

TKT: Module 1 – Aspects of pronunciation

Overview: These practice materials by Russell Whitehead are designed to help with the Module 1 exam, in particular with the phonology aspect in the 'Describing language and language skills' section of the test. The materials cover phonology in terms of phonemes, word and sentence stress, intonation and connected speech. Please note that these practice materials are designed to focus on *knowledge* of phonology, not on the teaching or assessment of phonology. These topics are covered elsewhere in the TKT.

Part of Exam: Module 1 (Language and background to language learning and teaching): Describing language and language skills

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student

Time: 30–60 mins



Think about:

It's often the case that if you take two language learners and teach them with the same input and resources for the same amount of time, they will end up with different accents. For example, one of them will sound more like a native speaker and one will sound less like a native speaker. What reasons could there be for this?

Teacher's notes

Notes for teacher trainers

Provided the trainees have the confidence, it could be very useful to get the trainees to record each other. Then they can work in small groups to analyze and evaluate each other's pronunciation.

The phonemic chart is part of the TKT toolkit. Trainees need to be familiar with the symbols. Spend time ensuring that they do acquire this knowledge. There are lots of fun and effective ways to do this (see other materials in onestopenglish, for example). The phonemic chart can also be found here: www.onestopenglish.com/skills/pronunciation/phonemic-chart-and-app

If you are working in a situation where all the trainees have the same mother tongue – which correlates with that of their learners – then the problematic areas of phonology may seem to constitute a fairly short and well-defined list. However, TKT has a global focus, and trainees need to be able to distinguish all sounds and think about all phonology issues.

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Stage 1: Considering

- a) *Trainee's own answers*
- b) *Trainee's own answers*
- c)
 - 1. i)
 - 2. e)
 - 3. d)
 - 4. g)
 - 5. b)
 - 6. c)
 - 7. a)
 - 8. h)
 - 9. j)
 - 10. f)
- d) *Trainee's own answers*

Stage 2: Experimenting

- e)
 - 1. B: A and C have single phoneme vowels – A is /i:/ and C is /e/ – while B contains a diphthong – /ei/.
 - 2. A: *This is actually Anne is the best and the is has been contracted; the apostrophe ' represents the missing letter. The apostrophes in B and C are possessive – it is the idea of Paul and the books of the students.*
 - 3. C: *In both A and B, the vowel sound in the first word – /eə/ in A and /ɑ:/ in B – goes before the consonant that begins the second word, and nothing gets changed. However, in C, the final sound of green – /n/ – is linked to the first sound of paper – /p/ – and so changes to /m/.*
- f)
 - 1. B
 - 2. A
 - 3. B
 - 4. C

A good dictionary will show you where the stress falls in these words.

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Stage 1: Considering

- a) When non-natives learn your language, what problems do you think they have with pronunciation?

Think of the different mistakes they make, and make some notes here.

Which kinds of mistakes seem most significant to you? Why?

- b) Make a list of the mistakes that learners you know make in pronouncing English.

Which kinds of mistakes seem most significant to you? Why?

Worksheet

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c) Here is a list of the basic aspects of phonology that you need to be familiar with.

Can you match the two halves of the sentences together to make correct statements?

1. Phonology is the study of the sound system of languages and, for our purposes, is focused	a) voice rise or fall or both, and is connected to the meaning or mood of the speaker
2. Minimal pairs are pairs of words in which the distinction	b) syllables are pronounced with more force, so that the sound is longer, higher and louder.
3. The phonemic chart or alphabet contains symbols of the sounds (as opposed to written letters) of a language – standard	c) as /ð/ – the neutral sound at the end of <i>mother</i> or the beginning of <i>ago</i> .
4. Diphthongs are combinations of two vowel	d) English contains 12 vowels, 8 diphthongs, and 24 consonants (as opposed to 26 written letters).
5. Words with more than one syllable have their main stress on one syllable (usually marked ' in a dictionary at the start of that symbol) and these	e) is between one sound only, for example, <i>seat</i> and <i>heat</i> .
6. Syllables that are in unstressed positions are sometimes weak syllables, and often pronounced	f) an /n/ sound goes before a /p/ sound it will become /m/, and /d/ in and will become /ŋ/ before the /g/ sound in <i>boys</i> and <i>girls</i> .
7. Intonation is the 'music' of a sentence, the way the speaker makes his or her	g) sounds (as opposed to written letters), for example, /əʊ/, which is in <i>go</i> , <i>hope</i> , <i>know</i> , etc.
8. Sentence stress refers to the placing of importance on a particular	h) word in a sentence to focus the meaning of the sentence.
9. Contractions are common in spoken English and happen when two words are joined together. For example, <i>he + is = he's</i> – but	i) on looking at phonemes – the smallest sound units which carry meaning.
10. In connected speech, certain changes can take place as words connect with each other. For example, where	j) they shouldn't be confused with the possessive 's, for example, <i>Pete's house</i> .

d) Now test yourself on these terms. Cover the first part of the sentences, and try to recall the second. Work with a colleague if you can.



Think about:

'Jon's got a new bike.' If the important thing is that it's Jon, not someone else, who's got a bike, then *Jon* will have the main stress of the sentence. But maybe we want to make it clear that the bike is a new one, not an old one – so then we put the stress on *new*. Or we might want to correct someone who had the mistaken idea that Jon had got a new car – then we'd stress *bike*. Try saying all three options. Then try the same idea with other sentences, such as, 'Kim told me Lucy is in France this week.'

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Stage 2: Experimenting

e) Try to answer these sample exam multiple-choice questions about phonology.

1. Which of these words contains a diphthong?
 - A. meat B. mate C. meant
2. Which of these phrases contains a contraction?
 - A. Anne's the best B. students' books C. Paul's idea
3. Which pair of words contains sounds that are linked in connected speech?
 - A. where to B. far taller C. green paper

f) Now try this part of a simple exam task. Match the words with the usual position of the main stress.

Main stress on:

- A First syllable
- B Second syllable
- C Third syllable

Words

- 1 Intelligent
- 2 Interesting
- 3 Intensive
- 4 Interaction

g) Practise saying the words above out loud with the correct stress. Work with a colleague if you can. Add some more words to each category, A, B and C.



Think about:

English is becoming more and more of a world language. There is a lot of discussion about what this means for how we learn and teach it. If Germans and Koreans are learning English so that they can communicate and do business together, what kind of English should they learn? Do you think they need to have a standard British or American accent?

- h) What have you learnt from these materials? Hopefully, that there are several different aspects involved in understanding phonology. All of them may be tested in TKT Module 1.
- i) Studying phonology often leaves learners with a limited list of issues to think about. In most cases, they realise that they have a certain number of sounds that they do not create distinctly enough (for example, *sink* and *think* sound the same, or *pig* and *big*). There will also be some sounds that they do not easily recognize as distinct, such as the classic *ship* and *sheep* example.

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Stage 3: Reflecting

- j) **Some words non-native speakers say may be hard for others to understand because of misplaced word stress – e.g. try saying *comfortable* with the stress on the third syllable (it sounds like an invitation to dinner!). The focus or communicative intent of whole sentences may be lost because the stress is misplaced.**

As a teacher, you will need to understand all the aspects of phonology, not just the particular issues you yourself have. You will need to be able to help all sorts of learners to improve their pronunciation.

**Don't forget:**

Good pronunciation works both ways. You need to be able to recognize sounds and their meanings as the foundation of communication. And you need to be able to make meaningful sounds yourself, otherwise your wide vocabulary and accurate grammar will be lost to the world!

Set yourself a target

Choose one aspect of phonology – anything you like, for example, the 'th' sound, or recognizing diphthongs in words – and promise yourself that you will improve this aspect within one week.

Come back to this later

Make sure you feel comfortable with the various aspects of phonology. Look through these materials again in a few weeks and check you feel you have enough knowledge about these important aspects of pronunciation.

- The phonemic script
- Diphthongs
- Word stress and weak syllables
- Contractions
- Connected speech
- Sentence stress and intonation

Suggestion for independent learning

Collect examples of the sounds that you find challenging. For example, if *t*, *d* and *th* are problematic, listen carefully to radio extracts on the BBC website, to audios with coursebooks, to the lyrics of music you have. Make notes of examples of words and phrases containing the sounds. Then you can practise repeating them, and try to say them in the same way that you heard them.

**Don't forget:**

Good pronunciation isn't about having an accent that is an exact copy of the accent of a British person from a specific region, for example. Good pronunciation means that people can understand what you say easily and that you don't create confusion.