

# Effective Speech Communication

Prof. Raymond B. Galang

# Sounds of English

The sounds of English are grouped into three.

These are the:

Vowels

Consonant sounds

Diphthongs

# VOWEL SOUNDS

**VOWELS** may be defined as those sounds which are produced without blocking or constricting the passage of air. They are formed by the movement of the tongue and the lips. These sounds are further classified into three depending on which part of the tongue is active in their production.

They are called front vowels if the front part of the tongue is active; central or middle vowels if the middle part is active; and back vowels if the rear part is active.

These sounds may also be described either as high mild or low depending on the height of the jaw when they are produced. Furthermore, they may be considered as round, spread, and neutral depending on the shape of the lips as they are produced.

Finally they may also be described as the tense or lax depending on whether or not there is tightening in the throat.

**Vowels form the core of most syllables. They also carry information about stress (Pennington, 1996)**

	Front	Central	Back
High	/i/		/u/
			/U/
Medium	/ε/	/Λ/	/θ/
	/e/	/ξ/	/c/
Low	/æ/		/D/
			/a/

Figure 4: Vowel Chart

Notice that your lips should be spread as,  
you produce the following vowels:

/i/ as in beat, heat, leak, key, meet, seat, amoeba,  
Caesar, Phoenix

/ɪ/ as in bit, hit, lick, kit, sit, grill, been, captain,  
marriage, delicate

/e/ as in abate, hate, lake, Kate, sate, Cay, mate,  
cape, gaol, grate,

/ɛ/ as in bet, bread, let, set, any, second,  
jeopardy, Leonard, spread

/æ/ as in bat, hat, lack, sat, man, anger, sack,  
cap, jam, hamburger

Your lips should be neutral (neither spread nor rounded) as you produce the following vowels:

/ə/ (schwa) as in about, particular, lesson, solution, towel, sofa, moment

/ʌ/ as in mother, love, onion, oven, brother, judge, cup, cut, much

This time, round your lips as you produce the following vowels:

/u/ as in boot, hoot, balloon, soon, taboo, cocoon, pool, music, groom

/U/ as in pull, book, could, would, sugar, push, pull, hook, cook

/o/ as in boat, coat, hope, phone, own most, chose, loan bestow

/c/ as in bought, caught, hawk, pawn, jaw, law, saw, draw, thought

/ɑ/ as in dark, father, arm, farm, party, sergeant, psalm, balm, calm

# Consonant sounds

These are sounds which are produced when the passage of air is either completely or partially obstructed.

There are two main groups of consonants:

a. **PLOSIVES**

these are sounds formed by completely obstructing the stream of air with either the lips or the tongue and then suddenly releasing it.

# Consonant Sounds

## b. CONTINUANTS

these are sounds formed by partially blocking the stream of air with the lips or the teeth. Continuants are further classified into fricatives, affricates, and approximants.

According to manner of articulation, consonants are classified as nasals, stops, fricatives, affricates and approximants. According to place of articulation, consonants are classified as bilabial (lips), alveolar (alveolar or gum ridge), velar (velum or soft palate), labiodental (lips and teeth), palatal (hard palate), glottal (glottis).

These consonants may be described as either voiceless or voiced. They are considered voiced when the vocal cords vibrate as the sounds are produced, and voiceless when they don't. example of voice consonants are /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /z/, /ð/, /ʒ/, and /dʒ/. The following are examples of voiceless consonants: /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /s/, /ʃ/, /θ/, and /tʃ/.

## Read aloud the following words

Breath – breathe

choke – joke

false – falls

speech – spits

edge – etch

bat – pat

bath – bathe

they – day

fission – vision

she – see

knife – knives

thought - taught

# Diphthongs

a diphthong is a combination of two vowel sounds blended in one syllable. It has no longer duration than a pure vowel sound to the other. In the production of a diphthong, the tongue moves from one vowel sound to the other.

# The diphthongs are:

[aɪ]

[oʊ]

[oɪ]

[aʊ]

[eɪ]

Slight

grow

soil

brown

paint

Light

know

coy

down

grain

Cry

sow

boy

ouch

reign

Glide

row

boil

towel

feign

Drive

bestow

broil

endow

deign

What are the pitfalls of Filipino speakers of English? These are the sounds not found in our mother tongue and have to be learned as new sounds.

Vowels: [e] [æ] [o] [ə]

Consonants: [f] [v] [ð] [t] [θ] [dʒ] [z] [ʒ]

Here is partial list of words some Filipino speakers often find difficult to pronounce distinctly.

mum – mom – ma'am

cup – cop – cap

blond – bland – blend

grin – green

sow – saw

no – gnaw

coat – caught

called - cold

thought – taught

meat – met - mate

Hut – hot - hat

Adopt – adapt – adept

Live – leave

It – eat- eight

loan – lawn

Slow – slaw (coleslaw)

Law – low

Roll – role

Speech – spits

Cut – cat - cot