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CONSONANTS IN THE LANGUAGE BEING STUDIED

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Abstrct: This article provides the readers with the necessary information about consonants in the language being studied.
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Introduction. In articulatory phonetics, a consonant is a speech sound that is articulated with complete or partial closure of the vocal tract. Examples are [p], pronounced with the lips; [t], pronounced with the front of the tongue; [k], pronounced with the back of the tongue; [h], pronounced in the throat; [f] and [s], pronounced by forcing air through a narrow channel (fricatives); and [m] and [n], which have air flowing through the nose (nasals). Contrasting with consonants are vowels. Since the number of possible sounds in all of the world's languages is much greater than the number of letters in any one alphabet, linguists have devised systems such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to assign a unique and unambiguous symbol to each attested consonant. In fact, the English alphabet has fewer consonant letters than English has consonant sounds, so digraphs like "ch", "sh", "th", and "zh" are used to extend the alphabet, and some letters and digraphs represent more than one consonant. For example, the sound spelled "th" in "this" is a different consonant from the "th" sound in "thin". (In the IPA, they are transcribed [ð] and [θ], respectively.)

Main body. Etymology. The word consonant comes from Latin oblique stem cōnsonant-, from cōnsonāns (littera) "sounding-together (letter)", a calque of Greek σύμφωνον sýmphōnon (plural sýmphōna). Dionysius Thrax calls consonants sýmphōna "pronounced with" because they can only be pronounced with a vowel. He divides them into two subcategories: hēmíphōna, semivowels ("half-pronounced"), which correspond to continuants, not semivowels, and áphōna, mute or silent consonants ("unvoiced"), which correspond to stops, not voiceless consonants. This description does not apply to some

human languages, such as the Salishan languages, in which stops sometimes occur without vowels (see Nuxálk), and the modern conception of consonant does not require co-occurrence with vowels. Consonants are unique part of linguistics that are straightforward to remember, but much more complex to understand. Simply put, consonants are letters that are not vowels. So any letter that is not A, E, I, O, U, and sometimes Y is a consonant. Remembering that rule is the easiest way to determine whether a letter is a consonant or not. However, the full reasoning why a letter is designated as a consonant is much more complex and interesting, and related to a field called articulatory phonetics, which studies ways we produce speech.

Consonant Sounds. Articulatory phonetics might seems like an intimidating term, but it's a study that focus on understanding humans and how we articulate to produce speech. In short, it's studying how we speak. Consonants are defined as speech sounds that humans create that involve airflow that is blocked partly or entirely while being produced. They can be blocked by speech organs like the vocal tract, as well as the teeth, tongue, or lips. These speech sounds are represented by letters that we know as consonants. There are twenty four speech sounds that form consonants in English. The easiest way to understand this is by trying it. If you voice the letters A, E, I, O, and U, you'll notice that your mouth and vocal cords are open. Your teeth, tongue, and lips are not touching. Now try a consonant like T. To pronounce T, you have to use the front of your tongue to interrupt the airflow. Try the letter K and you'll notice the same thing, you need to use your tongue, this time the back of your tongue, to pronounce the speech sound represented by the letter K. It might be strange to define speech as air flowing through your vocal cords, but that's exactly what it is. Introducing barriers like the tongue to alter the airflow changes the sound of your speech and thus creates consonants. A common question in linguistics is when the letter Y is a vowel and when it is a consonant. Understanding the difference depends on this differentiation between open airflow and blocked airflow. In general, Y is considered a vowel when there are no other vowels in the word, like in "by." Similarly, when Y is in the middle of a word or the last letter in a word of syllable, it is a vowel, like in "happy" or "recycle." In these cases, when pronounced, the Y creates airflow in the same way as a vowel. There is no interruption

or blockage or air. When Y is a consonant, however, there is a blockage. This usually happens when Y is the first letter of a word or a syllable, like in the words “year” and “lawyer.”

Expression of consonants in writing. The word consonant is also used to refer to a letter of an alphabet that denotes a consonant sound. The 21 consonant letters in the English alphabet are B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, P, Q, R, S, T, V, X, Z, and usually W and Y. The letter Y stands for the consonant /j/ in yoke, the vowel /ɪ/ in myth, the vowel /i/ in funny, and the diphthong /aɪ/ in my. W always represents a consonant except in combination with a vowel letter, as in growth, raw, and how, and in a few loanwords from Welsh, like crwth or cwm. In some other languages, such as Finnish, y only represents a vowel sound.

Consonants versus vowels. Consonants and vowels correspond to distinct parts of a syllable: The most sonorous part of the syllable (that is, the part that's easiest to sing), called the syllabic peak or nucleus, is typically a vowel, while the less sonorous margins (called the onset and coda) are typically consonants. Such syllables may be abbreviated CV, V, and CVC, where C stands for consonant and V stands for vowel. This can be argued to be the only pattern found in most of the world's languages, and perhaps the primary pattern in all of them. However, the distinction between consonant and vowel is not always clear cut: there are syllabic consonants and non-syllabic vowels in many of the world's languages. One blurry area is in segments variously called semivowels, semiconsonants, or glides. On one side, there are vowel-like segments that are not in themselves syllabic, but form diphthongs as part of the syllable nucleus, as the i in English boil [ˈbɔi̯l]. On the other, there are approximants that behave like consonants in forming onsets, but are articulated very much like vowels, as the y in English yes [ˈjɛs]. Some phonologists model these as both being the underlying vowel /i/, so that the English word bit would phonemically be /bit/, beet would be /bii̯t/, and yield would be phonemically /i̯ii̯ld/. Likewise, foot would be /fut/, food would be /fuu̯d/, wood would be /u̯ud/, and wooed would be /u̯uu̯d/. However, there is a (perhaps allophonic) difference in articulation between these segments, with the [j] in [ˈjɛs] yes and [ˈjiʲld] yield and the [w] of [ˈwuʷd] wooed having more constriction and a more definite place of articulation than the [ɪ] in [ˈbɔi̯l] boil or [ˈbɪt] bit or the [ʊ] of [ˈfʊt] foot. The other

problematic area is that of syllabic consonants, segments articulated as consonants but occupying the nucleus of a syllable. This may be the case for words such as church in rhotic dialects of English, although phoneticians differ in whether they consider this to be a syllabic consonant, /ˈtʃɻtʃ/, or a rhotic vowel, /ˈtʃɝtʃ/: Some distinguish an approximant /ɹ/ that corresponds to a vowel /ɝ/, for rural as /ˈɹɝl/ or [ˈɹʷɝːl̩]; others see these as a single phoneme, /ˈɹl̩/. Other languages use fricative and often trilled segments as syllabic nuclei, as in Czech and several languages in Democratic Republic of the Congo, and China, including Mandarin Chinese. In Mandarin, they are historically allophones of /i/, and spelled that way in Pinyin. Ladefoged and Maddieson[7][page needed] call these "fricative vowels" and say that "they can usually be thought of as syllabic fricatives that are allophones of vowels". That is, phonetically they are consonants, but phonemically they behave as vowels. Many Slavic languages allow the trill [r̩] and the lateral [l̩] as syllabic nuclei (see Words without vowels). In languages like Nuxalk, it is difficult to know what the nucleus of a syllable is, or if all syllables even have nuclei. If the concept of 'syllable' applies in Nuxalk, there are syllabic consonants in words like /sχs/ (/sχs/?) 'seal fat'. Miyako in Japan is similar, with /fkʃ/ 'to build' and /pskʃ/ 'to pull'.

Features. Each spoken consonant can be distinguished by several phonetic features:

The manner of articulation is how air escapes from the vocal tract when the consonant or approximant (vowel-like) sound is made. Manners include stops, fricatives, and nasals. The place of articulation is where in the vocal tract the obstruction of the consonant occurs, and which speech organs are involved. Places include bilabial (both lips), alveolar (tongue against the gum ridge), and velar (tongue against soft palate). In addition, there may be a simultaneous narrowing at another place of articulation, such as palatalisation or pharyngealisation. Consonants with two simultaneous places of articulation are said to be coarticulated. The phonation of a consonant is how the vocal cords vibrate during the articulation. When the vocal cords vibrate fully, the consonant is called voiced; when they do not vibrate at all, it is voiceless. The voice onset time (VOT) indicates the timing of the phonation. Aspiration is a feature of VOT. The airstream mechanism is how the air moving through the vocal tract is powered. Most languages have exclusively pulmonic egressive

consonants, which use the lungs and diaphragm, but ejectives, clicks, and implosives use different mechanisms. The length is how long the obstruction of a consonant lasts. This feature is borderline distinctive in English, as in "wholly" [hoʊlli] vs. "holy" [hoʊli], but cases are limited to morpheme boundaries. Unrelated roots are differentiated in various languages such as Italian, Japanese, and Finnish, with two length levels, "single" and "geminate". Estonian and some Sami languages have three phonemic lengths: short, geminate, and long geminate, although the distinction between the geminate and overlong geminate includes suprasegmental features. The articulatory force is how much muscular energy is involved. This has been proposed many times, but no distinction relying exclusively on force has ever been demonstrated. All English consonants can be classified by a combination of these features, such as "voiceless alveolar stop" [t]. In this case, the airstream mechanism is omitted. Some pairs of consonants like p::b, t::d are sometimes called fortis and lenis, but this is a phonological rather than phonetic distinction.

Consonants are scheduled by their features in a number of IPA charts:

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k g	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ		
Trill	ʙ			r					ʀ		
Tap or Flap				ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	ʟ			

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

Consonate Digraphs and Consonant Blends. In terms of articulatory phonetics, there are actually many more speech sounds than there are consonants. We encounter these in our daily lives as pairs of consonants. These are called consonate digraphs, two successive consonants that form a single sounds. On their own, each consonant makes a different sound, but together, they make a specific speech sound that the two letters represent. Through school and speaking, we learn these pairs and memorize their sounds. For example, when written together, the pair TH does not make a sound like a T or an H, but rather makes a

sound like in the word "then." This gets even more complicated because the pronunciation of consonant pairs changes depending on the word it's used in. "Then," for example, has a softer, shorter TH than in the word "think," which is a harder, more definitive sound. English does not differentiate these subtleties with additional pairs or symbols, as it would be far too complex. Instead, we just have to learn to pronounce the sounds as we learn to master the language. Consonant digraphs shouldn't be confused with words that contain multiple, successive consonants. Take the word "sparse," for example. In this word, there are two points in which we have two consonants in succession. These are each pronounced and blended together, but they do not form an entirely new speech sound. Rather, they are what we call consonant blends or consonant clusters. These retain the speech sounds of the individual consonants.

Silent Consonants and Stop Consonants. Silent Consonants. English also has special cases in which the consonant is not pronounced at all. These are called silent consonants. These often occur when there are two or more consonants together. In some cases, these form hard and fast rules like when a word has the letter K before the letter N. In this situation, the English language teaches is that the K is silent, like in the word "knight" or "knowledge." There are a few other pairs that form silent consonants, like B before T, as in the word "subtle," and P before T, as in "receipt." The same applies for words with P before N or S, like in "pneumonia," and "psychic." Similarly, when a word contains two of the same consonant in succession, we do not pronounce both letters. For example, in the word "happy," we pronounce only one P.

Stop Consonants. In addition to silent consonants, there are also unique situations in which consonants break up a word. These are often referred to as stop consonants. They are also known as oral occlusives or more informally, a "plosive." This last term refers to the fact that in a word, "plosive" contains a stop consonant in the letter P followed by L, which bisects the word and causes airflow to stop completely, as in "explosive." While we might not think of consonants are more than one letter together, the word consonant actually derives from the Latin stem that means "sound together." Remembering these facts can help to understand

what exactly a consonant is. When all else fails, just remember that consonants are all letters that are not vowels.

Conclusion. For many learners of English, one of the hardest things to grasp about the language is its pronunciation. Not only are there many accents to get accustomed to – American, British, Australian, among others – but there are many fundamental sounds within the language that can be difficult to produce. To make things even worse, English's spelling system is horrendous and seldom a reliable indication – even for native speakers – of how to pronounce most word. Because of this, it's useful to try to depict the pronunciation of the English language through a set of symbols besides the Latin alphabet – namely, the International Phonetic Alphabet. Known as the IPA for short, this phonetic system might be familiar to you, and in my experience, it's a useful tool for learning any language. The great thing about the IPA is that its symbols are meant to be universal. This means that if you learn the set of symbols used for English sounds, you can apply them to most other languages you might want to learn, from French to Arabic to Japanese. It is not a perfect system, since its details can only be so fine, and nuances like tone and stress are often overlooked in IPA transcription, which can be a bit of a problem with tonal languages like Mandarin and Vietnamese. However, for our purposes with English, these phonetic symbols can definitely come in handy if you're looking to improve your pronunciation.

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