

PHONOLOGY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The paper aims to study and examine the English consonants with its basic speech and sound patterns in phonology. But learning phonology posits challenges for the learners and still remains a major concern for the learners in English language. The study reveals parallels of consonant speech sounds of the English language and also analyze how this language is unique in its structure and linguistics, enabling us to understand the non-uniformity in its approach in phonology.

Introduction

Phonological aspects in English is more complicated and less simplified in English, however, when we examine consonant letters in English, some letters establishes the disparity more than one sound to it. It can be well illustrated by the examples from its phonological aspects in the language and it captivates the interest in the study of English speech and sound patterns. These sound patterns will be studied through English consonant sounds to signify the relevant disparities and variations in speech utterances.

b/,d/,f/,g/,h/,j/,k/,l/,m/,n/,p/,r/,s/,t/,v/,w/,z/ 17 sounds from Roman Alphabet and 7 sounds from different letters like /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/ /ŋ/.(Macmillan English Dictionary, MED)

We all are familiar with English Alphabet (A to Z) which consists of set of letters in a particular order that is used for writing English language and these Alphabet are called as Roman Alphabet. Understanding the phonology of a language is relatively a bit more complex, but this complexity can be reduced by awareness of the sound articulations in the speech patterns. The thorough knowledge of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) will empower the learners with confidence to pronounce English words correctly without any external guidance emphasizing on self-learning to master the spoken language. One should believe that one can acquire effective speech habits in English at any age and with any educational background.

India is non-English speaking country where predominance of regional language is prominent but emergence of English as a lingua franca language enforced instrumental

motivation for the learners, the desire to learn English to fit into an English-language culture. Due to this learners encounter difficulties in understanding and appreciating the different levels of expressions and grammar involved in the English language. In this regard an attempt is being made to show the ins and outs of phonetic implications in the practice of the language in linguistics and also comprehending difficult levels in the study of English phonology.

Firstly, Language's simplicity & complexity can be explored in totality in its basic structural form of matter and content. Secondly language's originality lies in its phonology and that is the core of its spoken abilities and pronouncing with proficiency making all the difference for the learners. Third concluding point aptly reveals that language brings out the basic appreciation of the language itself. The topic deals in an organized way to understand the complications of basic facts and functions of English phonology – precisely consonants and examples from Roman alphabet that is all 26 English letters a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,l,m,n,o,p,q,r,s,t,u,v,w,x,y,z are called Roman alphabet. Most consonants cannot function on their own, unlike vowels. For instance, we simply cannot utter /b/ without at least one vowel quality before or after it but vowels can be pronounced like /a/, /o/, /u/ etc.

Consonants need vowels to make units of meaning larger than phonemes, to make roots, words, phrases and sentences. Finally, even though the same consonants do occur more than once together in many English spellings, such 'double' consonant are only pronounced once. For instance, the word butter is pronounced as though it had only one t, /'betə(r)/, and not as /'bettə(r)/; for the pronunciation of all other cases of more than one consonant coming side by side, do consult the dictionary: for instance, dg in budget. Many Consonants come in pairs. They are chiefly distinguished from each other by the presence or absence of voice in them.

J. D. O'Connor defined plosives, fricatives, nasal, gliding and lateral consonants in *Better English Pronunciation*:

Plosive consonants are stop consonants /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/

In stop consonants the breath is completely stopped at some point in the mouth, by the lip tongue-tip or tongue-back, and then released with a slight explosion. (Connor 39)

/p/ and /b/ as in peak and beak

/t/ and /d/ as in tie and die

/k/ and /g/ as in class and glass

/tʃ/ and /dʒ/ in chin and gin

Fricatives are /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/

There are nine consonant phonemes whose main sounds all have friction as their most important feature. They are /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/. For all of them the lungs push air through a narrow opening where it causes friction of various kinds. (Connor 25)

/f/ and /v/ as in fast and vast

/θ/ and /ð/ as in thin and then

/s/ and /z/ as in sue and zoo

/ʃ/ and /ʒ/ as in leash and beige

/h/ in half

Nasal Sounds are /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/

In all nasal consonants the soft palate is lowered and at the same time the mouth passage is blocked at some point, so that all the air is pushed out of the nose. (Connor 48-49)

/m/ in room

/n/ in reason

/ŋ/ in long

Gliding Consonants are /j/, /w/, and /r/

There are three consonants which consist of a quick, smooth, non-friction glide towards a following vowel sound, the consonants /j, w, r/ (Connor 57)

Lateral Consonant /l/

/l/ - is formed laterally, that is, instead of the breath passing down the centre of the mouth, it passes round the sides of an obstruction set up in the centre. (Connor 53)

When we study carefully each consonant in each word and try to associate the method of articulation with the unique sound of each consonant. After having a close reading of these examples, we will be able to understand the phonetic symbols mentioned in the dictionary that uses these symbols to guide the learners to pronounce the word correctly. Mastering the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) which is an alphabetic system of phonetic notation based primarily on the Latin alphabet and it was devised by the International Phonetic Association as a standardized representation of the sounds of oral language. After discussing about an inventory of English speech sounds and the ways of producing them, we must clearly understand some other basic concepts in English phonology.

Bat is word /b/ but in Roman alphabet it is pronounced independently as /bi:/ that means b in a bat word had a different sound and b had a different sound when you say it Roman alphabet that a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,I,j,k,l,m,n,o,p,q,r,s,t,u,v,w,x,y,z. In other words English consonants have different sounds when they are formed in words but individually and in isolation each consonant differ from there Roman alphabet pronunciation The following examples illustrate the content of the topic citing the examples from Macmillan English dictionary (MED) : isolate /b/ from the word (book) and pronounce further put it back in the word again pronounce, there is difference, this difference has to be recognized and to be mastered by the learners to understand the phonology in English.

IPA	examples	Roman alphabet
b	bad, lab	/bi:/
d	did, lady	/di:/
f	find, if	/ef/
g	give, flag	/dʒi:/
h	how, hello	/eitʃ/
y	yes, yellow	/wai/
k	cat, back	/keɪ/
l	leg, little	/el/
m	man, lemon	/em/
n	no, ten	/en/
ŋ	sing, finger	/ɪŋg/
p	pet, map	/pi:/
r	red, try	/ɑ:(r)/
s	sun, miss	/es/
ʃ	she, crash	/ʃ/
t	tea, getting	/ti:/
tʃ	check, church	/tʃ/
θ	think, both	/θ/
ð	this, mother	/ð/
v	voice, five	/vi:/

w	wet, window	/'dʌb(ə)ljʊ:/
z	zoo, lazy	/zed/
ʒ	pleasure, vision	/ʒ/
dʒ	just, large	/dʒ/ (Macmillan English Dictionary)

After being acquainted with modes of speech articulation, it becomes easier to understand the role of phoneme and allophones (slight variation within the same Phoneme) as an agent of change in the word and its meanings in phonology. Phoneme is an individual speech sound that makes one word different from another. (MED) The consonants have characteristic sounds and these sounds are phonemes, and replacing one over other brings about noticeable change in the word meanings. For example, the consonants b and f in the words like 'bill' and 'fill' differs in their initial letter in these words and the rest of letter are the same like ill in bill and fill. A phoneme is the sound that can change the meaning of a word. For example cat and cut are two different words because they have two different phonemes. Sound "a" and the sound "u" are the phoneme for the words cat and cut which differs in its vowel sound. An essential property of phonemes is that it functions contrastively, e.g. In English /r/ and /m/ are phonemes because they are the only basis for contrast in words such as 'rowing' and 'mowing'. In other words, phoneme is a speech sound that signals a difference in meaning.

Consider, for example, the words "dime" and "dine". They sound exactly alike except for the /m/ and the /n/, but their meanings are different, therefore, it must be the /m/ and /n/ that made the difference in meaning, and these two nasals are established as English phonemes. Pairs of words like those above that demonstrate a single phonemic contrast are called minimal pairs. These minimal pairs can be explained by observing changes in either consonant letter or in vowel letter in a particular word. For instance jug and mug where consonant letters /j/ and /m/ differs in the beginning of the words and the rest of ug letters are the same in the given words. Similarly, the use of an allophone does not change the meaning of a word. In the word paper [ˈpeɪpə(r)] the first /p/ is aspirated and pronounced as [pʰ], and the second word paper [ˈpeɪpə(r)] /p/ is usually unaspirated as pronounced as a [p], like: [ˈpeɪpə(r)] either way it does not change the meaning of the word. Consonants in English words are different in their sound and symbol, sometimes a single consonant have two or more sounds in it for example single consonants are like/ b, d, l, m, n, f,/ etc but in some consonants there are more than one sound to it for example the words began with c like cat /k/ and cell /s/, chair /tʃ/ the sounds of the underlined consonant letters are different in different words and so it will be differently pronounced.

Scan /skæn/ can't be pronounced as shan /ʃɑ:n/ because here 'S' got the symbol as /s/ in the phonetic transcription.

Sugar /'ʃʊgə(r)/ can't be pronounced as sugar /'sɔgə/ because in the phonetic transcription it got the symbol has /ʃ/

Ship /ʃɪp/ can't be pronounced as sip /sɪp/ because here 'S' in ship as /ʃ/ symbol so it differs in its sound pattern.

Cent /sent/ can't be pronounced as /kent/ because for this word C has /s/ sound. Camp /kæmp/ can't be pronounced as /sæmp/ because for this word C has /k/ sound in the phonetic transcription.

Cheat /tʃi:t/ can't be pronounced as /ki:t/ because for this word C/tʃ/ has sound in the phonetic transcription.

Starting with 'Th' words they share two sounds in the same letter. For example /θ/ & /ð/

Thus /ðʌs/, word has /ð/ sound in the beginning. ‘These’ /ði:z/ can’t be pronounced as /ti:z/ tease because for this Th has /ð/ sound in the phonetic transcription.

Thrust /θrʌst/ can’t be pronounced as trust /trʌst/ because for this Th has /θ/ sound in the phonetic transcription

CONCLUSION

The paper explores major issues in learning English language phonology with relevant aspects of its sound structure. The above given examples describes the complexity of English consonants due to its complex nature of phonology. The well-known topics in English consonants are taken up for elaboration and discussed the words in its phonological structure. The learners appreciate the fact that the knowledge of IPA boosts their permanency of independent learning and also enhances their capability to know the word with its pronunciation without external influences. The introduction of IPA at primary school level would be more beneficial and which will enable the learners to learn the word with correct pronunciation at the reception stage. It’s an enliven concept to learn English language sounds but still more interesting to draw parallels to understand language in its phonological uniqueness differing from form and matter.

Works Cited

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