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Pronunciation Guide

American English Pronunciation of Consonant Sounds with Phonemic Symbols					
Phonemic Symbol	AHD ¹ Symbol	Examples	Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol	Example
/b/	/b/	<i>boy, cabin</i>	/p/	/p/	<i>pink, hip</i>
/tʃ/	/ch/	<i>cheer, watch, cello</i>	/r/	/r/	<i>rest, far</i>
/d/	/d/	<i>dog, bed</i>	/s/	/s/	<i>sink, bus</i>
/f/	/f/	<i>fill, phone, life</i>	/ʃ/	/sh/	<i>she, special,</i>
/g/	/g/	<i>go, log</i>	/t/	/t/	<i>tiny, little</i>
/h/	/h/	<i>his, cohort</i>	/ð/	/th/	<i>the, bathe</i>
/dʒ/	/j/	<i>joy, giant, budge</i>	/θ/	/th/	<i>thin, bath</i>
/k/	/k/	<i>cat, king, lack</i>	/v/	/v/	<i>view, weave</i>
/l/	/l/	<i>long, ill</i>	/w/	/w/	<i>win, when</i>
/m/	/m/	<i>my, team</i>	/j/ ²	/y/	<i>you, mayor</i>
/n/	/n/	<i>no, knife</i>	/z/	/z/	<i>zoo, rise</i>
/ŋ/	/ng/	<i>sing, think</i>	/ʒ/	/zh/	<i>leisure, beige</i>

American English Pronunciation of Vowel Sounds with Phonemic Symbols					
Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol	Examples	Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol	Example
æ	ă	<i>can, hat</i>	ɔ:	ô	<i>caught</i>
ei	ā	<i>cane, bait</i>	ɔr	ôr	<i>north</i>
ɜər	âr	<i>air, hare</i>	ɔi	oi	<i>joy, noise</i>
ɑ:	ä	<i>father</i>	ʊ	oo	<i>took</i>
ɑr	är	<i>arm</i>	ʊə	oor	<i>tour</i>
ɛ	ě	<i>bet, head</i>	u:	oo	<i>soon</i>
i:	ē	<i>meet, beat</i>	aʊ	ou	<i>out</i>
iər	îr	<i>here</i>	ʌ	ü	<i>cut</i>
i	ĭ	<i>pit</i>	ɜr	ûr	<i>word</i>
ai	ī	<i>my, light</i>	ə	ə	<i>about, the</i>
ɒ	ö	<i>hot</i>	ər	ər	<i>butter</i>
oʊ	ō	<i>no, know</i>	ju:	yoo	<i>view,</i>

¹ American Heritage Dictionary

² While the IPA symbol for this sound is /j/, I will use the AHD symbol of /y/

Characteristic Difficulties with English for Speakers of Chinese

1. Chinese dialects are not mutually understandable amongst Chinese people— written Chinese is readable by anyone who is literate
2. Uses pitch variations to create new words
3. No concept of syllable or emphasis stress
4. Tend to syllable-time instead of stress-time speech, they add a high falling tone on initial syllables creating a sing-songy sound to English ears
5. Tend to separate each syllable, making speech sound very staccato
6. Word order is identical for statements and questions in Chinese
7. As a culture, they value learning but will require proof that fun methods are worth their time; rote memorization is part of their traditional learning mode. Encourage them to practice speaking—not just reading or writing.
8. More vowel contrasts in English – much effort required to distinguish them
9. Pronounce diphthongs too short and without enough distinction between 2 vowels
10. May lengthen schwa /ə/ sound:
 - a. Problems recognizing that /ə/ can be created by almost every vowel
 - b. Examples
 - i. **A**bout
 - ii. **T**aken
 - iii. **P**encil
 - iv. **E**loquent
 - v. **S**upply
 - vi. **S**yringe
11. Confusing / i: / and /ɪ/
 - a. Length of vowels confused
 - b. Need vs. knit
 - c. Read vs. rit
 - d. Meat vs. mitt
 - e. Wheel vs. will
12. Confusing /ʊ/ and /ju:/
 - a. Confuse fool and full, Luke and luck
 - b. Carp for cup and kep for cup
 - c. Pot replaces putt
13. Voiced consonants often become devoiced (particularly with final consonant sounds):
 - a. /b/ becomes /p/
 - b. /d/ becomes /t/
 - c. /z/ becomes /s/
 - d. /g/ becomes /k/
 - e. /v/ becomes /f/
 - f. /dʒ/ becomes /tʃ/
 - g. /ʒ/ becomes /ʃ/

14. Many dialects do not have n: night becomes light
15. Consonant clusters do not exist.
 - a. Students may omit, add to, or subtract from the proper sound
 - b. insert vowel ex. sipoon for spoon
 - c. doggies for dogs
 - d. [br], [bl]
 - e. [pr], [pl]
 - f. [tr]
 - g. [kr], [kl], [ks]
 - h. [fr], [fl]
 - i. [sk], [st], [str]
 - j. [ts]
16. Few final consonant sounds
 - a. Mandarin exceptions: /n/ and /ŋ/
 - b. Cantonese exceptions: /n/, /ŋ/, /m/, /k/, /p/, /t/
 - c. May drop the final consonant: 'wife' becomes 'wi'
 - d. May add a vowel: 'wife' becomes 'wifey'
 - e. Final l becomes r: 'bil'l becomes 'beer', 'bee', 'biow', or 'bi'
17. /r/ sound doesn't exist in most Chinese dialects
 - a. Often replaced with /l/
 - b. Pay particular attention to initial /r/ [rust] vs [lust]
 - c. Also problematic when final /r/ is followed by a word starting with a vowel: 'we're on'
18. θ and ð do not exist in Chinese
 - a. 'Thin' pronounced as 'tin', 'fin' or 'sin'; 'this' pronounced as 'dis' or 'zis'
 - b. Often can produce sound during guided practice, but struggle in conversational usage
19. /h/ over pronounced as ch in loch
20. Most dialects do not have /z/: 'rice' for 'rise'
21. Sh, ch and j pronounced as their own language
22. Have difficulty with reduced forms (gonna, shoulda, hafta, 'cause) and tend to drop unaccented syllables

Characteristic Difficulties with English for Speakers of Korean

1. Ural-Altaic language related to Turkish; similar to Japanese in syntax with both languages using some Chinese characters although pronunciation is not similar
2. Korean sounds flat to English ears---they have difficulty making appropriate stress-timing in English; to Koreans English sounds histrionic
3. Korean letters are phonetic not ideograms; Latin alphabet transliterations are common in South Korea—students have little difficulty learning to write in English
4. Plural, third person singular and possessive final s and z sounds are not pronounced because of Korean grammar rather than difficulty hearing
5. No auxiliary verbs or articles in Korean
6. No Korean words begin with vowels
7. No long/short vowel distinctions in Korean—they use rising and falling intonation and pause
8. Korean never has more than 2 consonants in a row
9. Problems with consonant blends, tend to add a /ə/ between syllables, resulting in an additional syllable
 - a. Problem become probaleem
 - b. Friendly become friendly
10. Addition of final /i:/
 - a. In an attempt to “Korean-ize” the word, there is habit of adding a final vowel sound
 - b. It causes a problem because it may make a noun sound like an adjective
 - c. “church” become “churchy”
11. /ʌ/ replaced with /ɔ:/, /ɑ:/, or /ar/
 - a. “But” sounds like “bought”
 - b. “But” sounds like “bot”
 - c. “Cup” sounds like “carp”
12. /æ/ replaced with /ɛ/
 - a. “Hat” sounds like “het”
13. Confusion between /i/ and /i:/
 - a. “Sit” and “seat”
 - b. “Knit” and “neat”
 - c. “Mitt” and “meat”
14. All of the “r-colored” vowels sound like they don’t have the “r”
 - a. “First” becomes “fist”
 - b. “Curl” becomes “cull”
 - c. “Work” becomes “wok”
15. /u:/ shortened to a sound not analogous to an English sound
 - a. Problems arise not moving the lips forward or rounding them out enough
 - b. “move” becomes “muv” (sort of)
16. Trouble creating the diphthong /oʊ/
 - a. The sound is created with a slight /w/ at the end, which may cause problems for Korean speakers
 - b. May try to substitute /ɔ:/
 - c. “old” becomes “auld”

17. No distinction is made between voiced and voiceless sounds—this leads to confusions:
 - a. /d/ ↔ /t/ riding and writing
 - b. /g/ ↔ /k/ log and lock
 - c. /z/ ↔ /s/ raised and raced
 - d. /dʒ/ ↔ /tʃ/ gin and chin
 - e. /ʒ/ ↔ /ʃ/ delusion and dilution
18. Dropping the /y/, especially at the beginning of words
 - a. “year” becomes “ear”
 - b. “you” becomes “oo”
19. Difficulties with /w/
 - a. The sound exists in Korean but it produced differently
 - b. Problems arise based on the vowels that follow it:
 - c. It’s usually omitted when followed by /ʊ/ or /u:/
 - d. Replaced by /v/ when followed by /i:/, /i/, or /e/
 - e. Difficulties with /w/-related diphthongs (i.e. “situation” and “casual”)
20. Difficulties with /l/ and /r/
 - a. /r/ does not exist in Korean
 - b. When /l/ is in the beginning or middle of a word, there could be a substitution of a /w/
 - c. When /l/ is at the end of a word, there could be a substitution of /r/
 - d. When /r/ is in the beginning of a word or is part of a consonant cluster such as [pr], [tr], or [fr], it is often replaced by /l/
 - e. Final /r/ may be replaced by /l/ or dropped creating a /ə/ at the end of the word
 - f. Difficulty distinguishing between walk and work
21. /v/ pronounced as /b/ or /f/
 - a. /v/ doesn’t exist in Korean
 - b. If it’s at the beginning of the word, it’s often replaced with /b/
 - c. If it’s in the middle or at the end, it’s often de-voiced into /f/
22. Difficulties with /f/ and /p/
 - a. /f/ does not exist in Korean
 - b. /p/ has a similar but not exactly the same sound in Korean (it’s a “stiff-voice” glottal vs. the English bilabial plosive)
 - c. They may not hear the differences between the /f/ and /p/ sounds
 - d. /f/ becomes /p/ as in “families” becomes “pamilies” and “flay” becomes “pray”
23. Z becomes j as in zoo becomes Jew
24. In oral reading ignore definite article
25. Difficulties with /ð/ and /θ/
 - a. /θ/ as in “think” becomes /s/ as in “sink”
 - b. /ð/ as in “this” becomes /d/ as in “dis”

Characteristic Difficulties with English for Speakers of Vietnamese

1. Vietnamese uses a phonetic alphabet system with a one-to-one letter to sound relationship
2. Vietnamese tends to be disyllabic (most words have 2 syllables – but the syllables are written like they are 2 words)
3. Vietnamese is a tonal language, meaning two words can be spelled the same but the tone changes the meaning (má = check & ma = ghost). This is similar to how English used tone to convey mood or intent (i.e. sarcasm)
4. Vietnamese verbs do not have tense (past, present, future) or aspect (simple, perfect, progressive, conditional)
5. Sound redundancy
 - a. Sometimes an extra /s/ or /z/ will be added between words or syllables or at the end of words
 - b. “hobby” becomes “hosbi”
6. Omission of final consonant sounds
 - a. Vietnamese rarely ends words with a consonant
 - b. Learners often drop final consonant sounds, particularly /ks/, /dʒ/, /s/, /t/, /v/, and /z/
 - c. This can also occur in the middle of a word if these sounds end a syllable
7. Difficulty with /t/, /tr/, and /dʒ/
 - a. The /tʃ/ sound may be substituted for /t/, /tr/, and /dʒ/
 - b. “chime” for “time”
 - c. “chide” for “tried”
 - d. “batch” for “badge”
8. Interchanging /s/ and /ʃ/
 - a. Usually it takes the form of /ʃ/ being replaced by /s/, “shoe” becoming “sue”
 - b. If the /s/ is internal, it may be replaced with /ʃ/, “muscle” becoming “muschel”
9. Differentiating long and short vowel sounds in pronunciation
 - a. /i:/ and /i/ “meat” and “mitt”
 - b. /æ/ and /ʌ/ “bad” and “bud”
 - c. /ʊ/ and /u:/ “would” and “wooded”
 - d. /ɜr/ and /ɔr/ “first” and “forced”
 - e. /ei/ and /ɛ/ “wait” and “wet”
 - f. /oʊ/ and /ɔ:/ “coat” and “caught”
10. Consonant cluster pronunciations:
 - a. /sts/ as in “guests”
 - b. /ts/ as in “hits”
 - c. /str/ as in “street”
 - d. /tr/ as in “tree”
 - e. /dʒ/ as in “judge”
 - f. /fl/ as in “flower”
 - g. /fr/ as in “freedom”
 - h. /pr/ as in “pray”
 - i. /pl/ as in “play”
 - j. /kr/ as in “across”
 - k. /kl/ as in “clue”

11. Difficulty distinguishing words ending in –ed and -s
 - a. This problem could stem from the habit of dropping final consonants
 - b. Often will end with an unstressed vowel sound instead of completing the word
12. Stress timing
 - a. Much of the English stress timing hinges on the de-stressing of vowels.
 - b. Often the de-stressed vowel becomes a schwa /ə/
 - c. The schwa can be spelled as any vowel
 - i. [a] about
 - ii. [e] taken
 - iii. [i] pencil
 - iv. [o] eloquent
 - v. [u] supply
 - vi. [y] syringe
13. Difficulties with /ð/ and /θ/
 - a. /θ/ as in “think” becomes /s/ as in “sink” or /t/ as in “tink”
 - b. /ð/ as in “this” becomes /d/ as in “dis” or /z/ as in “zink”
14. /l/ and /n/ confused by speakers of northern Vietnamese dialects
 - a. “light” becomes “night”
 - b. “rolling” becomes “ronning”
15. /y/ pronounced as /z/ by speakers of central and southern Vietnamese dialects
 - a. “yes” become “zes”
 - b. “yellow” become “zellow”
16. As with most Asian languages, Vietnamese does not have /r/
 - a. “zed” instead of “red”
 - b. “ozange” instead of “orange”
17. Tendency to drop articles, and suffixes
18. Unvoicing the “g” in the /ŋ/
 - a. “king” become “kink”
 - b. “think” becomes “think” (or when paired with the “th” problem, it becomes “sink”)

Characteristic Difficulties with English for Speakers of Japanese

1. Katakana English is the practice of using the Japanese phonetic system to pronounce English words.
 - a. Each kana represents a specific sound or combination of sounds (much like the IPA chart included here)
 - b. The problem arises when there is no corresponding sound in Japanese to match an English sound
2. Japanese does not have an alphabet; it uses a syllabary
 - a. Each character corresponds to a full syllable, not a sound
 - b. Note: English letters correspond to a sound in theory, in practice, they may correspond to multiple sounds based on the word or other in the word
 - c. Consonants are always linked with a vowel in the syllabary
3. Word stress
 - a. Speakers of Japanese tend to give each syllable equal stress
 - b. Creates “flat” feel to longer words
 - c. Causes problems with words like “record” and “progress” where the stressed syllable defines the word
4. There are only 5 vowel sounds in Japanese
 - a. /ɑ:/ as in “father”
 - b. /ɛ/ as in “bet”
 - c. /i:/ as in “meet”
 - d. /oʊ/ as in “know”
 - e. /u:/ as in “food”
5. Confusion with /l/ and /r/
 - a. /l/ and /r/ sound do not exist in Japanese
 - b. There is a similar sound that is a hybrid of the two
 - c. Work on tongue placement at the beginning of the sound
6. Schwa /ə/
 - a. Because most syllables in Japanese are given equal time, the /ə/ sound causes problems when it’s in the unstressed syllable. Speakers try to give it the longer sound of the letter creating it
 - b. Because of the fact that syllables never end with consonants in Japanese, some speakers try to add a /ə/ between consonants
7. Difficulties with /ð/ and /θ/
 - a. Often replaced by /s/
 - b. “mouth” become “mouse”
8. Added /ə/ or /u:/ on words that end in consonants
 - a. Japanese words end in vowels
 - b. “salad” becomes “sarada” (when combined with the /l/-/r/ problem)
9. Difficulties with consonant clusters
 - a. Japanese doesn’t place consonants together
 - b. Will add a /ʌ/ or /ɒ/ between the letters of the cluster
 - c. “strawberry” becomes “sutoroberi”
 - d. “ski” becomes “sukii”

10. Difficulties with R-colored vowels
 - a. Probably tied to difficulties with the /r/ sound
 - b. /ɜr/ becomes /ɑ:/ “further” becomes “father”
 - c. /ɔr/ becomes /ɒ/ “north” becomes “noth”
11. Substituting /ŋ/ for /n/
 - a. This usually occurs in words ending in “n”
 - b. “ran” becomes “rang”
12. Difficulties with /f/ and /v/
 - a. Sounds do not exist in Japanese
 - b. Difficulties with lip/teeth placement to create the sound
 - c. /f/ sometimes replaced with /h/ especially when followed by /u/ or /oʊ/
13. Difficulties with /w/ when followed by certain vowels
 - a. Followed by /ʊ/ or /u/, /w/ tends to be omitted
 - b. Followed by /i:/ or /i/, /w/ sometimes becomes a /v/
14. Difficulties with /ʃ/
 - a. A similar sound exists in Japanese but is made differently
 - b. Sounds like a hybrid between /ʃ/ and /s/