

# The Phonetics of English Pronunciation

## Session 02

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<sup>1</sup>using material by William Barry

# The Topics

- What's different in English for Germans?
  - How letters represent sounds (orthographic interference)
  - Sounds we can *feel* (consonants)
  - Sounds we have to *listen* for (vowels)
  - Rhythm patterns for words, compounds and phrases (stress)
  - The frequency and function of some melodic patterns (intonation)

## Homework

- a) Read pp. 106-9 on vowels
- b) Answer questions 1-5 on exercise sheet
- c) Go back to the “spelling poem” (pp. 253-4) and *try* to transcribe the problem words (see task 6 on exercise sheet)

# What's different in English for Germans? (1)

*Not* a simple question!

- What sort of English?
  - Choose your variety! (🔊 British, 🔊 American)
  - But what sort of American or British?
    - 🔊 Georgia   🔊 Alabama   🔊 NW Brit.Eng.   🔊 SW Brit.Eng.
- These decisions determine the sound patterns that you aim for. But a “Standard Variant” is the usual target accent.
  - E.g. General American with a Mid-Western accent
  - Southern British English (RP?, “Oxford English”?)

## What's different in English for Germans? (2)

- ... and what sort of *German* do you speak?
- There are large differences between the regional variants, even if the grammar (morphology and syntax) is more or less Standard "Hochdeutsch".
- No problem in theory... *if we were aware* of our own accent. But we usually only notice other people's accents!
- Differences between English and German are always described with reference to standard variants...
- ... which can be confusing to the usual "not-quite-standard" learner.

## ... So what is the solution?

- First and foremost: *awareness*. . .  
You need to listen (to yourself and to others)
- But we *do* need some “tools” and some practice to help us to *identify* what we hear.  
We need:
  - to know what to listen for,
  - to know how to describe it and to represent it,
  - and to understand what is behind the description.
- We need some basic phonetic knowledge 😊

## What differences/problems are we looking for?

- *Orthography*-based problems (of course)
- Differences in the “sound systems” (consonants and vowels that English *has* and German *hasn't*)
- *False equivalences* (consonants or vowels that appear to be the same in English and German but are only *partially* the same. E.g. /l/, /b, d, g/, /i:/, /u:/...)
- Problems from *putting sounds together* (consonant clusters, vowel sequences, word stress and vowel reduction)
- Problems from *putting words together* (“*juncture*” differences, reductions due to accentuation, intonation)

# Orthographic interference

Orthography (even after a spelling reform!) is a complex and ultimately inconsistent reflection of the pronunciation!

## Demo 1

Düse, brüht, Mythos, Duisburg;

Vase, Wahn;

Champignon, Schade vs.

Chiemsee, Kiel... etc.

## Demo 2

caught, court, taut, ought, fort;

(US vs. UK?)

hate, bait, eight, eyot(!);

bison, lesson, recent;

And remember the example of ⟨wind⟩?

*English:* /wind/ or /waɪnd/ & *German* /vɪnt/

So we need some basic phonetic tools! 😊

## Sounds we can feel

Consonants are *fairly* easy to describe because we can (*mostly*) feel what we are doing to make a difference:

### Lips

⟨bap⟩

⟨lab⟩

⟨ram⟩

What about these:

### All have

⟨gaff⟩

⟨pave⟩

and:

### No friction;

⟨berry⟩

⟨well⟩

### Tongue tip behind teeth

⟨bat⟩

⟨lad⟩

⟨ran⟩

### *friction* from

⟨gas⟩

⟨baize⟩

### Back of tongue against soft palate

⟨back⟩

⟨lag⟩

⟨rang⟩

### a constriction

⟨gash⟩

⟨beige⟩

### no narrow constriction

⟨belly⟩

⟨yell⟩



## Describing consonants

- We have just seen, felt and heard that the *place of articulation* is important for producing different consonant sounds ([p t k])
- We noted that we can articulate differently at any place of articulation; i.e., the *manner of articulation* is important (e.g. [t s])
- Sometimes we have a *second articulatory gesture* that changes the manner of articulation (e.g. [b] vs. [m], [d] vs. [n], [g] vs. [ŋ])
- What the *vocal folds* are doing is also important. If they are vibrating, the sound is “voiced”; if they are not, the sound is “unvoiced”
- In summary: *place*, *manner* and *voicing* are used to classify consonants.

## Sounds we have to listen for

- Vowels are rather *more difficult to classify* because the mouth is open, and there is very little contact between the articulators.
- You can *hear them very well*, and you can probably hear very *fine differences*, but what words do you use for them?  
“light” and “dark” are commonly used.  
With ⟨ee⟩ and ⟨oo⟩, which is “light” and which is “dark”?
- Problem: not many different vowels can be described with these adjectives. *Where does light become dark* in ⟨been⟩, ⟨bin⟩, ⟨bane⟩, ⟨Ben⟩, ⟨ban⟩, ⟨barn⟩, ⟨Bonn⟩, ⟨born⟩, ⟨bun⟩, ⟨boon⟩?
- Vowels carry a lot of “accent” information (dialects as well as “native” vs. “foreign”), *so we need to be able to describe them*.

Read: Eckert & Barry, chapter V.1. Vowels, pp. 106-109

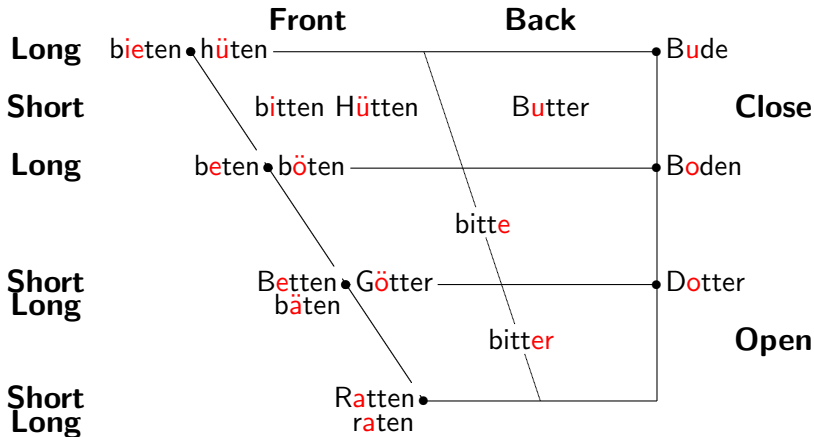
## Describing vowels

What do you have to do to produce the different vowels in the following word pairs?

Igel	Egel
Igel	Hagel
Igel	Hügel
Hügel	Hugo
Beten	Betten
Raten	Ratten
Bohle	bollern

What role do your jaw, your tongue and your lips play?

# The German vowel system



## Rhythm patterns (1)

In German it isn't	BER-LIN	DORT-MUND	SAAR-BRÜC-KEN
but	Ber-LIN	DORT-mund	Saar-BRÜC-ken
In English it isn't	LON-DON	TOR-QUAY	DUM-BAR-TON
but	LON-don	Tor-QUAY	Dum-BAR-ton

- *Word stress* is as important for the identity of a word as the sequence of consonants and vowels!
- Both German and English use word stress to define word-shapes

sometimes *just* stress: um-FAH-ren vs. UM-fah-ren  
EX-port (n.) vs. ex-PORT (v.)

But they don't do it in quite the same way phonetically

## The phonetics of word stress

- ⟨Berlin⟩ [bɛɔ̯'li:n] in German but [bə'li:n] in (British) English.
  - both languages reduce the *duration* of unstressed vowels;
  - both languages reduce the *loudness* (energy);
  - but only English reduces the vowel *quality* of unstressed vowels.
- Some examples:

conference /'kɒnfərəns/	confer /kən'fɜ:/
telephone /'teləfəʊn/	telephony /tə'leɪfəni/
philosopher /fɪ'lɒsəfə/	philosophical /fɪlə'sɒfəkəl/

## The stress of words together

- If words are formed by other words. . .  
The problem of compound words
- *No problem, they're like German, aren't they?*  
E.g.      'cushion + 'cover    → 'cushion,cover  
             'piano + 'teacher    → 'piano-,teacher  
             'vacuum + 'cleaner → 'vacuum-,cleaner  
but. . . + 'salesman        → 'vacuum-,cleaner 'salesman
- So. . . not all English “compounds” behave like German compounds!  
             'Wimbledon + 'Common → ,Wimbledon 'Common  
             'Regency + 'Crescent    → ,Regency 'Crescent
- **Note also:** Not all “compounds” are written as a single word!

## Sentence melody – intonation

- The problem with English and German intonation is...
  - ... that the phonological system is practically the same,
  - ... but the contexts and situations in which the melodic elements are used (i.e. their communicative function) may be different,
  - ... or at least some are used a lot less frequently and others a lot more frequently.

- a) *Der ↗Mann im schwarzen ↗Hut ist der Poli↘zeipräsident.  
Der ↘Mann im schwarzen ↘Hut ist der Poli↘zeipräsident.  
The ↘man in the black ↘hat is the po↘lice commissioner.  
The ↗man in the black ↗hat is the po↘lice commissioner.*
- b) *Ich ↘mag ihn ↗nicht, aber ich ↘muß mit ihm  
zu ↘sammenarbeiten.  
I don't ↘like ↗him, but I ↘have to ↘work with him.*



## Summary

- We have now got a general overview of what sort of problems have to be faced.
- In the coming weeks, we shall learn more about these areas, and specifically what it is that makes learners of English sound German.
- The goal is to make you aware. . . and to motivate you to listen to yourself and to the models that you are given to imitate.
- Knowing about the problems is – of course – not enough, and only *you* can change your pronunciation.

*Now for the homework. . .*

# Homework

1. Read pp. 106-9
2. Answer questions 1-5 on the exercise sheet by consulting the slides
3. Transcribe the keywords in the poem (pp. 253-4)

Please give name, matriculation number, and Fachrichtung

Hand in (on paper) by Thursday, 06/11/2008, 18:00

Building C7 2, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, room 4.11 (box outside door)