

Speech Improvement

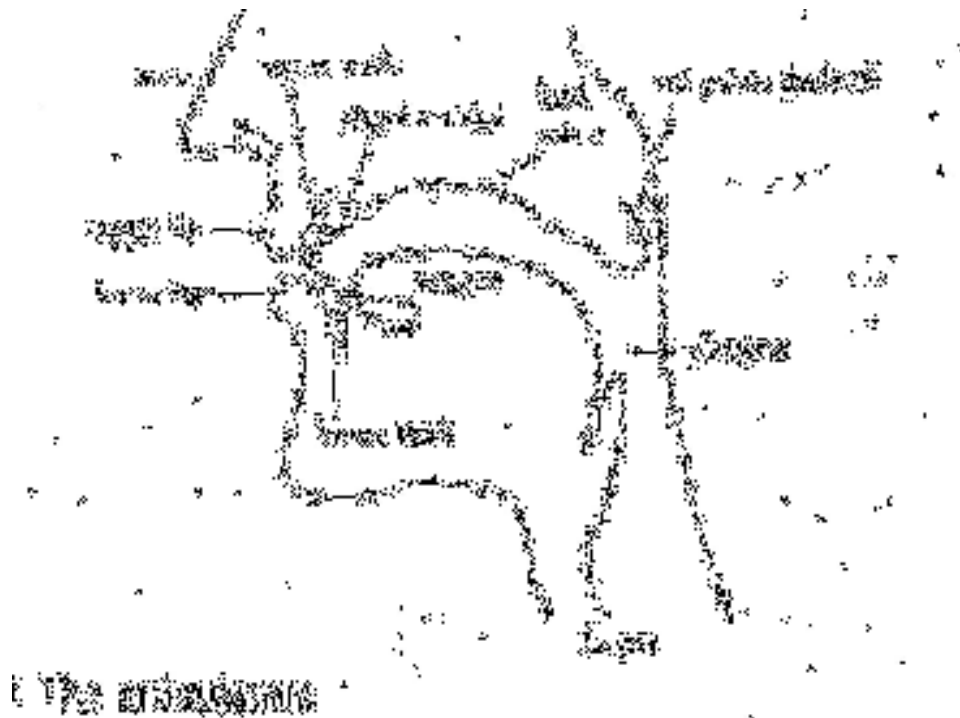
Phoneme - The smallest unit at the level of sounds of one particular language is called 'phoneme'. Peter Roach defines phonemes as "the abstract set of unit as the basis of our speech." Phonemes are systematically distinguishable from each other, e.g. the /t/ from /p/ in /tin/ and /pin/. The phoneme of spoken language differs from the letters of a written language.

The phonemes of English and their number vary from dialect to dialect, and also depend on the interpretation of the individual researcher. The number of consonant phonemes is generally put at 24 (or slightly more). The number of vowels is subject to greater variation; there are 20 vowel phonemes in Received Pronunciation, 14–16 in General American and 20–21 in Australian English. Out of this 12 are pure vowels or Monophthongs and 8 are vowel glides or Diphthongs.

Stress - Stress is the intensity or prominence given to a syllable. It may be defined as 'emphasis on a syllable or word in the form of prominent, relative loudness'. In traditional approach, each English word consisting of more than one syllable can be ascribed to any one of these three degrees – primary or loud, secondary or medium and unstressed.

Regarding the production of stress, Peter Roach observes that it depends on the speaker using "more muscular energy than is used for unstressed syllables". If prominence is given to a syllable in isolated words, it is called word- stress. When prominence is given to syllable in sentences, it is called sentence-stress.

The organs of speech



More than half of the human body, from the head to

the abdomen, is involved in production of spoken language. For this there are three groups or systems, of bodily organs that are brought together into cooperation. One such system of organ lies in the trunk, one in the throat, and one in the head. These are usually known as the respiratory system, the phonatory system and the articulatory system.

Organs involved in the production of speech are :

1. Lips – The lips can take up various different positions. They can be brought together so that they completely block the mouth, e.g. while pronouncing /p/ or /b/. The lower lip can be drawn inward and slightly upwards to touch the upper front teeth for the sounds /f/ or /v/.
2. Teeth (upper and lower) are present immediately at the front and to the sides of the mouth back almost to the soft palate, immediately behind the lips. The tongue is in contact with the teeth for the production of many speech sounds.

3. Teeth ridge – Convex part of the mouth immediately behind the teeth.
4. Hard palate – Concave part of the mouth immediately behind the teeth ridge. It is often called 'The Roof of the Mouth'.
5. Velum or Soft palate – The flexible part of the back of the roof of the mouth. It is one of the articulators that can be touched by the tongue. For example while pronouncing sounds /k/ and /g/.
6. Uvula – The end of soft palate.
7. Pharynx – It is a tube which begins just before the larynx. It is about 7 cm long in women and 8 cm in men.
8. Tongue – It is of course a very important articulator and it can be moved into many different places and many different shapes. The tongue is usually divided into following parts like – tip, blade, front, back and root.
9. Larynx or the Phonatory system – It is also called the 'Voice box'. It can be felt especially in the adult male and is known as the 'Adam's apple'. The primary function of the larynx is to act as a valve which can shut off the lungs in order to protect them
10. Epiglottis.
11. Vocal cords
12. Glottis – Space between two vocal cords.
13. The respiratory system consists of the lungs and its muscles, the bronchial tubes and wind-pipe or Trachea.

Syllable

A syllable is a unit of utterance containing one and only one vowel either alone or surrounded by consonants. The vowel is the 'nucleus' or 'peak' of a syllable. The consonant or consonants before the peak is called the 'onset'

and the consonant or consonants after the peak is called 'coda'. Some interesting observations regarding syllable are:-

- There are syllables which have no onset, but a coda like 'ease' /I: z/.
- There are syllable that have both onset and coda like seat /sit/.
- If the syllable ends in a vowel it is called an open syllable.
- If the syllable ends in a consonant it is called a closed syllable.

It is easy to identify the syllables in English words for example,

Bat	-	one syllable
Singing	-	two syllable
Removal	-	three syllable
Degenerate	-	four syllable
Opportunity	-	five syllable
Characterization	-	six syllable



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