

Unit 2



Theoretical introduction (2)

Phonetics, phonology, and writing

Print version of the
Phonetics with Listening Practice (British)
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2.1

English Phonetics: Unit 2: ['ɪŋ.ɡlɪʃ fə.'net.ɪks 'ju:n.ɪt 'tʰu:]

Theoretical Introduction (2) [θɪə.'ɪet.ɪk.l̩ .ɪntɪ.ə.'dʌk.fɪŋ 'tʰu:] [θɪə.'ɪet.ɪk.l̩ .ɪntɪ.ə.'dʌk.fɪŋ 'tʰu:]

Phonetics, phonology, and writing [fə.'net.ɪks fə(ʊ).nɒl.ədʒ.i.ən 'ɪaɪ.tɪŋ]

Robert Spence ['rɒb.ət 'spens] based on material by William Barry and Ingmar Steiner

['beɪst ʊn mə.'tʰɪə.l.i.əl bar 'wɪl.jəm 'bæɪ.i.ən 'ɪŋ.mɑːɪ 'stam.ə] [ən 'ɪŋ.mæ 'fai.nə]

[si / ʊi bɹy.mɛːʃ | ʌ dɒ.sə.vɛt.set də la ʁe.py.blik] ['twɛnt.i.ɪtʰ / 'θɜː.ti.əθ əv ʊk.'tʰəʊb.ə | 'twɛnt.i.nam.'tʰiːn]

2.2

1 Why do we need the International Phonetic Alphabet?

Why do we need the International Phonetic Alphabet?

From the “spelling poem” (cf. Eckert and Barry p. 253)

I take it you already know Of tough and bough and cough and dough? Others may stumble but not you
On hiccough, thorough, lough, and through. Well done! And now you wish perhaps, To learn of less familiar
traps? Beware of heard, a dreadful word That looks like beard but sounds like bird, And dead – it's said like
bed, not bead – For goodness' sake don't call it deed! Watch out for meat and great and threat (They rhyme
with suite and straight and debt).

2.3

Why do we need the International Phonetic Alphabet?

A moth is not a moth in mother Nor both in bother, broth in brother, And here is not a match for there
Nor dear and fear for bear and pear, And then there's dose and rose and lose – Just look them up – and
loose and choose, And cork and work and card and ward, And font and front and word and sword, And do
and go and thwart and cart – Come, come, I've hardly made a start! A dreadful language? Man alive! I'd
mastered it when I was five!

... and you can find even longer versions of this poem if you google for the first line :-)

2.4

2 Hearing *what's* said vs. listening to *how* it's said

Hearing *what's* said vs. listening to *how* it's said

- Primarily, we listen to someone to hear what he/she is saying.

- What did the person say? [Click here to hear \[kɪk hɪə tə hɪə\]](#)

– “Ich bin in den Laden reingegangen...” ?

– “Bin in den Laden reingegangen...” ?

– “Bin in'n Laden reingegangen...” ?

– “Bin in'n Lad'n reingegang'ng...” ?

- Orthography is not very good at capturing the details of the pronunciation:

[bɪn ɪn 'la:dən ʁaŋgə'gaŋ]

- But how much detail should we try to capture in our transcription of the sound?

2.5

3 Phonetic vs. phonological (e.g. phonemic) transcription

Phonetic vs. phonological (e.g. phonemic) transcription

Remember that there are different LEVELS a.k.a. STRATA in language, as well as different MANIFESTATIONS (e.g. written and spoken).

TIN STEP LETDOWN		lexicogrammatical
<t>	/t/	{graph phon}emic
ɾ ɹ ʈ	[tʰ] [t] [ɾ]	{graph phon}etic
photons	sound waves	physical reality

Note the conventions: <t> /t/ [t] see E&B p. 289

2.6

4 What should we include in the transcription?

What should we include in the transcription?

- <Ich bin in den Laden reingegangen.> — standard orthography
- /ʔɪç bɪn ɪn de:n 'la:dən 'ʁaŋgə'gaŋən/ — a phonemic transcription
- [bɪn ɪn ɪ 'la:dən 'ʁaŋgə'gaŋ] — a phonetic transcription with word breaks
- ['bɪnɪn 'la:dən 'ʁaŋgə'gaŋ] — a phonetic transcription without word breaks
- ['bɪn.m.ɪn 'la:dən 'ʁaŋgə'gaŋ] — a phonetic transcription with syllable breaks

2.7

5 Consonants and vowels: phonetics and phonology

Consonants and vowels: phonetics and phonology

- Phonetically: vowels involve merely a “shaping” of the airflow from the lungs
- Phonetically: consonants involve more of a restriction or obstruction of the airflow
- Phonologically: a vowel typically functions as the Nucleus of a syllable
- Phonologically: a consonant typically functions as the Onset (Initial) or Coda (Final) element in the structure of a syllable
- And don't confuse vowel/consonant “letters” (< >) with vowel/consonant “sounds” (/ / and []); the above is about “sounds”.
- The “vowel letters” in the English spelling system are <a>, <e>, <i>, <o>, <u>, and (sometimes:) <y>

2.8

6 Phonetics vs. phonology: different strata

6.1 Confronting phonetics with phonology

Confronting phonetics with phonology

- Page 40 of the course notes: official full IPA chart
- Page 39 of the course notes: list of English phonemes
- What differences do you notice between the two pages?

2.9

6.2 -etic vs. -emic: a difference of perspective

-etic vs -emic: a difference of perspective

- An -etic description is made from the perspective of an “outsider”:
 - — “what gestures / shapes / sounds can I in fact observe?”
- An -emic description is made from the perspective of an “insider”
 - — which *differences* between gestures / shapes / sounds are likely to **stand for a difference in MEANING** within one particular language?

2.10

7 Homework

Homework

- Consult the diagram on page 49 of the course notes, which shows the **places of articulation** in the human vocal tract.
- Each of these places of articulation has a technical name (usually borrowed from Latin) and an associated adjective. This applies both to the ‘active’ articulator (typically: a part of the tongue) and the ‘passive’ articulator (typically: a part of the roof of the mouth). Follow the link to the original Wikipedia file from which the diagram is taken and **learn the adjectives**. (In addition to the English terms, you can also find the German and Spanish terms there.)
- Familiarize yourselves with the **IPA symbols** used for phonemic transcriptions of English words (page 39 of the course notes). But beware! When learning the ‘meaning’ of IPA symbols you should always start with the full IPA table on page 40! (In transcribing English, we are often a bit sloppy in the way we use symbols like /r/ /ʌ/ /i:/ /e/ /u:/ /ɒ/ /ɔ:/ and a few others.)

2.11