**Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdallah University**

Faculty of Letters & Human Sciences

English Studies

*Modular Degree Program*



**Intro 2 Lx**

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**The International Phonetic Alphabet and Transcription (IPA)**

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is a system of phonetic notation which provides a standardized system of transcribing phonetic segments up to a certain degree of detail. The symbols for the English phonemic chart have been compiled from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) devised by International Phonetic Association. The association was established in 1886, and since then, it has been functioning as the major as well as the oldest representative organisation for phoneticians. The association’s mission is to promote the scientific study of phonetics by providing phoneticians worldwide with a notational standard for the phonetic representation of all languages, i.e. the IPA. The alphabet is based on the Latin letters and diacritics that indicate slight alterations to the usual value of phonetic symbols, e.g. [kw] (meaning /k/ is labialised). The latest version of the alphabet was published in 2005.

Phonetic transcription has a high degree of accuracy and shows a lot of articulatory and auditory details. It is often called narrow transcription and aims to represent actual speech sounds in the narrowest sense, using diacritics to refer to phonetic features. The symbols are therefore enclosed in square brackets [ ]. For example, [kh] means that /k/ is aspirated, in [khɑ:].

**RP Consonants and vowels**

Speech sounds are generally divided into two classes: vowels and consonants. Vowels are produced with a comparatively open vocal tract for the airflow to pass unimpeded. As a result, vowels are considered to be open sounds, whereas consonants are produced with a certain constriction in the vocal tract. Roach (2009) gives the following characterisation of the sounds:

Vowels are the class of sounds that are associated with the least obstruction to the flow of air during their production.

All consonants have certain properties in common that identify them from vowels. Consonants are the class of sounds that are associated with obstructed airflow through the vocal tract during their production. Vowels can also be distinguished from consonants as they display a different acoustic energy: vowels are highly resonant and intense and have greater sonority than do consonants. Vowels also have the function to be syllabic (a syllable can contain a minimum of one vowel), while consonants are units that function at the margins of syllables, either singly or in clusters, and are optional. Vowels typically involve the vibration of vocal folds, so they are voiced, while consonants split into voiced and voiceless forms. There are 24 consonants in English, although seven of them are referred to as sonorants.

A special set of consonants that demonstrate reduced levels of obstructed airflow during their production are called sonorants. They because they share several features (sonority and continuation) with vowels: [m], [n], [ŋ], [l], [r], [j], [w]. According to Roach (2009), Sonorants are sounds that are voiced and do not cause sufficient obstruction to the airflow to prevent normal voicing from continuing.



Figure 1. The International Phonetic Alphabet

Table 1.

RP Consonant: place & manner of articulation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Bilabial** | **Labiodentals** | **Dental** | **Alveolar** | **Post-alveolar** | **Retroflex** | **Palatal** | **Velar** | **Glottal** |
| **Plosive** | p b |  |  | t d |  |  |  | k ɡ |  |
| **Affricate** |  |  |  |  | tʃ dʒ |  |  |  |  |
| **Nasal** | m |  |  | n |  |  |  | ŋ |  |
| **Fricative** |  | f v | θ ð | s z | ʃ ʒ |  |  |  | h |
| **Approximant** | w |  |  |  | **ɹ** | ɻ | j | w |  |
| **Lateral Approx** |  |  |  | l |  |  |  |  |  |

Table 2.

The RP consonants with examples

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Consonant** | **Example** |
| [p] | Play |
| [b] | Board |
| [d] | Do |
| [t] | Time |
| [ʃ] | Sure |
| [k] | Car |
| [θ] | Think |
| [ð] | This |
| [z] | Zoo |
| [ʒ] | Television |
| [ɡ] | Go |
| [tʃ] | Chair |
| [f] | Fine |
| [dʒ] | Judge |
| [s] | Sin |
| [h] | Here |
| [v] | Vine |
| [**ɹ]** | rude |