

B.A. (T.Y.) – SEMESTER V

Major in English (Core)

Understanding Phonetics and Phonology of English

Course Code: HENGCT1301

Comprehensive Study Notes

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Prescribed Text: A Course in Phonetics and Spoken English – J. Sethi & P. Dhamija

4 Units • 60 Teaching Hours • 4 Credits

Covers all four units: Organs of Speech; Description & Classification of Speech Sounds; Phonetic Transcription, the Phoneme & the Syllable; and Word Accent & Intonation — with labelled diagrams, IPA charts, tables and exam-oriented short notes.

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Course Objectives (COs)

No.	Course Objective
CO1	Identify and describe the human organs involved in the production of speech sounds.
CO2	Classify speech sounds (vowels and consonants) using articulatory, auditory, and acoustic phonetics.
CO3	Apply the IPA for accurate phonetic transcription of English words and short passages.
CO4	Explain the concept of the phoneme as the smallest distinctive sound unit and its role in distinguishing meaning.
CO5	Analyse the structure of the syllable and identify syllable patterns in English.
CO6	Demonstrate correct word accent (stress) patterns and intonation contours in spoken English.

Course Outcomes (COSs)

No.	Course Outcome	Bloom's Level
COS1	Label and describe the functions of the organs of speech in sound production.	Understand
COS2	Classify English consonants by place, manner of articulation, and voicing.	Analyse
COS3	Classify English vowels by tongue height, advancement, lip rounding, tenseness.	Analyse
COS4	Transcribe English words and connected speech using IPA with reasonable accuracy.	Apply
COS5	Distinguish phonemes from allophones; explain minimal pairs as evidence of phonemic status.	Understand/Analyse
COS6	Identify syllable boundaries and syllable types (CV, CVC, CCVC) in English words.	Analyse
COS7	Locate primary/secondary stress in polysyllabic words; recognise common stress rules.	Apply
COS8	Recognise and produce basic English intonation patterns (rising, falling, fall-rise).	Apply

Curriculum Distribution

Unit	Topic	Hours
1	Organs of Speech	15
2	The Description and Classification of Speech Sounds	15
3	Phonetic Transcription, The Phoneme, The Syllable	15
4	Word Accent and Intonation	15
	Total	60

UNIT 1

Organs of Speech

1.1 Phonetics: An Introduction

Phonetics is the scientific study of human speech sounds – how they are produced (articulatory phonetics), transmitted (acoustic phonetics), and perceived (auditory phonetics). Phonology, by contrast, studies how sounds function within a particular language system to build meaning. Before we can classify or transcribe speech sounds, we must first understand the physical organs that work together to produce them.

Speech production is essentially a modification of an air-stream. Air set in motion by the lungs travels through the vocal tract and is shaped by various organs into recognisable speech sounds. The whole mechanism may be divided into three broad stages:

- **Initiation** – setting the air in motion (usually the lungs).
- **Phonation** – modification of the air-stream at the larynx (vocal cords).
- **Articulation** – further shaping of the air-stream in the vocal tract (pharynx, oral and nasal cavities).

1.2 The Organs of Speech and Their Functions

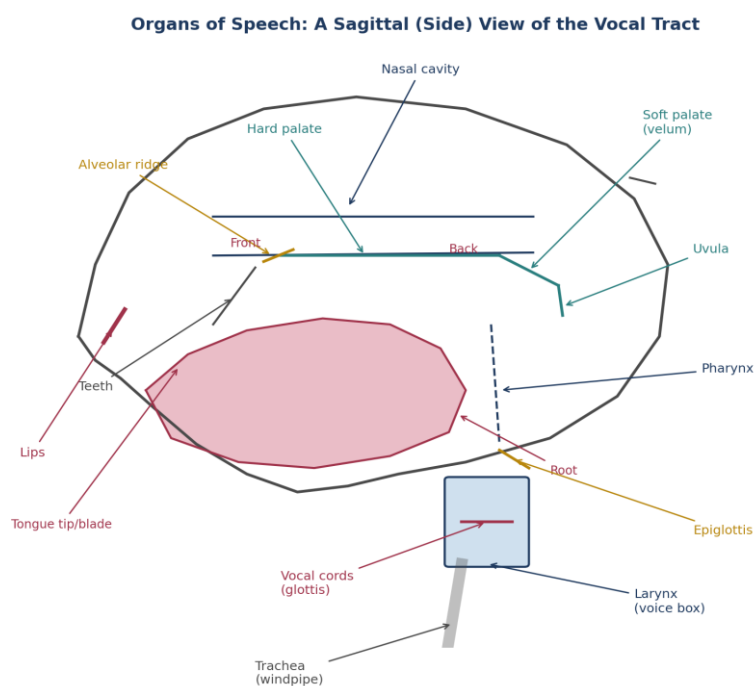


Fig. 1.1 – Sagittal section of the vocal tract showing the principal organs of speech.

Organ	Function in Speech Production
Lungs	Provide the air-stream (initiator of most English sounds); act like bellows, pushing air out during exhalation.
Trachea (windpipe)	Carries air from the lungs to the larynx.
Larynx (voice box)	Houses the vocal cords; controls voicing (voiced vs. voiceless sounds).
Vocal cords (vocal folds)	Two muscular folds; vibrate to produce voiced sounds, remain apart for voiceless sounds.
Pharynx	Muscular tube above the larynx; acts as a resonating chamber and connects larynx to oral/nasal cavities.
Epiglottis	Leaf-shaped flap that protects the trachea when swallowing; relevant to epiglottal sounds.
Soft palate / Velum	Movable rear part of the roof of the mouth; raised for oral sounds, lowered for nasal sounds.
Uvula	Small fleshy extension of the velum; used to produce uvular sounds (not in English).
Hard palate	Bony, immovable part of the roof of the mouth; active place of articulation for palatal sounds.
Alveolar ridge	Bony ridge just behind the upper front teeth; place of articulation for alveolar sounds like /t, d, s, z, n, l/.
Teeth (upper)	Used with tongue tip/blade for dental sounds (θ, ð) and with lower lip for labiodental sounds (f, v).
Lips	Can be rounded, spread or closed; active in bilabial (p, b, m) and labiodental sounds.
Tongue	Most flexible and important articulator; divided into tip, blade, front, back and root.
Nasal cavity	Air passage through the nose; active when the velum is lowered, producing nasal sounds (m, n, ŋ).

Parts of the Tongue

Since the tongue is the most mobile and important articulator, it is conventionally divided into five parts, moving from front to back: **tip** (the extreme front edge), **blade** (just behind the tip, lying below the alveolar ridge at rest), **front** (lying below the hard palate), **back** (lying below the soft palate), and **root** (the base, facing the pharynx wall). Different parts of the tongue are raised toward different parts of the roof of the mouth to produce different vowels and consonants.

Resonance: The Vocal Tract as a Resonating Chamber

Once sound is generated at the larynx (or, for voiceless sounds, once air-turbulence is created at some point of obstruction), it passes through the pharynx and oral and/or nasal cavities, which act as **resonators**. By changing the shape and size of these cavities – through movements of the tongue, lips, and velum – speakers reinforce certain frequencies and dampen others, producing the distinct quality (timbre) that lets us tell one vowel or one voice from another. When the velum is raised, the nasal

cavity is shut off and only the oral cavity resonates (oral sounds); when the velum is lowered, air also resonates through the nasal cavity, producing nasalised or fully nasal sounds such as /m, n, ŋ/.

1.3 The Air-stream Mechanism

An air-stream mechanism is the way air is set in motion for the purpose of producing speech sounds. There are three air-stream mechanisms recognised in the languages of the world, based on which organ initiates the air movement:

Mechanism	Initiator	Direction	Use
Pulmonic	Lungs	Egressive (outward)	Used for virtually all English sounds
Glottalic	Larynx	Egressive (ejectives) / Ingressive (implosives)	Not used in English; found in some African, Caucasian languages
Velaric	Back of tongue against velum	Ingressive (clicks)	Not used in English speech; e.g. Zulu, Xhosa clicks

Egressive Pulmonic Airstream (used for almost all English speech sounds)



Air flows from the lungs → up the trachea → through the larynx → out through the mouth and/or nose

Fig. 1.2 – The pulmonic egressive air-stream: the pathway of air used in English speech.

English uses only the **pulmonic egressive** air-stream mechanism: air is pushed out of the lungs, up the trachea, through the larynx, and out through the mouth and/or nose, being modified at each stage.

1.4 States of the Glottis

The glottis is the space between the two vocal cords. The state of the glottis determines whether a sound is voiced or voiceless, and gives rise to several other sound types:

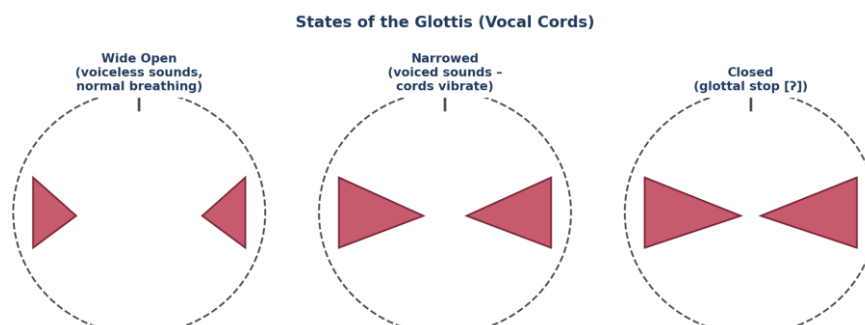


Fig. 1.3 – States of the glottis: wide open (voiceless), narrowed (voiced), and closed (glottal stop).

State of Glottis	Result
Wide open	No vibration – produces voiceless sounds, e.g. /p, t, k, s, f/, or normal breathing.
Narrowed, vocal cords vibrate	Vibration produces voiced sounds, e.g. /b, d, g, z, v/, and all vowels.
Completely closed, then released	Produces the glottal stop [ʔ], as in the Cockney pronunciation of 'buʔən' (button).
Narrowed with friction (whisper)	Produces a whispered quality with audible friction but no true vibration.

Key Takeaways – Unit 1

- Speech production involves initiation (lungs), phonation (larynx/vocal cords) and articulation (vocal tract).
- English exclusively uses the pulmonic egressive air-stream mechanism.
- The state of the glottis distinguishes voiced from voiceless sounds and produces the glottal stop.
- The tongue (tip, blade, front, back, root) is the most active and flexible articulator.
- The velum's raised/lowered position determines oral vs. nasal sounds.

UNIT 2

The Description and Classification of Speech Sounds

2.1 Branches of Phonetics

Branch	Focus
Articulatory Phonetics	How speech sounds are physically produced by the vocal organs.
Acoustic Phonetics	The physical properties of sound waves (frequency, amplitude, duration) as they travel through air.
Auditory Phonetics	How speech sounds are perceived and processed by the listener's ear and brain.

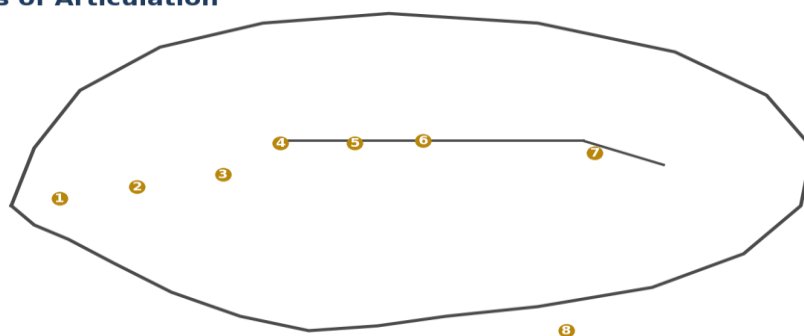
Consonants and vowels are the two basic categories of speech sounds. **Consonants** are produced with some degree of obstruction (complete or partial closure, or narrowing) to the air-stream in the vocal tract. **Vowels** are produced with a relatively free, unobstructed flow of air, the quality being determined mainly by the position of the tongue and the lips.

2.2 Classification of Consonants

English consonants are classified along three parameters: **place of articulation** (where the obstruction occurs), **manner of articulation** (how the obstruction is made), and **voicing** (whether the vocal cords vibrate).

(a) Place of Articulation

Places of Articulation



1. Bilabial (lips)
2. Labiodental (lip+teeth)
3. Dental (teeth)
4. Alveolar (ridge)
5. Post-alveolar / Palato-alveolar
6. Palatal (hard palate)
7. Velar (soft palate)
8. Glottal (vocal cords)

Fig. 2.1 – The eight principal places of articulation used in English.

Place	Articulators Involved	Example Sounds
Bilabial	Both lips	/p, b, m, w/
Labiodental	Lower lip + upper teeth	/f, v/
Dental	Tongue tip/blade + upper teeth	/θ, ð/
Alveolar	Tongue tip/blade + alveolar ridge	/t, d, s, z, n, l/
Post-alveolar / Palato-alveolar	Tongue blade + area behind alveolar ridge	/ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ, r/
Palatal	Front of tongue + hard palate	/j/
Velar	Back of tongue + soft palate (velum)	/k, g, ŋ/
Glottal	Vocal cords / glottis	/h/

(b) Manner of Articulation

Manner	Description	Example Sounds
Plosive (Stop)	Complete closure, air pressure builds up, then released explosively	/p, b, t, d, k, g/
Fricative	Narrow gap causing audible friction as air passes through	/f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, h/
Affricate	Complete closure released slowly, producing friction (plosive + fricative)	/tʃ, dʒ/
Nasal	Complete oral closure, velum lowered, air escapes through nose	/m, n, ŋ/
Lateral	Partial closure at centre; air escapes along the side(s) of tongue	/l/
Approximant (Glide)	Articulators approach but never close enough to cause friction	/r, j, w/

(c) The Consonant Chart of English (24 Phonemes)

Manner \ Place	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral				l				
Approximant	w			r		j		

Note: Where two symbols appear in a cell, the left is voiceless and the right is voiced. Nasals, laterals and approximants are all voiced.

(d) Voicing

Voicing depends on whether the vocal cords vibrate during the production of a sound. **Voiced** sounds (e.g. /b, d, g, z, v, m, n, l, r, w, j/ and all vowels) involve vibration of the vocal cords. **Voiceless** sounds (e.g. /p, t, k, f, s, θ, ʃ, h, tʃ/) are produced with the vocal cords apart and not vibrating. English consonants frequently occur in voiced–voiceless pairs sharing the same place and manner of articulation, e.g. /p–b/, /t–d/, /k–g/, /f–v/, /θ–ð/, /s–z/, /ʃ–ʒ/, /tʃ–dʒ/.

2.3 Classification of Vowels

Vowels are produced without any obstruction to the air-stream. Their quality is determined by four main criteria:

- **Tongue height** – how high or low the tongue is raised (close, close-mid, open-mid, open).
- **Tongue advancement** – which part of the tongue is raised (front, central, back).
- **Lip rounding** – whether the lips are rounded or spread/neutral.
- **Tenseness / length** – whether the vowel is tense-long or lax-short (e.g. /i:/ vs. /ɪ/).

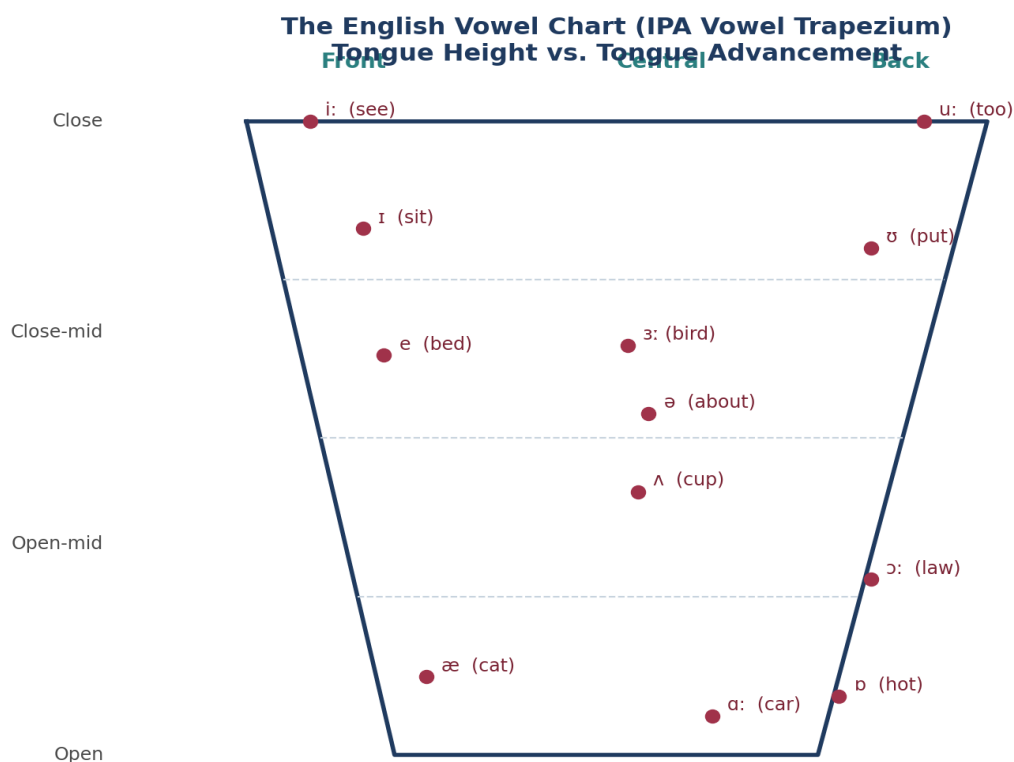


Fig. 2.2 – The IPA vowel trapezium showing the twelve English monophthongs (pure vowels).

Vowel	Height	Advancement	Rounding	Example Word
/i:/	Close	Front	Unrounded	see
/ɪ/	Near-close	Near-front	Unrounded	sit
/e/	Close-mid	Front	Unrounded	bed
/æ/	Near-open	Front	Unrounded	cat
/ʌ/	Open-mid	Central-back	Unrounded	cup
/ə/	Mid	Central	Unrounded	about (schwa)
/ɜ:/	Open-mid	Central	Unrounded	bird
/ɑ:/	Open	Back	Unrounded	car
/ɒ/	Open	Back	Rounded	hot
/ɔ:/	Open-mid	Back	Rounded	law
/ʊ/	Near-close	Near-back	Rounded	put
/u:/	Close	Back	Rounded	too

English distinguishes two vowel types by length/tension: **long (tense) vowels** – /i:/, ɑ:/, ɔ:/, u:/, ɜ:/ – and **short (lax) vowels** – /ɪ, e, æ, ʌ, ɒ, ʊ, ə/. Length is generally shown by the diacritic [:] after the symbol.

The Cardinal Vowel System

Because vowel qualities form a continuum without sharp physical boundaries, the phonetician **Daniel Jones** devised a set of eight **Primary Cardinal Vowels** as fixed, auditorily equidistant reference points, independent of any one language. These are plotted at the extremities and systematic intervals of the vowel quadrilateral (numbered 1–8: [i], [e], [ɛ], [a], [ɑ], [ɔ], [o], [u]). The vowels of English (or any language) can then be described and taught by relating them to these fixed cardinal points – for example, English /i:/ is slightly less close and less front than Cardinal Vowel 1 [i].

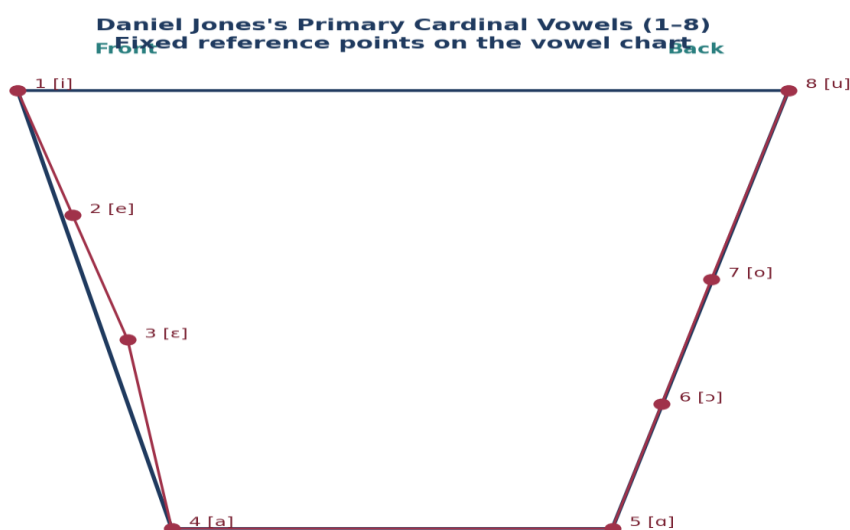


Fig. 2.4 – The eight Primary Cardinal Vowels of Daniel Jones, used as fixed reference points.

Secondary Cardinal Vowels (9–16) use the same tongue positions as the primary set but with reversed lip-rounding (e.g. rounded [y] at the front-close position, corresponding to unrounded [i]), extending the descriptive apparatus to rounded front vowels and unrounded back vowels found in other languages.

2.4 Diphthongs and Triphthongs

A **diphthong** is a single vowel sound involving a smooth glide from one vowel quality to another within the same syllable. English has 8 diphthongs, traditionally grouped as **closing** (gliding toward /ɪ/ or /ʊ/) and **centring** (gliding toward /ə/):

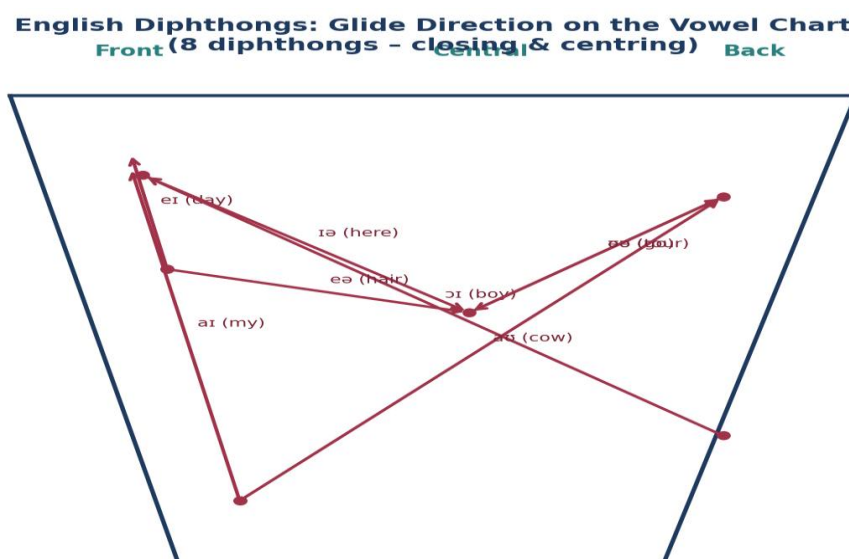


Fig. 2.3 – Glide direction of the eight English diphthongs on the vowel chart.

Type	Diphthongs	Example Words
Closing (to /ɪ/)	/eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/	day, my, boy
Closing (to /ʊ/)	/əʊ/, /aʊ/	go, cow
Centring (to /ə/)	/ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/	here, hair, tour

A **triphthong** is a glide from one vowel to another and then to a third, all within a single syllable – essentially one of the closing diphthongs followed by /ə/. English has five triphthongs: /eɪə/ (player), /aɪə/ (fire), /ɔɪə/ (royal), /əʊə/ (lower), and /aʊə/ (hour). In rapid, connected speech the middle element is often barely audible.

Consonant Clusters

A **consonant cluster** is a sequence of two or more consonants occurring together without an intervening vowel, either at the beginning (initial cluster) or end (final cluster) of a syllable/word. English permits fairly complex clusters compared to many languages:

Position	Maximum Cluster Size	Example
Initial	3 consonants (always /s/ + voiceless plosive + approximant)	/spl/ splash, /str/ street, /skw/ square
Final	4 consonants	/mpts/ prompts, /ksts/ texts

Learners whose first language disallows such clusters (e.g. Hindi, Marathi, Japanese) often insert an extra vowel to break up the cluster (e.g. 'school' pronounced with an initial /ɪ/ or /ə/), which is an important area of pronunciation teaching and error analysis.

A Note on Accents: RP and General American

The phonemic transcriptions used in this course generally follow **Received Pronunciation (RP)**, the traditionally prestigious, regionally-neutral accent of British English historically associated with southern English education and broadcasting. It should be noted that RP is only one of many legitimate native-speaker accents of English (others include General American, Scottish English, Australian English, Indian English), each with systematic differences in vowel quality, rhoticity (pronunciation of post-vocalic /r/), and intonation – for example, RP is non-rhotic (silent 'r' in 'car'), while General American is rhotic.

Key Takeaways – Unit 2

- Consonants are classified by place, manner of articulation, and voicing; English has 24 consonant phonemes.
- Vowels are classified by tongue height, advancement, lip rounding, and tenseness; English has 12 pure vowels (monophthongs).
- English has 8 diphthongs (closing and centring) and 5 triphthongs.
- Voiced/voiceless consonant pairs share the same place and manner but differ in vocal cord vibration.

UNIT 3

Phonetic Transcription, The Phoneme, The Syllable

3.1 The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

English spelling is notoriously inconsistent – the same letter can represent different sounds (e.g. the letter 'c' in *cat*, *city*), and the same sound can be spelt differently (e.g. /i:/ in *see*, *sea*, *receive*, *machine*). The **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)**, devised by the International Phonetic Association, provides one unique symbol for every distinct sound, enabling accurate and unambiguous representation of pronunciation across any language.

The IPA symbols for English comprise 24 consonant symbols, 12 pure vowel (monophthong) symbols, 8 diphthong symbols, and a number of diacritics (e.g. length mark [:], stress marks ['] and [ˌ]).

3.2 Principles and Types of Phonetic Transcription

Type	Description	Example
Broad (Phonemic) transcription	Shows only phonemically distinctive sounds; enclosed in slant brackets / /	/kæt/ for 'cat'
Narrow (Allophonic) transcription	Shows fine phonetic detail including allophonic variation; enclosed in square brackets []	[kʰæt̚] for 'cat' (aspirated k, unreleased t)

For most academic and pedagogical purposes (including this course), **broad/phonemic transcription** is used, enclosed within slant brackets. A few transcription conventions to remember:

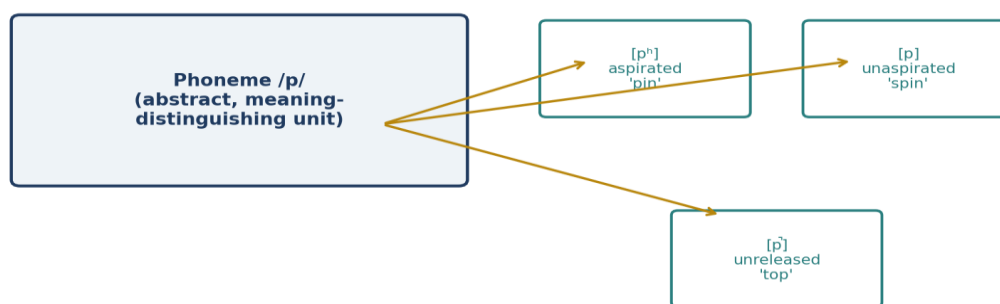
- Primary stress is marked with a small raised vertical line before the stressed syllable: /'/, e.g. /'fə:təgræf/.
- Secondary stress is marked with a small lowered vertical line: /,/, e.g. /,fəʊtə'græfɪk/.
- Vowel length is marked with a colon-like symbol: [:], e.g. /i:/, /ɑ:/.
- A syllable boundary may be marked with a dot: [ˌ], e.g. /'fə.təg.rə.fi/.

3.3 The Phoneme and Allophones

A **phoneme** is the smallest contrastive/distinctive unit of sound in a language – an abstract mental category that can distinguish one word from another in meaning. For example, /p/ and /b/ are separate phonemes in English because substituting one for the other changes meaning: *pin* vs. *bin*.

An **allophone** is one of the different phonetic realisations of a single phoneme, determined predictably by its phonetic environment. Substituting one allophone for another does not change word meaning – it may only sound 'odd' or 'foreign-accented'.

Phoneme and Its Allophones



Allophones = predictable, context-dependent variants of one phoneme (they never change word meaning)

Fig. 3.1 – The phoneme /p/ and three of its context-dependent allophones in English.

Allophone of /p/	Environment	Example
[pʰ] aspirated	Word-initial, before a stressed vowel	pin [pʰɪn]
[p] unaspirated	After /s/	spin [spɪn]
[p̚] unreleased / no audible release	Word-final, or before another stop	top [tɒp̚]

Allophones of the same phoneme are said to be in **complementary distribution** (each occurs only in its own specific environment, never in the same position as another) or in **free variation** (either allophone may occur in the same position without a change of meaning, e.g. the different pronunciations of the final consonant in 'stop').

3.4 Minimal Pairs

A **minimal pair** consists of two words that differ in meaning through the change of only one sound (phoneme) in the same position, all other sounds being identical. Minimal pairs are used as linguistic evidence to establish that two sounds are separate phonemes in a language (i.e. that they are contrastive rather than allophonic).

Minimal Pair	Contrast Illustrated	Transcription
pin – bin	/p/ vs /b/	/pɪn/ – /bɪn/
ship – sheep	/ɪ/ vs /i:/	/ʃɪp/ – /ʃi:p/
thin – tin	/θ/ vs /t/	/θɪn/ – /tɪn/
cat – cap	/t/ vs /p/ (final)	/kæt/ – /kæp/
lock – rock	/l/ vs /r/	/lɒk/ – /rɒk/

3.5 The Syllable: Structure and Types

A **syllable** is a unit of pronunciation, typically consisting of a vowel sound (the peak of sonority) with or without surrounding consonants. Every syllable must have a nucleus (usually a vowel), which may optionally be preceded by an onset and/or followed by a coda.

Example: the word 'cat' /kæt/ (CVC syllable)

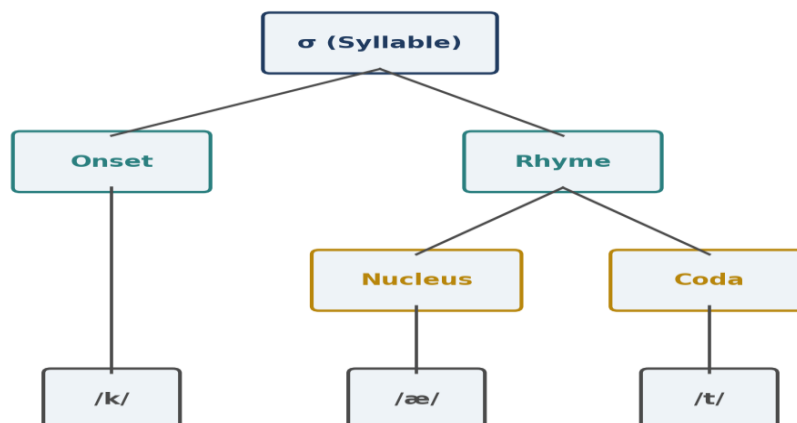


Fig. 3.2 – Internal structure of the syllable, illustrated with the word 'cat' /kæt/.

Component	Definition
Onset	The consonant(s), if any, that precede the vowel nucleus of the syllable.
Nucleus (Peak)	The obligatory core of the syllable, usually a vowel or diphthong.
Coda	The consonant(s), if any, that follow the vowel nucleus.
Rhyme (Rime)	Nucleus + Coda together (the part of the syllable that 'rhymes' in poetry).

Syllable Types in English

Pattern	Structure	Example
V	Vowel only	a /ə/, eye /aɪ/
CV	Consonant + Vowel	go /gəʊ/, tea /ti:/
VC	Vowel + Consonant	at /æt/, in /ɪn/
CVC	Consonant + Vowel + Consonant	cat /kæt/, dog /dɒg/
CCVC	Two-consonant onset + Vowel + Consonant	stop /stɒp/, play /pleɪ/ (CCV)
CVCC	Consonant + Vowel + Two-consonant coda	band /bænd/, fact /fækt/
CCCVC	Three-consonant onset (max in English) + Vowel + Consonant	spring /sprɪŋ/

English syllable structure permits a maximum onset of three consonants (e.g. 'spr' in *spring*) and a maximum coda of four consonants (e.g. 'mpts' in *prompts*). Words are classified by the number of syllables they contain: **monosyllabic** (one syllable, e.g. cat), **disyllabic** (two, e.g. table), and **polysyllabic** (three or more, e.g. photography).

Key Takeaways – Unit 3

- Broad transcription (phonemic, / /) records only contrastive sounds; narrow transcription ([]) records fine phonetic detail.
- A phoneme is an abstract, meaning-distinguishing sound unit; its allophones are context-determined phonetic realisations.
- Minimal pairs provide evidence that two sounds are separate phonemes.
- A syllable consists of an optional onset, an obligatory nucleus, and an optional coda; nucleus+coda = rhyme.
- English permits up to 3 consonants in the onset and up to 4 in the coda.

UNIT 4

Word Accent and Intonation

4.1 Word Accent (Stress)

Word accent (or stress) refers to the degree of prominence given to a particular syllable in a word relative to other syllables. A stressed syllable is typically produced with greater loudness, higher pitch, and longer duration than unstressed syllables. English is a 'stress-timed' language, meaning that stressed syllables tend to recur at roughly regular intervals in connected speech.

English distinguishes three degrees of stress in longer words:

Degree	Symbol	Example
Primary stress	/' (raised, before syllable)	'photograph /'fəʊtəgrɑ:f/
Secondary stress	/, (lowered, before syllable)	,photo'graphic /,fəʊtə'græfɪk/
Unstressed	(no mark)	remaining syllables, often weakened to schwa /ə/

Shifting Word Stress Changes Word Class / Meaning

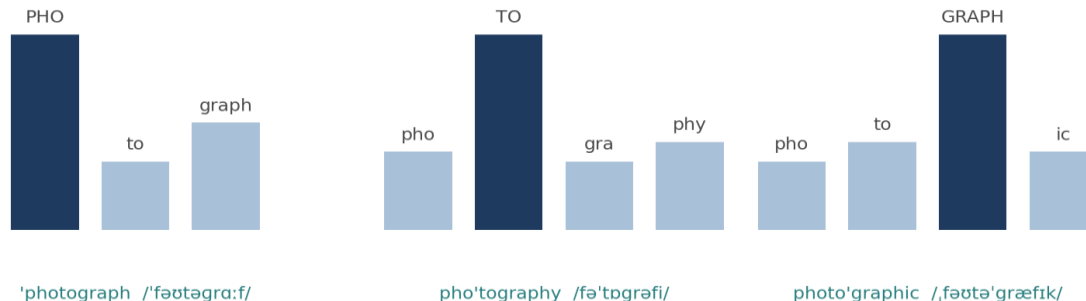


Fig. 4.1 – Shifting stress alters both the pronunciation and, often, the word class of related words.

4.2 Rules and Tendencies of Word Stress

Unlike languages with fixed word stress (e.g. French – always final syllable), English stress is variable and partly unpredictable, but a number of general tendencies help learners:

Rule / Tendency	Example
Two-syllable nouns/adjectives usually stress the first syllable	'table, 'happy, 'music
Two-syllable verbs usually stress the second syllable	re'lax, be'gin, ar'rive
Noun/verb pairs often differ only in stress placement (word-class pairs)	'record (n.) vs. re'cord (v.); 'present (n.) vs. pre'sent (v.)
Words ending in -tion, -sion, -ic, -ical, -ious, -ial usually stress the syllable before the suffix	in'formation, e'lectric, ambi'tious
Words ending in -ee, -eer, -ese, -ette, -esque often stress the suffix itself	employ'ee, engi'neer, Japa'nese
Compound nouns usually stress the first element	'blackbird, 'bookshop, 'greenhouse
Compound adjectives / phrasal verbs usually stress the second element	bad-'tempered, sit 'down
Prefixes are usually unstressed; the root carries the stress	un'happy, dis'agree

Word stress is **phonemic** in English: changing the position of stress can change the meaning or grammatical category of a word without changing its spelling (e.g. 'CONtent' (satisfied) vs. 'conTENT' (subject matter); 'PERmit' (n.) vs. 'perMIT' (v.)).

4.3 Rhythm in Connected Speech

In connected, natural speech, stressed syllables recur at roughly regular time intervals, and unstressed syllables are compressed to fit the rhythm – this is called **stress-timed rhythm** (as opposed to the 'syllable-timed' rhythm of languages like French or Hindi, where every syllable takes roughly equal time). Rhythm in connected speech is closely associated with:

- **Weak forms** – function words (a, the, of, and, can, was) are usually reduced/unstressed with vowels weakened to schwa /ə/ in normal speech, e.g. 'and' /ən(d)/ instead of /ænd/.
- **Elision** – omission of a sound in rapid speech, e.g. 'next day' → /neks dei/ (dropping /t/).
- **Assimilation** – a sound changes to become more like a neighbouring sound, e.g. 'in Paris' → /ɪm 'pæris/.
- **Linking** – a consonant or 'linking r' connects across word boundaries, e.g. 'far away' → /fɑːrəweɪ/.

Features of Connected Speech in English

Assimilation	Ten bikes	→ [tem baɪks]
Elision	Next day	→ [neks deɪ]
Linking	Far away	→ [fa:reɪwə]
Weak Forms	Bread and butter	→ [bred ən bʌtə]

Fig. 4.3 – Four common features of connected, natural English speech.

4.4 Intonation: Tones and Functions

Intonation is the pattern of pitch variation (rise and fall of voice) across an utterance. While word stress operates at the level of the individual word, intonation operates over phrases and sentences and conveys grammatical, attitudinal, and discourse-level meaning – it can signal whether an utterance is a statement, question, or expresses surprise, doubt, or politeness.

Basic English Intonation Patterns

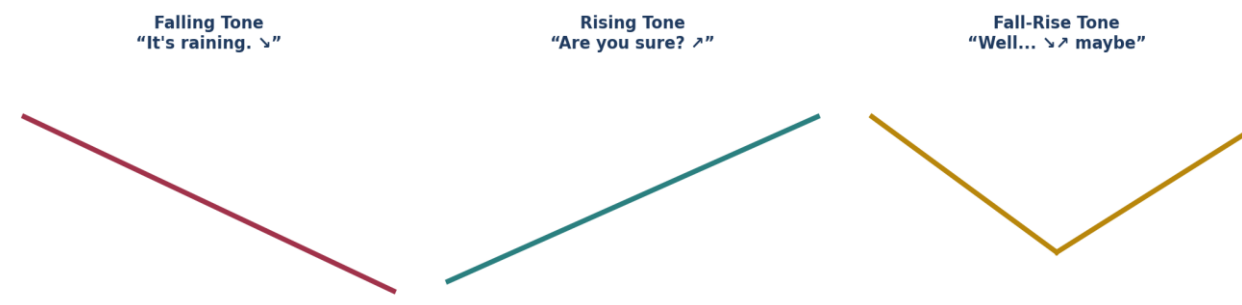


Fig. 4.2 – The three basic English intonation tones and their typical communicative uses.

Tone	Typical Use	Example
Falling tone ↘	Statements, commands, wh-questions, completed information	"I live in Mumbai. ↘"
Rising tone ↗	Yes/no questions, uncertainty, lists (non-final items), politeness	"Are you coming? ↗"
Fall-rise tone ↘↗	Reservation, contrast, non-finality, implied 'but...'	"It's good ↘↗ (but not perfect)."

Functions of Intonation

- **Grammatical function** – distinguishes sentence types, e.g. statement vs. question with identical wording ('You're coming.' vs. 'You're coming?').
- **Attitudinal function** – conveys the speaker's emotion or attitude (interest, boredom, sarcasm, surprise).
- **Accentual function** – highlights the most important word(s) in an utterance (the nucleus/tonic syllable).
- **Discourse function** – signals whether information is new or given, and manages turn-taking in conversation.

Key Takeaways – Unit 4

- Word stress marks the relatively more prominent syllable(s) in a word; English has primary, secondary and unstressed levels.
- Stress placement is phonemic in English – it can distinguish word class (noun vs. verb) and meaning.
- English rhythm is stress-timed; weak forms, elision, assimilation and linking shape connected speech.
- Intonation (falling, rising, fall-rise) operates over phrases/sentences and conveys grammatical and attitudinal meaning.

Exam-Oriented Short Notes (Unit-wise)

The following condensed notes are designed for the compulsory Q.1 / Q.6 'short notes' sections of the End Semester Examination, where five/two out of several sub-topics must be answered briefly.

The Larynx

The larynx (voice box) is a cartilaginous structure situated at the top of the trachea. It houses the two vocal cords, whose vibration (or lack of it) determines whether a sound is voiced or voiceless. The space between the vocal cords is called the glottis.

Pulmonic Egressive Air-stream

English relies solely on air pushed outward from the lungs (the pulmonic egressive mechanism) to produce speech sounds, unlike some languages which also use glottalic or velaric air-streams (e.g. clicks, ejectives, implosives).

Cardinal Vowels

A set of reference vowel qualities devised by phonetician Daniel Jones, plotted on the vowel quadrilateral/trapezium, used as fixed points against which the vowels of any language can be measured and described.

Diphthong

A single vowel sound involving a glide from one vowel quality to another within one syllable; English has 8 diphthongs, divided into closing (e.g. /aɪ/) and centring (e.g. /ɪə/) types.

The Phoneme

The smallest unit of sound in a language capable of distinguishing meaning between two words; a phoneme is an abstract category realised by one or more concrete allophones.

Allophone

A predictable phonetic variant of a phoneme determined by its surrounding sound environment; substituting allophones does not change word meaning, e.g. aspirated [p^h] vs. unaspirated [p] as realisations of /p/.

Minimal Pair

Two words differing in meaning by only one sound in the same position, used as evidence that the two sounds are distinct phonemes, e.g. 'pin' /pɪn/ and 'bin' /bɪn/.

The Syllable

A unit of pronunciation built around a vowel nucleus, optionally preceded by an onset and followed by a coda; nucleus + coda together form the rhyme.

Word Stress / Accent

The relative prominence given to a syllable within a word through greater loudness, pitch and length; English stress placement can be phonemic, distinguishing word class (e.g. 'record (n.) vs. re'cord (v.)).

Weak Forms

Reduced, unstressed pronunciations of common function words (a, the, of, and, was) in connected speech, typically involving vowel reduction to schwa /ə/.

Intonation

The pattern of pitch movement (rise and fall) across a phrase or sentence, used to convey grammatical meaning (statement/question), attitude, and emphasis.

Fall-Rise Tone

An intonation pattern where pitch falls and then rises within the same tone unit, typically signalling reservation, contrast, or an implied but unstated continuation ('...but').

Appendix: Complete IPA Reference Chart for English

A consolidated reference of all 44 English phonemes (24 consonants, 12 monophthongs, 8 diphthongs) for quick revision before the examination.

Consonants (24)

Symbol	Example	Symbol	Example	Symbol	Example
/p/	pen	/tʃ/	chip	/z/	zoo
/b/	bat	/dʒ/	jam	/ʃ/	ship
/t/	top	/m/	man	/ʒ/	measure
/d/	dog	/n/	no	/h/	hat
/k/	cat	/ŋ/	sing	/r/	red
/g/	go	/f/	fish	/j/	yes
/θ/	think	/v/	van	/w/	wet
/ð/	this	/s/	sun	/l/	leg

Monophthongs (12)

Symbol	Example	Symbol	Example	Symbol	Example
/i:/	see	/ʌ/	cup	/ɒ/	hot
/ɪ/	sit	/ə/	about	/ɔ:/	law
/e/	bed	/ɜ:/	bird	/ʊ/	put
/æ/	cat	/ɑ:/	car	/u:/	too

Diphthongs (8)

Symbol	Example	Symbol	Example
/eɪ/	day	/ɪə/	here
/aɪ/	my	/eə/	hair
/ɔɪ/	boy	/ʊə/	tour
/əʊ/	go	/aʊ/	cow

Worked Example: Transcribing Connected Speech

Isolated word transcription is only the first step; in the ESE, you may also be asked to transcribe short phrases or sentences, applying features of connected speech such as weak forms and linking. Study the example below:

Orthographic: “I want a cup of tea.”

Careful/citation transcription: /aɪ wɒnt ə kʌp ɒv ti:/

Connected/natural transcription: /aɪ 'wɒnt ə 'kʌp ɒv ti:/ – note that 'of' is reduced to its weak form /əv/, and only the content words (want, cup, tea) carry stress, while the function words (a, of) are unstressed.

Practice: Phonetic Transcription

Cover the right-hand column and attempt to transcribe each word phonemically before checking your answer. Practising transcription regularly is the most effective way to prepare for COS4 and the ESE transcription-based questions.

Word	Phonemic Transcription
knowledge	/ˈnɒlɪdʒ/
psychology	/saɪˈkɒlədʒi/
through	/θru:/
enough	/ɪˈnʌf/
photograph	/ˈfəʊtəɡrɑ:f/
comfortable	/ˈkʌmfətəbəl/
Wednesday	/ˈwenzdeɪ/
queue	/kju:/
island	/ˈaɪlənd/
cupboard	/ˈkʌbərd/

Tip: Many of the 'tricky' words above show that English spelling and pronunciation frequently diverge – this is precisely why phonetic transcription, not spelling, is used to represent pronunciation accurately.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Articulation	The process by which the vocal organs modify the air-stream to produce speech sounds.
Articulatory Phonetics	The branch of phonetics studying how speech sounds are physically produced.
Acoustic Phonetics	The branch of phonetics studying the physical (acoustic) properties of speech sounds.
Auditory Phonetics	The branch of phonetics studying how speech sounds are perceived by the ear/brain.
Allophone	A context-determined phonetic variant of a phoneme.
Assimilation	A sound changes to become more similar to a neighbouring sound in connected speech.
Cardinal Vowels	A fixed set of reference vowel qualities devised by Daniel Jones.
Coda	The consonant(s) following the vowel nucleus in a syllable.
Consonant	A speech sound produced with some obstruction to the air-stream.
Diphthong	A vowel involving a glide from one vowel quality to another within a single syllable.
Elision	The omission/dropping of a sound in connected, rapid speech.
Glottis	The space between the vocal cords.
Intonation	The pattern of pitch movement across a phrase or sentence.
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet – a standardised set of symbols for transcribing speech sounds.
Larynx	The 'voice box'; houses the vocal cords.
Manner of Articulation	How the air-stream is obstructed in producing a consonant (e.g. plosive, fricative).
Minimal Pair	Two words differing in meaning by a single sound in the same position.
Monophthong	A single, 'pure' vowel sound with a steady quality (no glide).
Nucleus	The obligatory core (usually a vowel) of a syllable.
Onset	The consonant(s) preceding the vowel nucleus in a syllable.
Phoneme	The smallest sound unit in a language capable of distinguishing meaning.
Phonetics	The scientific study of speech sounds.
Phonology	The study of how sounds function within the system of a particular language.

Term	Definition
Place of Articulation	The location in the vocal tract where a consonant's obstruction occurs.
Received Pronunciation (RP)	A regionally neutral, traditionally prestigious accent of British English.
Rhyme (Rime)	The nucleus and coda of a syllable considered together.
Stress (Word Accent)	The relative prominence given to a syllable within a word.
Syllable	A unit of pronunciation built around a vowel (or vowel-like) nucleus.
Triphthong	A glide through three vowel qualities within a single syllable.
Voicing	Whether the vocal cords vibrate (voiced) or not (voiceless) during a sound's production.
Weak Form	A reduced, unstressed pronunciation of a common function word in connected speech.

Model Long-Answer Questions (Q.2–Q.5 Practice)

The following questions mirror the style of Q.2 to Q.6 in the ESE paper pattern (15 marks each, one question per unit). Use the corresponding unit notes and diagrams above to structure full answers with an introduction, labelled diagram, well-organised body, and conclusion.

Unit 1

1. Describe, with a labelled diagram, the organs of speech and explain the role of each in the production of speech sounds.
2. Explain the pulmonic egressive air-stream mechanism used in English, distinguishing it from the glottalic and velaric mechanisms.
3. Discuss the different states of the glottis and their effect on the sounds produced.

Unit 2

1. Classify English consonants on the basis of place and manner of articulation, with suitable examples and a chart.
2. Explain the criteria used to classify English vowels, and describe the English vowel chart with examples.
3. Distinguish between diphthongs and triphthongs in English, giving at least five examples of each type where applicable.

Unit 3

1. Explain the concept of the phoneme and the allophone with suitable examples. How is the phonemic status of a sound established?
2. What is phonetic transcription? Distinguish between broad and narrow transcription with examples.
3. Discuss the structure of the English syllable, explaining onset, nucleus, coda and rhyme with examples of different syllable types.

Unit 4

1. What is word stress? Explain the major rules governing word stress placement in English with examples.
2. Explain how a shift in stress can change the grammatical category or meaning of a word, with at least five examples.
3. Discuss the different tones of English intonation and their grammatical, attitudinal and discourse functions.

Fully Worked Sample Answers (One Per Unit)

These model answers illustrate how to structure a complete 15-mark response, combining definition, explanation, diagram reference, and organised sub-points.

Q. Describe the organs of speech and their role in sound production. (Unit 1)

Introduction: Speech production is a physiological process in which air expelled from the lungs is progressively modified by a series of organs – collectively called the organs, or vocal apparatus, of speech – to yield the distinct sounds of a language. These organs may be grouped into three broad regions: the respiratory system, the phonatory system, and the articulatory system.

The Respiratory System: The lungs act as the power source, or initiator, of speech. During exhalation, air is pushed up through the trachea (windpipe) toward the larynx. This pulmonic egressive air-stream powers virtually all English speech sounds.

The Phonatory System: At the top of the trachea lies the larynx, a cartilaginous box housing the two vocal cords. The space between them, the glottis, can be held wide open (voiceless sounds), narrowed so the cords vibrate (voiced sounds), or fully closed and released (glottal stop). This stage determines the fundamental voicing quality of a sound.

The Articulatory System: Once past the larynx, air enters the pharynx and then either the oral or nasal cavity, or both. Depending on the position of the soft palate (velum), sounds may be oral (velum raised, air escapes through the mouth only) or nasal (velum lowered, air also escapes through the nose). Within the oral cavity, the tongue – divided into tip, blade, front, back and root – works together with the lips, teeth, alveolar ridge, hard palate and soft palate to form specific obstructions and shapes, producing the wide range of consonants and vowels described in the IPA (see Fig. 1.1).

Conclusion: Each of these organs performs a distinct and indispensable role: the lungs supply energy, the larynx supplies voicing, and the vocal tract supplies articulation and resonance. Their coordinated action is what allows the continuous stream of exhaled air to be shaped into the discrete, meaningful sounds of human language.

Q. Classify English consonants by place and manner of articulation. (Unit 2)

Introduction: English has 24 consonant phonemes, each of which can be uniquely specified by three parameters: place of articulation, manner of articulation, and voicing. Together these three parameters form a complete, economical description of every English consonant.

Place of Articulation refers to where in the vocal tract the obstruction to the air-stream occurs, ranging from the lips (bilabial: /p, b, m/) through the teeth, alveolar ridge, palate and velum, to the glottis (glottal: /h/). **Manner of Articulation** refers to the type of obstruction: plosives (/p, b, t, d, k, g/) involve complete closure and explosive release; fricatives (/f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, h/) involve a narrow gap producing friction; affricates (/tʃ, dʒ/) combine both; nasals (/m, n, ŋ/) involve oral closure with air escaping through the nose; the lateral (/l/) allows air to escape around the sides of the tongue; and approximants (/r, j, w/) involve only a slight narrowing with no friction.

Voicing distinguishes cognate pairs sharing place and manner but differing in vocal cord vibration, e.g. /p–b/, /t–d/, /k–g/, /f–v/, /s–z/. These three parameters can be combined into the standard consonant chart (see Section 2.2c), which organises all 24 phonemes systematically by place (columns) and manner (rows), with voiceless/voiced pairs distinguished within each cell.

Conclusion: This three-way classification (place, manner, voicing) is the foundation of articulatory description in phonetics and allows any consonant, in English or any other language, to be precisely and economically specified.

Q. Explain the phoneme and the allophone with examples. (Unit 3)

Introduction: The concept of the phoneme is central to phonology – the study of how sound differences function within a language system. While phonetics describes the physical properties of sounds, phonology asks which sound differences actually matter for distinguishing meaning in a given language.

Definition: A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a language that can distinguish one word from another in meaning. For instance, English /p/ and /b/ are separate phonemes because swapping them changes meaning: 'pin' /pɪn/ vs. 'bin' /bɪn/. Such word-pairs, differing by only one sound in the same position, are called minimal pairs and are the standard evidence for phonemic contrast.

Allophones: A single phoneme, however, is not phonetically identical in every context – it may be realised as different allophones depending on its surrounding sounds. For example, the phoneme /p/ is aspirated [p^h] at the start of a stressed syllable ('pin'), unaspirated [p] after /s/ ('spin'), and often unreleased [p̚] at the end of a word ('top'). English speakers do not perceive these as different sounds because the choice between them is entirely predictable from context – they are in complementary distribution and never contrast meaning.

Conclusion: The phoneme is thus an abstract, language-specific mental category, while its allophones are the concrete phonetic forms it takes in different environments. Understanding this distinction explains why native speakers of one language may fail to hear sound differences that are highly salient (phonemic) in another language.

Q. Explain the rules of word stress in English with examples. (Unit 4)

Introduction: Word stress, or word accent, refers to the extra prominence given to one syllable of a word relative to its neighbours, achieved through a combination of greater loudness, higher pitch and longer duration. Unlike languages with fixed stress placement, English stress is variable and can even distinguish meaning, making it an important area of pronunciation study.

General Tendencies: Two-syllable nouns and adjectives typically stress the first syllable ('Table, 'HAPpy), while two-syllable verbs typically stress the second ('reLAX, be'GIN). Certain suffixes systematically attract or shift stress: words ending in -tion, -sion, -ic, or -ious usually place stress on the syllable immediately before the suffix (in'formation, e'lectric), while suffixes like -ee, -eer, and -ese usually carry the stress themselves (employ'ee, engi'neer). In compound nouns the first element is usually stressed ('blackbird), while phrasal verbs and compound adjectives usually stress the second (sit 'down, bad-'tempered).

Stress and Word Class: A striking feature of English is the existence of noun/verb pairs distinguished purely by stress placement, with identical spelling: 'record (noun) vs. re'cord (verb); 'present (noun) vs. pre'sent (verb); 'permit (noun) vs. per'mit (verb). In each case, the noun form stresses the first syllable and the verb form stresses the second – illustrating that stress is phonemic in English, capable of signalling grammatical category.

Conclusion: While English word stress is not entirely predictable, these tendencies – based on word class, suffix type, and compounding – provide learners with reliable guidelines for correct and natural-sounding pronunciation.

Common Pronunciation Difficulties for Indian Learners of English

Understanding typical points of difficulty helps in both examination answers on applied phonetics and in improving one's own spoken English. Many of these arise because Indian languages (Hindi, Marathi, and others) lack certain English sound contrasts or permit different syllable structures.

Difficulty	Typical Substitution	Correct Target
Dental fricatives /θ, ð/	Replaced with dental/retroflex plosives	think /θɪŋk/, not /tɪŋk/
/v/ vs /w/ contrast	Often merged into a single sound	vet /vet/ vs. wet /wet/ kept distinct
Vowel length contrasts	Short and long vowels not clearly distinguished	ship /ʃɪp/ vs. sheep /ʃi:p/
Consonant clusters	Extra vowel inserted to break up clusters	school /sku:l/, not /ɪsku:l/ or /əsku:l/
Schwa /ə/ in unstressed syllables	Full vowel used instead of reduced schwa	'about' /ə'baʊt/, not /ɑ:ba:ʊt/
Word stress placement	Stress often on wrong syllable, or equal stress on all syllables	'photograph vs. pho'tography (stress must shift)
Retroflex articulation of /t, d/	Alveolar /t, d/ pronounced as retroflex sounds	top /tɒp/ with alveolar, not retroflex, /t/

Awareness of one's mother-tongue influence (often called 'MTI' in pronunciation teaching) is the first step toward more intelligible, internationally comprehensible English pronunciation – the practical application of the phonetic and phonological knowledge built up in this course.

Examination Preparation Tips

How to Answer Diagram-Based Questions

- Always label diagrams clearly and neatly – use a pencil first if unsure, then ink over.
- Write the name of each organ/part next to the diagram, not just numbers, unless a key is also provided.
- Keep the diagram proportionate; a rough but clearly labelled sketch scores better than an elaborate but unlabelled one.
- Relate the diagram directly to the written explanation – refer to it explicitly ('as shown in the diagram...').

How to Answer Transcription Questions

- Always enclose phonemic transcriptions in slant brackets / /.
- Double-check vowel length marks [ː] and stress marks [ˈ] [ˌ] – these are frequently awarded separate marks.
- For connected speech / sentence transcription, remember to mark word stress and consider weak forms of function words.
- Practise transcribing unfamiliar words by first identifying the syllable count and likely stress pattern.

How to Answer 'Classify and Explain' Questions

- Begin with a brief definition of the key term (e.g. consonant, vowel, phoneme).
- Use a clear three-part structure matching the classificatory criteria (e.g. place / manner / voicing).
- Support every category with at least one English example and, where possible, its IPA symbol.
- Conclude by summarising why the classification system is useful (economy, precision, cross-linguistic comparison).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q. What is the difference between phonetics and phonology?

Phonetics is the general, language-independent study of how speech sounds are physically produced, transmitted, and perceived. Phonology studies how sounds pattern and function meaningfully within the system of one particular language – for example, which sound contrasts are phonemic in English versus in Hindi.

Q. Why do we need a phonetic alphabet when we already have the alphabet?

The ordinary Roman alphabet is a spelling system, not a sound system: the same letter can represent different sounds (the 'c' in 'cat' and 'city'), and the same sound can be spelt in different ways (the /i:/ sound in 'see', 'sea', and 'machine'). The IPA solves this by assigning exactly one symbol to each distinct sound, regardless of spelling.

Q. Is stress the same thing as intonation?

No. Stress (word accent) operates at the level of the individual word, marking which syllable is relatively more prominent. Intonation operates over an entire phrase or sentence, describing the overall pattern of pitch movement (rising, falling, etc.). A word keeps its stress pattern regardless of the sentence's intonation, though the stressed syllable of the most important word in a sentence often also carries the main pitch movement (the 'nucleus' or 'tonic syllable').

Q. How many phonemes does English have in total?

The commonly cited figure for Received Pronunciation is 44 phonemes: 24 consonants, 12 pure vowels (monophthongs), and 8 diphthongs. Some analyses also count 5 triphthongs separately, or treat them as sequences of a diphthong plus /ə/.

Q. What is the difference between a monophthong, a diphthong, and a triphthong?

A monophthong is a single, steady-state vowel quality (e.g. /i:/ in 'see'). A diphthong involves a glide between two vowel qualities within one syllable (e.g. /aɪ/ in 'my'). A triphthong involves a glide through three vowel qualities within one syllable, typically a closing diphthong plus schwa (e.g. /aɪə/ in 'fire').

Q. Why is 'schwa' considered such an important vowel?

Schwa /ə/ is the most frequently occurring vowel sound in spoken English because it is the vowel that unstressed syllables typically reduce to in connected speech (e.g. the second syllable of 'about', or the 'a' in 'sofa'). Recognising and correctly producing schwa is essential for natural, native-like English rhythm.

Q. Can two allophones of the same phoneme ever be written with different IPA symbols?

Yes – in narrow (allophonic) transcription, different allophones are shown using diacritics or distinct symbols within square brackets, e.g. [p^h] (aspirated) vs. [p] (unaspirated) as allophones of the single phoneme /p/. In broad (phonemic) transcription, however, only the single phoneme symbol /p/ is used, regardless of which allophone actually occurs.

Q. Does every English syllable need a consonant?

No. A syllable's only obligatory element is the nucleus, which is usually (though not always) a vowel; both the onset and the coda are optional. Words like 'a' /ə/ or 'eye' /aɪ/ consist of a single vowel syllable with no consonants at all.

Q. Why does stress sometimes change with word class (e.g. 'record vs re'cord)?

This pattern reflects a broader tendency in English for two-syllable nouns/adjectives to stress the first syllable and two-syllable verbs to stress the second. Because many English words can function as both noun and verb with identical spelling, stress becomes the only audible cue distinguishing the grammatical category – making word stress genuinely phonemic in such pairs.

Model Question Paper Pattern (ESE)

As per the official course structure, the End Semester Examination (60 marks, 2.5 hours) follows this pattern:

Question	Nature	Marks
Q.1	Short notes (five sub-questions, based on entire syllabus) – Compulsory	15
Q.2	Long-answer question on Unit 1 (Organs of Speech)	15
Q.3	Long-answer question on Unit 2 (Description & Classification of Speech Sounds)	15
Q.4	Long-answer question on Unit 3 (Phonetic Transcription, Phoneme, Syllable)	15
Q.5	Long-answer question on Unit 4 (Word Accent and Intonation)	15
Q.6	Short notes (any two of four, based on entire syllabus)	15

Note: Candidates must attempt Q.1 (compulsory) and any THREE questions from Q.2 to Q.6, for a total of 60 marks.

Continuous Assessment (CA) Break-up

Component	Marks
Class Test	20
Assignment / Presentation / Viva / Quiz / Open Book	12
Attendance	8
Total CA	40

Prescribed Text: *A Course in Phonetics and Spoken English* by J. Sethi & P. Dhamija.

— End of Notes —