

Practical English Phonetics and Phonology

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Glossary

Accent

A pronunciation variety characteristic of the speech of a group of people.

Acoustics

The scientific study of sound.

Acrolectal

Associated with speakers of the most privileged socioeconomic classes. Derived from the noun acrolect, meaning a dialect of this type.

Active articulator

The articulator which moves in an articulation, e.g. the tip of the tongue for /t/.

Advanced

Articulated more to the front. Diacritic [k+], e.g. /k/ in keen [k+i:n]. Opposed to retracted.

Affricate

A manner of articulation involving a complete closure that is released slowly, thus producing homorganic friction, e.g. /tʃ dʒ/.

Airstream

A flow of air typically outward from the lungs. An airstream of some sort (usually pulmonic egressive) is necessary to produce any speech sound.

Allophone

A realisation of a phoneme.

Alveolar

A place of articulation involving the tip/blade of the tongue (active articulator) and the alveolar ridge (passive articulator), e.g. English /t n s/.

Ante-penultimate

One before the last but one. Often used with reference to stress

Approach stage

The initial stage in the articulation of a stop when the articulators move towards each other.

Approximant

A manner of articulation produced with the articulators sufficiently apart for there to be no audible friction, e.g. English /r j/. Approximants can be of two types, either central approximants (e.g. English /w r j/) or lateral (e.g. English /l/).

Articulation

A movement made by the organs of speech in order to produce a speech sound.

Articulator

Any organ or part of an organ in the vocal tract which is involved in the production of a speech sound.

Articulatory system

Relating to the articulators found in the supra-glottal vocal tract (i.e. in the throat, mouth and nose).

Aspiration

A delay in voicing after the release of a voiceless stop, often described as a brief 'puff of air' or [h]-like sound, e.g. pie [phaɪ].

Assimilation

The replacement of one phoneme by another under the influence of a third as a result of phonetic conditioning, e.g. if green bag is said as /'gri:m' bæɡ/, then /n/ is said to assimilate to /m/ under the influence of the following /b/. Assimilation may be of different types: place, manner and energy.

Auditory

Referring to any aspect of hearing.

Back vowel

A vowel for which the back of the tongue is the highest part, e.g. /u:/.

Backing diphthong

A diphthong involving tongue raising and backing to [ʊ] or /u:/.

Basilectal

Associated with speakers of the least privileged socio-economic classes. Derived from the noun basilect, meaning a dialect of this type.

BATH words

A set of words spelt with a, the pronunciations of which vary between PALM /ɑ:/ (e.g. in NRP and south-east England) and TRAP /æ/ (e.g. in General American and most North American English, Scotland and northern England).

Bilabial

A place of articulation involving both lips, e.g. /p b m/.

Breathy voice

A glottal setting where the vocal folds vibrate as for voice but the arytenoids are apart so that air can escape through the gap at the rear of the glottis, e.g. Hindi [bʱ].

Cardinal vowels

A set of reference vowels, independent of any language, widely used in linguistic description. The basic set are termed primary cardinal vowels. The secondary cardinal vowels have reverse lip shapes.

Central

Referring to vowels pronounced with the centre of the tongue as the highest part, e.g. [e]. Opposed to peripheral.

Centring diphthong

A diphthong involving tongue movement to [ə].

Checked vowels

A phonological class of vowels found in English, German and other related languages which in the same phonetic contexts are shorter than free vowels. Unlike free vowels, checked vowels cannot occur ever in stressed open syllables. (Also termed short vowels.)

Citation form

The form of a word when pronounced in isolation.

Clear [l]

A slightly palatalised [l], e.g. /l/ in leaf, /l/ in German Wahl 'choice'.

Close

A sound, often a vowel, articulated with the tongue raised close to the roof of the mouth.

Closed syllable

A syllable ending in a consonant, e.g. hot.

Closing diphthong

A diphthong involving the tongue rising closer to the roof of the mouth.

Cluster

A sequence, within the same syllable, of a number of consonants, e.g. /gr/ and /spt/ in grasped.

Coda

The final consonantal element of the syllable. See also rhyme.

Complementary distribution

Where the allophones of a phoneme are predictable from phonetic context. Cf. free variation.

Consonant

Sounds occurring at the margins of syllables.

Content words

Words such as nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs, which have a high information content. Also called lexical words. Cf. function words.

Contracted form

A form derived from the combination of two function words, e.g. will not → won't. (Also termed contraction.)

Contrastive analysis

The linguistic study of two languages side by side to establish points of difference and similarity.

Creak

A glottal setting involving low frequency vibration of the front vocal folds. In language, generally found as part of creaky voice (see below).

Creaky voice

A glottal setting where the front vocal folds vibrate slowly (as for creak) whilst the back vocal folds vibrate rapidly (as for voice).

Dark l

A velarised [l], e.g. English fill. Symbolised as [ɫ]

Dental

A place of articulation involving the tip of the tongue and the front teeth, e.g. /θ ð/ in thanks, those, Spanish /t d n/ [t̪ ð̪ n̪] in tonto 'fool', donde 'where'.

Devoicing

When in a particular context a sound which is normally voiced is realised as partially or completely voiceless, e.g. /b/ and /d/ in bad cough.

Diacritics

Marks added to phonetic symbols to supply extra information, e.g. [̃] added to a vowel [ɛ] shows it to be nasalised [ɛ̃].

Dialect

A language variety of a group of people defined geographically and/or socially. Note that dialect applies to geographically and/or socially grammar and vocabulary only.

Diphthong

A vowel where there is an obvious change in tongue and/or lip shape. (Also termed vowel glide.)

Diphthong shift

An effect found in certain accents (e.g. Cockney) whereby the realisations of the diphthongs FACE, PRICE, and CHOICE appear to shift anti-clockwise on the vowel diagram. As a result, FACE sounds like PRICE in other accents, PRICE resembles CHOICE, and CHOICE has a closer starting point. In such accents, GOAT is usually more open, sounding similar to MOUTH in other varieties.

Discourse

Referring to the analysis of language in units larger than a single sentence, e.g. paragraphs, conversations.

Distributional variation

Differences in language usage between accents dependent on the occurrence or non-occurrence of a phoneme in certain contexts. Such differences operate without exception, e.g. /r/ in rhotic vs. non-rhotic accents.

Double articulation

A speech sound involving two places of articulation, e.g. English /w/.

Duration

The amount of time taken up by a speech sound.

Egressive

Outgoing. Opposed to ingressive.

Elision

A process by which a phoneme is deleted, e.g. /t/ in English last week ['lɑ:s 'wi:k].

Elocution

Speech training, usually for acting or public speaking, based on aesthetic value judgments rather than the objective descriptive approach advocated by phoneticians and phonologists. A teacher of elocution is an elocutionist.

Energy of articulation

Another term to cover the fortis/lenis contrast.

Epenthesis

Insertion of a segment into a word, e.g. /t/ in lance /lɑ:nts/, [ə] in Irish English film ['fɪləm].

Error analysis

A technique for predicting a language learner's potential errors by systematic analysis of errors already made.

Estuary English

A loose term for a modern variety of educated English, which, while removed from basilectal London speech, nevertheless shows many traces of London influence.

Focus

The pitch pattern of the nucleus of an intonation group.

FORCE - NORTH

A distinction found in some accents whereby words spelt with o, e.g. oar our or, and which elsewhere would be considered part of the THOUGHT set, are further divided into two subsets FORCE and NORTH.

Fortis

A phonological class of voiceless obstruent consonants with energetic articulation, e.g. English /k f s/. Opposed to lenis.

Free variation

When the occurrence of a particular allophone cannot be predicted from phonetic context. Cf. complementary distribution.

Free vowels

A phonological class of vowels found in English, German and related languages which includes all except the checked vowels. In similar phonetic contexts, the free vowels are longer than the checked. Unlike checked vowels, free vowels regularly occur in stressed open syllables. (Also termed long vowels.)

Frequency

The number of vibrations per second. Used in phonetics especially with reference to vocal fold vibration.

Fricative

A manner of articulation which involves a narrowing in the vocal tract so that audible friction is produced, e.g. English /s z/.

Friction

Hiss produced by air turbulence.

Front vowel

A vowel articulated with the front of the tongue highest, e.g. E /i:/ in FLEECE.

Fronting diphthong

A diphthong involving tongue raising and fronting to [ɪ] or [i:].

Function words

Words such as prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, articles, auxiliary verbs which structure the sentence, rather than passing on much information. (Also termed grammatical words or form words.) Opposed to content words.

General American

The prestige accent of the United States. (Also termed Network American.)

Glide

A vowel where there is an obvious change in tongue and/or lip shape. (Also termed diphthong.)

Glottal

Referring to articulations involving the glottis, e.g. [h ʔ].

Glottalisation

A secondary articulation involving the addition of glottal stop (normally in the approach stage), e.g. syllable-final English /t p tʃ/ in that stopwatch [ðæʔt 'stɒʔpɹɒʔtʃ].

Glottal replacement

Substitution of a consonant (most commonly /t/) by glottal stop. (Also termed glottalling.)

Glottal setting

A number of ways in which the larynx can operate so as to produce different types of voicing, creak, etc.

Glottal stop

Complete closure of the vocal folds followed by sudden release.

Glottis

The space between the vocal folds.

Grapho-phonemic

A term used to cover the relationships between spelling and phonemes.

Grave

(Used with reference to fricatives.) Having mostly low-frequency hiss.

Grooved

Fricatives involving the airstream being channelled through a groove formed along the mid-line of the tongue, e.g. [s z].

H-dropping

Referring to accents of English (including the majority of England's basilectal varieties) which lack consistent /h/ in content words, e.g. high-handed /aɪ 'ændɪd/.

Head

The sequence of stressed syllables in an intonation group immediately preceding the (intonation) nucleus.

Hierarchy of error

A ranking of the gravity of learners' errors in terms of their effect on native speakers.

Hold stage

The second stage in the articulation of a stop when the articulators are held in contact so as to block the passage of the airstream.

Homophones

Words of different meaning (spelt differently or similarly) that are pronounced in the same way, e.g. scene – seen, seal 'aquatic mammal' – seal 'to close firmly'.

Homorganic

Having the same place of articulation, e.g. /n/ and /d/ in trendy /'trendi/.

Idiolect

The speech of a single individual.

Ingressive

Ingoing. Opposed to egressive.

Intensity

The amount of energy in a sound wave perceived as loudness.

Interlinear

Intonation marking which indicates pitch with dots and lines placed between a pair of horizontal lines.

Intervocalic

Occurring between vowels.

In-text

Intonation marking which indicates pitch within the text itself by means of stylised marks (e.g. circles, angled marks).

Intonation

The pitch patterns of speech.

Intonation phrase (IP)

A group of words forming a complete intonation pattern. (Also termed breath group, sense group, tone group, intonation group.)

Intrusive r

A type of r liaison, similar to linking r, but not traceable to any r in the spelling, e.g. I saw it coming /aɪ'sɔːr ɪt 'kʌmɪŋ/.

L1, L2

Abbreviations for mother tongue (first language) and target language (second language).

I-vocalisation

The effect by which syllable-final /l/ is realised as a vowel of an [ʊ] type, e.g. Cockney bell [bɛʊ].

Labial

Referring to the lips.

Labialisation

A secondary articulation involving the addition of lip-rounding, e.g. English [kw] in quilt.

Labial-velar

A double articulation involving (1) the lips and (2) the back of the tongue against the velum, e.g. /w/ in wise.

Labio-dental

A place of articulation involving the lower lip and the upper front teeth, e.g. /f v/ in fine, vine.

Lagging assimilation

An assimilation in which one phoneme changes under the influence of a preceding phoneme, e.g. when in the corner is pronounced as /ɪn nə 'kɔːnə/. (Also termed perseverative or progressive.)

Language invariable stress

Refers to languages where all words, or the vast majority, have the same stress pattern, e.g. French: final stress; Welsh: penultimate stress; Czech: initial stress.

Lateral

A manner of articulation in which the airstream escapes over the lowered sides of the tongue. The term includes lateral approximants (e.g. /l/ as in little), and also lateral fricatives (e.g. /ɬ/ as in Welsh llyfr 'book').

Lateral release

The release of a plosive by means of lowering the sides of the tongue following a homorganic stop, e.g. English bottle.

Leading assimilation

An assimilation in which one phoneme changes in advance of a following phoneme, e.g. in Greece pronounced as /ɪŋ'griːs/. (Also termed anticipatory or regressive.)

Lenis

A phonological class of voiced obstruent consonants articulated with relatively little energy and with potential voice, e.g. English /g v z/. Opposed to fortis.

Lexical variation

Differences in language usage between accents dependent on the choice of one phoneme or another in a particular set of words, e.g. /æ/ or /ɑː/ in the BATH words.

Lexically designated stress

Languages where stress can fall anywhere in the word but is fixed for each item, e.g. English, German and Portuguese.

Liaison

The insertion of a consonant in order to facilitate the articulation of a word sequence, e.g. French *ces* /se/, *animaux* /animo/ but *ces animaux* /se z animo/.

Lingual

Used in phonetics as an anatomical term referring to the tongue.

Linking r

A frequent form of liaison in non-rhotic accents of English whereby silent word-final orthographic *r* is sounded if the following word begins with a vowel, e.g. *more* /mɔ:/ but *more ice* /mɔ: r 'aɪs/. Cf. intrusive *r*.

Manner of articulation

How the articulators affect the airstream passing through the vocal tract so as to result in a stricture of either (1) complete closure, (2) close approximation or (3) open approximation.

Marginal phoneme

A foreign phoneme found only within a restricted set of words such as loans or names, e.g. /x/ in English in words like *loch*, *Bach*.

Medial

The position of a segment which is neither word-initial nor word-final.

Minimal pair

A pair of words distinguished by a single phoneme, e.g. *bit* – *sit*.

Minimal set

A set of words in a given language distinguished by a single phoneme, e.g. *bit* – *sit* – *pit* – *lit* – *nit*.

Monosyllable

A word of one syllable, e.g. *bat*. Cf. polysyllable.

Multicultural London English (MLE)

A fast-developing variety of London English, incorporating many features of Caribbean pronunciation, used mainly by younger members of inner-city ethnic groups.

Nasal

(1) Referring to the space inside the nose. (2) A manner of articulation involving the soft palate being lowered so that the airstream escapes via the nasal cavity, e.g. /m n ŋ/. Cf. oral.

Nasal cavity

The space inside the nose.

Nasal release

The release of a plosive by the lowering of the soft palate allowing the airstream to pass out through the nose.

Nasal vowel

Vowel articulated with the soft palate lowered, thus adding the resonance of the nasal cavity, e.g. French / ɛ̃ / in *faim* 'hunger', Portuguese / ã / in *vim* / *vĩ* / 'I came'.

Nasalisation

A secondary articulation involving the addition of nasal resonance to an oral sound, e.g. the vowel in English *man* [mæ̃n].

Native speaker

A person who speaks a language as his or her mother tongue.

Neutralisation

See phoneme neutralisation.

Non-nasal

Another term for oral.

Non-native speaker

A person who has acquired a language in any way other than by speaking it from early childhood as a mother tongue. Cf. native speaker.

Non-regional pronunciation (NRP)

A type of educated British English accent, employed typically by younger speakers, which is not localisable (NRP) through specific regional characteristics. Cf. Traditional Received Pronunciation.

Non-rhotic

Those varieties of English where orthographic r is pronounced only before a vowel, e.g. most forms of English spoken in England and Wales (including NRP), Australian and South African. Cf. rhotic.

Nucleus

The pitch pattern of the nucleus of an intonation group.

Nuclear tone

The last strongly stressed syllable of an intonation group, notable for its striking prominence. Do not confuse with syllable nucleus.

Nucleus location

The placing of the nucleus within an intonation group.

Obstruent

A term covering stops and fricatives. Cf. sonorant.

Onset

The first stressed syllable of the head. It is a prominent syllable in the intonation group. Do not confuse with syllable onset.

Open

A sound (usually a vowel) which is articulated with considerable space between the upper surface of the tongue and the palate, e.g. /ɑ:/ in bar, German /a:/ as in Bahn 'path'. Opposed to close.

Open syllable

A syllable which does not end in a consonant phoneme, e.g. see, boy. Opposed to closed syllable.

Oral

(1) Concerning the mouth. (2) Referring to articulations made with the soft palate raised so that air escapes via the mouth and not the nose; cf. nasal.

Oral cavity

The space inside the mouth.

Organs of speech

All organs involved in the speech process.

Orthography

Another term for spelling. Adj. orthographic.

Overlapping stops

A sequence of stops which involves one or more of their stages being inaudible.

Palatal

A place of articulation involving the front of the tongue and the hard palate, e.g. /j/ in yes.

Palatalisation

A secondary articulation involving the addition of front tongue raising towards the palate, e.g. news [nju:z].

Palato-alveolar

A place of articulation involving the blade/front of the tongue and the rear of the alveolar ridge/front of the hard palate, e.g. /ʃ/ as in shiver and /dʒ/ in jeans.

Paralinguistic

Referring to paralanguage, i.e. features of communication which are not part of language as such, e.g. gestures, facial expressions, tones of voice.

Passive articulator

The articulator which does not move in the production of a speech sound, e.g. the alveolar ridge in /t/.

Penultimate

One before the last. Often used with reference to stress.

Peripheral

Referring to vowels produced at the edge of the vowel diagram. Opposed to central.

Pharyngeal cavity

The space inside the pharynx. Also spelt 'pharyngal'.

Phonation

The process by which the vocal folds are positioned so as to produce various glottal settings, e.g. voiced, voiceless, creak, etc.

Phoneme

One of a set of abstract units which together form the sound system of a given language, and through which contrasts of meaning are produced.

Phoneme neutralisation

In certain phonetic contexts, it may not be possible to allocate an allophone to one phoneme category rather than another. The phonemic opposition is thus neutralised; e.g. the final vowel in happy [i] could be regarded as either /ɪ/ or /i:/, as its realisation shares features of both these phonemes.

Phoneme inventory

The complete set of phonemes in a language.

Phonemic transcription

An alphabetic system for showing the sounds of a language, which allots one symbol to each phoneme. Phonemic transcription uses relatively simple letter shapes and is placed between slant brackets / /.

Phonetic conditioning

A term used to cover any way in which speech sounds are influenced by adjacent (or near-adjacent) segments.

Phonetic transcription

Transcription which shows articulatory detail by means of representing the allophones of phonemes. Phonetic transcription is detailed and placed between square brackets [].

Phonetics

The scientific study of speech sounds.

Phonology

The branch of linguistics that deals with the system and patterning of sounds in a language. Adj. phonological.

Pitch

The property of a sound (related to frequency) which enables a listener to perceive it as high or low. In rough terms, the higher the frequency, the higher the pitch.

Place of articulation

The point in the vocal tract at which a sound is made.

Plosion

The noisy release of air in the final stage of a stop.

Plosive

A manner of articulation which involves a complete closure in the vocal tract followed by a rapid release of the airstream, e.g. /p b/ in pie, buy.

Polysyllable

A word of more than one syllable, e.g. bicycle. Cf. monosyllable.

Post-vocalic

In a context following a vowel.

Pre-fortis clipping

The effect by which vowels are shortened preceding a fortis consonant.

Pre-glottalisation

A stop consonant incorporating a glottal stop occurring in the approach stage. Also termed glottal reinforcement.

Prescriptivism

An approach to linguistics where rules are laid down for what is considered 'correct' or 'incorrect' use of language (e.g. in pronunciation or grammar).
Adjective: prescriptive.

Prestige accent

A social accent associated with high status.

Pre-vocalic

In a context before a vowel.

Prominence

A combination of properties such as stress, pitch, duration and loudness which together make a sound stand out from others.

Pulmonic

Involving the lungs.

r-colouring

The addition of a retroflex quality to vowels, e.g. American bird, car, etc.

Realisation

The process by which the abstract phonemic unit becomes physical reality in the form of sound. Loosely, the way in which a particular phoneme is said on a given occasion.

Realisational variation

Differences in language usage between accents dependent on the realisation of a particular phoneme.

Received Pronunciation (RP)

The term which has been used since the 1920s for the traditional prestige accent of British English. Usually abbreviated to RP. Sometimes called BBC English. Cf. non-regional pronunciation (NRP).

Reciprocal assimilation

Two-way assimilation whereby two phonemes are simultaneously changed, e.g. /s/ and /j/ in Bless you /'bleʃ ju:/.

Regional variation

Variation in speech which differs from one geographical area to another. (Also termed areal variation.) Cf. social variation.

Release stage

The final stage in the articulation of a stop in which the articulators part and the airstream is allowed to escape with plosion.

Retracted

Articulated further back. Diacritic [-], e.g. English /k/ in cork [k-ɔ:k]. Opposed to advanced.

Retroflex

A place of articulation which involves the tongue-tip being curled back to articulate with the rear of the alveolar ridge, e.g. [ʈ ɖ ɳ] in Indian languages (e.g. Hindi). The tongue-bunching characteristic of many types of American /r/ is also often loosely referred to as retroflex.

Rhotic

Those varieties of English where orthographic r is pronounced wherever it occurs, e.g. most forms of American English, Scottish and Irish English. Cf. non-rhotic.

Rhyme

A term to cover the nucleus and coda elements in the syllable.

Rhythm

Patterns of the timing of syllables in speech, in some way similar to rhythmic patterns in music.

Salient

A conspicuous feature of a language variety, especially something which is popularly regarded as being characteristic of the accent concerned, e.g. uvular [ʁ] in Geordie.

Schwa

The central vowel /ə/ as in about, better, French atelier 'studio', German Bekannte 'acquaintance'. Derived from the Hebrew word for the sound in that language.

Secondary articulation

A modification applied to the main articulation of a speech sound. Secondary articulations comprise palatalisation, velarisation, labialisation, glottalisation, nasalisation.

Segment

Individual speech sounds, i.e. consonants and vowels, that can be represented by means of the symbols of a phonetic alphabet. Adj. segmental.

Segmentation

The process of dividing up the flow of speech into individual speech sounds (or segments).

Sentence stress

Used loosely to refer to the stress patterns of connected speech.

Setting, articulatory

A term used to cover the way in which the organs of speech are held throughout the speech process. Setting varies from one language to another and, within languages, from one accent to another.

Sharp

(Used with reference to fricatives.) Having mostly high-frequency hiss. Cf. grave.

Smoothing

An effect whereby in a vowel sequence one element is partly or totally lost, e.g. tyre /taɪə/ realised as [taə] or even [ta:].

Social variation

Differences in language usage which are dependent on factors such as social class, age, religion, etc. Cf. regional variation

Sonorant

A term covering nasals, approximants (central and lateral) and vowels. Cf. obstruent.

Sonority

The relative loudness or carrying power of a sound compared to that of other sounds which have similar pitch, stress and duration, etc. Adj. sonorous.

Speech mechanism

Another term for the organs of speech.

Steady-state vowel

A vowel articulated with tongue and the lips held in one position. (Also termed monophthong and pure vowel.) Cf. diphthong.

Stigmatised

Used with reference to accent features which invoke social disapproval of various kinds, e.g. ridicule, correction.

Stop

A term covering plosives and affricates, involving a complete closure in the vocal tract with the soft palate raised.

Stress

The combination of features (loudness, pitch, vowel duration and vowel quality) which make certain syllables seem more prominent than others. Primary stress refers to the most prominent syllable in a word; secondary stress to the second most prominent.

Stress-timed

A type of speech rhythm which gives the impression of regular intervals between stressed syllables, e.g. English, Dutch and German. Cf. syllable-timed.

Stricture

A narrowing of a part of the vocal tract made by the actions of the articulators.

Strong form

The form which certain function words have when pronounced stressed or in isolation. Opposed to weak form

Supra-glottal

Referring to parts of the speech mechanism situated above the larynx, i.e. the pharynx, mouth and nose.

Supra-segmental

Phonetic phenomena which cover an extent greater than the individual segment, e.g. pitch, stress. Cf. segment.

Syllabic consonant

A consonant which functions as a syllable nucleus, e.g. English /ŋ/ in hidden /hɪdŋ/.

Syllable

A linguistic unit larger than the phoneme and smaller than the word, usually containing a vowel as its nucleus.

Syllable nucleus

The most prominent, sonorous element of a syllable. Do not confuse with (intonation) nucleus.

Syllable onset

The initial consonantal element of a syllable. Do not confuse with intonation onset.

Syllable-timed

A type of speech rhythm which gives the impression of syllables occupying roughly equal amounts of time, e.g. French, Yoruba. Cf. stress-timed.

Systemic variation

Differences in language usage between accents dependent on variations in the number of phonemes in the phoneme system.

T-voicing

A voiced realisation of /t/, symbolised as 't̚', e.g. American English sitting, matter.

Tag-question

A structure, consisting of an auxiliary verb and pronoun, attached to the end of a statement for confirmation, e.g. Andrew lives in Birmingham, doesn't he?

Tag-type response

Brief questions similar in structure to a tag-question. Tag-type responses are used as a rejoinder in discourse, e.g. He's selling his bike. - Is he?

Tap

A manner of articulation where the active articulator strikes the passive articulator with a single rapid, percussive movement, e.g. Spanish para 'for' ['para].

Th-fronting

An effect whereby in certain accents (for example, Cockney) dental fricatives (/θ ð/) are replaced by labio-dental fricatives (/f v/), three brothers /'fri: 'brʌvəz/.

Th-stopping

An effect whereby in certain accents the dental fricatives /θ ð/ are articulated as stops, e.g. New York English

(Lexical) tone

Pitch movements that in a tone language (e.g. Chinese, Ewe, Korean) are capable of distinguishing word meaning.

Tone language

A language which utilises tones as phonemes.

Tongue arch

The hump formed by the tongue for a vowel articulation.

Tongue height

The degree to which the tongue approaches the roof of the mouth

Tonic

Another term for nucleus.

Trill

A manner of articulation where the active articulator strikes the passive articulator with a number of rapid, percussive movements, e.g. Spanish parra 'grapevine' ['para]. (Also termed roll.)

Upspeak

The tendency for speech of younger persons to include a preponderance of terminal rising tones for statements (as opposed to the falling patterns to be found in traditional RP), especially in narrative.

Utterance

A term used to refer to any stretch of speech.

Uvular

A place of articulation involving the uvula and the back of the tongue, e.g. French rire [ʁi:ʁ] 'to laugh'.

Variety

A term covering both accent and dialect, referring to variation in language usage between various groups of people.

Velar

A place of articulation involving the velum and the back of the tongue, e.g. /k/ in kick.

Velarisation

A secondary articulation involving the addition of tongue back raising towards the velum, e.g. dark [ɫ] in build.

Velic closure

A closure made between the soft palate and the pharynx wall during the articulation of non-nasal sounds.

Vocal folds

The two folds of ligament contained in the larynx that by vibration produce voice. (Also termed vocal cords.)

Vocal tract

The passageways above the larynx used in speech, i.e. the nasal, oral and pharyngeal cavities.

Voice

A glottal setting involving rapid vibration of the vocal folds, producing a 'buzz' which accompanies almost all vowel sounds and voiced consonants.

Voiced

Referring to a sound articulated with voice, e.g. all vowels and consonants such as [m z g ð]. Opposed to voiceless.

Voiceless

A sound articulated without voice, e.g. [s k θ]. Opposed to voiced.

Vowel

A sound formed with a stricture of open approximation which acts as a syllable nucleus.

Vowel diagram

A stylised figure used to represent vowel qualities based on apparent tongue height.

(Vowel) glide

A vowel where there is an obvious change in tongue and/or lip shape. (Also termed diphthong.)

Vowel quality

The acoustic nature of a vowel sound as perceived by the human ear.

Vowel reduction

An effect found in most forms of native-speaker English, whereby peripheral vowel phonemes are replaced in unstressed syllables by /ə x k/ or a syllabic consonant.

Vowel sequence

A sequence of vowels within a single syllable. Used in descriptions of English particularly to refer to the sequences /aɪə aʊə/.

Weak form

The reduced form of unstressed function words, e.g. are /ə/, and /ɪ/. Opposed to strong form.

Whisper

A glottal setting in which a pulmonic airstream is forced through a gap between the arytenoid cartilages.

Word stress

Used to refer to the stress characteristics of individual words. Cf. sentence stress.

Yod

Another term for the sound [j]. Derived from the Hebrew word for the sound in that language.

Yod-dropping

Elision of /j/ in initial consonant clusters, as in GA tune /tu:n/.