



## GETTING IT RIGHT: PRONOUNCING ENGLISH

XIII SEMINARIO DE ESTUDIO COMPARADO DE SISTEMAS JUDICIALES EUROPEOS A TRAVÉS DEL LENGUAJE JURÍDICO

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## VARIANTS OF ENGLISH

- 3 major geographic variants of English:
  - **British English:** BBC English/Queen's English // RP –Received Pronunciation:
  - **American English:** Boston English // GA – General American:
  - Australian English.**

(+ others: Scottish English, Irish English, Welsh English, South African English, New Zealand English, Canadian English, etc.

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## BrE vs. AmE

- **Orthography:** theatre (BrE)/theater; colour (BrE)/color; centre (BrE)/center, pyjamas(BrE)/pajamas, through (BrE)/thru, tonight (BrE)/tonite, etc.
- **Morphology:** She hasn't got up yet (BrE)/She hasn't gotten up yet; He's different from (BrE)/than you. The team/family/police is/are (BrE). To have a shower (BrE).
- **Syntax:** Did you ever fly there?/Have you ever flown there? (BrE); If you had come, I would have said nothing (BrE)/If you would have come, I would have said nothing.
- **Vocabulary:** lift (BrE)/elevator; torch (BrE)/flashlight; lorry (BrE)/truck; biscuit (BrE)/ cookie.
- **Stress:** 'secretary (BrE)/ 'secre'tary; 'translate (BrE)/ 'trans'late.
- **Pronunciation** (phonemes): vitamin (/i/ vs. /aɪ/), tomato (/ɑ:/ vs. /eɪ/); schedule (/j/ vs. /sk/); either/neither (/aɪ/ vs. /i:/).

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BrE vs. AmE

- Main differences in pronunciation:
  - /ɑ:/ → /æ/ bath, fast, clerk, can.
  - /ɒ/ → /a/ shop, not, box.
  - /ʌ/ → /ə/ love, bus, cup.
  - /rt/ → /r/ forty, thirty, party.
  - /ɜ:/ → /ɜ:r/ bird, sir.
  - /ɒ/ → /æ/ fox, rot, cot.
  - /l/: milk, look, ill, call, real, well, tell.
  - /t/ after n, m → /n/ rented, twenty, plenty, wanted.
  - /t/ in intermediate position → similar to /r/ butter, better, letter.
  - /ɔ:/ → /ɒ:/ saw, law, fall, raw.  
Followed by /r/ → /ɔ:r/: This cord is short.

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THE ARBITRARINESS OF ENGLISH

- ENGLISH:
  - 45 phonemes (sounds), only 26 letters to represent them → ARBITRARINESS
  - 45 sounds > 26 letters
- A COMPARISON WITH SPANISH:
  - 24 phonemes, 29 letters to represent them.
  - 24 sounds > 29 letters

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- Examples of 1 sound (phoneme) → several letters (graphemes):
  - /f/ can be written as:
    - Ph (photograph)
    - Gh (laugh)
    - F (family)
  - /i:/ can be written as:
    - E (these) ee (seed) ay (quay)
    - Ea (read) ie (piece) ey (key)
    - Eo (people) i (machine)

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• **Example (1 letter → several sounds):**

Letter “a” can be pronounced as:

/æ/ → c <u>a</u> t	/ɔ:/ → b <u>a</u> ll
/ɑ:/ → c <u>a</u> r	/ɪ/ → lugg <u>a</u> ge
/e/ → m <u>a</u> ny	/eɪ/ → t <u>a</u> ke ... etc.

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**AS IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH!!**

• Some words have a double pronunciation:

Often	/ɒfən/	/ɒftən/
Been	/bi:n/ (str.)	/bɪn/
Vitamin	/vaɪtəmɪn/	/vɪtəmɪn/
Privacy	/prɪvəsi/	/praɪvəsi/
Tomato	/meɪ/	/mə: /
Direct	/ɪ/	/aɪ/

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• Some words are pronounced differently when their category changes (*homographs*):

Tear	/tɪə/	/tɜ:/
Lead	/li:d/	/lɜ:d/
Read	/ri:d/	/red/
Live	/lɪvz/	/laɪv/

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## UNPREDICTABILITY:

TRICYCLE // TRILOGY

BIGAMY // BILINGUAL

SUGAR

APPLE // ACORN

EARTH

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## VOWELS

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## PROBLEMS:

English has 12 vowels (Spanish 5)

English has short and long vowels

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VOWEL KEY

- /i:/ long "i" (feet, eat, free)
- /ɪ/ (sit, pills)
- /e/ "e" (tell, when, get)
- /æ/ Mixture between "a" and "e" (bag, man, cat)
- /ɑ:/ Long "a" (dark, part, car)
- /ɒ/ Between "o" and "a", closer to "o" (gone, long)
- /ɔ:/ Long "o", close to "u" (short, door, call)
- /ʊ/ Between "u" and "o", closer to "u" (took, cook, put)
- /u:/ Long "u" (fool, food)
- /ʌ/ Between "a", "o" and "u" (duck, luck, much, some)
- /ɜ:/ Long "e" (bird, learn, work)
- /ə/ Between "a" and "e" but closer to "a" (worker, cover, later).  
[schwa]

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Relatively difficult for speakers of languages from the Latin family (5 long vowels):

- /ɑ:/ dark, heart, far
- /ɔ:/ heard, word
- /i:/ feet, meet
- /ɔ:/ lord, pork
- /u:/ moon, soon

Very difficult for speakers of languages from the Latin family :

- /æ/ bag, man, sat
- /ɒ/ lock, strong
- /ə/ worker, about, woman
- /ʌ/ duck, luck, fuss
- /ʊ/ wood, took, cook

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/i:/

- Spellings:
- ee (see, bee)
  - ea (read, sea)
  - ie (field, shield)
  - ei (receive)
  - e (these)

/i:/	/ɪ/
peach	pitch
leap	lip
read	rid
beach	bitch
bean	bin
beat	bit
seat	sit

The seats on the beach are cheap

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## /ɪ/

Might be perceived as /e/: mill, houses, teaches, wanted, waited.  
- Very frequent in: some plurals (*watches*), 3rd person singular of some verbs (*he fixes*) and past/participles of some verbs (*it ended*).

Spellings: i, y (lady, milk)  
any grapheme (unstressed position): mongy, minute, language

/ɪ/	/i:/
will	wheel
still	steal

/ɪ/	/e/
till	tell
built	belt
will	well

The pink dishes are in the sink

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## /e/

Spellings: e (bed, ten, pen)  
ea (head, dead)  
a (many, any)  
u (bury)

/e/	/ɪ/
bell	bill
sell	sill

/e/	/i:/
met	meat
said	seed
stem	steam

He said the televisien set was red

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## /æ/

Mouth open to say "a", but say "e"

Spellings: a (flash, lamp, hand)

/æ/	/e/
man	men
sat	set
bad	bed
bag	beg

He sat in the back of the taxi

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## /ɑ:/

- Typical of R.P., difficult to distinguish from /æ/: car, market. Tongue in same position as when yawning.
- After /f, θ, ð, s/ in British English pronounced as /ɑ:/, in American English as /æ/: father, path, bath, after, grass, laugh, dance.

Spellings: a (ask, grass) er (clerk) ear (heart)  
al (half, calm) au (aunt, laugh)

/ɑ:/	/æ/
bark	back
March	match

/ɑ:/	/ʌ/
calm	come
heart	hut

My father can't park his car in the yard

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## /ɒ/

- More central in AmE = perceived as /ɑ/: shop, not, what, hot.
- Problems to distinguish: hot/hut; lock/luck, stock/stuck.

Spellings: o (not, box, dog) a (want, watch)  
au (because) ou (cough)

/ɒ/	/ʌ/
shot	shut
long	lung
gone	gun

/ɒ/	/ɑ:/
pot	part
cod	card
stock	stark

The shop is locked at five o'clock

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## /ɔ:/

- More and more frequently pronounced as /u/ - short, taught, daughter.

Spellings: o (horse) oar (board) oo (poor) ou (bought)  
ore (more) our (four) aw (saw) a (all)

/ɔ:/	/ɒ/
caught	cot
stalk	stock

/ɔ:/	/ɑ:/
lord	lard
pork	park

/ɔ:/	/ʌ/
bought	but
dawn	done

The lord was born near the court, of course

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## /ʊ/

- Allophone /u:/: foot, look, took, book, good.

**Spellings:** **u** (put) **oo** (book, look)  
**ou** (could, should) **o** (bosom)

/ʊ/	/ɜ:/
look	lurk
hood	heard
/ʊ/	/əʊ/
bull	bowl
could	code
brook	broke

Look, put your hood on the hook.

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## /u:/

- Allophone /u:/: lose, who, food.

- Sometimes shorter: group, soup, route (followed by voiceless consonant).

**Spellings:** **oo** (spoon, boom) **ou** (soup, route, look)  
**o** (do) **u** (flu)  
**ew, ue, ui, oe** (shoe, blue)

/u:/	/ʊ/
fool	full
pool	pull
/u:/	/ɔ:/
fool	fall
boot	bought

The Duke will shoot the fool.

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## /ʌ/

- Several allophones throughout Great Britain: /æ/, /ɑ:/.  
/ʌ/

**Spellings:** **u** (sun, run, fun) **o** (come, done)  
**ou** (young, country) **oo** (blood, flood)

/ʌ/	/æ/
cup	cap
but	bat
some	Sam
run	ran
/ʌ/	/e/
money	many
but	bet

Your uncle doesn't have much money.

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## /ɜ:/

- In AmE the "r" following it is pronounced: earth, firm, word, nurse, sir, birth.
- It is like a long schwa /ə/.

Spellings: **ir** (first) **or** (word)  
**er, ear** (earth) **our** (journey)  
**ur** (nurse)

/ɜ:/	/e/
bird	bed
word	wed
learned	lend
/ɜ:/	/æ/
hurt	hat
bird	bad
/ɜ:/	/ɔ:/
worm	warm
firm	form

He tumed and murmured: 'Sir!'

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## /ə/ "schwa"

- Very strong tendency towards it in English: "know", "old", "toe", "nose", "no" were pronounced "o", not any more.
- Mouth as if to say "a" in Spanish: not moving lips or tongue, say gentle "a/e" (mixture of "a", "e" and "o").
- When in final position, very open: almost /a/ (mother, worker, daughter, cover).[vs. AmE]

### Spellings:

ANY vowel or group of vowels. Any unstressed syllable can be /ə/: famous, woman, letter, cupboard, should, etc.

A photographer was present when the accident happened

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# SEMIVOWELS

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/j/

quick "i" (as in 'you').

/w/

quick "u+ vowel" using lips, not throat

/j/

you

yet

your

Yale

yam

/dʒ/

Jew

jet

jaw

jail

jam

/w/

wood

wet

west

/g/

good

get

guest

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## DIPHTHONGS

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### 9 diphthongs:

/aɪ/ time, cry, fly, my, buy, sight, fly, pride, try.

/eɪ/ day, stay, same, say, May, tray, cake.

/ɔɪ/ boy, toy, noise, foil.

/aʊ/ cow, now, how, shout, crowd, trout.

/əʊ/ no, show, boat, coat, note, slow, robe.

/ɪə/ here, beer, tear, fear, hear, sheer.

/eə/ there, where, care, stare, pear.

/ɔə/ poor. [No diphthong in AmE]

/ʊə/ sure [Allophone: /ɔ:/], cruel, fuel.

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# TRIPHTHONGS

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## 5 triphthongs:

- /aɪə/ fire, wire, liar.
- /eɪə/ player, layer.
- /ɔɪə/ destroyer, employer.
- /aʊə/ shower, flower, vowel.
- /əʊə/ slower, lower, blower.

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# CONSONANTS

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- Initial /p, t, k/: /p<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>, k<sup>h</sup>/ (voiced)

pin, Peter, pocket

tin, ten, Tom

cap, cough, cot

- /d/ and /t/ are dental in many Latin family languages ("dedo") and alveolar in English:

day, duck, dark, dish, desk

time, teeth, till, tale, told

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- Always pronounce **CLEARLY** final consonants:

Final "d": bed, bad, bird, cod.

Final "g": bag, fog, beg, wig.

Final "b": rub, club, rob, pub.

Final "t": get, forget, hot, sit.

Final "p": drop, tip, sleep, nap.

Final "k": sick, sock, pick, lack.

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- Careful with /f/, /b/ and /v/.

/v/ does not exist in Spanish :

fish, find, coffee, tough, staff, enough

victory, very, ever, clever, drive, save

/b/

/v/

best

vest

bolt

volt

robe

rove

- Careful with /θ/ and /ð/:

/θ/ : think, thank, nothing, truth.

/ð/ : then, this, there, brother, weather, without, bathe, with.

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- Careful with /s/ (voiceless) and /z/ (voiced).

/z/

zoom, zoo, zebra, busy, crazy, comes, prize

/s/

/z/

race raise

rice rise

pence pens

Sue zoo

sip zip

buses buzzes

/s/ drops, shirts, walks, roofs, paths

/z/ pubs, beds, bags, sails, climbs, rains, songs (after b, d, g, v, l, m, n, ŋ)

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- Careful with /s/, /ʃ/ and /ʒ/:

/s/

sip

sort

sin

/ʃ/

ship

short

shin

- In /ʒ/ vocal cords vibrate: measure, explosion, conclusion, garage.

/ʃ/

nation, creation, reduction, motion.

/ʒ/

vision, explosion, decision,

exclusion

To practice with /ʒ/, replace by /ʃ/ and see what happens: treasure, strange, pleasure, cushion, division, television.

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- Practice with /h/

Him, her, home, hurt, hope, help, high, who, hit, here.

Behind, overhear, somehow, ahead.

**BUT!!!**

Honest, honour, heir, hour, forehead. EXHIBIT

AND in dialects / relaxed talk (TRY NOT TO DO IT):

Do you find him [/ɪm/] pleasant? I like him

I don't love him. Do you love her?

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- Watch out for initial /s/.

Spain (not “Espain”), stop (not “estop”);  
BUT “escape”, “escalators”.

still, spray, split, student, street, strong.  
school, sky, slow, smooth, small,  
SHREK (“es-rek” in Spanish).

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- Voiceless consonants (some more than others):

- **mb:** climb, lamb, bomb, crumb, plumber.
- **mn:** hymn, damn (silent “n”); mnemonic (silent “m”).
- **gh:** high, sigh, fight, night, weight, neighbour.
- **l:** calm, could, should, would, talk, walk, calf.
- **ps:** psychology, psychiatrist, psalm (silent “p”).
- **r:** warm, farm, learn, north.
- **h:** hour, heir, honest, forehead, John.
- **w:** lawn, dawn, crawl.

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