examining the principles of pronunciation combined with context-based materials led to the creation of the website, English Pronunciation: Learn the Art of Speaking American English (https://fbpellas.github.io/). The field project serves as an online resource for teachers who are unfamiliar with pronunciation teaching and want to learn the basic components of pronunciation. By utilizing this website, teachers will be able to master how to teach phonemes, intonation patterns, and word stress effectively and confidently.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

"Popcorn reading" sounds cute, but I despised it so much when my seventh grade English teacher would have the whole class participate. Essentially, if the teacher calls your name, it is your turn to read a passage out loud. I hated hearing myself talk because of my accent. My family had just immigrated to the United States from the Philippines when I was in middle school. Although I knew enough English, there were times that friends or classmates would correct my pronunciation. I became more conscious of my accent and felt insecure, shy, and anxious. My mother felt the same way. At times she would ask me or my sisters to do the talking as she worried about being misunderstood. She would constantly ask us how to pronounce certain things and insist we correct her if she misspoke. Surely it is a common occurrence for many nonnative speakers like my family.

When it comes to learning the host country's native language, second language learners feel more pressured to sound like a native speaker for fear of miscommunication and accent-based discrimination (Derwing & Munro, 2005; 2009). Based on my experiences as both an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher and a foreign language student, understanding and producing the correct pronunciation is a huge concern when it comes to language learning. "Mutual intelligibility is the paramount concern for second language learners" (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 380). When I first received my certification to teach, I remember spending hours learning how to manage a classroom, creating lesson plans, and mastering verb tenses.

Unfortunately, I did not learn how to teach pronunciation at all. Even if I were to do my research online, I was not sure where to start or if the information would result in effective instruction.

In an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, teachers often prioritize the refinement of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Consequently, second language (L2) pronunciation is not given enough attention and oftentimes neglected in curriculum and material development (Alghazo, 2015; Cox et al., 2019; Gilakjani & Ahmadi., 2011; Gorba, 2019). Many ESL educators do not feel confident when it comes to teaching pronunciation due to little training and lack of resources (Alghazo, 2015; Cox et al., 2019; Derwing & Munro, 2005). Most of the educators understand the importance of pronunciation, yet they lack the experience and training to teach these skills. Researchers discovered that the majority of teachers from various Anglophone countries share the same sentiment: English pronunciation is not taught because they "do not feel competent" or "qualified" to teach it (Cox et al., 2019). According to Loc and Newton's study, what some teachers might consider pronunciation instruction is typically "reactive and unplanned" (2020, p. 2). Most of the pronunciation correction occurs at the moment of instruction when the student makes a mistake, therefore there has not been an effective way of documenting learner mistakes and progress. The English language boasts numerous complex pronunciation rules that students might not be able to demystify unless given proper guidance and instruction. One of the most common difficulties second language learners encounter is pronouncing the /th/ consonants: /θ/ (like 'Thursday') and /ð/ (as in 'that') (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Some students might not realize that high-frequency words such as 'rough' and 'tough' end with an -f sound, yet 'though' has a different pronunciation even though they share similarities in spelling.

Despite the huge demand for pronunciation instruction in ESL classrooms, there is little to no focus on this skill. “Foreign language curricula emphasize pronunciation in the first year of study as it introduces the target language’s alphabet and language sound system, but rarely continues this focus past the introductory level” (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011, p. 77). The main problem is that educators are not provided proper training in pronunciation instruction and there are not enough resources and materials designed to teach and learn this skill efficiently and effectively.

Purpose of the Project

“To ignore or neglect the explicit teaching of pronunciation would be to ignore the basis for language acquisition,” (Tlazalo Tejada & Basurto Santos, 2014, p. 152). Pronunciation instruction should be an essential component of teacher training and language learning as it helps non-native speakers gain confidence, improve their communication skills, and achieve their professional and personal goals. Because teaching pronunciation is often neglected, the field project aims to bridge the gap between teachers’ needs in training and students’ learning demands. The field project is a website that would make learning English pronunciation easier and more comprehensible for teachers and students. It covers the basic components of pronunciation that every beginner should learn.

The project is a website specific to American English pronunciation learning. It consists of informative articles introducing learners to phonemes, intonation, and word stress. The website also includes audio guides to help learners mimic how phonemes are produced and several quizzes to test their knowledge. The project serves as a resource for English language learners (ELL) to supplement their lessons or act as a guide for those who are studying on their

own. A quick online search leads to a multitude of links to pronunciation dictionaries. Although they provide an audio guide to pronouncing specific words, it might not be sufficient for learners to truly understand certain pronunciation rules. Drill exercises and repetition are not enough to show improvement in pronunciation. However, if incorporated in a contextualized manner, it will ameliorate students' understanding of the rules behind certain words, sounds, and spellings (Tlazalo Tejada & Basurto Santos, 2014). Teachers must avoid generalizing pronunciation instruction, especially if the students are from diverse linguistic backgrounds. What might be difficult for one learner is not necessarily the case for other students. The goal of the project is to create an interactive and user-friendly experience that teaches learners American English pronunciation in a simplified yet interesting way.

Theoretical Framework

For English language learners, the main goal is to obtain strong communication skills, therefore Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) best supports the field project. Researchers state that intelligibility between language learners and native speakers is important for EFL learners, hence why they prioritize learning pronunciation (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). The CLT theory emphasizes the ability to communicate over accuracy in the language.

In 1965, Noam Chomsky introduced the concepts of "competence" and "performance" in modern linguistics. The linguist defines "competence" as being knowledgeable in linguistic aspects such as grammar and vocabulary, whereas "performance" refers to the skill of producing the language (Canale & Swain, 1980). As a response to Chomsky's claims, Dell Hymes

proposed the idea of "communicative competence", which refers to a language speaker's ability to be grammatically competent and using the language in accordance with the social context (Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 2002). Early teaching models such as the Grammar Translation Method or the Audiolingual Method only taught second language learners very limited skills. For instance, the Audiolingual Method required L2 students to mimic the teacher or a voice recording to familiarize themselves with vocabulary words. Although this might have helped some learners with their pronunciation, it did not provide the students with enough ability to use the learned vocabulary in real-life situations.

As Savignon puts it, "language teaching is based on a view of language communication...language is seen as a social tool that speakers use to make meaning" (2002, p. 6). In the 1980s, Michael Canale and Merrill Swain developed a model based on the principle of communicative competence. Known as Communicative Language Teaching, the model values the meaning of the language over its form and structure. Canale and Swain identified four components to communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic (1980).

1. Grammatical competence: ELLs are able to understand various aspects of grammar: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, among others.
2. Sociolinguistic competence: the person should be able to communicate based on what is contextually appropriate. This includes knowing how to address one's interlocutor with the proper register or distinguishing between formal and informal speech.

3. Discourse competence: this skill is about cohesion and coherence. The speaker should be able to understand and link a series of utterances to create a meaningful message (Savignon, 2002).
4. Strategic competence: the learner should know how to cope during unfamiliar and unexpected scenarios. For example, language learners should be able to ask for clarification, paraphrase, or have the ability to correct their own mistakes.

In a Communicative Language Teaching-led classroom, the learners' needs and concerns are at the forefront and the teachers act as facilitators. CLT has become one of the most popular approaches for its holistic take on language learning. The method abandons traditional pronunciation techniques such as rote learning and repetition in exchange for communicative, contextualized activities. CLT is a suitable method for English language learners because it focuses on improving the speaker's grammatical and communicative competence, thus resulting in intelligibility.

Significance of the Project

Pronunciation instruction is highly in demand for ESL and EFL students because mutual intelligibility is the main objective for many. "Various studies provide evidence supporting that there is a positive correlation between pronunciation proficiency and pronunciation instruction" (Aksakall & Yağız, 2020, p. 12). Unfortunately, many teachers do not feel entitled to teach pronunciation skills for the lack of training they received and the "limited knowledge of the English sound system," says Gorba (2019, p. 216). The website gives teachers the tools to teach

pronunciation effectively. Although many English programs focus on how to improve speaking and listening, a pronunciation website could be used to supplement these skills if they are not taught in class. Considering that the website is simplified to make a complex topic like pronunciation comprehensible, self-directed learners can benefit from the website. Learning pronunciation has multiple benefits: learners are more aware of their pronunciation weaknesses, enhanced listening skills, and improvement in communication skills and confidence (Cox et al., 2019).

The English Pronunciation site is free and accessible to any English language learners and educators around the world. It also benefits teachers who need guidance or do not have sufficient resources to implement pronunciation lessons in class. The contents of the learning resources will follow the Communicative Language Teaching methodology. Thanks to this modern method, educators will be able to teach pronunciation that focuses on building communicative and grammatical competencies.

Learning pronunciation guided by a trained expert will help students become more successful in achieving this goal. Without proper training, students may take it upon themselves to figure out problems on their own, then leading to "incorrect assessment and misguided actions" (Cox et al., 2019, p. 3). Communicative Language Teaching will help ESL students understand the correct application of grammar pronunciation rules and enable them to become excellent communicators with a strong command of different language functions.

Definition of Terms

AAVE: African American Vernacular English

Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ): a law protecting employers from lawsuits if they choose to refuse employment (Akomolafe, 2013).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): an approach to language teaching in which language is used as a "social tool". Meaning is given more importance than the form or structure of a language (Savignon, 2002, p. 2).

Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH): the early stages of a person's life until the age of puberty when a child's brain experiences lateralization (Akomolafe, 2013; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Scovel, 2000; Zhou, 2015).

English as a Foreign Language (EFL): Language students who are learning English in a country where English is not the native language (Bardack, 2010).

English Language Learner (ELL): Individuals who are getting an education in the English language. ELLs speak another language as their native tongue (Bardack, 2010).

English as a Second Language (ESL): Non-native language learners who are learning English in a country where English is spoken as the main or native language (e.g., Australia, Canada, the United States, etc.).

Glass Ceiling Syndrome: refers to the excessive amount of heavily-accented Americans in low-ranking jobs, yet underrepresented in high-ranking positions (Akomolafe, 2013).

International Phonetic Association (IPA): an alphabet system that is used as a guideline for pronunciation teaching and learning (Pedrazzini, 2016).

Invisible Minority: a population comprising naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, and refugee and asylum seekers (Akomolafe, 2013).

IRCA: Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

Linguistic Stereotype Hypothesis: "listeners made assumptions and judgments about speakers based on those speakers' language varieties" (Rubin, 2012, p. 12).

L1: The learner's native or first language.

L2: The language learner's second or target language.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA): the process of learning another language different from one's mother tongue.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Intelligibility is one of the most important skills for English language learners to achieve. Being a comprehensible communicator can present a host of opportunities for nonnative English speakers. This means they can get accepted into a university, find employment, and settle in a new country. Learning the correct pronunciation is a top priority for many English language learners because they want to feel connected and accepted by native speakers (McCrocklin & Link, 2016). Speakers with a heavy native accent are more likely to be treated worse or discriminated against based on the way they speak (Akomolafe, 2013; Derwing & Munro, 2009; Rubin 2012). Accent discrimination is a common occurrence but is often overlooked compared to racial, gender-based, and other kinds of discrimination. As much as adult ELLs want to eliminate their heavy accents, doing so is simply impossible especially if they learned English at a later period (Scovel, 2000). The sections in this review of relevant literature discuss second language acquisition (SLA) amongst adults, accent discrimination in North America, and implementing a pronunciation pedagogy in the classroom.

Second Language Acquisition

When it comes to second language acquisition (SLA), are children superior to adults? Based on experiences by families who migrated to an English-speaking country, children can easily acclimate to their foreign environment and acquire the language faster without an accent. On the other hand, their parents study hard and diligently, yet receive unsatisfactory results

(Zhou, 2015). Because of this, there was "an enormous impact on language planning over the past twenty years" (Scovel, 2000, p. 213). Some teachers approached their pedagogies similarly to how a child would acquire English as their first language (L1). In some countries, this means introducing English in the curriculum as early as preschool or kindergarten.

A Canadian-American neurosurgeon named Wilder Penfield was the first to argue that children are better at learning a language due to "the plasticity of a child's developing brain" (Scovel, 2000, p. 214). In 1967, Eric Lenneberg, a psycholinguist, developed the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) which evolved from Penfield's "the earlier, the better" view on language acquisition. In this hypothesis, the critical period refers to the early stages of life until the age of puberty when a child's brain experiences lateralization (Akomolafe, 2013; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Scovel, 2000; Zhou, 2015). This hypothesis supports the idea that those who learned a second language post-puberty are more likely to develop an accented speech because their brains did not go through a similar process of language acquisition during their brain's critical period of development. The hypothesis left an enormous impact on language planning and pedagogy in the United States and abroad, hence implementing EFL instruction as early as elementary school rose to popularity in some countries where English is not the primary language (Scovel, 2000)

Despite producing an accented L2, adult learners can still sound perfectly intelligible in that language. In rare circumstances, adult EFL and ESL learners have succeeded in acquiring a near-native accent. Scovel (2000) presented two experiments proving that accentless speech is possible for adult language learners. In 1997, Bongaert observed highly proficient Dutch speakers learning French as their L2. Native French speakers judged the Dutch learners' skills and thought they sounded similar to native speakers. Another study made by Ioup, *et al.* (1994)

discovered that a native English speaker acquired a high-proficient level in Egyptian Arabic and passed as a native speaker. The experiments proved that although the majority of post-pubescent language learners are candidates for an accented L2, there are some exceptions to the hypothesis.

Perhaps this exception can be attributed to a variety of learning factors and learning rates. Zhou (2015) listed different factors influencing SLA. For example, students who are intrinsically motivated (e.g., personal enrichment, interest in culture, relationships) to learn a second language might witness better results than learners who are extrinsically motivated (e.g., educational requirements, furthering a career). Another factor is possessing good language learner (GLL) strategies such as building a habit to learn certain vocabulary words or adapting a technique suited for the individual's learning style. Last but not least, the learner's aptitude or how well they can learn a language in particular circumstances, such as having a formal (i.e., classroom) education or being self-taught, proves they can successfully learn their target language.

Overall, the assumption that children have a better advantage of acquiring a second language is simply a myth (Scovel, 2000). Adult learners have more assets compared to children in terms of having strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, excellent learning techniques, and greater cognitive maturity. The Critical Period Hypothesis favors children compared to adults in terms of accent development, but not language development. It shows the greatest leverage children have compared to older learners is their ability to effortlessly sound like a native speaker in their target L2. In special cases, some adolescent or older learners can or can be trained to speak a second language with a near-native speaker accent. Second language acquisition amongst adults had been unfairly compared to children's acquisition of their mother

tongue. A much more acceptable gauge is to compare both populations as they learn a second language. Opponents of the "the younger, the better" statement considers this claim as a myth because adults possess other significant linguistic and cognitive skills that are exceptional assets to language acquisition (Scovel, 2000; Zhou, 2015).

Accent Discrimination

An accent is best described as producing speech differently from the standard variety of the language (Derwing & Munro, 2009; McCrocklin & Link, 2016). Typically, a speaker's accent varies based on the language they speak because the words produced are influenced by their speech patterns and the sounds which are familiar to them. To illustrate, a French native speaker might pronounce the word "are" with the /r/ sound coming from the throat compared to an American-sounding /r/ in which the word is produced with rounded lips. French native speakers might produce a guttural /r/ because of the way the consonant is produced in their language. Consequently, speaking with an unconventional accent has forced ELLs to transform their speech patterns to fit in with the local norm to avoid discrimination. This section explores the topic of accent discrimination and how it affects English language learners' everyday lives.

Foreign language learners tend to equate adopting and mastering an L2 accent to being highly proficient in their target language. According to a survey carried out by McCrocklin and Link (2016), many ESL/EFL learners wanted to achieve sounding like a native speaker because they wanted to feel more respected, have a better connection with the people, and integrate well into the Anglophone culture. As a result, L2 learners are focused on eliminating their L1 accents

to fit in with other native speakers. Unfortunately, this goal is neither practical nor easy to achieve especially for adult L2 learners.

The problem concerns adults who learn English as their second (or third) language because their accent can be more apparent. Native English speakers can easily distinguish a foreign from a local accent and tend to have preconceived notions against nonstandard English speakers. Listeners can make judgments about people simply based on their accents. The accented speaker is classified as an outsider compared to those who speak the standard dialect or language. Throughout history, societies utilized Shibboleth tests as a secret code between groups to decide who is an outsider depending on how words are pronounced. A Shibboleth test can "determine who shall be permitted to dwell" within country borders (Rubin, 2012, p. 12). English language learners are well aware of these gatekeeping practices that inhibit their chances at university admissions, employment, and homeownership, to name a few. Speech production is closely related to social identity according to the Linguistic Stereotype Hypothesis. As the name suggests, "listeners made assumptions and judgments about speakers based on those speakers' language varieties" (Rubin, 2012, p. 12). Using accent, a listener assumes a speaker's identity based on their gender, socioeconomic status, education, place of origin, race, and ethnicity, thus creating stereotypes according to these conclusions. That being said, not all accents are equal. Having a European or Australian accent is more favored and seen as more sophisticated and such speakers may receive better treatment than speakers with an African or Hispanic accent (Akomolafe, 2013; Derwing & Munro, 2009).

The United States' foreign-born population continues to increase each year, thus increasing the linguistic diversity of the country. Although many foreign-born Americans are

highly educated, many are stuck in low-level jobs that they are possibly overqualified for. This phenomenon, known as the *Glass Ceiling Syndrome,* refers to the excessive amount of heavily-accented Americans in low-ranking jobs. Conversely, heavily-accented Americans are underrepresented in high-ranking positions. Naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, and refugee and asylum seekers all fall under the group known as *the Invisible Minority* (Akomolafe, 2013). Even though they exercise the same civic duties, Invisible Minorities are often denied the privileges that native-born Americans possess due to their accent. Two laws protect foreign-born Americans from discrimination based on their national origin: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). Employers are prohibited from denying employment based on the person's foreign accent unless it "interferes with the employee's job performance" (Akomolafe, 2013, p. 10). Even with the implementation of Title VII and IRCA, employers have the right to determine whether a candidate is considered fluent or has a comprehensible accent. Another provision, the Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ), protects employers from lawsuits if they choose to refuse employment. In 1989, Manuel Fragante was denied employment for his heavy Filipino accent despite earning the highest score on a civil service exam and speaking grammatically correct (Akomolafe, 2013). The law has often favored the employer like in the case of *Fragante v. City and County of Honolulu.* The legal complications and inconveniences caused by the BFOQ discourage many invisible minorities from suing companies that practice discrimination.

Accent-based discrimination is perceived as weaker in comparison to racial or gender-based discrimination therefore people think it is more acceptable and tolerable (Derwing & Munro, 2009). Chakraborty (2018) stated that individuals unaware of their personal biases

were more likely to perpetuate negative biases to non-native speakers. Even children are susceptible to stereotypes, especially speech-based. Disney animated films have routinely used accents to distinguish good versus bad, a common theme in children's films. In *The Lion King*, Mufasa, the powerful and sagacious protagonist speaks with a Standard American accent. On the other hand, his nefarious and manipulative brother, Scar, is depicted with a British English accent. Within the American accent, speakers of regional accents (e.g., Southern) and the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) are underrepresented onscreen. They have a minor role in the story or are usually portrayed with a working-class background. In cartoon and live-action films and television shows, foreign-accented speech (especially Germanic and Eastern European accents) was often used to distinguish villains as they most likely reflect American sentiments during World War II and the Cold War (Fattal, 2018). The prevalent use of a non-Standard American accent to portray antagonists is harmful to children especially if films and television shows are their main source of learning about foreign cultures and ethnicities, wrote Lippi-Green (1997).

A feasible solution for educators is to empower language learners by promoting World Englishes. This concept developed by the linguist, Braj Kachru, highlights the three circles of English: the inner, outer, and expanding circles. The inner represent countries where English is the main language spoken (e.g., Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, etc.) The outer circle includes countries where English plays a role in their history and culture, but not necessarily speak English as their native language (e.g., the Philippines, India, Kenya, etc.). Finally, the expanding circle comprises countries where English has no role historically or politically but is commonly taught as a foreign language (e.g., Korea, Brazil, Italy, etc.). Ishaque (2018) argued

that using native English speakers (from the inner circle) as a model for unaccented English should be reconsidered. The number of English speakers from the inner-circle countries is about the same or maybe less than those from the outer circle. Promoting the use of World Englishes encourages students to embrace their own accents and lessens the stigma associated with a non-standard English accent. Having a variety of accents puts less pressure on the learners to sound like a native speaker and helps them focus on being excellent communicators.

Accent discrimination has far more serious consequences than being made fun of by peers. The Linguistic Stereotype Hypothesis proved that listeners make assumptions about one's gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status when they hear an unfamiliar accent from the speaker. Those with a heavier accent experience "less employment, less housing options, impoverished health care service, lower credibility, and discrimination in courts" (Chakraborty, 2017, p. 57). Although federal laws protect L2 speakers from being discriminated against in the workplace for their national origin, these laws often protect employers if they decide to refuse a candidate based on their accent. Invisible minorities deserve better legal rights in the workplace and equal privileges compared to their American-born counterparts. Moreover, educators can help L2 adult learners by advocating for World Englishes. It eliminates the hierarchy amongst native versus non-native accents and puts the focus on teaching EFL and ESL students how to be intelligible and comprehensible.

Pronunciation Pedagogy

ESL and EFL curricula are often lacking in emphasis on pronunciation instruction because many educators do not receive formal training in this subject. Compared to other

language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, pronunciation has been neglected in curriculum and lesson planning (Alghazo, 2015; Cox *et al.,* 2019; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Darcy *et al.,* 2012). The late 19th century saw a rise in the Reform Movement. During this time, the International Phonetic Association (IPA) was established and set the earliest guidelines for pronunciation teaching and learning (Pedrazzini, 2016). When the Direct Method was introduced, the method of teaching pronunciation had declined but rose again in the 1940s. The Audio-Lingual Approach focused on phonemes and morphemes but failed to address the communication skills needed to converse in English (Nikbakht, 2010).

To understand the learner's needs, Derwing and Munro (2005) suggested that teachers should familiarize themselves with the student's phonological needs and how English prosody is recognized. Being observant and phonologically aware are good qualities to start with if one is not formally trained in teaching pronunciation. Explicit instruction of the L2 pronunciation was proven to be beneficial to the ELL, although further research needs to be done to see how long the improvements last (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

Darcy, Ewert, and Lidster (2012) proposed six principles of pronunciation instruction based on research findings and implemented it in Indiana University's intensive English program. Firstly, the elements for instruction are based on "processing research" and must include production and perception of sounds (p. 95). Secondly, the instruction of pronunciation must begin as early as possible so learners are aware of intonation, stress, and the alphabet. Pronunciation must always be a part of the curriculum and must be taught per lesson. One of the downfalls of the current curriculum model shows that goals and objectives are not clearly stated. Teachers who make an effort to explain pronunciation tend to make corrections only when the

student makes a mistake or asks a question. Moreover, teachers must have an "ongoing development" of pronunciation training (Darcy, Ewert, & Lidster, 2012, p. 95). A workshop or a presentation on this important topic will not suffice as pronunciation learning is a long-term process.

The final principle states that beginner, intermediate, and advanced level students should have varying targets depending on their level of proficiency. Beginners must first learn word-based before sentence-level pronunciation so they can understand the basics while increasing their vocabulary. Suprasegmental features (e.g., intonation, stress, and rhythm) are just as important in learning pronunciation as segmental (e.g., phonetics) and should be taught at an early stage (Cox *et al.,* 2019; Darcy, Ewert, & Lidster, 2012). Beginner level learners can better distinguish the meaning of a word if they understand intonations. For example, interrogative sentences can be identified differently from a declarative statement thanks to the rising intonation at the end of the question. During the intermediate level, students start to familiarize themselves with phonotactics, which are ways to combine phonemes. To illustrate, the /bl/ sound exists at the beginning of the word (e.g., black, blossom, blast), but never in the end. As for advanced level learners, they start to learn high-level registers used in academia such as presentations and interviews. A highly proficient student must "focus on accuracy even when the attention is on meaning" (Darcy, Ewert, & Lidster, 2012, p 98.).

Pronunciation should always be learned with the guidance of a teacher otherwise, the learner can misinterpret certain elements or incorrectly assess themselves (Darcy, Ewert, & Lidster, 2012; Cox et al., 2019). Much like other language skills, pronunciation should continue

to develop over time and should not only be given focus when the student makes a mistake at the time of speaking.

Summary

Learning another language has a different consequence for adult and child learners. Most people tend to think that children are better at acquiring languages, although adults are equally successful at learning another language (Scovel, 2000; Zhou, 2015). The Critical Period Hypothesis states that those who study a language past the age of puberty are more likely to acquire an accented speech in that language (Scovel, 2000; Zhou, 2015). There are some exceptions to this rule such as people who could produce a near-native sounding speech. One must also take into account the person's intrinsic and extrinsic motivations when determining learner success.

Unfortunately, many native speakers tend to stereotype and stigmatize English language learners with a heavier accent. This caused many accent-reduction courses to spring up instead of fighting the discrimination. ESL educators should empower their students with accurate pronunciation skills, but also help them overcome the stigma that comes with having a heavy accent. It is also important to promote World Englishes instead of following a singular model based on the typical British or American accent (Ishaque, 2018). Another way to combat accent discrimination is to enforce better laws that protect foreign-born Americans from discrimination. It is very important to note that just because a person speaks with a heavy accent does not insinuate that they are incomprehensible. Educators should receive formal and continuous

instruction on pronunciation to guide their students better. Instead of reducing accentedness, pronunciation teaching should focus on achieving comprehensible and intelligible speech.

CHAPTER III
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Brief Description of the Project

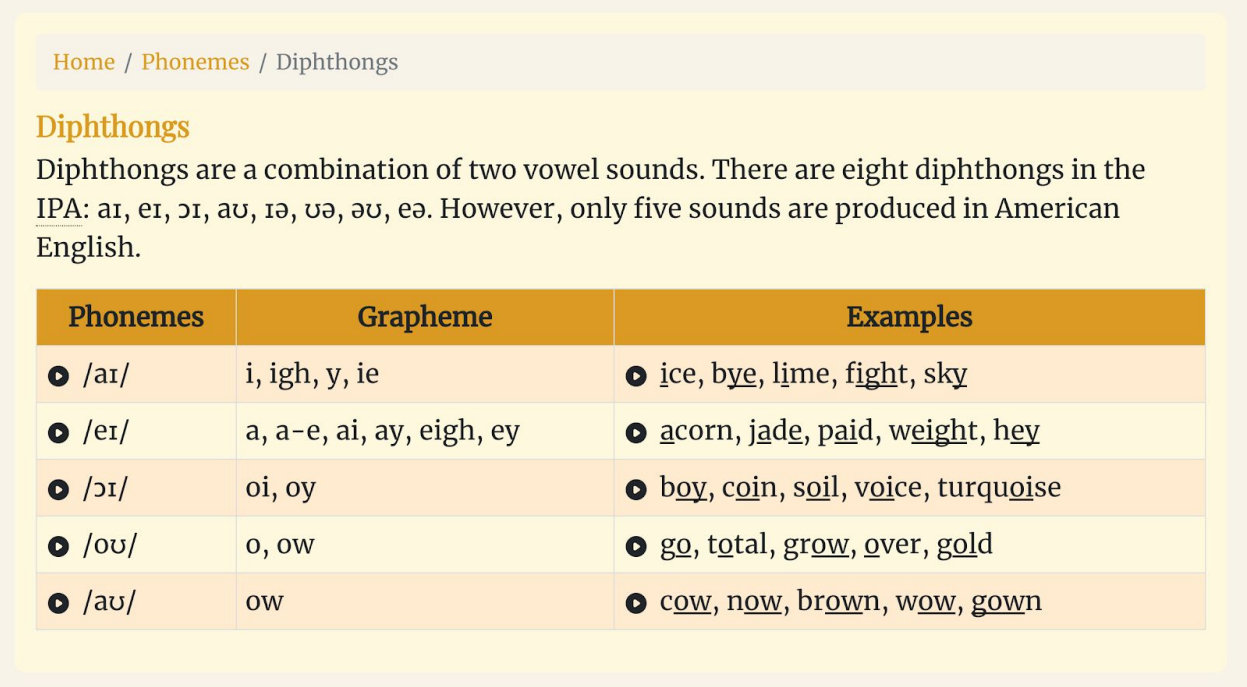
The field project is a website that provides basic information regarding American English pronunciation. One of the biggest concerns in ESL and TESOL curricula is the lack of emphasis on pronunciation teaching even though learning this skill is a high priority for many English language learners. The goal of this project is to bridge this gap and provide a guide that will help teachers and students understand the essential components of English pronunciation. These categories are based on Darcy, Ewert, and Lidster's (2012) principles of pronunciation which were implemented in their own intensive English program. Their research emphasized the importance of applying both segmental and suprasegmental features. The website is narrowed down to three categories that every beginner should know: phonemes (segmental), word stress, and intonation (both suprasegmental).

Section 1: Phonemes

Phonemes refer to the units of sound in a language. Most people are introduced to segmental features (such as vowels and consonants) when they first learn about pronunciation. I wanted to start the section with phonemes so learners can familiarize themselves with a visual representation of the 44 sounds depicted in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The phoneme section has three subsections: vowels, diphthongs, and consonants. Each category has a clear and straightforward explanation of the topic and a chart complete with the phonetic symbol, graphemes, and examples.

Figure 1

Diphthong table chart from *English Pronunciation*



Home / Phonemes / Diphthongs

Diphthongs

Diphthongs are a combination of two vowel sounds. There are eight diphthongs in the IPA: aɪ, eɪ, ɔɪ, aʊ, ɪə, ʊə, əʊ, eə. However, only five sounds are produced in American English.

Phonemes	Grapheme	Examples
/aɪ/	i, igh, y, ie	ice, bye, lime, fight, sky
/eɪ/	a, a-e, ai, ay, eigh, ey	acorn, jade, paid, weight, hey
/ɔɪ/	oi, oy	boy, coin, soil, voice, turquoise
/oʊ/	o, ow	go, total, grow, over, gold
/aʊ/	ow	cow, now, brown, wow, gown

Learners have the option to listen to the pronunciation of every phoneme and examples. I made sure that the list of examples are diverse and are represented by different spellings. For example, /æ/ includes words spelled with au and ai, not just a, which is commonly spelled with the /æ/ phoneme. Even though there are eight diphthongs in the IPA, I chose to include only five that are produced in American English. The list also includes the phoneme /oʊ/ which is not covered in the IPA but is typically produced in American speech. Many words with this sound (such as go, note, and goat) are pronounced with the /əʊ/ diphthong in British English. The phoneme section ends with two quizzes: *Odd Phoneme Out* and *Phonetic Spelling*. In the first quiz, learners are given four words (e.g., pace, neighs, gray, and key) and they must choose which word is produced with a different phonetic sound (key: /iː/). For the second quiz, learners must decode each word based on their phonetic spelling.

Section 2: Stress

The second section talks about the importance of word stress or emphasis in the English language. Suprasegmentals or prosodic features (such as stress, rhythm, pitch, and tone) should not be neglected when learning pronunciation. Word stress is marked with an apostrophe-like symbol (ˈ) in front of the syllable that is stressed. This section also briefly talks about syllables and how a stressed syllable sounds louder, longer, and higher compared to other syllables. I intend to include word stress in this project because it is a subtle yet powerful feature in the English language. Knowing the difference between ˈconduct and conˈduct can completely change the meaning of a sentence. One section of this article discusses the difference between two similar words that have different meanings and syllable stresses. Learners can play the audio to compare how the words are pronounced when the stress is applied to different syllables.
I created two quizzes that accompany this section: *Same Words, Different Stress* and *Where's the Stress?* The first quiz is similar to the earlier example: it tests the learner's auditory skills to see how well they can distinguish the stress. Learners must play the recording and choose which word has the correct stress mark placement (e.g., / ˈrɛk ərd / or / rɪ ˈkɔrd /). For the second quiz, *Where's the Stress?* learners are given a word and they must choose which syllable the stress appears in.

Section 3: Intonation

Intonation is another prosodic or suprasegmental feature that beginners must learn. Intonation is described as the variation of the voice's tone and pitch. Adding the appropriate intonation to the speech clearly expresses the speaker's attitude or feelings. The section dives

deeper into the three main intonation patterns: falling, rising, and non-final. Each subsection discusses what type of utterance is appropriate with certain patterns. For example, the rising intonation is used to show surprise or disbelief although commands and declarative statements are spoken with a falling intonation. The section ends with two quizzes that test the learner's knowledge of intonation: *Guess the Pattern* and *Shopping for a Present*. In the first quiz, learners must guess which pattern of intonation is used on the utterance. For instance, in the sentence "Does she have enough time to prepare?", learners should choose "rising intonation" because it is a yes/no question. In *Shopping for a Present,* learners will read a conversation between Annie and the salesperson. Certain sentences are written in bold and learners must identify among the three options which pattern of intonation is appropriate. For example, when Annie says "hi!", learners should pick falling intonation because it is an interjection.

The project focuses on the three main components of pronunciation: phonemes, word stress, and intonation. I chose to include prosodic features like intonation and word stress because of the assumption that phonemes are the only key to understanding pronunciation. Each section is organized and offers a comprehensible explanation of each segmental and suprasegmental features.

Development of the Project

For the field project, I was inspired to focus on pronunciation teaching based on my own experience as an English teacher. Students are often apologetic about their pronunciation, giving disclaimers before starting the lesson and saying "I'm sorry my accent is very bad." Many students have also shown interest in learning pronunciation, insisting I correct them with every

mistake. As much as I would like to help them, I was not sure how to teach students pronunciation effectively. Like some ESL educators, I did not receive any intensive training on teaching pronunciation. I am only used to correcting students when they make mistakes as they were speaking, but I am afraid this technique will not be efficient in the long run. Originally I planned to hold a workshop on teaching pronunciation, but I decided to create a website because of its potential to reach a broader audience. Moreover, a website is more permanent and readily available compared to a workshop.

The English Pronunciation website was created using GitHub, a platform that allows developers to build software. Unfortunately, I have no background in computer science or software development, therefore I had to enlist outside help to set up the website. In the past, I have used website-hosting sites like Wix or Adobe Spark, but this time I opted to use GitHub because it allowed me to be flexible with the content, design, and functionality.

The biggest challenge I encountered was researching phonemes. It is important to discuss the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as it is commonly used especially in dictionaries. I watched various YouTube videos so I can learn how to pronounce the 44 phonemes for my voice recordings. At first, I could not decide how to organize the chart because there were many possible categories and some differences between American and British English pronunciations. For example, I only focused on five diphthongs that are common in American English and left out three others even though they are part of the IPA. I made sure that the examples provided have various graphemes that correspond to one phoneme. The point is to help learners get used to making a distinction between the alphabet and phonetic spelling. For example, the word “moon” has two /oo/ but is spelled /mun/ because it has a long /u/ phoneme. I wanted to record

each phoneme and example to give the learners a clear idea of how the sounds are pronounced. Some vowel sounds like /æ/, /ʌ/, /aː/, and /ɒ/ might be confusing to learners because the mouth is opened when these phonemes are produced, yet they each have distinct sounds. My favorite part of the website is creating the quizzes. The goal is to test their knowledge of phonemes, word stress, and intonation after reading the sections. I was inspired by some quizzes that I saw during my research and some were created based on formats that I was already familiar with. In *Odd Phoneme Out,* I wanted to test learners to see if they can make a distinction between words that have similar letter combinations, but different sounds (e.g., br**ea**d vs. r**ea**ds). In *Shopping for a Present,* I created a script with various types of intonation patterns. I intended to give students a contextualized view of how different expressions are used in everyday conversations.

The Project

The project in its entirety can be found in the appendix.

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In ESL and EFL classrooms, speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills are often more prioritized over learning pronunciation. Many English language learners wish to refine their pronunciation skills to feel confident and accepted in English-speaking environments. Unfortunately, many non-native speakers want to improve their pronunciation in order to avoid being discriminated against. Despite the high demand for pronunciation lessons, ESL/EFL teachers feel incompetent teaching pronunciation for their lack of training and knowledge in this area. In addition, pronunciation instruction tends to be excluded from curriculum planning and material development.

The English Pronunciation website demystifies the elements of pronunciation. Because the target audiences are teachers and students, the goal is to discuss all the necessary information in a clear and comprehensible manner. The purpose of this field project is to educate learners about the essential components of pronunciation such as phonemes, intonation, and word stress. Teachers and students are encouraged to use the English Pronunciation website as a resource to supplement their lessons and act as a guide for self-directed learners. Pronunciation learning is a continuous process, therefore having a free online resource that is easily accessible is crucial. Moreover, not many ELLs have the opportunity to exchange with native or proficient English speakers, so they might be unfamiliar with how new vocabulary words are produced. Although learners are familiar with the English alphabet, phonemes help them understand the distinction

between different sounds. In the long run, it not only helps with pronunciation, but it also helps learners enhance their spelling and develop their vocabulary.

Understanding grammar and vocabulary makes up a small fraction of one's competence in communication; it is not sufficient to speak English fluently. Communicative Language Teaching explains how grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies are equally important to communication. A sentence that is grammatically correct could be misunderstood if the person's intonation is inaccurate. Therefore, learning prosodic features such as word stress and intonation can help speakers express the meaning and sentiment behind their message. For example, stress can occur in different syllables, so it can change the meaning of the word if misspoken. Moreover, the intonation changes the emotion being expressed in the utterance.

The ability to communicate in a foreign language with fluency and confidence is a goal that many English language learners work hard to achieve. Pronunciation instruction should be an essential part of teacher training and language learning because it helps students communicate clearly and be comprehensible to their interlocutors.

Recommendations

The English Pronunciation website is designed to be used by teachers and students who want to learn more about American English pronunciation. Teachers are advised to use this website to teach students the main principles of pronunciation. With the growing popularity and necessity of distance learning, having a website makes it efficient to access information anywhere in the world. The explanations are simplified so beginner and intermediate learners can

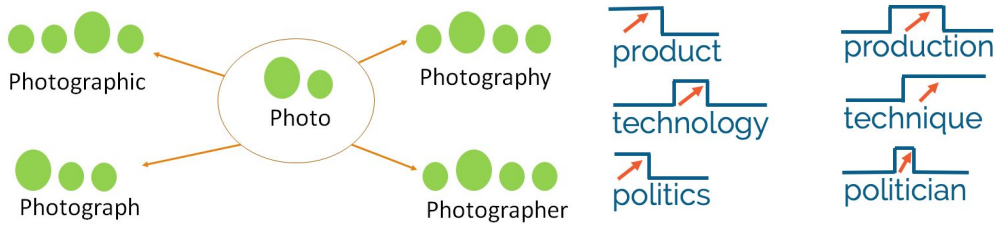
easily comprehend every piece of information. Ideally, phonemes, stress, and intonation should be covered when first introducing beginner level students to pronunciation.

All three sections provide clear definitions, a variety of examples, and audio guides. At the end of each section, learners are directed to a corresponding quiz to test their knowledge of what they have learned. The phoneme section includes audio examples to guide learners on how the sounds are produced. Teachers can play the audio during class and students can mimic the pronunciation. During the repetition exercise, teachers can explain how the lips move and the tongue is placed when pronouncing the phoneme. At the moment, the website does not include a specific guide that clarifies how the tongue should be positioned. In the future, the website will include this component as it would greatly help learners visualize the sound.

The word stress section details how stress is placed on different syllables. Discussing word stress in class is highly important because not many students are familiar with it. The article included a rule of thumb guide so learners can expect where stress can typically occur. Teachers should focus on words with similar spellings and different stress. Practicing such words can help students hear the difference between different stress placements. When the website is further developed, visual representations of syllabic stress will be added. Teachers can use lines or circles to represent which syllable is stressed, as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2

Visual representations of word stress pattern



Finally, the three patterns of intonation should be well discussed in class. Most beginners only associate phonemes with pronunciation. In fact, intonation plays a subtle, yet powerful role because it carries not only information but also the emotion of the message. Teachers can help their students practice different intonation patterns through conversational activities. Just like in the quiz, *Shopping for a Present,* students can pair up or form small groups and act out scenarios.

Combining these three basic principles can help students build a strong foundation of pronunciation at an early stage. The focus should not be on reducing the accent, but on improving the pronunciation. Teachers should be trained in pronunciation instruction in order to effectively guide students and help them become confident communicators.

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APPENDIX

English Pronunciation: Learn the Art of Speaking American English

This field project is a website dedicated to American English pronunciation. The following pages are the contents of the website: https://fbpellas.github.io

Faith Pellas

English Pronunciation

Learn the Art of Speaking American English

About Phonemes Stress Intonation Quiz

About the Author

Faith Pellas is a scholar at the University of San Francisco's TESOL department. For the past four years, she has been teaching English to learners from beginners to advanced levels. When she's not working on her thesis, Faith loves learning French, watercolor painting, and sending postcards to her nearest and dearest. Please visit the website at https://fbpellas.github.io

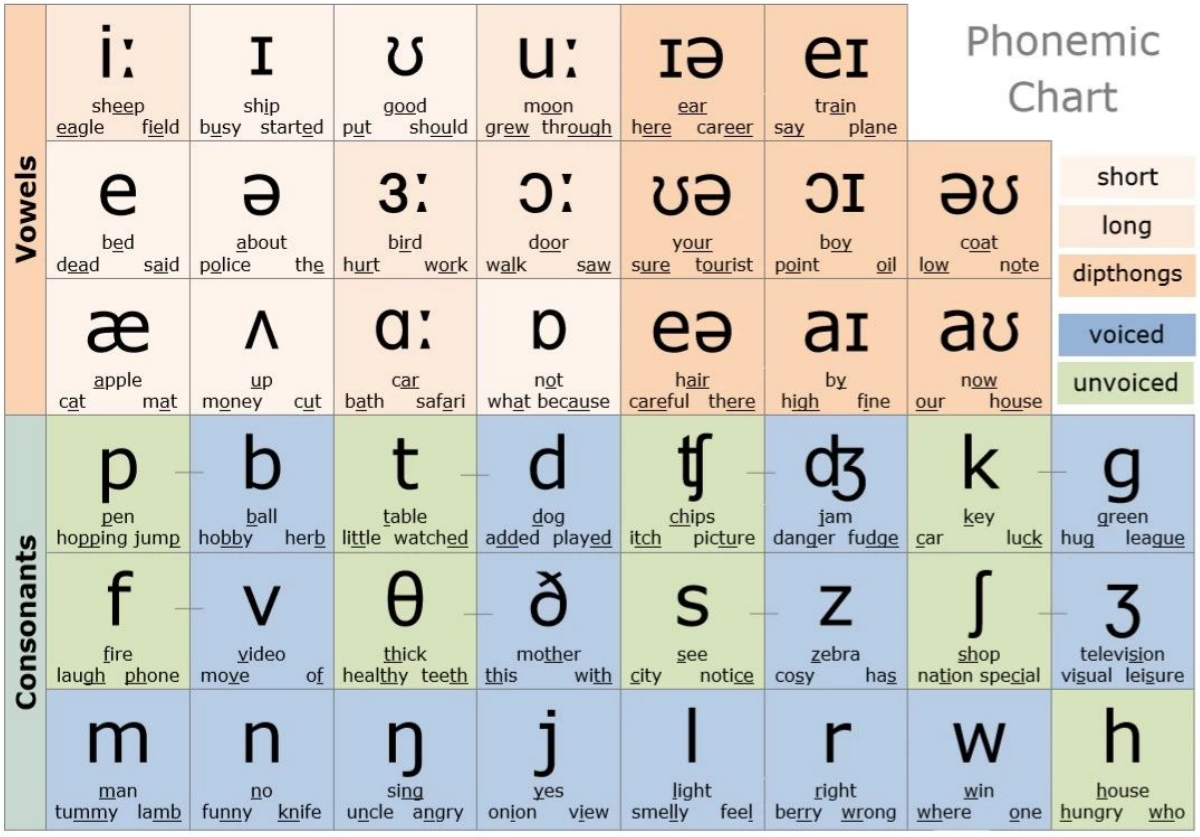
Mission

One of the biggest goals for language learners is to learn how to speak with the correct pronunciation of their target language. Unfortunately, many English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) curricula do not focus on pronunciation, therefore, many teachers lack training in this field. The purpose of this website is to help teachers and students understand the basics of pronunciation. By learning pronunciation, students can feel more confident in speaking and communicating.

Phonemes

According to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), there are 26 letters and 44 phonemes (or sounds) in the English alphabet. These letters are divided into two categories: **vowels** and **consonants**.

Note: Phonemes should not rely on the word's spelling. For example, the word *moon* is not spelled with the letter 'u', yet is produced with the long /u/ phoneme.



Vowels

Vowels are a set of unblocked sounds. They consist of the letters A, E, I, O, U (sometimes Y). The IPA lists 20 phonemes categorized as long, short, and diphthongs.

Vowels can sometimes be categorized as lax (short) and tense (long) depending on how much effort the lips and tongue make when producing the sound.

Listed below are the phonemes that are widely used in the American English language. Some words might vary in phonemes depending on regional dialects.

Phoneme	Grapheme	Examples
/iː/	e, ee, ea, ey, ie, y	green, sheep, tea, key, funny
/ɪ/	i, y, ui, u	pink, symbol, build, busy, quilt
/ʊ/	oo, ou, u	wood, could, full, book, push
/uː/	u, o, oo, ou	blue, who, noon, you, group
/e/	e, ea, ai	men, bread, met, said, head
/ə/	(schwa sound)	banana, the, ever, police, upon
/ɜː/	i(r), u(r), ea(r)	bird, hurt, learn, earth, furniture
/ɔː/	o(r), oo(r), o(r)e, oa(r)	morning, floor, wore, board, sport
/æ/	a, au, ai	apple, back, plaid, laugh, after
/ʌ/	u, o, oo, oe	under, honey, flood, does, fun
/aː/	a(r), o, ea(r), ow	hard, shark, heart, knowledge, body
/ɒ/	o	lot, cloth, honest, robot, stop

Diphthongs

Diphthongs are a combination of two vowel sounds. There are eight diphthongs in the IPA: aɪ, eɪ, ɔɪ, aʊ, ɪə, ʊə, əʊ, eə. However, only five sounds are produced in American English.

/aɪ/	i, igh, y, ie	ice, bye, lime, fight , sky
/eɪ/	a, a-e, ai, ay, eigh, ey	acorn, jade, paid, weight, hey
/ɔɪ/	oi, oy	boy, coin, soil, voice, turquoise
/oʊ/	o, ow	go, total, grow, over, gold
/aʊ/	ow	cow, now, brown, wow, gown

Consonants

Consonants have 24 blocked sounds. In the IPA chart, consonants are arranged completely differently from the English alphabet.

Phonemes like /p/ and /b/ are next to each other because the lips and the tongue move the same way when producing these sounds. The only difference is the phoneme on the left is unvoiced (no vibration on the throat) and the phoneme on the right is voiced (there is vibration on the throat).

/p/	p, pp	pen, upper, puppy, grape, happy
/b/	b, bb	big, hobby, bee, library, cab
/t/	t, tt, bt, ght, ed	test, kitten, doubt, light, worked
/d/	d, dd, de, ld	daughter, add, bride, would, bed
/tʃ/	ch, c, tch, t+ure, t+ion	church, cello, beach, mature, question
/dʒ/	g, j, ge, dge, gg	cage, jam, judge, suggest, edge
/k/	c, k, ck, ch, que, q, cc	cause, king, lack, ache, quest
/g/	g, gg, gu, gue, gh	hug, bigger, guest, ghost, vague
/f/	f, ff, ph, lf, fe	flower, offer, graph, half, giraffe
/v/	v, ve	vest, have, glove, wives, wave

/ θ /	th	Thursday, thank, bath, nothing, both
/ð/	th, the	with, mother, those, gather, further
/s/	s, ss, ps, c, sc, ce, se	kiss, psychology, rice, circle, peace
/z/	z, zz, se, ss	zoo, jazz, scissor, lazy, quizzes
/ʃ/	sh, ti, ss, ch, tion, sion	share, motion, passion, tension, English
/ʒ/	s, ge, sion, sure	Asia, casual, beige, vision, measure
/m/	m, mm, mb, me, mn	mom, grammar, climb, game, autumn
/n/	n, ne, nn, kn, pn, gn	nine, connect, knife, pneumonia, gnaw
/ŋ/	ng, n	sing, bank, angry, drink, jungle
/j/	y, io, u	young, onion, opinion, yes, use
/l/	l, ll, le	long, pill, table, likely, lamp
/r/	r, rr, wr, rh	rest, borrow, rhythm, write, wrap
/w/	w, wh, u, o	west, when, quiet, one, whale
/h/	h, wh	home, whole, who, hair, ahead

Test yourself to see how well you know the phonemes

Odd Phoneme Out

Phonetic Spelling

Quiz

A. Odd Phoneme Out

Choose the word that has a different phoneme from the rest.

1. **bread, seed, reads, green**

   br**ea**d: /e/

   s**ee**d, r**ea**d, gr**ee**n: /iː/

2. **pace, neighs, gray, key**

   k**ey**: /iː/

   p**a**ce, n**eigh**s, gr**ay**: /eɪ/

3. **sew, through, brew, blue**

   s**ew**: /oʊ/

   thr**ough**, br**ew**, bl**ue**: /uː/

4. **eight, ant, aim, age**

   ant: /æ/

   eight, **ai**m, **a**ge: /eɪ/

5. **thick, then, third, through**

   then: /ð/

   thick, **th**ird, **th**rough: /θ/

6. **climb, fry, light, tray**

   tr**ay**: /eɪ/

   cl**i**mb, fr**y**, l**igh**t: /aɪ/

7. **brow, crown, throw, meow**

   thr**ow**: /oʊ/

br**ow**, cr**ow**n, me**ow**: /aʊ/

8. **mission, precision, vision, version**

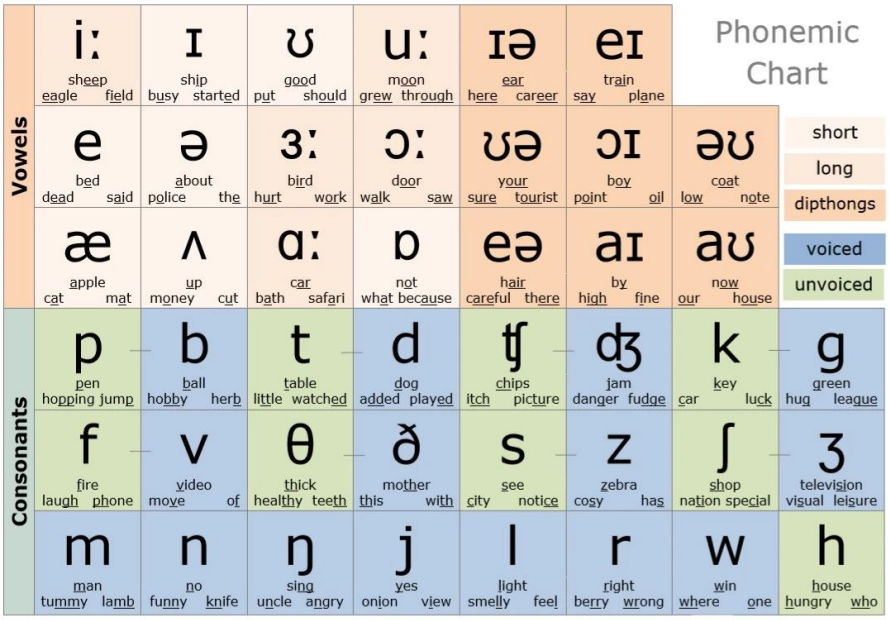
   mi**ss**ion: /ʃ/

   preci**sion**, vi**sion**, ver**sion:** /ʒ/

B. Phonetic Spelling

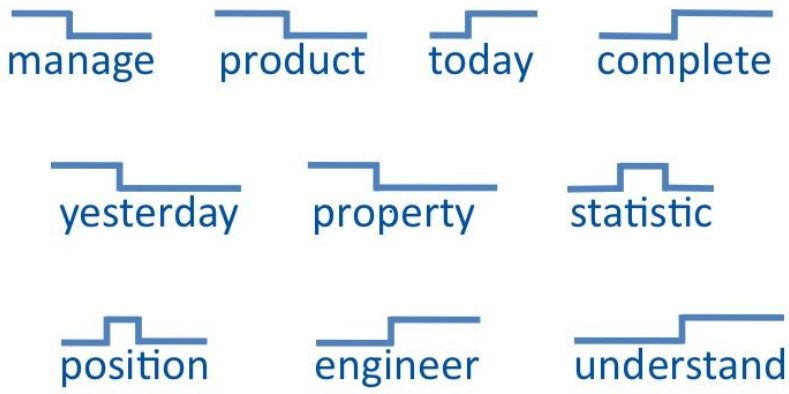
Guess the words based on their phonetic spelling. The box will turn green if the answer is correct.

Refer to the IPA chart for clues.



1. əˈtɛn ʃən attention
2. ˈfɪʃ ɪŋ fishing
3. noʊt note
4. fænˈtæs tɪk fantastic
5. ˈɔr dnˌɛr i ordinary
6. ˈbʌt ər butter
7. ˈtʃæm pi ən champion
8. ˈtrɛʒ ər treasure
9. ˈwɛd ɪŋ wedding
10. θ ɜrd third

Stress



Understanding word stress can help English language learners communicate clearly. A word stress emphasizes a syllable of a word with 2 or more syllables. Content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) are usually stressed.

A syllable is a unit of a word with one vowel sound.

hi= 1 syllable
flo~wer= 2 syllables
e~lec~tric= 3 syllables
sig~ni~fi~cant= 4 syllables

If a word has one syllable, there is no stress. Word stress is marked with the (ˈ) symbol which looks like an apostrophe. The stress mark comes before the stressed syllable.

e.g. hi / haɪ /
ˈflower /ˈflaʊ ər/

e ˈlectric / ɪ ˈlɛk trɪk /
sig ˈnificant / sɪg ˈnɪf ɪ kənt /

When pronouncing the stress, the syllable should sound a little higher, longer, and louder than the rest of the syllables.

Rule of Thumb

2-syllable nouns: the first syllable is stressed

person / ˈpɜr sən /
castle / ˈkæs əl /
basket /ˈbæs kɪt /

2-syllable verbs: the second syllable is stressed

demand / dɪ ˈmænd /
arrive / ə ˈraɪv /
complete / kəm ˈplit /

Some words are similar but have different meanings based on the word stress.

ˈpresent (noun) : current moment or time
pre ˈsent (verb) : to show

ˈreject (noun): something flawed or has mistakes and imperfections
re ˈject (verb): to refuse, to not accept

ˈconduct (noun): behavior
con ˈduct (verb): to lead

What other words have similar spellings, but different meanings and stress?

Quiz yourself on how well you can distinguish word stress:
Same Words, Different Stress
Where's the Stress

QUIZ

A. Same Words, Different Stress

Listen to the recording and choose the answer with the correct stress mark. Green indicates correct and red means the answer is wrong.

1. Record
   /ˈrɛk ərd / or / rɪˈkɔrd /
2. Object
   /ˈɒb dʒɛkt/ or / əbˈdʒɛkt /
3. Contract
   / ˈkɒn trækt / or / kənˈtrækt /
4. Increase
   / ˈɪn kris / or / ɪnˈkris /
5. Recall
   / ˈri kɔl / or / rɪˈkɔl /

B. Where's the Stress?

Choose the syllable that is pronounced with the correct word stress.

1. Apartment
   A - part- ment / No stress
2. Respond
   Re- spond / No stress
3. Positivity
   Po-si-ti-vi-ty/ No stress
4. Computer
   Com-pu-ter / No stress
5. Bakery
   Ba-ke-ry / No stress
6. Honorable
   Ho-no-ra-ble / No stress
7. Scientific
   Sci-en-ti-fic / No stress
8. Weigh
   We-igh / No stress
9. Winner
   Wi-nner / No stress
10. Competition
    Com-pe-ti-tion / No stress

Intonation

Aside from grammar and vocabulary, learning intonation is equally important in American English.

Intonation refers to the tone and pitch of the voice when speaking.
Pitch: the highness or lowness of the voice
Tone: the way someone speaks

It helps others understand what kind of message you are trying to communicate. Are you happy? Sad? Surprised? Asking a question? Even though a person speaks with perfect grammar, the meaning could get lost if the intonation is not correct.

Listen to these sentences below.

He failed the **test**.
He failed the **test?**

The word *test* is the focus word, which is stressed or emphasized. When a word is stressed, the pitch is higher. There are 2 basic types of intonation: rising and falling.

In the first sentence, the intonation falls at the end of the sentence to show that the sentence is finished. On the other hand, the intonation on the second statement rises to show surprise or disbelief.
The next sections discuss the different patterns of intonation: falling, rising, and non-final.

Falling Intonation ↘

This is the most common intonation pattern in American English.
We use this intonation when we finish a statement, give a command, as an information question, and an exclamation. The intonation falls on the last word of the sentence.

Finished Statements:

We live in ↘ France.
They are not ↘ invited.
It takes five hours to get ↘ there.

Commands:

Statements are used to give orders. Commands or imperative sentences start with the verb and not the subject.

Report to me ↘ immediately.
Do not take any ↘ photos.
Brush your teeth and go to ↘ bed.

Wh- Questions:

Who, What, When, Where, How, Why, Which are also known as information questions.

How are ↘ you?
When is your ↘ birthday?
Why did you lie to ↘ me?

Exclamations or Interjections:

Statements that express surprise, awe, pain, etc. Interjections are always marked with an exclamation point (!)

That's ↘ amazing!
↘ Congratulations!
You look lovely in that ↘ dress!

Rising Intonation ↗

The voice rises at the end of the statement. We often use this pattern when asking a yes or no question, a question tag, or to show surprise or disbelief.

Yes/No Questions:

Are you working ↗ tomorrow?
Has Stephen called ↗ you?
Could you please print out the ↗ documents?

Question Tags:

Questions at the end of the sentence to ask for confirmation. A question tag consists of an auxiliary verb (am, is, are, can, have, do, does, etc.) and a pronoun.

They left already, didn't ↗they?
Sandra is your cousin, isn't ↗she?
You can ride a motorcycle, can't ↗you?

Surprise or Disbelief:

The intonation rises on the word that is emphasized.

↗Really? Where did you hear that?
She won 5 million dollars in the ↗lottery? -disbelief that she won the 'lottery'
She won ↗5 million dollars in the lottery? -disbelief that she won $5 million

Non-Final Intonation ↗↘

The non-final or rise-and-fall intonation is often used with choices, lists, or unfinished statements. The examples below show which words rise and where they fall.

Choices:

Do you prefer ice ↗cream or ↘cake?
What would you rather do: go ↗hiking or go ↘swimming?
Can you speak ↗ Mandarin or ↘Spanish?

Lists:

Each item on the list rises in sound and the last word falls.

We need ↗flour, ↗milk, ↗sugar, and ↘eggs to make the cake.
Next week I'm available on ↗Monday, ↗Tuesday, and ↘Friday.
The shirt comes in ↗small, ↗medium, and ↘large.

Introductory/Non-Final Statements:

These statements are typically at the beginning of the sentence.

When ↗I grow ↘up...
↗By the ↘way,
↗As I was ↘saying,
↗Just so you ↘know,

Conditional Statements:

Conditionals usually start with ‘if’ or ‘when’. The last word of the first clause rises, then falls at the end.

If I have a million ↗dollars, I would travel the ↘world.
When I was a ↗child, I played ↘football.
If it’s cold ↗outside, I will wear a ↘jacket.

Test yourself to see how well you know intonations:
Guess the Pattern
Shopping for a Present

Quiz

A. Guess the Pattern

Read each sentence and choose whether it has a falling, rising, or non-final intonation.

1. I brought some wine, snacks, and a blanket for the picnic.
   Non-final: it's a list
2. Does she have enough time to prepare?
   Rising: Yes/No question
3. You're still coming, aren't you?
   Rising: Question tag
4. It's nice to meet you!
   Falling: exclamation
5. Did you order the chicken or the fish?
   Non-final: choice
6. They didn't go camping this weekend.
   Falling: finished statement
7. Why did you quit your job?
   Rising: WH- question
8. Good morning! It's so beautiful outside.
   Falling: exclamation and a finished statement
9. Submit the form after answering the questions.
   Falling: command
10. When I was a student, I had three months of vacation.
    Non-final: conditional

B. Shopping for a Present

Read the conversation between Annie and the salesperson. Identify whether the phrases in bold have a falling, rising, or non-final intonation.

Salesperson:	Hello! **How can I help you?**
Annie:	**Hi!** I'm looking for a present for my sister's birthday. What would you recommend?
S:	Well, what does she like? **Is she into sports?** Does she love art?
A:	I'm not so sure, **she already has everything**.
S:	**If I were you,** I would give her new clothes. Maybe that shirt?
A:	Oh, I think she will like that. Should I get her the **blue or grey**?
S:	Why not give her one of every color? We have **blue, grey, pink, and orange.**
A:	I'll take them all. **Add the scarf as well**, please.
S:	Okay, **that would be $280 in total.**
A:	**$280**? I think I'll just get the scarf, then.

1. Falling
2. Falling
3. Rising
4. Falling
5. Non-final
6. Non-final
7. Non-final
8. Falling
9. Falling
10. Rising